



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Effectively Engaging Trans* Campers and Participants

YMCA Camp Takodah is committed to ensuring access, inclusion, and engagement for all. We actively promote a culture of equity that is free from bias and injustice. We strive to achieve equal access, identify and resolve inequities, and remove institutional barriers that limit the ability of all people to develop their full potential.

SUMMARY

Freedom from discrimination based on sex, gender expression, and/or gender identity is required by Camp Takodah policies. Camp Takodah programs and activities must be conducted accordingly. This document provides staff and volunteers guidance for ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all campers and equal access to all programs and activities.

This document addresses many situations that may arise when serving a trans* camper. Camp staff and volunteers focus on the positive impact we strive to have with each individual who comes to the Camp Takodah. A trans* camper should be welcomed as any other individual. Camp Takodah is committed to working on a case by case basis to ensure the greatest possible inclusion recognizing facility and resource limitations. Gender may or may not be a big part of an individual's personal identity. Avoid treating the "trans*" part of a person as their whole identity.

This document does not anticipate every situation that might occur. Questions regarding the application of this policy should be directed to the Camping Services Director.

Trans* (with an asterisk after) is a term used to show inclusivity of various gender identities. The term transgender is felt by some to exclude those who identify outside of the male/female binary. Trans* is a term that is used to include all identities that fall under the gender variant umbrella (e.g. genderqueer, pangender, third gender, gender nonconforming).

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS DOCUMENT

1. General guidelines for trans* campers in overnight camp (pg. 2-5)
2. Additional suggestions for trans* youth and teens (pg. 5)
3. Behaviors that are helpful and behaviors that are not helpful (pg. 5-6)
4. Definition of Terms (pg. 6-8)

TAKODAH YMCA

32 Lake Street
North Swanzey, NH 03431
603-352-0447

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55 Fitzwilliam Road
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info@takodahymca.org
www.camptakodah.org

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Accommodating needs of trans* campers

As a general guideline, accommodating trans* campers should be addressed in a case by case manner.

If appropriate, conversations should be held with trans* campers and their families regarding how Camp Takodah can best meet their needs. Use open-ended questions to assess how camp can be helpful. For example:

- What would be helpful to make your experience positive?
- What can we do to help you feel more welcome here?

Seek to find solutions and ways to accommodate the camper's needs and be honest and realistic about facility or programmatic limitations. Our intention and desire are to be open and welcoming, and we have the reality of facilities that are over 100 years old.

Names/Pronouns

Campers have the right to be addressed by their preferred names and pronouns. Inadvertent slips or unintentional honest mistakes in the use of preferred names or pronouns might occur. Camp Takodah does not condone the intentional and persistent refusal to respect a person's gender identity.

Facility Accessibility

Access to gendered spaces (e.g. restrooms, overnight accommodations) should be on the basis of gender identity. Gender assigned at birth, physical characteristics, or presentation should not dictate use of gendered space. Trans* individuals may select either restroom. Requiring someone to use a bathroom or other gendered space of the gender with which they do not identify can be detrimental for an individual's well-being and safety and puts Camp Takodah at risk for discrimination complaints.

Cabin assignments will be made based on gender identity. In the case of non-binary gender identity, campers will be asked to select a cabin gender in which they will feel most comfortable for that session. If staying for multiple sessions, they will be invited to choose again at the start of the next session.

If a camper is not comfortable using the gender-labeled restrooms, staff will seek ways to find an option that makes the individual feel comfortable. All available options should be presented in an unbiased way, and staff should work with each individual to identify their desired way forward.

Whenever possible, campers who have a need or desire for increased privacy for any reason should be provided access to an alternative restroom or area to shower or change in privacy. This allows people who may feel uncomfortable sharing restrooms with trans* campers the option to make use of a separate area. No one should be required to use an alternative restroom because they are trans*.

Harassment/Discrimination/Intimidation-Free Environment

Camp Takodah prohibits harassment, discrimination, and/or intimidation on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identify, race, color, ancestry, national origin, disability, marital status, socio-economic status, religion, veteran status, unfavorable discharge from the military or other protected status.

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Harassment-Free Workplace policies are in place and Camp Takodah takes all reasonable steps to prevent harassment from occurring to or by campers and staff. In concert with the Camp Takodah Code of Conduct and Personnel Policies, these and other actions that create an intimidating or hostile environment are not permitted:

- Threats, degrading comments, epithets, or slurs;
- Derogatory posters, photographs, cartoon, drawings, or gestures;
- Sexual harassment, including leering, making sexual gestures, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, calendars, or posters;
- Physical contact such as unwanted touching, assault, impeding, or blocking movements.

Sexual harassment can occur between people of any sex/gender and will be taken seriously in every case.

Incidences of harassment should be handled in accordance with Camp Takodah Code of Conduct and Personnel Policies.

Conflict Resolution, Code of Conduct, Discipline

Whenever discussing a situation such as behavior or discipline with a trans* camper or their family, focus on the conduct of that situation, and not on any assumptions regarding the individual's gender identity.

Resource staff for trans* campers

The Camping Services Director and Assistant Camp Director are available to advise staff/volunteers on questions or issues related to trans* campers.

Communication and Promotion

Efforts should be made to raise awareness that Camp Takodah is a trans-inclusive welcoming space in a way that is considerate of all campers. To that end:

- Language in camp communications should be gender neutral and inclusive
- Information should be included in Parent Guide and FAQs indicating how we support trans* youth and/or youth in transition
- Images of trans* individuals should be included in printed materials and represented online.
- Use language that signals to the trans* community that they are included in our "Everyone is Welcome" statement. For example: "Camp Takodah is proud of its wide variety of staff and campers from many different backgrounds. Our community includes people of many different nationalities, ethnicities, gender identities and expression, socio-economic backgrounds, life experiences, ages, etc." The specific use of "gender identities" signals our inclusion policies to the trans* community.
- When addressing groups and campers, use gender neutral or non-gender based words. For example, rather than "Boys & Girls" or "Ladies & Gentlemen", say "Friends", "Campers", "Students", etc.

Records

To the extent that Camp Takodah is not legally required to use an individual's legal name and gender marker on camp documents, the name and gender by which the individual identifies shall be used. In situations where Camp Takodah is required by law or third-party funders to report an individual's legal name or gender marker (e.g. criminal background checks, sex offenders' check), this information should be collected and effort should be taken to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of such confidential information.

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Registration forms should be designed to accurately and sensitively document gender/sex and preferred names. When a preferred name is provided, it should be used at all times.

Prior to Camp

- Work in partnership with parent/guardian, camper, and assigned staff to identify potential challenges and to find solutions. Consider sleeping arrangements, places to change and shower, use of bathrooms and any other traditionally gendered spaces. Ask open ended questions and let the camper and their guardians be the guide. Example: What would help you feel welcome and safe?
- Arrange a discussion with the camper before they arrive about their expectations and boundaries. Does or does not the trans* camper want others campers and staff to know? What do they expect from their cabin leaders? What types of questions/topics of discussion are off limits? Cabin leaders should emphasize that they are there to support the camper.
- Be clear about confidentiality. If they so choose, a camper's trans* status should be treated as confidential.
- Determine how the topic will be shared with other cabin mates. Example: If a cabin mate wants to know why a camper is given a separate shower time, how will that be answered?
- Be enthusiastic about Camp Takodah being a trans* positive space!

Arrival at Camp

- Set camper group expectations from the start, which encompasses the specific issues a trans* person may face.
- If a camper arrives and identifies differently from what is indicated on their forms, let them know that we fully support and affirm them and that because their parent signed them up and may have certain expectations, we will put them in the cabin with which they identify and we will notify their parent. "We don't want to make you uncomfortable, but we wouldn't want them to be upset after the fact."
- Begin with a name game that gives them the option to include their preferred gender pronoun (he/she/they etc.), take a moment to explain what pronouns are and how they are used, and invite campers to share "any other information that will make you feel welcome in this space." End with something fun or silly, like "and if you could have any super power what would it be?" Answering this question will indicate to us the introduction is complete. Counselors should start with themselves to lead by example how to answer the prompt. For example, "Hi, my name is Casey; my pronouns are they/them/theirs. One thing I want to share is I went on a long hike yesterday and am a bit sore, so I would appreciate your patience with me if I am moving a little slower today. If I could have one super power it would be flight, so I wouldn't be so sore today!" Sharing personal information, even just sharing a name, can be a scary experience. Affirm and thank campers for sharing, including if a camper outs themselves as trans*. Example: Counselor might say: "Thank you for sharing, I just want to say again that Camp Takodah wants to be welcoming to everyone and I want to help create that experience for you."
- Staff should intentionally use each person's preferred gender pronoun shared with the group in front of other people to affirm how this person wants to be addressed. For example, Kristin and Robin would introduce each other on stage say "This is Kristin and SHE is awesome!" and "And this is Robin and HE is awesome!" Also, in every day speech it is easy to add in pronouns, "Oh yes, I know Taylor, THEY came to camp last year! They are awesome!" Use an individual's preferred pronouns at all times, including when the person is not present.

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- Cabin expectations/group agreements should cover respect for personal space and personal questions. Trans* people will likely face a lot of probing questions, so addressing this as a general rule is important. Example: "Each one of us comes to camp with a variety of life experiences. Listening to people's experiences is a great way to learn. But no one has to share details about their lives". When people choose to share, the stories and information they share are gifts. We will honor those gifts with our respect and confidentiality. Thank people for sharing their experiences when they choose to do so. Two group agreement phrase examples include "What's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here," and "Honor the gifts we share."

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND TEENS

- A trans* child or teen may or may not share their gender identity with a group. Respect their decision and follow their lead. Remember, a person may be "out" to one group but not to another. It may be helpful for you to understand what settings they are out in. Example: "Is this something you want me to hold in confidence?" Also, "What name and pronoun do you want me to use when... (at camp; with family/guardian; etc.)?"
- When contacting the family of a trans* child or teen, be aware the youth may not be out as trans* to their family. Avoid using gender pronouns, unless the youth has been consulted first to determine an appropriate way to reference their gender identity. One way to ask the child (in a private setting), is "What name and pronoun do you want me to use when speaking with your family?" If unable to ask, try speaking about the individual without using pronouns or gender indicators. Example: "I am calling about Tyler's behavior. Today Tyler...", rather than, "I am calling about your son's behavior. Today he..."
- If a child, youth or teen has a parent/guardian who does not accept their gender identity, find ways to affirm the child's gender identity, while working with and respecting the parent's perspective.
- Be aware of how gender identity may be seen, perceived, and even reacted to differently within different cultural groups and generations
- A youth or teen may mention having a trans* parent. Follow the child's lead; discuss it with them if it appears they want to, letting them lead the discussion, and treat it as confidential information.
- Be alert for any disrespectful comments in the group; model and insist on an inclusive environment.

EXAMPLES OF HELPFUL AND NOT HELPFUL BEHAVIORS

Helpful Behaviors:

- Respect an individual's:
 - Pronoun choice. We all mess up on pronouns. It's okay. Apologize and move on.
 - Self-identity. For example, if someone tells you they identify as a woman, they are a woman whether or not they look/seem like a woman to you.
 - Privacy. Don't ask inappropriately personal questions of a trans* person you've just met like: "What do your genitals look like?" or "How do you have sex?"
- Be honest about your level of understanding and your preparedness (or not) to be an ally.
- Educate yourself and others.
- Interrupt conversations that are exclusive or otherwise inappropriate.
- Pronouns are possibly one of the most stressful things for people who are learning to be trans* allies. But don't feel bad, they're much more stressful for trans* people. It's almost always okay to ask what pronouns someone prefers. Ask in private, not in front of a large group. Ask respectfully, "What are your preferred pronouns?" Start asking this of all campers, not just those you are unsure of.

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Behaviors to Avoid:

- Assumptions. Try not to assume anything about a person who may be trans*, including their identity, pronoun preference, transition status/plans, age, and/or sexual orientation.
- Don't assume all people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual inherently understand what it means to be trans* or that all trans* people share the same perspective.
- Interrogating. Not every trans* person is an expert on gender or on trans* issues. Even if they are, they might not want to be explaining trans* stuff 24/7.
- Coming to a trans* person to work out your discomfort around trans* issues.
- Commenting on a trans* person's "passing," or "not passing", as the gender with which they identify. Not all trans* people want to be seen as male or female. Commenting on someone's passing reinforces stereotypes and suggests that blending in with the dominant gender culture is expected.
- Avoid telling a trans* person how hard their life must be. Empathize with their situation, don't pity them.
- Religious opposition, personal objections. Generally talk about our core value of respect, without going into religious beliefs or your own personal beliefs.

DEFINING TERMS

Sexual Orientation

Who an individual is attracted to physically, emotionally, spiritually. Some common sexual orientations:

- Lesbian: women who are attracted to women
- Gay: men who are attracted to men ("gay" is sometimes used as an inclusive term encompassing gay men, lesbians, bisexual people)
- Bisexual: a person attracted to two sexes or genders, not necessarily simultaneously or equally
- Heterosexual: attracted to those of a sex other than your own, commonly "the opposite sex"
- Asexual: low or absent sexual attraction to anyone
- Queer: broad term indicating attraction other than heterosexual; this term is also a gender expression; it can be one or the other or both, depending on individual experience or choice (expanded definition below)
- Questioning: a person who is undecided and/or unclear about their sexual orientation or gender identity

Gender Identity

An individual's internal understanding, definition or experience of their own gender.

LGBTQ

A common abbreviation used to identify the "gay" and/or "queer" community. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning. Other variations of the abbreviation are common, as the abbreviation is ever evolving. To refer to this community as a whole, one could say either "the LGBTQ community", "the gay community", or "the queer community".

Gender Expression

How an individual demonstrates their gender through the ways they act, dress, behave, and interact.

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Biological Sex

Determined by the anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones which make up a person's body. At birth, a child is declared an assigned sex based on physical characteristics:

- Female: bearing "female" genitalia
- Male: bearing "male" genitalia
- Intersex: a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive organs, sexual anatomy or chromosomes that are not either male or female.

Cisgender or Cis

An umbrella description for a person whose gender identity and gender expression align with their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Nonconforming

A term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different than their sex assigned at birth. Common identities related to transgender include but are not limited to: androgynous, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming. Transvestite, transsexual, cross-dresser, and tranny are in almost all cases derogatory. All above terms are used on an individual self-identified basis. Do not assume, ask, or call someone any of these terms unless invited to do so. Transgender or the shorthand "trans," are good words for cisgender people to use when discussing trans* topics.

Gender Expansive

An umbrella term used for individual that broaden their own culture's commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived gender norms. Gender Expansive individuals include those with transgender and non-binary identities, as well as those whose gender in some way is seen to be stretching society's notions of gender. The terms *gender fluid*, *gender non-binary*, *gender non-conforming*, and *gender queer* have similar meanings.

Queer

Queer currently has two main identities in the LGBTQ community. Initially, queer was used by individuals who preferred to reject gender and/or sexual orientation labels and instead to align themselves into an all-inclusive identity. As this use evolved, queer has been adopted by some in the LGBTQ community as a new umbrella term (i.e. instead of referring to "the gay community" you'd refer to "the queer community"). While this once pejorative term has been reclaimed by the community, queer can still be considered offensive and should not be used to name call someone.

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Transition

The process through which one begins to live as the gender with which one identifies rather than the sex assigned at birth. There are many different ways to transition and techniques and timelines for transitioning are unique and authentic for each individual. Transitioning may include "coming out" (telling family, friends, and co-workers); updating one's "gender expression" (appearance, dress); updating the name and/or sex on legal documents; and accessing medical treatment such as hormones or gender affirming surgery; however, everyone transitions differently and not all transgender or gender expansive individuals can or wish to take any or all of these steps.

Ally

Someone who advocates for and supports members of a community beyond their own - reaching across differences to achieve mutual goals.

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