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Gender Inclusion Policy

YMCA Camp Takodah is committed to ensuring access, inclusion, engagement, and affirmation 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 anyone to develop their full potential.

NOTES

- The Gender Inclusion Policy guides both staff and volunteers (hereafter referred to as “staff”).
- The Gender Inclusion Policy supports everyone at camp (hereafter referred to as “campers”).
- Definitions of terms used are provided as an appendix at the end of the document.
- The Gender Inclusion Policy uses the phrase “gender-expansive” as an umbrella term for individuals who broaden their own culture’s commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for gender expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived norms. Gender-expansive individuals include those with transgender and non-binary identities, as well as those whose gender is seen to be stretching society’s notions of gender. Gender-expansive does not imply any specific sexual orientation.

SUMMARY

Equal access, inclusion, engagement, and affirmation based on sex, gender expression, and/or gender identity is required by Camp Takodah policies. The Camp administration will insist that programs and activities are conducted accordingly. This policy provides staff guidance for ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all campers and equal access to all programs and activities.

This policy addresses many situations that might arise when serving a gender-expansive camper. Staff should focus on making a positive impact on every camper who comes to Camp Takodah. A gender-expansive camper should be welcomed as any other camper, and staff should strive to create the best possible experience for them. Camp Takodah is committed to working with campers on a case-by-case basis to ensure the greatest possible inclusion.

This policy could not anticipate every situation that might occur. Questions regarding the application of this policy should be directed to the Camp Director.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS POLICY

1. General guidelines for gender-expansive campers in overnight camp (pg. 2-4)
2. Additional suggestions for working with gender-expansive campers (pg. 2)
3. Behaviors that are helpful and behaviors that are not helpful (pg. 5)
4. Definition of terms (pg. 5-7)

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Meeting the Needs of Gender-Expansive Campers

As a general guideline, meeting the needs of gender-expansive campers should be addressed on a case-by-case manner.

If appropriate, staff should have conversations with gender-expansive campers and their parents/guardians regarding how Camp Takodah can best meet their needs. Staff should 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?”

Staff should seek to find options and ways to accommodate the camper’s needs, while being honest and realistic about facility or programmatic limitations.

Names/Pronouns

Campers have the right to be addressed by their self-identified names and pronouns. Camp Takodah will not tolerate the intentional and/or persistent refusal to respect a camper’s gender identity.

Facility Accessibility

Access to gendered spaces (e.g. restrooms and cabins) should be on the basis of gender identity. Sex assigned at birth, physical characteristics, and/or presentation should not dictate the use of gendered space. Requiring someone to use a gendered space that does not reflect their self-identified gender can be detrimental to their well-being and safety.

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.

Restroom assignments will be made based on gender identity. If a camper is not comfortable using a gender-specific restroom or has a desire for increased privacy, staff will seek ways to find an option that makes the camper feel comfortable. All available options should be presented in an unbiased way, and staff should work with each camper to identify their desired way forward.

No camper will ever be required to use an alternative cabin or restroom because they are gender-expansive.

Conflict Resolution, Code of Conduct, Discipline

Camp Takodah's motto (friendly to all), values (caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility), and Gender Inclusion Policy are foundational to the camp culture.

Staff should prevent/mitigate behavioral issues and manage problematic behaviors in positive ways. While the camp administration manages every situation on a case-by-case basis, the basic behavior management framework includes:

- Set clear expectations with campers on Opening Day
- Use positive behavior management strategies to enforce expectations consistently throughout the session
- Communicate with parents about challenges and strategies for overcoming them

If staff are unable to prevent a camper from harming other campers (physically or emotionally) or Camp Takodah’s community/culture, the camp administration will dismiss the camper from the program, and they will not be permitted to return for the remainder of the summer.

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Any staff member who violates the Gender Support Policy will be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination, as outlined in the Personnel Policies.

Resource Staff for Gender-Expansive Campers

The Camp Director and Assistant Camp Director are available to provide advice on questions or issues related to gender-expansive campers.

Communication and Promotion

Efforts should be made to raise awareness that Camp Takodah is a gender-expansive inclusive and 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 the Parent Guide and FAQs indicating how staff support gender-expansive campers.
- Images of gender-expansive campers should be included in printed materials and represented online.
- Staff should use language that signals to the gender-expansive community that they are included in Camp Takodah's "Everyone is Welcome" statement. 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 expressions, socio-economic backgrounds, life experiences, ages, etc." The specific use of "gender identities" signals to the gender-expansive community that Camp Takodah is a gender-expansive inclusive and welcoming place.
- When addressing groups and campers, staff should use gender neutral or non-gender-based words. For example, rather than "boys and girls" or "ladies and gentlemen," staff should use words like "friends," "campers," "folks," etc.

Records

To the extent that Camp Takodah is not legally required to use a camper's legal name and gender markers on official documents, the name and gender by which the camper identifies shall be used. In situations where Camp Takodah is required by law to report a camper's legal name or gender markers (e.g. criminal background checks), this information should be collected and effort should be taken to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of such confidential information.

Registration forms should be designed to accurately and respectfully document gender and names in a way that is both affirming for campers and meets Camp Takodah's medical and legal needs. Each camper will have as much agency as possible over who will have access to legal names and gender markers beyond the Camp Director, Assistant Director, and Healthcare Team.

Prior to Camp

- Staff should work in partnership with the parents/guardians, camper, and assigned staff to identify needs and to find options. Staff should consider sleeping arrangements, places to change and shower, and use of restrooms or any other traditionally gendered spaces. Staff should ask open ended questions and let the camper and their parents/guardians be the guides. Example: "What would help you feel welcome and safe?"
- Staff should arrange a discussion with the camper before they arrive about their expectations and boundaries. Examples: "Do you want others campers and staff to know? What do you expect from your staff? What types of questions/topics of discussion are off limits?" Staff should emphasize that they are there to support the camper.
- Staff should be clear about confidentiality. If they so choose, a camper's gender-expansive status should be treated as confidential.
- Staff should determine how the topic will be addressed with other campers. Example: If a cabin mate wants to know why a camper uses a separate restroom, how will that be answered?
- Staff should be enthusiastic about Camp Takodah being a gender-expansive-positive space.

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Arrival at Camp

- If a camper arrives and identifies differently from what is indicated on their forms, staff should let them know that camp is an inclusive and welcoming place for them. Staff should let them know that they are welcome to move to a cabin that reflects their self-identified gender, as long as the camp administration receives permission from their parents/guardians. Example: "Your parents/guardians registered you with [Boys Camp or Girls Camp], and they might have expectations about you staying in that camp. We want to do everything we can to make you feel safe and comfortable, and we also need to make sure your parents/guardians aren't upset after the fact. I'd be happy to talk to them about switching your cabin. Is that something that would be helpful?"
- Aside from seeking the parent's/guardian's permission to change a camper to another cabin, staff should not discuss gender with the parents/guardians without permission from the camper.
- Staff should start introductions by explaining what pronouns are and how they are used. Staff should set an expectation that campers always use self-identified names and pronouns as a way of respecting each other. Staff should then lead a name game that gives campers the option to indicate their self-identified pronouns and invites campers to share "any other information that will make you feel comfortable in this space." Staff should end with something fun, like "and if you could have any super power, what would it be?" Staff should start with themselves to role model how to answer the prompt. 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. Staff should affirm and thank campers for sharing.
- Once a camper identifies their name and pronouns, staff should intentionally use the camper's self-identified pronouns in front of other campers to affirm how the camper wants to be addressed. Examples: Kristin and Robin would introduce each other on stage by saying "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. Example: "Oh yes, I know Taylor. They came to camp last year, and they are awesome!" Staff should use a camper's self-identified pronouns at all times, including when the camper is not present. Staff should also correct others when the camper is not present. Example: "Jane goes by they/them/theirs."
- Cabin contracts should cover respect for personal space and personal questions, as an extension of teaching concepts of boundaries and consent. Gender-expansive campers 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 a each other's experiences is a great way to learn. But no one has to share anything that makes them feel uncomfortable." Staff should explain that when others choose to share, the expectation is to treat the information with respect and confidentiality.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND TEENS

- A gender-expansive camper may or may not share their gender identity with a group. Staff should respect their decision and follow their lead. Staff should remember that a camper may be out to one group but not to another. Staff should consider asking about settings the camper is out in. Examples: "Is this something you want me to hold in confidence? What name and pronouns do you want me to use when [at camp, with parents/guardians, etc.]?"
- When contacting the parents/guardians of a gender-expansive camper, staff should be aware that the camper may not be out as gender-expansive to their parents/guardians. Staff should avoid using gender pronouns, unless the camper has been consulted first to determine an appropriate way to reference their gender identity. Example: "What name and pronouns do you want me to use when speaking with your family?" If staff is unable to ask, they should talk about the camper 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 camper has parents/guardians who do not accept their gender identity, staff should find ways to affirm the camper's gender identity, while working with and respecting the parent's/guardian's perspective.
- Staff should be aware of how gender identity may be seen, perceived, and even reacted to differently within different cultural groups and generations
- A camper may mention having a gender-expansive parent. Staff should follow the camper's lead, letting them lead the discussion and treating it as confidential information.

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- Staff should be alert for disrespectful comments. Staff must model and insist on an inclusive environment.

EXAMPLES OF HELPFUL AND NOT HELPFUL BEHAVIORS

Helpful Behaviors:

- Respect a camper's:
 - Self-identified name and pronouns.
 - 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 gender-expansive camper, 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 might be one of the most stressful areas for those who are learning to be allies to gender-expansive campers. Language is deeply ingrained and hard to change. It takes conscious effort and practice. However, that stress is not comparable to the discrimination faced by gender-expansive campers, and that effort is minimal considering the positive impact that being seen and affirmed as one's authentic gender can have. It is okay to make mistakes, but don't make them bigger by dwelling on them. Simply apologize and move on. If you are unsure of someone's pronouns, you can ask respectfully in private. Always share your own to help normalize this question, and start making a habit of asking everyone their pronouns rather than just campers who present in a way you perceive as ambiguous.

Behaviors to Avoid:

- Making assumptions:
 - Try not to assume anything about the gender of anyone.
 - If a camper has identified as gender-expansive, don't assume identity, pronouns, medical gender-transition status/plans, and/or sexual orientation.
 - Don't assume all campers who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual inherently understand what it means to be gender-expansive or that all gender-expansive campers share the same perspective.
- Focusing on gender. Gender may or may not be a big part of a camper's personal identity. Avoid treating the gender of a camper as their whole identity.
- Interrogating. Not every gender-expansive camper is an expert on gender or on gender-expansive issues. Even if they are, they might not want to be explaining gender-expansive issues 24/7.
- Coming to a gender-expansive camper to work out your discomfort around gender-expansive issues.
- Commenting on a gender-expansive camper's "passing" or "not passing" as the gender with which they identify. Not all gender-expansive campers 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.
- Telling a gender-expansive camper how hard their life must be. Empathize with their situation, but don't pity them.
- Allowing space for religious opposition or personal objections. Talk about our core value of respect, without going into religious beliefs or personal beliefs.

DEFINING TERMS

Ally: A term that describes a person who speaks out or takes actions on behalf of someone else or for a group that they are not a part of.

Androgynous: Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

Asexual: A term that describes a person who lacks sexual attraction or desire for other people.

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Bi: Bisexual.

Bisexual: A term that describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of more than one sex, gender, or gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Cis or Cisgender: A term that describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others. A person might be out to some groups of people and not to others.

Gay: A term that describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to some members of the same gender.

Gender: A person's internal sense of self as male, female, both, or neither (gender identity), as well as one's outward presentation and behaviors (gender expression). Gender norms vary among cultures and over time.

Gender Binary: The idea that there are two distinct and opposite genders—male and female. This model is limiting and doesn't account for the full spectrum of gender identities and gender expressions.

Gender Expression: How a person expresses their gender through outward presentation and behavior. This includes, for example, a person's name, clothing, hairstyle, body language, and mannerisms.

Gender Identity: An internal, deeply felt sense of being male, female, a blend of both, or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same as or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Role: A set of social and cultural beliefs or expectations about appropriate behavior for men/boys or women/girls. Gender roles can vary from culture to culture. Strict gender roles can limit a person's development.

Gender Role Stereotyping: Stereotypes based on social and cultural beliefs or expectations about appropriate behavior for men/boys or women/girls. This can limit children's aspirations, achievements, and well-being.

Gender Spectrum: The broad range along which people identify and express themselves as gendered beings or not.

Genderqueer: People who typically reject the binary categories of gender, embracing a fluidity of gender identity. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender Transition: The process by which some people strive to more closely align their outward identity with the gender they know themselves to be. To affirm their gender identity, people may go through different types of gender-transitions.

- **Social Transition:** This can include a name change, change in pronouns, and change in appearance, clothes, or hairstyle.
- **Legal Gender Transition:** The process of updating identity documents, such as birth certificates and drivers' licenses, to reflect a person's authentic gender and name. Different states and localities have different rules, often making this process very challenging.
- **Medical Gender Transition:** For children, this may include the use of hormone blockers to delay the onset of puberty. It may also include cross-sex hormones to induce a puberty that is more consistent with the

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child's gender identity, or for adults, to promote physical changes. It can also include gender affirmation surgery.

Heteronormative: The assumption of heterosexuality as the given or default sexual orientation instead of one of many possibilities, and that the preferred or default relationship is between two people of "opposite" genders.

Heterosexism: The attitude that heterosexuality is the only valid or "normal" sexual orientation. This can take the form of overt negative comments or actions towards LGBTQ people or subtle actions or assumptions that marginalize LGBTQ people.

Heterosexual: A term describing a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of a different gender. Also known as straight.

Intersex: The term used for 1–2% of babies who are born with chromosomes, hormones, genitalia, and/or other sex characteristics that are not exclusively male or female as defined by the medical establishment in our society. In most cases, these children are at no medical risk, but most are assigned a binary sex identity (male or female) by their doctors and/or families.

Lesbian: A term describing a woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to some other women.

LGBTQ: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning. Additions to this acronym can include A, for "asexual," and I, for "intersex."

Non-binary: An umbrella term for people who transcend commonly held concepts of gender through their own expression and identities. Other terms for this might include gender-expansive, gender-creative, or genderqueer. Some non-binary people also identify as transgender.

Outing: Exposing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity to others without their permission.

Pansexual: A person who can be attracted to any sex, gender, or gender identity.

Queer: A term some people use to identify themselves with a flexible and inclusive view of gender and/or sexuality. Also used interchangeably with LGBTQ to describe a group of people such as "queer youth." It is also seen in academic fields, such as queer studies or queer theory. Historically it has been used as a negative term for LGBTQ people. Some people still find the term offensive while some embrace the term as an identity.

Sex: One's biological and physical attributes—external genitalia, sex chromosomes, and internal reproductive structures—that are used to assign someone as male or female at birth.

Sex Assigned at Birth: This is generally determined by external genitalia at birth—female, male, or intersex.

Sexual Orientation: Describes a person's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. Some examples of sexual orientations are gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, or pansexual.

Sexuality: Describes how one experiences and expresses oneself as a sexual being. It begins to develop in early childhood and continues over the course of one's lifetime.

Straight: A slang term for heterosexual.

Trans: Short for transgender.

Transgender: An umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Alternatively, a term used to describe people who identify as a different gender from the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation; transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.