

# Understanding and Supporting Gender Diversity in Schools

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# Session Objectives

To enhance participants' awareness of gender identity and gender diversity matters in schools;

To introduce tools participants can use not only to assess a system's readiness to accommodate gender diverse students but to determine the support and transition needs of individual gender diverse students as part of the schooling process;

To highlight strategies participants can employ to support gender diverse students and to improve school climate as it pertains to gender diversity.



# NASP's Position

- Position statements
  - [Safe Schools for Transgender and Gender Diverse Students \(2014\)](#)
    - “The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) supports efforts to ensure that schools are safe and inclusive learning environments for all students, family members, and school staff, including those who are transgender or gender diverse. NASP respects a person’s right to express gender identity, and the right to modify gender expression when necessary for individual well-being. In addition, NASP supports all students’ right to explore and question their gender identity....NASP acknowledges that having a transgender identity or being perceived as gender diverse are not disorders, and that efforts to change a person’s gender identity are ineffective, harmful, and discriminatory. NASP works to ensure that settings in which school psychologists work are safe and welcoming and provide equal opportunity to all persons regardless of actual or perceived characteristics, including gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and any other personal identity or distinguishing characteristics.”
  - [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth \(2011\)](#)
    - “NASP believes that school psychologists are ethically obligated to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity for the development and expression of their personal identity in a school climate that is safe, accepting, and respectful of all persons and free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse. To achieve this goal, education and advocacy must be used to reduce discrimination and harassment against LGBTQ youth by students and staff and promote positive social-emotional and educational development.”

# NEA's Position

Teaching Strategies (<http://www.nea.org/tools/30420.htm>)

“NEA believes that a great public school is a fundamental right of every child - free from intimidation and harassment, and safe for all students, including those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered.”

“There is only one real issue for educators: We are responsible for our students' safety and education. We must ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to achieve and thrive.”



# Definitions

## Sex

Think biology - Female/Male

## Gender

Social construction that is culturally-mediated -  
Girl/Woman, Boy/Man

## Gender Identity

Lived/defined by the individual

## Gender Expression

How people communicate their gender identity to others

## Gender Role

Culturally-mediated ways people live out gender -  
Feminine/Masculine

## Sexual Orientation

One's primary psychological, social, emotional, and erotic attractions to other people



# Definitions (continued)

## Cisgender

Gender identity matches the sex and gender one was assigned at birth

## Transgender

Gender identity does not match the sex and gender one was assigned at birth

Consistent, persistent, insistent

## Gender Diverse

Broader category that captures the range of gender identities



# Transgender Youth

- 80% of TG-identified adults knew they were 'different' before leaving elementary school
- Less than 4% of TG-identified persons realized they were TG after the age of 18
- Average age of trans-spectrum self-realization: 7.9
- Average age of learning the 'words' to communicate feelings: 15.5  
Consistent, Persistent, Insistent
- Transitions pre-puberty are social in-nature; some persons make seek medical transitions around puberty or later

# Gender Non-Conformity and ASD

- Numerous anecdotal observations and emerging research is demonstrating a correlation between gender non-conformity and autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Children and adolescents on the autism spectrum are seven (7) times more likely to be gender non-conforming
- Children and adolescents at gender clinics are 6-15 times more likely than their same-aged peers to have ASD

*Strang et al. (2017)*



# Mental Health Issues

- Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)
  - Gender dysphoria
- Higher rates of depression and anxiety; lower levels of self-esteem; high rates of substance use/abuse and risk-taking behaviors
- Suicide attempt rate
  - 41% of TG/GD adults report attempting suicide in their lifetime
  - 10-20% of LGB-identified persons
  - 3-5% of the general population

# School Issues

Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 43% report feeling unsafe at school because of the climate
- 38% report avoiding gender-specific spaces because of climate
- 66% report avoiding extra-curricular activities and school functions

# School Issues

Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 31.8% of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because of climate and 10% missed four or more days in the past month
- 96% heard negative gender expression remarks
- 86% heard negative trans-specific remarks

# School Issues

Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 64% heard negative gender expression remarks from adults
- 55% verbally harassed at school
- 20% physically harassed at school
- 60% LGBTQ sexually harassed at school

# School Issues

Transphobia:

School Climate, Bullying, Biased Remarks, Harassment

- 49% LGBTQ electronically bullied because of SO or GI/GE
- 58% LGBTQ did not report incidents
- 64% who did report indicated school staff did nothing in response

# School Issues

## Discriminatory School Policies and Practices

- 66% experience anti-LGBT policies and practices
- 16.7% of students were prohibited from discussing or writing about LGBT topics in school assignments, and 16.3% were prohibited from doing so in extracurricular activities
- 30% report being disciplined for PDA

# School Issues

## Discriminatory School Policies and Practices

- 16% prevented from attending a dance or function
- 14% restricted from promoting GSA
- 51% prevented from using declared name
- 60% required to use restrooms and/or locker rooms based on gender assigned (GA) at birth

# School Issues

## Discriminatory School Policies and Practices

- 22% prevented from wearing clothes considered inappropriate based on GA
- 10.8% were prevented or discouraged from participating in school sports because they were LGBTQ
- 71.2% of LGBTQ students reported their schools engaged in some form of gendered practice in school activities (e.g., attire, royalty courts, photographs)



# Effects of a Hostile Climate

- Three times more likely to have missed school in the past month
- Have lower GPAs than non-harassed peers
- Twice as likely to report not to pursue PSE



# Effects of a Hostile Climate

- Twice as likely to have been disciplined at school
- Report higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem
- Report higher rates of substance use/abuse and risk-taking behaviors



# Legal & Policy Matters

## Title IX (Patsy Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act, 2002)

- U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights considers gender identity and gender expression as protected classes under Title IX
- The DOE-OCR and the U.S. DOJ have filed and won lawsuits in this regard

## FERPA

- According to Lambda Legal, students (ages 18+) and/or parents or legal guardians have the right to request a school change the name and gender marker on a student's records if they are incorrect, misleading, or violate one's privacy [34 C.F.R. section 99.7(a)(2)(ii)]

## Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

- Gender identity is not a disability in-and-of itself
- Focus on disability in the 504 plan, not on gender identity
- If the disability for which one is seeking accommodations centers on mental health sequelae associated with one's gender identity and that impacts one's education, it would be appropriate to develop a 504 plan in this situation



# Guidance from the National Center for Transgender Equality

Withdrawing the Departments' guidance letter would not change the law. Title IX protects transgender students, as most courts have agreed. Schools have a legal and a moral duty to support all students, including transgender students.

The federal guidance was based on over a decade of case law and proven best practices from schools around the country. The nation's education leaders—including the leading associations of teachers, principals, pediatricians, and school counselors and psychologists—support treating all students equally and consistent with their gender identity.

Schools nationwide are increasingly supporting and affirming transgender students, and most will continue to do so with or without guidance from the administration. Over 40% of K-12 students attend schools with affirming state or local policies, and that number is rapidly growing.

# Guidance from the National Center for Transgender Equality

The guidance and its approach to supporting transgender students are supported by the American Association of Secondary School Principals-which requested the guidance-as well as the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American School Counselors Association, the National Parent-Teacher Association, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers.

The guidance is already working for nearly half of America's students. The federal guidance is based on guidelines from 14 states and DC and from hundreds of other local school districts, with tens of millions of students.

Schools nationwide are increasingly supporting and affirming transgender students, and most will continue to do so with or without guidance from the administration. Over 40% of K-12 students attend schools with affirming state or local policies, and that number is rapidly growing.

# Guidance from the National Center for Transgender Equality

Title IX protections are based on more than 15 years of case law. Five federal appeals courts and over a dozen district courts, stretching back over 15 years, have found that federal sex discrimination laws, including Title IX, prohibit discrimination against transgender people. One district court, however, issued a nationwide order last year preventing the Departments from enforcing Title IX in some cases involving transgender students.

Gavin Grimm's case in front of the Supreme Court next month is more important than ever. The questions before the court are to evaluate the guidance and whether the prohibition of sex discrimination under Title IX applies to transgender students seeking to use the restroom in school consistent with their gender identity.

Case law is on our side. Schools can still choose to support their trans students and we need to advocate for that on a local and state level now more than ever.

# Beware of 'Professional' Organizations

American College of Pediatricians

*“A person’s belief that one is something one is not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking; at worst it is a delusion.”*

# Raising Ryland



<http://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2015/03/17/digital-shorts-parenting-transgender-child-orig.cnn>



# Tools

- For use with individuals
- As applied to systems



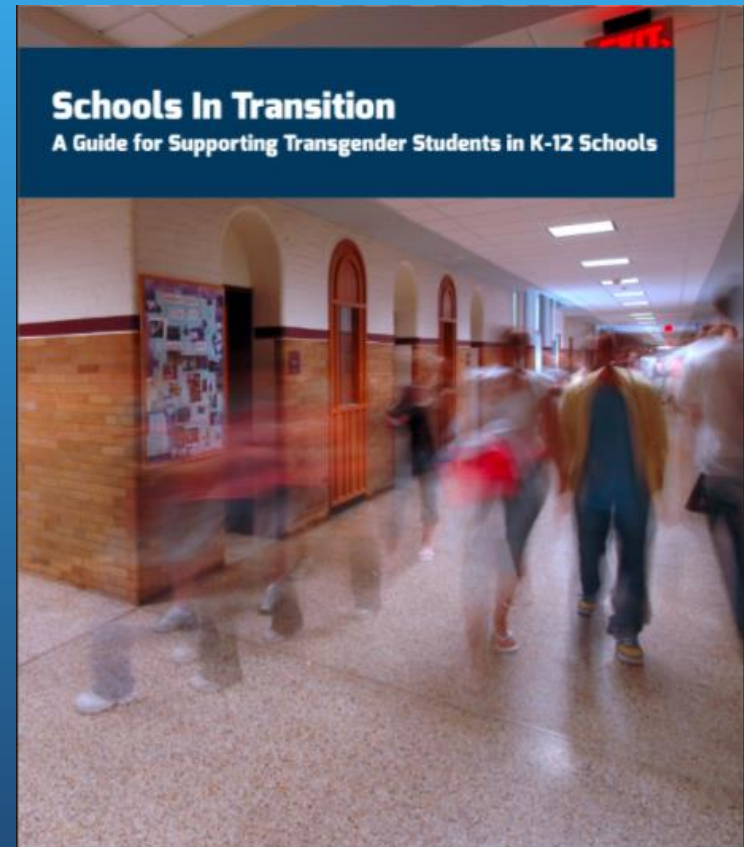
**For Use with Individuals**



# Schools In Transition

First-of-its-kind publication providing guidance to schools to ensure safe and supportive environments for transgender and gender diverse students.

Published By: Gender Spectrum (2015)



<https://www.genderspectrum.org/staging/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Schools-in-Transition-2015.pdf>



# Schools in Transition Tools: Two Components

1. Gender Support Plan
2. Gender Transition Plan



# Gender Support Plan

- Serves as a guide to assist schools in coming to a common understanding of a student's gender identity and how the school will be accountable in the process of supporting the student
- Ideally, developed collaboratively with the student in-question (if appropriate), family members, and school personnel
- Addresses confidentiality, privacy, safety, names, pronouns, records, facilities use, participation in the full range of the educational process, and other considerations

# Gender Transition Plan

- Outlines the necessary planning to take place to support students through their social transition process at school
- Intended to be developed collaboratively with the student in-question (if appropriate), family members, and school personnel
- Addresses a communications plan, professional development plan, and timelines for accomplishing necessary tasks
- Aids in the creation of information and lessons determined to meet the needs of the school community

# Assessing Systems



## District and School Transgender and Gender Diverse Readiness Assessment Form Savage, Springborg, & Lagerstrom (2016)

- Developed by school-based mental health professionals in collaboration with the parent of a transgender child
- Adapted from the Vulnerability Assessment measure contained in the PREPaRE 1 workshop
- Provides information about a district's readiness to accommodate and support gender diversity as well as an individual school building's readiness to do so
- Intended to be completed by a team of school-based personnel
- <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/diversity/lgbtq-youth/transgender-youth>



# Special Services and Equity Matters

- Access to an LGBTQ+ cultural broker
- Non-LGBTQ+ cultural brokers and language interpreters have received training on gender identity, gender expression, and gender diversity
- Paperwork has multiple gender options to check
- Pre-referral, problem-solving, student assistance, and child study teams and procedures are responsive to gender diversity
- Protocols reliant on gender-based norms are scored using combined-gender norms (if available) or in accordance with the gender-diverse student's affirmed identity
- Report-writing considerations
- 504 planning and IEP development take into account the unique needs of gender-diverse students

# Strategies



# Ensuring A Safe and Supportive School Environment

Professional development for all people working within the school community

Policy development

- Non-discrimination policies
- Anti-harassment policies
- Other school policies (e.g., field trips; restroom/locker room use; athletic teams)
- Be proactive versus reactive



# Ensuring A Safe and Supportive School Environment

Gender non-specific spaces and safe zones (e.g., GSAs)



# Ensuring A Safe and Supportive School Environment

Advocacy:

**"I'M JUST APPALLED. THEY'RE WRONG ON THE ISSUE  
AND THEY'RE WRONG ON THE MORALITY."**

House Republicans introduced a bill that would  
**FORBID TRANSGENDER MINNESOTANS**  
from using bathrooms, changing rooms, & other  
public spaces that match their gender identities.

It would also force schools and businesses to discriminate.

**"I'LL VETO IT."**

-Governor Mark Dayton

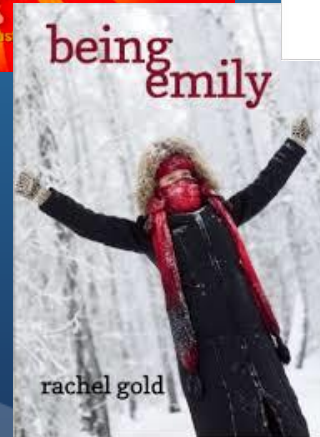
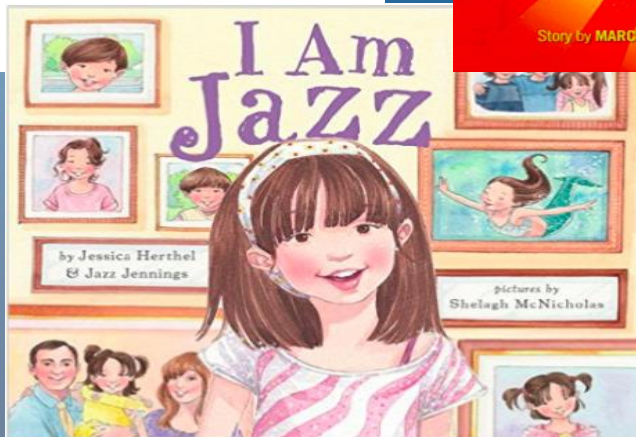
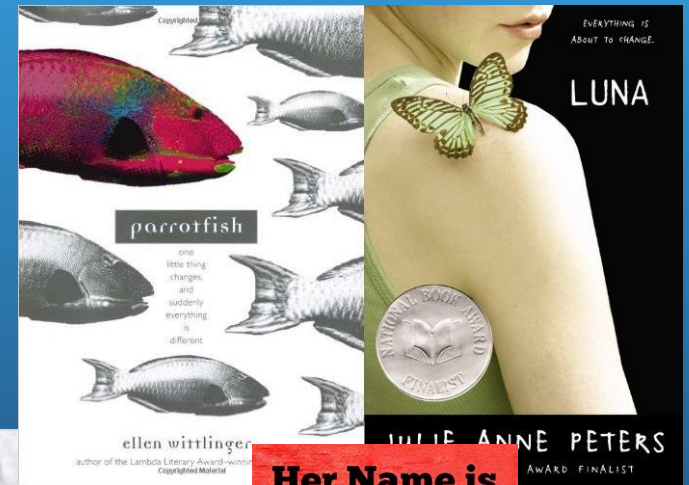
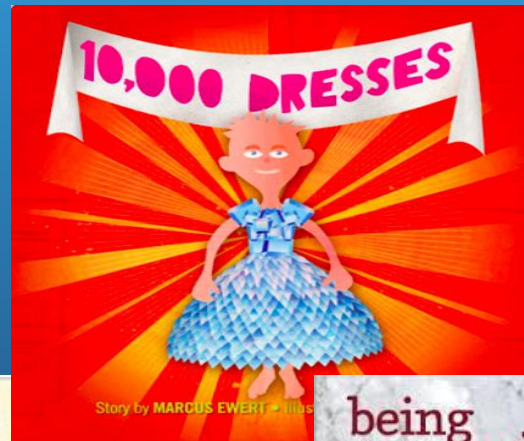
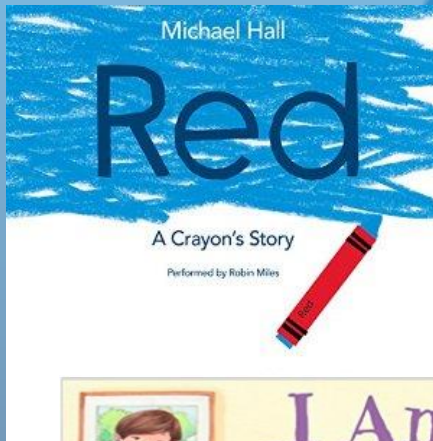
# Ensuring A Safe and Supportive School Environment

- Use inclusive language at the universal level
- Offer an opportunity for students to use the name and pronoun of their affirmed gender on class lists and any other area their names may publically appear
- Preserve confidentiality



# Ensuring A Safe and Supportive School Environment

- Provide school staff with access to curricula, materials, and resources reflecting gender diversity



**Monday Morning And Beyond**  
**(Here's where you come in...)**



# Monday Morning and Beyond

- Download Schools In Transition and the Transgender and Gender Diverse Readiness Assessment Form
- Schedule a meeting with your school's decision maker(s)
  - Share what you have learned today
  - Revisit your school's policies or bring to their attention ones that need to be developed
  - Request professional development for everyone within the school community
  - Ask If they will allow a baseline assessment to be conducted - If you meet with resistance from your administration consider informally completing the assessment

# Monday Morning and Beyond

- Re-evaluate your perspective of and interaction with current trans and gender students and their families.
- Let it be known you are the go-to person in the building for questions, resources, and support
- Recruit staff members to help facilitate a GSA
  - Middle Schools are doing this across the nation - it isn't just for high schools anymore

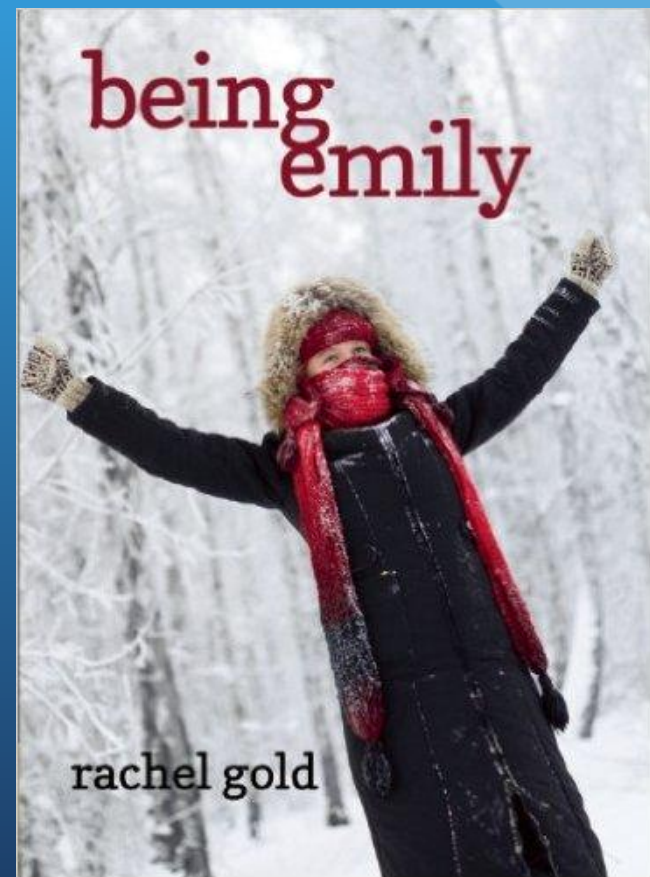
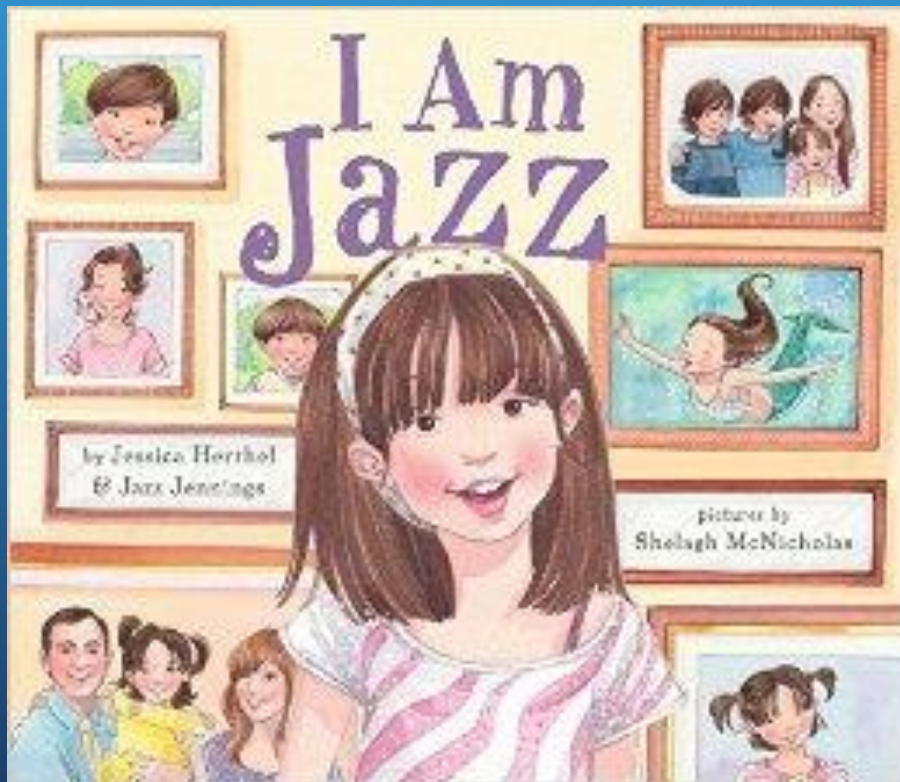
# Monday Morning and Beyond

- Order Safe Space stickers and distribute widely



# Monday Morning and Beyond

- Talk to your librarian about ordering age-appropriate books on the subject



# Monday Morning and Beyond

- Be an advocate in every aspect of your life - and while you are at it - speak in support of civil rights bills (e.g., “Bathroom Bills”) every chance you get!



# Monday Morning and Beyond

- “Though more than 200 localities have trans-inclusive nondiscrimination policies on the books, there has never been a verified report of a transgender person assaulting a person in a restroom, nor has there ever been a confirmed report of someone ‘pretending’ to be transgender to gain access to sex-segregated spaces with nefarious purposes.” Advocate Magazine, April 2016





# Monday Morning and Beyond

## What experts from states with laws on the books say:



**“Beyond specious” to say laws will lead to sexual assault.**

Toni Troop, spokeswoman for Jane Doe Inc.



**Sexual assaults stemming from law “not even remotely” a problem.**

John Elder, Minneapolis police spokesman



**No problems since passage of 2011 law.**

Las Vegas Police Department



**Opponents of protections are trying to “create fear.”**

Alexa Priddy, director at Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault



**“Has not resulted in increase[d] sexual assault”**

William Hoshijjo, executive director of Hawaii Civil Rights Commission



**“Zero allegations” of bathroom sexual assault.**

Charlie Burr, spokesman for Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries



**“Not aware” of any problems from a 2001 law.**

Karen Richards, Vermont Human Rights Commission



**No increase in sex crimes due to 2001 law.**

Michael D. Evora, executive director of Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights



**“No factual basis” for sexual assault fears.**

Amy Snierson, executive director of Maine Human Rights Commission



**“Unaware of any sexual assault as the result of the CT gender identity or expression law.”**

Jim O'Neill, spokesman for the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights in Opportunities

# Resources

[National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\)](#)

[Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network \(GLSEN\)](#)

[Transparenthood \(Blog\)](#)

[TransActive Gender Center](#)

[Welcoming Schools](#)

[Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center](#)

[TransYouth Family Allies](#)

[Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference](#)

[TNET - PFLAG's Transgender Network](#)



# Questions:

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