



LGBTQ+ FAQs

GSWW Commitment/Policy

Diversity and equity are core values of Girl Scouts of Western Washington.

We invest in our community through Girl Scouts. Our community represents every race, ethnicity, income level, sexual orientation, ability, and religion; reflects a spectrum of gender identity; and connects across geographic locations. By focusing our attention on community members who are furthest from racial, economic, and social justice, Girl Scouts can be an instrument of change, promoting equitable outcomes for all. We wholly commit to taking action to grow as an anti-racist and anti-oppressive organization so that, through Girl Scouts, our members are affirmed as they strive to make our community and world better.

We also recognize that gender is not binary—people don't identify only as boys or girls. We welcome children from across the gender spectrum: those who identify as transgender, agender, androgynous, etc., and those who are in transition or questioning their gender identity. The Girl Scout mission is to hold space for those who, on the spectrum of gender identity, are not cisgender boys (those whose gender identity is boy, and the sex assigned at birth is male.) Consequently, Girl Scouts is not appropriate for cis-gender boys.

For more information on joining, please visit our Join page [here](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who can join GSWW? I identify as _____. Can I join Girl Scouts and participate in troops, camps and/or programming?

- Cisgender girl (gender identity girl & sex assigned at birth girl) – yes
- Gender non-conforming/gender neutral/non-binary – yes
- Transgender – yes
 - Gender identity girl & sex assigned at birth male – yes
 - Gender identity boy & sex assigned at birth female – yes
- Cisgender boy (gender identity boy & sex assigned at birth male) – no

Q: Do I have to use a Girl Scout's pronouns?

Yes. Girl Scouts are encouraged to ask what each other's pronoun(s) are and make every effort to use them; this is another way to treat everyone with respect and acknowledge we are all learning. You can model this approach by introducing yourself with pronouns and/or starting each meeting/event by sharing names and pronouns. On an individual level, you may also introduce yourself to someone by saying, "Hi, my name is _____. My pronouns are _____" (e.g. she, her, hers). Also ensure that others are using the correct pronouns and address it if they aren't. For example, you could say, "Keisha's pronouns are they, them, theirs. Please show respect by using the proper pronouns." For more information, please see <https://www.mypronouns.org/>

Q: What do I tell people (whether they are related to the Girl Scout or not) if they have questions about another Girl Scout? Remind them of GSWW's commitment and expectations. Let them know that due to the individual Girl Scout's right to privacy, you cannot discuss specifics about any member and remind them that GSWW is a welcoming environment for all individuals except cis-boys (gender identity and gender assigned at birth both male).

Q: How do I respond to or support parents or volunteers who argue or question the policy? Please refer them to their Volunteer Support Manager (VSM) or connect them to the appropriate staff leader (a director, AVP, or VP). You may also direct them to the Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. As always, you can direct a parent or volunteer to call Customer Care to connect them to the appropriate person.

Q: What if two Girl Scouts are dating?

It is strongly encouraged that groups make group agreements and that one of the group agreements states that the relationships built through GSWW activities are intended to be platonic. Public displays of affection during GSWW events are discouraged. Volunteers and employees should be held to these same standards.

Q: Do I have to provide separate bathrooms/dressing rooms/showers for trans+ and gender non-conforming Girl Scouts?

All members are entitled to privacy while using restroom facilities. This includes toilets, changing areas, and showers. Please continue to practice good privacy strategies for all individuals including access to private changing spaces and times for all individuals. Members have the right to use the facility of their choosing (men's, women's, or gender-neutral facilities [where available]).

Q: For overnight events, where should everyone sleep? During the registration process, provide an opportunity for campers/families to share their gender identity (perhaps in the "what does your camper need to be successful" question). It is also a best practice to provide an opportunity for families/campers to note accommodation requests (of any sort) that organizers can follow up on. Unless a camper states otherwise, we should treat them the same as all campers with regard to things like sleeping arrangements, etc. There is no need to "out" or discuss a camper's gender identity with other campers. If questions or issues arise among campers, address the issue with respect, protecting the needs of the LGBTQ+ participant, and in an age appropriate manner.

Q: What if LGBTQ+ topics are raised by youth or come up naturally during GSWW events? If topics relating to LGBTQ+ identities are raised organically, it is acceptable to discuss them on the level of identity, education, and experiences. Avoid allowing the conversation to turn to the act of sex. While a Sensitive Topics application isn't required by the council, please use your best judgement in consultation with GSWW staff in deciding whether use of the Sensitive Topics application would be a good idea. In that case, tell any individuals involved that you would like to place a hold on the conversation and that you will return to it if the application is accepted. With older Girl Scouts or with groups with LGBTQ+ youth, you may want to put in an application at the beginning of the year to allow for the conversation to happen when it arises. For further information, see <https://www.girlscoutsww.org/en/for-volunteers/VolunteerEssentials/EngagingGirlsFamilies.html>.

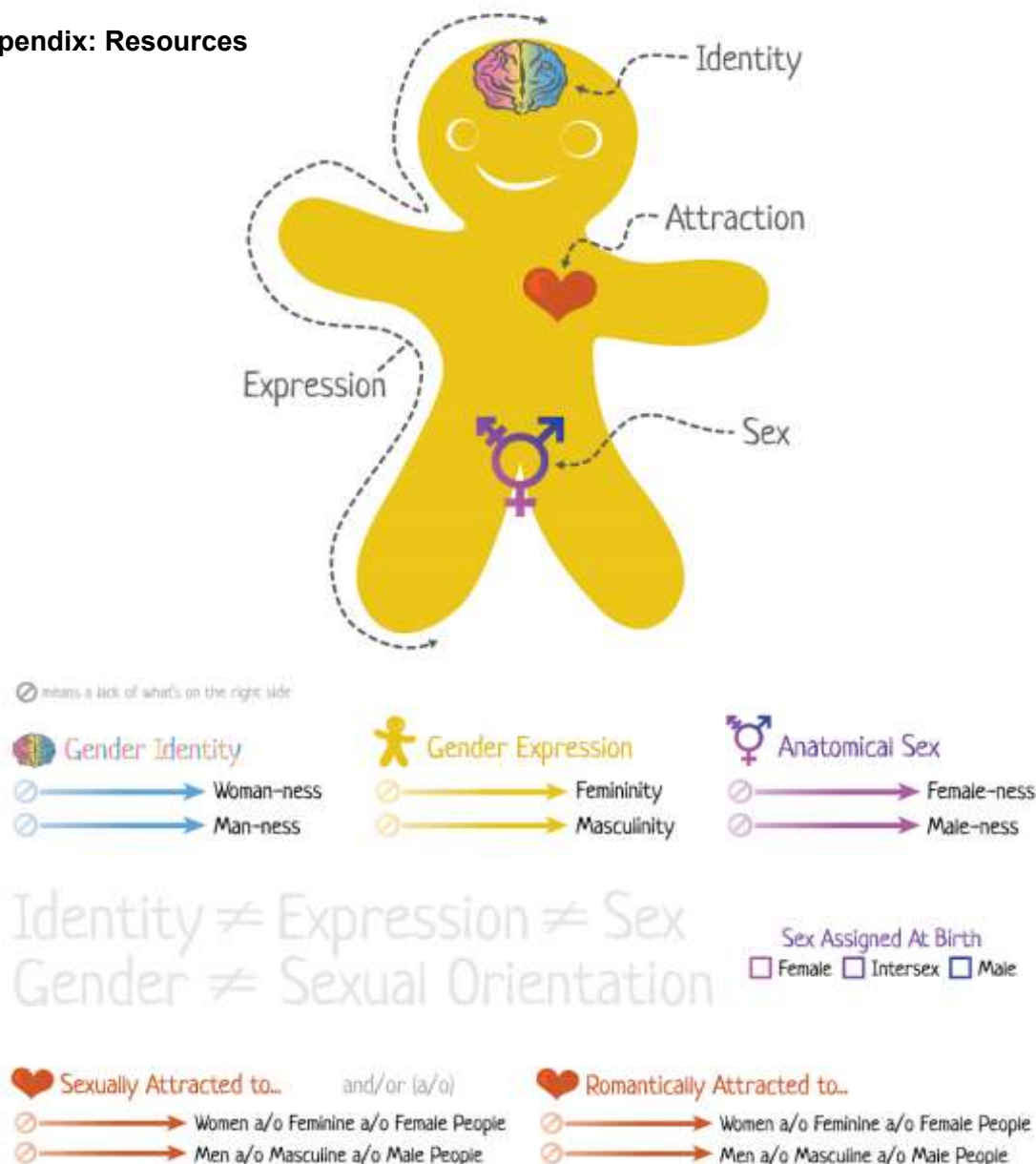
Q: What if volunteers or employees identify as trans+ or gender non-conforming?

The same guidelines are applicable regardless of whether the individuals are youth, volunteers, or employees.

Q: I don't feel equipped to navigate gender issues, what can I do? Talk to the individual, talk to the parents (if they are engaged and know), talk to the appropriate staff leader or the AVP of DEI. Educate yourself and consider attending our [LGBTQ+ and other DEI training opportunities](#). We are excited to help and support you and there are lots of resources for you.

We all have a responsibility to treat every individual with respect and dignity, and to honor the way they show up in the world.

Appendix: Resources



There are many resources out there for youth and for adults who want to better understand some of the terminology that relates to the LGBTQ+ community, though there are many ways to define these common words and phrases.

One resource comes from the Trevor Project, which you can find here:

https://www.thetrevorproject.org/trvr_support_center/glossary/