Best Practices for Including Transgender Student Athletes

- Helen Carroll, National Center for Lesbian Rights
- Pat Griffin, University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Ashland Johnson, Human Rights Campaign
Session Goals – An Understanding Of:

• Basic terminology and concepts
• NCAA recommendations for policy and best practice for including transgender athletes
• The shifting legal landscape related to transgender participation on sports teams
• Have an opportunity to ask questions about particular concerns or questions about implementing an institutional or conference policy.
Transgender 101 Vocabulary

- Transgender?
- Transitioning?
- Gender Expression?
- Sex Assigned at Birth?
- Cisgender?
- Sexual Orientation?
- Gender Identity?
Sex Assigned at Birth:

Sex designation at birth based on examination of external genitalia
Gender Identity:

A person’s internal sense of being a woman/girl, man/boy, or another gender identity.

One’s gender identity can be the same or different than the sex assigned at birth.
Gender Expression:

The behavior and appearance characteristics that express our gender identity: Clothing, hair style, movement patterns, voice, etc.
Sexual Orientation:

A person’s sexual desires, behaviors, fantasies directed toward someone of another sex (heterosexual), the same sex (lesbian, gay), or any sex (bisexual, pansexual).
Transgender:

An adjective describing a person whose gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth.
Cisgender: An adjective describing a person whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth
Transitioning:

The **process** a transgender person goes through to express their gender identity in ways that align with their internal sense of self

- Name, Pronouns
- Clothing, Hair
- Hormone Treatment
- Surgery

**Transitioning is different for each person**
• A transgender girl/woman (MTF) was assigned male at birth but identifies as a girl/woman

• A transgender boy/man (FTM) was assigned female at birth but identifies as a boy/man
Sexual orientation is different from gender identity

Transgender people identity as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or some other sexual orientation
Laws and Policies Related to Transgender Inclusion in College Athletics

Federal Law - Title IX

State Student Non-Discrimination Laws

City/Local Non-Discrimination Law

Athletic Conference and Individual Institutional Policy
NCAA Policy for Including Transgender Students on Sports Teams

- Hormonal Treatment
  - Trans Male student athletes
  - Trans Female student athletes

- No Hormonal Treatment
  - Student athletes may play on team consistent with sex assigned at birth
    - Trans Men can play on the men or women’s team
    - Trans Women cannot play on the men’s team
Concerns Expressed About Transgender Students on Sports Teams

- Competitive Equity
- Competitive Safety
- Locker Room Access/Privacy/Safety
- Gender Equality

Most concerns are expressed about transgender girls playing on girls’ teams.
Competitive Equity & Safety

Safety in competition should always be attended to.

Is the playing field ever level?
Wide Range of Performance & Safety-Related Factors

- Overlap Between Sexes
- Variations Within Each Sex
- Access to Training, Good Nutrition
Locker Room & Bathroom Access, Privacy & Safety

• Transgender student-athletes should be able to use locker rooms and bathrooms in accordance with their identified gender

• Every locker room and toilet area should have provisions for privacy accessible to all students
Locker Room & Bathroom Access, Privacy & Safety

• **When requested by a transgender student,** separate changing and toilet facilities should be provided

• Safety for all students in locker rooms and bathrooms are no more important when transgender students are present
Gender Equity

Transgender women are women. They are competing for a spot on the women’s team just as any cisgender woman is.

The likelihood that a cisgender man would pretend to be a trans woman to play on a women’s team is small and can be addressed if it ever occurred.
Overall Guidelines

• Be Proactive, Plan ahead. Don’t wait for a trans student to knock on your door asking to play

• Focus on inclusion, not exclusion

• Protect the confidentiality of transgender students – How public they want to be about their trans identity

• Educate the school community about transgender inclusion (Don’t forget part-time staff)
Best Practice Recommendations: Education

All members of the school community should receive information about transgender identities, non-discrimination policies, and expectations for creating a respectful school and team climate for all students, including transgender students.
Best Practice Recommendations: Hotel Rooms

- Transgender student-athletes should be assigned hotel rooms according to their identified gender in the same manner that other members of the team are assigned rooms.

- Provisions should be made for any students who need extra privacy whenever possible.
Best Practices – Dress Codes

• Transgender students should be able to dress in accordance with their gender identity

• Dress codes for athletic teams should be gender-neutral (For example: Do not require girls to wear dresses or skirts. Instead require attire that is neat, clean and appropriate for the occasion)
Best Practices: Communication with Away Game School Officials

• Talk with athletic directors and coaches from other schools prior to competitions about expectations for treatment of transgender students on and off the court (locker room, bathroom accommodations).

• Do not identify a particular student as transgender, but rather establish general expectations for the treatment of all students, including those who may be transgender.
TRANSATHLETE is a resource for students, athletes, coaches, and administrators to find information about trans inclusion in athletics at various levels of play.
Concluding Thoughts

Pat Griffin
giffin@educ.umass.edu

Helen Carroll
hcarroll@nclrights.org

Ashland Johnson
ashland.johnson@hrc.org