



Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth in Scouting

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA), Virginia Headwaters Council (VAHC), and VAHC Camp Shenandoah are a welcoming environment to all youth and eligible adults. All Scouts and adult leaders pledge to uphold the Scout Oath and Law, which call for us to treat all people with dignity and respect. Adult leaders are responsible for ensuring the physical safety of youth members, monitoring behavior and, when necessary, intervening to protect transgender and gender non-conforming youth from discrimination and harassment. The guidelines in this document are not intended to address every possible situation, but rather represent best practices and general policy. Council professionals and summer camp administrative staff are trained and available to provide additional assistance.

Basic Guidelines

A Scout is courteous. Courteousness should guide Scouts and adult leaders to ensure units are safe and welcoming spaces for all. Below are some basic guidelines to help accomplish this.

- Youth information provided by a parent/legal guardian on the Youth Application (524-406) to enroll a youth in Scouts should be accepted as offered. No additional health, education, legal, or other documents should be required.
- Transgender and gender non-conforming youth should be afforded the opportunity to participate in all activities.
- Local rules created by units for camping and events should apply to all Scouts and not be applied selectively to transgender and gender non-conforming youth.
 - *Example: The buddy system always applies, but any Scout who desires extra privacy is allowed to tent individually as long as they pitch their tents within 10 feet of other members of their patrol so they are within earshot of each other.*
 - *Example: Parent/guardian approval for a transgender Scout to tent with another Scout should not be required unless all parents/guardians are required to give approval on tent partners for all Scouts.*
- Rules covering dress should be set in advance of events or camp. Clothes selection should be accepted as long as it is consistent with general requirements.
 - *Example: A rule disallowing open toe shoes in camp, bikini-style swimsuits on the water, or t-shirts with inappropriate language that is applied to all Scouts is acceptable. A rule selectively disallowing what a single Scout can wear is not.*
- Transgender youth and adult leaders should be afforded the opportunity to use restroom or showers consistent with their gender identity. All individuals should always respect the privacy of others in such facilities.
 - *Example: When planning for camping trips and other events, unit leaders should consider options available with regard to restrooms (e.g., availability of single-user restrooms for individuals who prefer this) and showers (e.g., availability of single-stall showers with doors/curtains for privacy for all).*

Summer Camp

Tents. Camp Shenandoah provides canvas wall tents, each with two cots. We assign to each unit appropriate tents in proportion to the number of registered guests. It is the responsibility of the unit and youths' parents to use their discretion in determining assignments in our tents. We strongly urge unit leaders to conclude these discussions prior to arrival at Camp Shenandoah. Anyone desirous of bringing a personal tent may do so by notifying camp Admin at least one week in advance. We appreciate units recognizing space for additional tents in our campsites is limited.

Restrooms and Latrines. All facilities are non-gender single stalls. Flushable toilets are located near the Parade Field, behind the Dining Hall, inside the Health Lodge and in the Shower house. Each campsite has at least two individual latrine stalls.

Shower house. The facility is divided into four sections: youth male, adult male, youth female, adult female. Each section features at least one toilet stall and a minimum of two shared sinks. All shower stalls are individual with a latching door. Persons are to use a private shower stall according to how they identify. The expected practice is for each person to undress, shower and get dressed in their shower stall. Other activities such as shaving, or hair drying are typically conducted in the public area. The BSA mandates youth going to the Shower house do so with a buddy and never alone. It is the policy of Camp Shenandoah that at least two adults travel to and from the Shower house with youth to comply with Youth Protection Training standards. Any adult leader or parent with additional questions is encouraged to telephone our council Service Center.

Accommodations. Requests for special accommodations should be made to the VAHC Service Center during regular business hours at 540-943-6675 at least one week prior to arrival to Camp Shenandoah. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by VAHC CEO/Scout Executive, James Battaglia, or their designee, Program and Camping Director, Scott Lancey.

Creating a Safe and Welcoming Environment

The Scout Law tells us that a Scout is kind. In turn, kindness requires us to exercise empathy and compassion when working with others and not engage in behaviors that could hurt or harm them. These principles should already guide us when dealing with any controversial or sensitive subject and we must continue them when addressing or speaking about transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. When meeting new people, keep the following practices in mind. They are a simple, yet powerful way of communicating that Scouting is a welcoming place for all.

- Introduce yourself and offer your own pronouns and then ask the person what name and pronouns they use. Answer seriously if asked your own pronouns.
 - *Example: Hi my name is Chris. I use she/her pronouns. What's your name and what pronouns do you use?*
- Always use a Scout's preferred name and pronouns, even if they are not present.
 - *Example: Trip had a really good time on the camping trip. He is excited about joining the troop!*
- Do not assume a person's gender identity based on appearance. If you are not sure and there is not an opportunity for the youth to share, the term Scout is not gender specific and can therefore be used to address all.

- The singular “they” and “them” is a correct use of grammar listed in most large dictionaries and often used colloquially when the gender of an individual is unknown. Some individuals use the singular “they” and “them” as their personal pronouns.
 - *Example: Someone left a message at the camp office for you. They did not say when they will back.*
- If you make a mistake when addressing someone, acknowledge what happened and move on. Keep your apology brief, so that it does not become about you.
 - *Example: “I’m sorry, I meant to say [correct name/pronoun.]” Own your mistake and don’t try to shrug it off by saying “I am an old dog” or “I am old school.”*
- Be aware that some language may be hurtful or contentious, regardless of intent. Joking about pronouns, appearance, or gender can be perceived as belittlement or harassment.
 - *Example: Mocking transgender individuals by saying things like, “I identify as a dog” or “I identify as a toaster,” is inappropriate and should not be done.*

Deliberate misgendering, misnaming, or mocking of transgender or gender non-conforming youth by other Scouts is bullying and needs to be immediately stopped. Misbehavior by adults of this sort needs to be addressed in accordance with Youth Protection Guidelines. The BSA Fact Sheet, “[Providing Support to Scouts Who Are Bullied](#),” is one resource that can help in addressing the needs of a Scout who is the object of or witnesses such behavior.

Common Terms

The following definitions, based on resources from various experts, are not meant to label, but are intended as functional descriptors to help encourage respectful conversations among Scouting professionals, leaders, and volunteers.

- **Transgender** - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender is an adjective, not a noun, e.g. transgender girl or transgender boy. A transgender identity is not dependent upon appearance or medical procedures.
- **Gender Identity** - A person's internal, deeply held sense of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Unlike gender expression, gender identity may not be visible to others.
- **Gender expression** - How a person presents gender outwardly, through behavior, clothing, voice or other perceived characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine or feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture, such as with kilts and skirted uniforms. An individual's gender expression does not automatically imply one's gender identity.
- **Gender Non-Conforming** - Gender is defined by norms, behaviors and roles that vary between societies and over time. A stereotypical gender role distinction in many societies is that women are expected to be nurturing while men are expected to be strong and bold. A person who does not adhere to traditional roles and dress for their gender would be gender non-conforming.
- **Nonbinary** - A person who does not identify exclusively as male or female. Non-binary people may identify as being both male and female, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. The presence of non-binary individuals is well-established in many cultures. For example, some Indigenous North Americans communities recognize a third-gender, called Two-Spirit, in which the individual's soul is both masculine and feminine.

- **Cisgender** - A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. Cisgender and transgender have their origins in Latin-derived prefixes of "cis" and "trans" — cis, meaning "on this side of" and trans, meaning "across from" or "on the other side of."
- **Transition** - The process one goes through to affirm one's gender identity. This may involve social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, a coming-of-age ceremony such as a bar-mitzvah or bat-mitzvah, medical transition which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents.
- **Sexual Orientation** - A person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to other people. A person need not have had any sexual experience to know their own sexual orientation. An individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity or gender expression.

Resources for Further Learning

- American Camp Association - [Summer Camp for All: Serving the Need of Trans Campers](#)
- BSA - [Creating a Bullying-Free Culture in Scouting](#)
- BSA - [Guide to Safe Scouting](#)
- BSA Virginia Headwaters Council - [Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- Scouts Australia – [Supporting Gender Diverse Members in Scouting](#)
- Scouts Australia – [Transgender Members' Procedure](#)
- Scouts for Equality - [Advancing Inclusion and Belonging for All](#)
- Scouts for Equality - [Creating Welcoming Environments for All Scouts 2.0](#)
- The Scout Association (UK) – [Support Trans Adults and Volunteers](#)
- The Scout Association (UK) – [Supporting Trans Young People](#)