



Transgender  
Equality  
Network  
Ireland

# ACCS Conference

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Family Support and Education Officer

- Provide support to families who have gender diverse children
- Provide support and guidance to schools to help them to support gender diverse students

# Gender Development

- **Infancy:** Most parents interactions with their infants are shaped by gender, and this in turn shapes the child's understanding of gender.
- **18-24 Months:** Toddlers begin to define gender and develop a sense of self, taking messages from many sources.
- **Ages 3-4:** Children begin to connect the concept "girl" or "boy" to specific attributes.
- **Ages 5-6:** Very aware of rules and of the pressure to comply with them.

Halim & Ruble, (2010), Zosuls *et al*, (2011)

# Sex v Gender: What's the difference?

## **Sex**

The designation of a person at birth as male or female usually based on their anatomy or biology

## **Gender Expression**

The external manifestation of a person's gender identity

## **Gender Identity**

A person's deeply-felt identification as male, female, some other gender or no gender

## **Transgender / Trans**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth

## **Cisgender**

A person who is not trans (i.e. a person whose gender identity and gender expression is aligned with the sex assigned at birth)

# Trans women & men

- A person whose gender identity is 'opposite' to the sex assigned to them at birth.
- The term connotes a binary view of gender, moving from one polar identity to the other in a binary opposition.
- Trans Man: Assigned female at birth, identifies as male – Chaz Bono
- Trans Woman: Assigned male at birth, identifies as female – Laverne Cox

# Non-binary identities



- Many people do not identify at one end of the gender spectrum or the other, and may be:
- Somewhere in between
- A bit of both
- Some people feel they are just human beings without any gender identification and describe themselves as non-gender. Levitt & Ippolito (2014)

- An umbrella term used to describe people whose sex characteristics are not either all typically male or all typically female at birth are intersex
  - Sex chromosomes
  - Gonads - ovaries or testicles
  - Sex hormones
  - Internal reproductive anatomy
  - External genitalia



Issue paper



# There are more of us than you think!

An estimated **1% of the population will experience some form of gender variance**

In an Irish context, this means  
**45,882 people**

Intersex conditions appear in approx. 3 in every 200 births so this would equate to about  
**75,000 Intersex people in Ireland**



# Effect of puberty

- Female identified developing in a male form: facial hair, voice, muscle, bone structure etc.
- Male identified developing in a female form: breasts, menstruation, voice etc.
- Brings huge psychological stress, risk of self harm/suicide to gender incongruent people
- Additional stressors: bullying, family rejection

# Common Issues

- Co-occurring mental health issues
- Self harm often plays a significant part
- Heightened risk of suicidality (Mayock et al. 2009, Mc Neill et al 2013)
- Over a quarter of those who identified as Transgender indicated that they had attempted suicide at least once (Mayock et al. 2009, Mc Neill et al, 2013)

- 1. Fully reversible interventions:** These involve the use of GnRH analogues to suppress estrogen or testosterone production and consequently delay the physical changes of puberty.
- 2. Partially reversible interventions:** These include hormone therapy to masculinise or feminise the body
- 3. Irreversible interventions:** These are surgical procedures.

# What about the families?

- Families may experience, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance – looks and feels a lot like grief
- Cognitively, families need to mourn and reconcile changes to the family identity
- Just like grief, people experience it differently

# When Parents approach the School

- Can often be a stressful time
- May feel vulnerable and unsure
- Important to reassure them – even if you are unsure!

# When the student makes the disclosure

- There may be a variety of reasons why this happens
- Parents may not be supportive at this point
- Reassure the student
- Try to arrange a meeting with parents
- Try to reach a consensus for everyone

# Bringing it to the attention of the principal

- Important to respect the student's privacy
- They may not want to do anything about it
- Important for them to know that they have support



# Is it something that the school must act on?

- **Yes !**
- Protected by Equal Status Acts 2000-2015
- Protected by Employment and Equality Acts 1998-2015
- Protected on both the gender and disability ground

# What is the Gender Ground?

- Established by the Court of Justice of the EU
- A person cannot be subject to less favourable treatment because of their gender identity than someone who is not transgender

# What is the Disability Ground?

- In this context includes a range of physical and psychological conditions
- Gender dysphoria is a recognised medical condition
- Obligation for service provider to provide reasonable accommodations
- Not the function of the school to ascertain whether or not the student is transgender

# What if it is a Single Sex School?

- Student was initially offered a place on production of a birth certificate – which is still legally binding
- Student cannot be expelled for transitioning to another gender
- Changing school and making a social transition simultaneously can be extremely challenging

# Is it necessary to inform the B of M ?

- These are guidelines for appropriate protocols for schools when supporting gender diverse students
- As with all draft guidelines and policies, it is important that BOM approve the guidelines after the normal consultations.
- As a matter of courtesy BOM should be kept informed

- Name and Pronoun
- Uniforms
- Bathrooms
- PE and changing facilities

# Informing other Students

- Primary objective is to protect the student from bullying and intrusive questions
- The transgender student should be consulted prior to speaking with their peers
- The transgender student should never be responsible for educating the other students about what it means to be transgender

# Where do we start? What do we say?

- A fellow student has something they wish to share with you.
- They are looking for your support and understanding
- You are the best class we could have asked
- Pose and answer relevant questions
- Leave space for them to ask questions



# How can we prevent Bullying?

- Ensure that students know that it is rude to ask anyone about surgery or hormones
- Acknowledge that a change of name and pronoun will be challenging for everyone, but repeated and purposeful mis-pronouncing and using the birth name will be deemed bullying
- Appoint a teacher (or two) who can be approached with any questions that students might have

# Frequently asked Questions

- Is it necessary to inform the entire school?
- Is it not more advisable to move to a co-educational school?
- What if the parents are divorced or separated and not in agreement?
- What supports will be needed for non-binary students?
- Is a Deed Poll necessary to facilitate a name change?

- How can we support the siblings of a transgender student?
- What if a parent of another student makes a complaint?
- Does the school have a duty to inform the parents of other students if it is not widely known that a student is transgender?

- The Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) can be used to obtain a new birth certificate
- People who have a GRC have a new legal gender status 'for all purposes'
- It is not necessary to have had any medical treatment to be granted a GRC if over 18
- 16 & 17 year olds can obtain a GRC with the support of their parents
- Under 16s are not recognised in the Act

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