



Grand Valley State University Athletics Department's Policy on Transgender Student-Athlete Inclusion

Grand Valley State University Athletics Department Non-Discrimination Statement:

GVSU Athletics goes beyond our University's mandates on equity and is committed to creating an environment of inclusion and the highest sense of belonging for its staff and student-athletes. Inclusion is a central pillar of the GVSU Athletics Impact Plan to integrate championship excellence into everything we do. We work to continuously address issues of equity, diversity and multiculturalism, engaging in practices and supporting policies that reflect the belief that our Athletics Department will thrive only via a more democratic and inclusive work community. This commitment is fully aligned with the GVSU institutional framework of intersectional social justice as well as its non-discrimination policies. These policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, color, gender, national origin, physical impairment, political affiliation, race, religion, or sexual orientation in the application of the all employment-related and program policies and procedures.

Aligned with the University's commitment to non-discrimination, inclusion and equal opportunity, the Athletic Department provides access for transgender student-athletes to participate in NCAA competitions on our varsity teams. It is our mission to provide an environment where transgender student-athletes feel safe, valued, respected and supported. Those associated with the GVSU Athletic Department are expected to commit themselves to this ethos by recognizing and understanding their own biases in how they receive and process information related to gender identity and expression. By doing so, we hope to foster a more inclusive athletic environment that acknowledges and honors the differences in each of our own identities.

Staff and student-athletes of the Athletics Department are encouraged to use appropriate language and terminology. As a department, we respect a person's right to self-identify, and we encourage our community to politely ask a person how they identify if they are unsure. The definitions listed below reflect common terminology that may be referenced within the policy. Though robust, this is not an exhaustive list; we recognize that language is constantly evolving and will continue to update the list and our shared understanding of terminology.

Definitions:

- **AFAB:** Acronym meaning Assigned Female at Birth. AFAB people may or may not identify as female some or all of the time.
- **AMAB:** Acronym meaning Assigned Male at Birth. AMAB people may or may not identify as male some or all of the time. (*See Gender*)

- **Banned Substances:** NCAA Bylaw 31.2.3 identifies testosterone as a banned substance, and provides for medical exception review for demonstrated need for use of a banned medication. It is the responsibility of the NCAA institution to submit the request for a medical exception (see www.ncaa.org/drugtesting) for testosterone treatment prior to the student-athlete competing while undergoing treatment. In the case of testosterone suppression, the institution must submit written documentation to the NCAA of the year of treatment and ongoing monitoring of testosterone suppression.
- **FTM:** A trans male/masculine person who was assigned female at birth.
- **Gender:** A set of social, psychological, and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual along a spectrum of man, woman, both, or neither.
- **Gender-Affirming Surgery (GAS):** Surgical procedures that can help people adjust their bodies to more closely match their innate gender identity. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery. This term should be used in place of the older term sex change. Also sometimes referred to as sexual reassignment surgery (or SRS), genital reconstruction surgery, or medical transition.
- **Gender Dysphoria:** The distress caused when a person's assigned sex at birth and assumed gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSMV), the term "...is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."
- **Gender Expression:** The manner in which a person communicates their gender to others through external means such as clothing, hair-styles, appearance, and/or mannerisms. While most people's understandings of gender expressions relate to masculinity and femininity, there are countless combinations that may incorporate both masculine and feminine expressions—or neither—through androgynous expressions. An individual's gender expression does not automatically imply one's gender identity.
- **Gender Identity:** One's deeply held core sense of being a woman, man, some of both, or neither. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced very early in life, but may also shift over the course of one's life.
- **LGBTQ+:** An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. It is sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender). The addition of the Q for queer is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed

definition, which recognizes more fluid identities; and as a move towards greater inclusivity for gender-expansive people. The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. The “+” represents those who are part of the community, but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.

- **Misgender:** To refer to someone, especially a transgender or gender-expansive person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, which does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.
- **Mixed Team:** A mixed team is a varsity intercollegiate sports team on which at least one individual of each gender competes. (Revised: 5/8/06) NCAA Bylaw 18.02.2 for purposes of meeting the required minimums set forth in Bylaws 18.2.3 and 18.2.4, a mixed team shall be counted as one team. A mixed team shall count toward the minimum sponsorship percentage for men’s championships.
- **MTF:** A trans female/trans feminine person who was assigned male at birth. Often considered an over medicalized and somewhat outdated term.
- **Nonbinary:** Refers to individuals who identify as neither man or woman, both man and woman, or a combination of man or woman. It is an identity term which some use exclusively, while others may use it interchangeably with terms like genderqueer, gender creative, gender nonconforming, gender diverse, or gender expansive. Individuals who identify as nonbinary may understand the identity as falling under the transgender umbrella, and may thus identify as transgender.
- **Personal Gender Pronouns:** A personal gender pronoun, or PGP—sometimes called proper gender pronoun—is the pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual personally uses and would like others to use when talking to or about that individual.
- **Preferred Names:** In all cases, teammates, coaches and administrators will refer to transgender student-athletes by their preferred name.
- **Transsexualism:** The desire to change anatomic sexual characteristics to conform physically with one’s perception of oneself as a member of the opposite sex.
- **Transgender:** Often shortened to trans. A term describing a person’s gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression—such groups include, but are not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous. See above for common acronyms and terms including female to male (or FTM), male to

female (or MTF), assigned male at birth (or AMAB), assigned female at birth (or AFAB), genderqueer, and gender expansive.

- **Transition:** A term sometimes used to refer to the process—social, legal, and/or medical—one goes through to discover and/or affirm one’s gender identity. This may, but does not always, include taking hormones; having surgeries; and changing names, pronouns, identification documents, and more. Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control. The validity of an individual’s gender identity does not depend on any social, legal, and/or medical transition; the self-identification itself is what validates the gender identity.

This policy was written in accordance with the NCAA Guiding Principles and Bylaws for sport participation.

NCAA Guiding Principles

- Participation in intercollegiate athletics is a valuable part of the education experience for all students.
- Transgender student-athletes should have equal opportunity to participate in sports.
- The integrity of women’s sports should be preserved.
- Policies governing sports should be based on sound medical knowledge and scientific validity.
- Policies governing sports should be objective, workable and practicable; they should also be written, available and equitably enforced.
- The legitimate privacy interests of all student-athletes should be protected.
- The medical privacy of transgender students should be preserved.
- Athletic administrators, staff, parents of athletes and student-athlete should have access to sound and effective educational resources and training related to the participation of transgender and gender-variant students in athletics.
- Policies governing participation of transgender students in athletics should comply with state and federal laws protecting student from discrimination.

Grand Valley State University Athletics Department Transgender Student-Athlete Policy:

A transgender student athlete will be allowed to participate in any varsity sports activity so long as that athlete’s use of hormone therapy, if any, is consistent with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) existing policies on banned substances. Specifically, a transgender student-athlete will be allowed to participate in varsity sports activities under the following conditions:

Participation on Varsity Sports Teams per NCAA Bylaws

Transgender student athletes who are undergoing hormone treatment for gender transition may participate when:

- A. A trans male (FTM) student-athlete who has received a medical exception for treatment with testosterone for diagnosed Gender Dysphoria Disorder (GDG) and/or Transsexualism, for purposes of NCAA competition may compete on a men's team, but is no longer eligible to compete on a women's team without changing that team status to a mixed team.
- B. A trans female (MTF) student-athlete being treated with testosterone suppression medication for Gender Dysphoria Disorder (GDG) and/or Transsexualism, for the purposes of NCAA competition may continue to compete on a men's team but may not compete on a women's team without changing it to a mixed team status until completing one calendar year of testosterone suppression treatment.
- C. Once a team is classified as a mixed team, it retains that status through the remainder of the academic year without exception.

In any case where a student athlete is taking hormone treatment related to Gender Dysphoria Disorder (GDG) and/or Transsexualism that treatment must be monitored by a physician and GVSU must receive regular reports about the athlete's eligibility according to these guidelines.

- A. Transgender student athletes who are NOT undergoing hormone treatment
 1. Any transgender student athlete who is not undergoing hormone treatment related to gender transition may participate in varsity sports activities in accordance with their assigned birth gender.
 2. A trans male (FTM) student-athlete who is not being treated with testosterone related to gender transition may participate on a men's or women's team.
 3. A trans female (MTF) student-athlete who is not undergoing testosterone suppression treatment related to gender transition may not compete on a women's team.

Implementation Process

- A. The student's responsibility
 - In order to avoid challenges to a transgender student's participation during a sport season, a student athlete who has completed, plans to initiate, or is in the process of taking hormones as part of a gender transition shall submit the request to participate on a sports team in writing to the Director of Athletics

upon matriculation or when the decision to undergo hormonal treatment is made.

- The student shall submit a request to the Director of Athletics or their designee. The request shall include a letter from the student's physician documenting the student's intention to transition or the student's transition status if the process has already been initiated. This letter shall identify the prescribed hormonal treatment for the student's gender transition and documentation of the student's testosterone levels, if relevant.

B. Grand Valley State University Athletics Department responsibility

1. The Director of Athletics or their designee and the Associate Athletics Director – Medical Services shall meet with the student to review eligibility requirements and procedure for approval of transgender participation.
2. The Director of Athletics or their designee shall notify the NCAA and the Athletic Conference of the student's request to participate, when applicable.
3. If a student's request is denied by the Director of Athletics or their designee, the decision must be automatically reviewed by a Transgender Participation Committee to be established by a school administrator. This committee shall be convened and its decision reported to the athletic director or his/her designee and the school administrator in a timely fashion.
 - i. This committee will include:
 - A health care professional, e.g. physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other licensed health professional with experience in transgender health care and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care. The student athlete's physician can serve in this role.
 - The faculty athletic representative; and
 - The university Title IX Coordinator
 - ii. The athletic director or his/her designee will inform the NCAA and the GLIAC of the appeal outcome.
4. GVSU and the Center for Drug Free Sport will confirm that the treatment requirement has been met.

5. GVSU will petition to the NCAA for transgender student-athletes, subject to a one-year transition period, to request an extension of their eligibility at the end of their transition period.
6. An opposing institution may only challenge a transgender student-athlete's approved eligibility through a formal appeal process through the appropriate oversight body.
7. All discussions among involved parties and required written supporting documentation should be kept confidential, unless the student-athlete makes a specific request otherwise. All information about an individual student's transgender identity and medical information, including physician's information provided pursuant to this policy, shall be maintained confidentially.

Additional Guidelines

A. Facilities Access

1. Changing Areas, Toilets, Showers – Transgender student-athletes will be able to use the locker room, showers and toilet facilities consistent with the student's gender identity. Every effort will be made to have private, enclosed changing areas, showers and toilets for use by any athlete who desires them. When requested by the transgender student-athlete, GVSU will make every effort to provide separate changing, showering and toilet facilities for the student's use, however transgender student-athletes shall not be required to use separate facilities
2. Competition at another institution – If a transgender student-athlete requires a particular accommodation to ensure access to appropriate changing, showering or bathroom facilities, the GVSU Athletics Director or their designee, in consultation with the transgender student-athlete, will notify their counterparts at other institutions prior to competition to ensure that the student has access to facilities that are comfortable and safe. This notification will maintain the student's confidentiality. Under no circumstances will the student-athlete's identity as a transgender person be disclosed without the student's express permission.
3. Hotel rooms – Transgender student-athletes will be assigned to share hotel rooms based on their gender identity, with recognition that any student who needs extra privacy should be accommodated whenever possible.

B. Dress Codes and Team Uniforms

1. Dress Codes – While representing the institution, transgender student-athletes will be permitted to dress consistently with their gender identities, while conforming to GVSU athletic department standards.
2. Uniforms – All team members will have access to uniforms that are appropriate for their sport and that they feel comfortable wearing. No student-athlete will be required to wear a gendered uniform that conflicts with the student’s gender identity.

Enforcement and Non-Retaliation

- A. Enforcement – Any member of the GVSU athletics department who has been found to have violated this policy by threatening to withhold athletic opportunity or harassing any student on the basis of their gender identity or expression, or by breaching medical confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action. Any member of the athletics department who becomes aware of conduct that violates this policy should immediately report the conduct to the Athletics Director. A [formal report](#) will be made through the appropriate office as it relates to the specific violation of this policy.
- Withholding of athletic opportunity/harassment: Office of Inclusion & Equity and Title IX
 - Breaching medial confidentiality: Athletic Director

Of note, all employees of the Athletics Department (except those who serve in non-supervisory clerical capacities) are mandatory reporters as identified by the GVSU Title IX Office. This means that when a mandatory reporter is notified of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, stalking, intimate partner violence (dating/domestic violence), sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or gender-based harassment, they must immediately report the information to the Title IX Coordinator.

- B. Retaliation – Retaliation is specifically forbidden against anyone who complains about discrimination based on gender identity or expression. The GVSU athletics department will take steps to prevent any retaliation against any person who makes such a complaint.
- C. Anti-Harassment Policy – Should this policy be violated; steps will be taken in accordance with the [University Anti-Harassment Policy](#).

Education

- A. Athletic Department – All members of the athletic department will receive information and education about transgender identities, institutional and conference non-discrimination policies, the use of preferred names and pronouns, and expectations for creating a respectful team and school climate for all students, including transgender and gender-variant students.

- B. Student-Athletes – All student-athletes receive annual education on gender-based violence based on a tiered educational model through a partnership with the Center for Women & Gender Equity.

Media

- A. Confidentiality – Protecting the privacy of transgender student-athletes is a top priority for all athletics department and affiliated school personnel, particularly when in the presence of the media. All medical information shall be kept confidential in accordance with the applicable state, local and federal privacy laws.