

## GREATER SEATTLE SUMMER SWIM LEAGUE

### Gender-Inclusion Athlete Procedure

This procedure is to advise GSSSL member teams, their coaches, and their staff of the rights and expectations GSSSL extends to transgender and non-binary athletes. The rights and expectations listed below and in the associated Gender-Inclusion Policy are essential for every GSSSL member team to meet so that we may work toward the league goal of inclusion, thus cultivating lifelong swimmers.

This procedure does not anticipate every situation that might occur. Rather, it offers suggested approaches to common situations where the rights of a transgender and/or non-binary athlete may be implicated. This procedure's goal is to help ensure the protection and safety of all transgender and non-binary athletes competing on teams across the league. For any questions, staff are encouraged to reach out to the league's primary contact, the GSSSL board's Gender-Inclusive Task Force lead.

### PRIMARY CONTACT

The GSSSL board's Gender-Inclusive Task Force Lead is designated as the league's primary contact regarding this procedure and its associated policy in relation to transgender and non-binary athletes. As primary contact, the Gender-Inclusive Task Force lead will receive copies of all informal and formal complaints regarding transgender and non-binary athletes. All questions regarding the application of this procedure should be directed to the Gender-Inclusive Task Force. Presently, the task force is composed of Jeremy Hunter, Marley Mendez, Willie Bell, Brennon Ham, and Rob Sjoberg. They can be reached at [genderinclusiongsssl@gmail.com](mailto:genderinclusiongsssl@gmail.com). This document will be updated should task force leadership change to reflect the name and contact information for future leaders.

### DEFINITIONS

Note: The following definitions provided are not meant to label students, but instead are intended as functional descriptors.

"Assigned sex at birth/sex assigned at birth" refers to the sex a person was given at birth, usually based on anatomy or chromosomes (e.g. male, female, intersex, or X).

"Cisgender" is a term used to describe people whose assigned sex at birth matches their gender identity (e.g., a person who was assigned female at birth and whose gender identity is that of a girl/woman).

"Gender expression" refers to the way a person expresses their gender, often through behavior, gestures, emotional expression, movement, dress, and/or grooming.

“Gender identity” refers to a person’s internal and deeply felt sense of being a woman, a man, and/or neither. Persons may identify as non-binary, gender-expansive, or other -- regardless of their assigned sex at birth.

“Non-binary” refers to a wider, more flexible range of gender identities than those typically associated with the binary gender system of female and male. People who are non-binary may use a variety of terms including gender-expansive or others to describe their gender identity.

“Transgender” is a general term used to describe a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s assigned sex at birth.

“Transitioning” is the process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

## SUMMARY

Aligned with Seattle Public Schools and Washington State law, the GSSSL board policy requires that all programs and activities be conducted without discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity. Furthermore, as a general rule, all decisions regarding assignment, participation, and use in GSSSL swimming are determined pursuant to an athlete’s gender identity and not assigned sex at birth. **GSSSL member teams will implement**

**Washington State law and GSSSL Board Policy in the following required ways:**

- **Names/Pronouns:** Athletes have the right to be addressed by the name and pronoun they use that corresponds to their gender identity consistently asserted on their swim team. The name an athlete uses corresponding to their gender identity is sometimes also referred to as a preferred name or true name. Athletes, or their parent/guardian acting on the athlete’s behalf, may request that the name the athlete uses be added to their athlete registration. This will ensure that the athlete’s name appears on meet management systems, psych sheets, heat sheets, meet results, certificates, trophies, and the like.
- **Swim Team Racing Categories:** Presently, swim team racing categories are broken into “girls” and “boys.” Athletes have the right to compete under the gendered racing category that aligns with the gender identity they consistently assert on the swim team and/or best aligns with their gender identity as determined by the athlete.
- **Age-informed Meet Participation:** Medical intervention is not required for transgender and non-binary athletes. During postseason, there are different guidelines based on identities and specific medical interventions outlined in detail under GUIDELINES (Required).

**The remaining procedure points are optional to teams, but strongly encouraged by the Gender-Inclusion Task Force.**

- **Best Practices:** Coaches and pool staff should review best practices annually. Best practices include facility walk-throughs, name and pronoun check-ins with all swimmers,

expectation-setting with swimmers and families, and directing new staff to league training.

- Issues of Privacy: All athletes have a right to privacy; this includes keeping an athlete's transgender or non-binary identity private. Information about a student's gender identity, legal name, or assigned sex at birth may constitute confidential medical information. Disclosing this information to others may violate privacy laws.
- Code of Conduct: GSSSL Member Teams should update their code of conduct to ensure the protection and inclusion of transgender and non-binary athletes with specific attention to bullying and expectations for club members/families.
- Restroom/Locker Room Accessibility: Athletes have the right to use the restroom that corresponds to the gender identity they consistently assert on their swim team. Gender expansive athletes have the right to use the restroom the athlete determines to best align with their gender identity. This should be communicated with the athlete's coach by the athlete or an athlete's parent on behalf of the athlete.
- Racing Attire: Athletes will not be contacted or disciplined for wearing clothing perceived to be not consistent with their gender identity for racing or practicing.
- Records: Transgender and non-binary record breakers are bound by the same restrictions as transgender and non-binary athletes who are eligible to participate in postseason.
- Gender Segregation: Staff will make every effort to separate athletes based on factors other than gender when possible.
- Team Manager: Coaches will use the Team Manager pathway below to ensure that trans and non-binary swimmers are able to be appropriately filtered into the corresponding gendered events correctly.
- Meet Manager: In meet manager, heat sheets/psych sheets/meet results should exclude gender markers while maintaining gender categories for events.

## **GUIDELINES (Required)**

### **Names/Pronouns:**

Athletes have the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns corresponding to the gender identity they consistently assert at the pool. A parent/guardian may not override an athlete's request to be addressed by the name and pronoun that the athlete uses.

Athletes, or their parent/guardian acting on the athlete's behalf, may request that the name the athlete uses be added to the team and meet management systems. This will ensure that the athlete's name appears on meet management systems, psych sheets, heat sheets, meet results, certificates, trophies, and the like. The athlete's legal name will be used when required by law for documents such medical emergencies unless otherwise directed by the athlete or parent. Upon request of an athlete or their parent/guardian, coaching staff and meet management operators, will enter the name that the athlete uses into the meet management system under the "name" field. Athletes are not required to

have their name changed in order to be addressed by the name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity at the pool. Pool and coaching staff will use best efforts to address athletes by the name and pronoun they use. However, if an athlete decides against having the name (and/or gender) they use recorded by the team, the name will not appear in meet management systems, meet result postings, and the like. GSSSL acknowledges that initially, inadvertent slips or honest mistakes in the use of names or pronouns might occur but will not condone an intentional and persistent refusal to correctly acknowledge an athlete's gender identity by pool or coaching staff.

### **Swim Team Racing Categories and Racing Attire:**

Current swim team racing categories are broken into "girls" and "boys." Subject to the eligibility policies of the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) for high school interscholastic athletics, transgender athletes have the right to participate on the gendered teams/gendered racing categories that are consistent with the gender identity they consistently assert at their pool and non-binary athletes have the right to participate on the gendered teams/gendered racing categories that best align to their gender identity.

### **Age-Informed Meet Participation**

All transgender athletes have the right to compete in the gender category that aligns with their gender identity. Non-binary swimmers have the right to compete in the gender category that feels most appropriate as determined by the athlete with the following exception:

- Athletes taking testosterone for 1 year or more as a part of their gender affirming care are required to compete under the boys gender category, regardless of the athlete's identity.
- If an athlete who is taking testosterone as a part of their gender affirming care does not feel safe competing in the boys gender category, the athlete's team should contact the Gender-Inclusion Task Force lead for guidance.

Transgender athletes under 12 are free to compete without restrictions in both dual meet season and postseason. This includes swimmers taking puberty or hormone blockers.

Transgender athletes ages 13 and older who do not qualify for postseason are eligible to participate in dual meet season without restrictions. This includes swimmers taking puberty or hormone blockers.

Transgender athletes ages 13 and older who have qualified for postseason are able to participate in postseason as long as one of the two following guidelines are met:

- Athletes assigned male at birth competing under the girls gender category will need to provide evidence that they have been taking hormone suppressants (i.e. testosterone blockers) for a minimum of one year. Taking estrogen as a part of the athlete's gender affirming care is not required. Transgender athletes for whom this

applies should reach out to the Gender-Inclusion Task Force lead for additional instruction.

- Athletes assigned male at birth competing under the girls gender category who are not receiving hormone therapy as a part of their gender affirming care, can only compete through prelims, but will be marked as an exhibition swimmer.
  - Once an athlete makes a qualifying time in a dual meet, that athlete will be marked as an exhibition swimmer for all remaining dual meets in that event.
  - For relays, Athletes who qualify for postseason in an individual race are eligible to compete on a scoring relay team featuring that same or overlapping event. *For example, an athlete who qualifies in a backstroke event, could still swim the backstroke leg of a scoring medley relay.*

\*Please note: there are many reasons a transgender athlete may choose medical intervention as a part of their gender affirming care. Athletes should not be pushed to pursue or avoid medical intervention by their coaches, their peers, or other families on the team.

\*\*A transgender or non-binary athlete's choice to seek out medical intervention is confidential information. The ruling of the Gender-Inclusion Task Force will either indicate "eligible to swim" or "eligible for exhibition only." No additional inquiry or investigation should take place or is needed.

\*\*\*Athletes can appeal decisions with which they disagree by asking the Gender-Inclusion Task Force lead to convene a group including the athlete's coach, the GSSSL Board President, the Gender-Inclusion Task Force lead, and an advocate of the athlete's choosing.

## GUIDELINES (Recommended)

### **Best Practices:**

*At the beginning of each season*, coaches should reintroduce themselves to all their swimmers and provide all swimmers the opportunity to reintroduce themselves to each other and to coaches. Before introductions, coaches should explain what pronouns are and why they are important. Then, after the explanation, coaches should include their own pronouns in their reintroduction, even when they feel their pronouns are obvious. An example: "My name is Coach Tracy and I use she/her pronouns." Encourage swimmers to share their names and pronouns, too.

*Check in with swimmers after disclosures*, especially when a swimmer has shared a name or pronouns that are different than names or pronouns by which they went previously. Swimmers should be shown appreciation and asked about the following:

- When it is appropriate to use pronouns. Such as: *Is this the name and pronouns you would like us to use around family members?*

- Which gender category under which swimmers should be entered. Such as: *Trans and non-binary swimmers are able to swim under the gender category girl or the gender category boy based on what aligns best. Which category aligns with how you want to swim?* \*Please note: athletes may identify as trans and wish to compete in the gender category under which they were registered. This is also an appropriate course of action.
- What supports athletes need. Such as: *What kinds of support do you need? Know that you can reach out to any of the coaches for support at any time.*

*Questions should be anticipated.* Coaches and pool staff should anticipate questions. A list of FAQs with answers will be provided to all head coaches to be distributed to all coaching staff and pools. All coaching staff and pool staff are encouraged to receive training provided by the GSSSL board.

### **Issues of Privacy:**

All athletes have a right to privacy; this includes keeping an athlete's transgender or non-binary identity private. Information about a student's gender identity, legal name, or assigned sex at birth may constitute confidential medical information. Disclosing this information to others may violate privacy laws. Therefore, to ensure athlete safety and well-being, and to provide identity-safe pools for all, staff should not disclose an athlete's transgender or non-binary identity to others unless (1) legally required to do so or (2) the athlete has authorized disclosure. Whenever speaking with a transgender or non-binary athlete about a particular issue such as racing, conduct, discipline, attendance, or health, focus on the conduct or particular issue and avoid making assumptions regarding the athlete's actual or perceived gender identity. Further, when contacting the parents/guardians of a transgender or non-binary athlete and it is unclear whether the athlete asserts the same gender identity at home, it is best practice to avoid using gender pronouns. For example, one could say, "I am concerned about P.J.'s attendance," rather than, "I am concerned about his attendance."

### **Code of Conduct**

All GSSSL member teams are encouraged to review their team's code of conduct. If the code of conduct does not already outline expectations around inclusion, respect, and safety, the team should update said code of conduct such that all athletes are able to feel safe and supported on their swim team. The code of conduct should also include expectations of parents as spectators, timers, or other volunteers. These expectations should clearly outline how team coaches and staff plan to handle bullying, intimidation, harassment, and violence, especially when targeted at transgender and non-binary athletes. When issues of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and violence persist, athletes and their coaches have a right to file a complaint with GSSSL by reaching out to the

Gender-Inclusion Task Force lead. The lead will process the request and work with the GSSSL board for resolution or consequence.

**Restroom/Locker Room Accessibility:**

Transgender athletes have the right to use the restroom that is consistent with the gender identity they consistently assert at school. Athletes who identify as non-binary have the right to use the restroom the athlete determines to best align with their gender identity. Note that all athletes, regardless of the underlying reason, who need or desire for increased privacy, should be provided access to an alternative changing option (e.g., a staff restroom, etc.). If coaching or pool staff have legitimate concerns about the safety or privacy of athletes, as related to a transgender or gender-expansive athlete's use of the restroom or locker room, staff should bring these concerns to the Gender-Inclusive Task Force lead. Such privacy or safety issues should be immediate and reasonably foreseeable, not speculative. Coaching and pool staff and/or the Gender-Inclusive Task Force lead should meet with the athlete and/or parents/guardians to determine if there is a need for an alternative facility. The decision to provide an alternative facility for any athlete will be determined on a case-by-case basis. No athlete should be required to use a locker room that conflicts with their gender identity.

**Racing Attire:**

There are many reasons, including financial barriers and lack of family support, that may prevent a swimmer from wearing clothing that is perceived to not be consistent with their gender identity. Athletes will not be contacted or disciplined for wearing clothing perceived to be not consistent with their gender identity for racing or practicing. When possible and when deemed appropriate, if financial barriers exist, pools should consider making purchases to provide gender affirming clothing to swimmers.

**Records:**

Transgender and non-binary record breakers are bound by the same restrictions as transgender and non-binary athletes who are eligible to participate in postseason. Please see above. Record-breaking times achieved by transgender athletes over the age of 13 who are assigned male at birth and compete under the girls gender category will not be counted if the athlete is not taking hormone suppressants such as testosterone blockers. Club teams are strongly encouraged to consider creative ways to acknowledge achievements in these instances; clubs can adopt an "All Gender" category on record boards to showcase athlete excellence when the required criterion is unable to be met.

**Gender Segregation in Other Areas:**

Staff will make every effort to separate athletes based on factors other than gender when

possible. Listed below are examples of reasonable alternatives to common situations where athletes are separated by gender:

- Practices: Athletes can be divided by birth month or birth order instead of gender.
- Awards: Athletes can be honored as pairs. These pairs can be understood as having competed in “girls” events and “boys” events, but do not need to have gender included when recognized with their families.
- Calling for Athletes’ Attention: Instead of using gendered phrases to get students’ attention such as “girls and boys,” “you guys,” and “ladies and gentlemen,” it is recommended to use phrases such as “swimmers,” “[insert your mascot name] come here.”

### **TEAM MANAGER**

Regardless of which gender an athlete has been registered under (F or M), transgender and non-binary athletes have a right to participate under the gender category that aligns best with their gender identity as outlined above. Coaches will use the Team Manager pathway below to ensure that trans and non-binary swimmers are able to be appropriately filtered into the corresponding gendered events correctly.

Use the following Team Manager Pathway: Access the “Athlete” tab in TM. Open the Athlete details and click the appropriate Gender Identity for the meet competition.

**\*\*In the situation where an athlete chooses to shift their gender identity of competition during the season, every effort should be made by coaches and pool staff to support the athlete in their exploration of identity. Where shifting of gender identity in competition by an athlete during the season projects to have a significant impact on scoring events in a dual or post season meet, see the guidelines in the Age-Informed Meet Participation paragraph for guidance.**

### **MEET MANAGER**

In meet manager, heat sheets/psych sheets/meet results should exclude gender markers while maintaining gender categories for events.