



4-H Practices for Inclusion of Individuals of All Genders and Sexual Orientations

Frequently Asked Questions (Released: 11/2017, Revised 5/2021, 6/2023)

Purpose:

As the nation's largest youth development organization, the 4-H Youth Development Program engages millions of people from all areas of the country to provide opportunities for youth to learn life skills, confidence, and compassion. In California, the 4-H Youth Development Program is administered by the University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR).

In 2015, Janet Napolitano, the President of the University of California explained: "The University of California sets the global standards of inclusiveness, understanding, and equitable treatment in all its endeavors, creating a world where individuals and communities of diverse sexuality and gender identity and expression are safe, supported, respected, empowered, and truly equal." The 4-H Youth Development Program, like the University of California, is committed to being inclusive and welcoming of all forms of diversity. This document is intended to support all 4-H participants and personnel in implementing emerging best practices, the [University of California Gender Recognition and Lived Name Policy](#), as well as non-discrimination policies, at all 4-H events and activities.

UC ANR prohibits discrimination against or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities on the basis of sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. 4-H programs must ensure that they do not discriminate against individuals (including youth members, adult volunteers, and staff) on any of these bases. While this policy is not new, more and more 4-H staff, volunteers, and members are seeking guidance each year on how to implement this policy. This document was developed to answer frequently asked questions about implementation of the non-discrimination policy at 4-H clubs, events, activities, and camps around the state. As you read through the questions and answers, please keep in mind that the information is the same for all individuals, whether they are youth members, adult volunteers, or staff members.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the differences between sex, gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation?

Understanding and correctly utilizing language is an important aspect of creating inclusive and affirming 4-H programs. The language and definitions shared here are **not comprehensive** of all genders and sexual orientations. Additionally, language describing identities is constantly evolving and can be geographically specific.

Sex is a medical term that refers to a combination of physiological attributes. These attributes include reproductive organs, chromosomes, gonads, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics. Generally, people are assigned male or female sex based upon the appearance of their external reproductive

organs, It is also helpful to understand two other terms related to sex: **sex assigned at birth** and **intersex**.

Sex assigned at birth refers to a person's sex designation as recorded on their birth certificate. Generally, a medical professional or guardian designates a newborn either "male" or "female" sex after examining the infant's genitalia.

Intersex is an umbrella term that describes a wide range of natural bodily variations that do not fit typical definitions of male and female bodies. These variations may include, but are not limited to, unique chromosome compositions, hormone concentrations, and external and/or internal biology.

Gender refers to a person's internal sense of their own gender. A person's gender may or may not match their sex assigned at birth. Some common genders include: man, woman, gender neutral, transman, transwoman, and non-binary. An individual may use additional genders not listed. Gender does not always correspond to gender expression (definition below). It may be helpful to define three additional terms related to gender: **transgender**, **non-binary** and **gender transition**.

Transgender is a term that refers to a person whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may also recognize someone who identifies outside of the binary gender affiliations (i.e., man or woman). A **transman** refers to a person who identifies as a boy or man but was assigned female sex at birth. A **transwoman** refers to a person who identifies as a girl or woman but was assigned male sex at birth. A person whose gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth has a gender of **cisgender**.

Non-binary is a term that refers to a person who identifies beyond the man/woman gender binary and/or beyond the masculine/feminine binary of gender expression. Related terminology includes gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and gender fluid.

Gender affirmation refers to acknowledging and supporting all individuals' gender identities and expressions.

Gender expression refers to how a person presents their gender to others. This can include how a person dresses, styles their hair, speaks, and many other factors.

Gender transition refers to a process in which a person alters their physical appearance to more closely match their gender rather than their sex assigned at birth. A person in gender transition may or may not alter their dress/grooming habits, change their name, or use pronouns that are more congruent with their gender. A person may begin gender transition at any point in their life, and gender transition may happen over any length of time. Some but not all gender transitions include medical procedures such as hormone replacement therapy and surgical alterations or primary and secondary sex characteristics. Not all transgender and non-binary people pursue gender transition.

Sexual orientation refers to who a person is attracted to. (Note: Ongoing research defines patterns of emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction as one's sexual orientation). Gender and sexual orientation are two separate aspects of a person's identity.

- A person who identifies as a **lesbian** is a woman who is attracted to women.
- Someone who identifies as **gay** is often a man who is attracted to men. **Gay** may also be used by a person of any gender who identifies as having an attraction other than heterosexual.

- A person who is **bisexual** refers to an individual who is attracted to two genders (most commonly men and women).
- Someone who identifies as **pansexual** is a person who is attracted to others regardless of sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
- An individual who is **asexual** is a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction.
- **Queer** (by the “Q” in LGBTQ+) may be used as an umbrella term that refers to a sexual orientation that is non-heterosexual or used to describe one’s gender. Due to the history of this word some people have negative associations and are not comfortable using this word.

Additional terms and definitions are included in the [University of California Gender Recognition and Lived Name Policy](#).

2. What inclusive practices can help ensure that participants of all genders and sexual orientations will feel comfortable in 4-H?

It is exciting that your 4-H program is striving to create a welcoming environment where individuals who identify as nonbinary, transgender, and/or intersex feel safe to participate. You might be interested to know that over the years many nonbinary, transgender, and/or intersex youth have participated in 4-H programming. Since this might be a new experience for you, here are some tips to make your 4-H program a great experience for your participants:

- Ensure the 4-H practices for inclusion have been widely shared with the entire 4-H community. Do not focus discussions about inclusion on a particular individual as this violates their privacy and may create an unsafe experience for them. If questions or concerns arise, be sure to keep the discussion on 4-H practices and policies, rather than on a particular individual’s participation. Here’s one idea to get you started: Include a copy of UC ANR’s non-discrimination policy in your 4-H welcome packet along with a statement that all individuals are welcome to participate in 4-H programs.
- Set up training for your 4-H staff and volunteers about inclusivity and gender affirmation. Ensure that the training includes terminology lessons about gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation, as well as coaching on how to answer questions from members and families. There are often many local community resource centers that can provide in-person training for your program. If you need help setting up a training, please contact the State 4-H Office at (530) 750-1334 or ca4h@ucanr.edu.
- When feasible, allow individuals to tour 4-H program facilities. Discuss what options are available for using the bathroom. If your 4-H event or activity, also discuss what options are available for sleeping and showering, and make clear the 4-H program defers to individuals’ preferences (more on this below). In overnight situations, ensure that everyone has their own sleeping space (i.e., one youth member in a bed).
- Normalize using appropriate pronouns and names. Ensure that name tags, rosters, (and the like) reflect individuals’ expressed pronouns and names. Lead by example for others in the 4-H program in using those pronouns and names consistently. You may consider using the national 4-H Program Leaders’ Working Group’s Powerful Pronouns activity, which is available for download on [this webpage](#).

- Avoid segregating and categorizing participants by gender (for example, do not ask members to form a boys' line and a girls' line).
- If someone shares their gender with you, you can ask them what concerns they have (if any) about participating in 4-H. If you aren't sure how to respond, reassure the individual and let them know that you will get more information for them and get back to them soon. Then contact the State 4-H Office at (530) 750-1334 or ca4h@ucanr.edu for help.
- Just like with all 4-H participants, be sure to check in during and at the end of the program to see how things are going.

3. A youth member has shared their transgender identity with 4-H; however, the member's parents are not supportive of their child's gender. What is the most inclusive process?

4-H will treat all participants according to their gender even if a youth member's own guardian raises objections. While the guardians may choose not to allow their child to participate in 4-H, 4-H will not discriminate against the member to accommodate the guardian's objections.

4. What is the most inclusive way to ask participants about their gender?

Personally identifiable information (including gender and sex assigned at birth) must be kept confidential. This information may only be disclosed to those 4-H staff and volunteers that have a legitimate programmatic need for the information. In a lot of cases, there is no legitimate programmatic need to ask participants about their gender. For example, if youth are registering to participate in your 4-H program's County Presentation Day, there is no reason to ask about their gender. Likewise, there is no reason to ask volunteer judges their gender.

In the limited cases when you do have a legitimate programmatic need, the best option is to ask the following open-ended question: "What is your gender identity?"

If you will be collecting too much information to read each of the responses to an open-ended question, then use the following question: "What is your gender identity?"

- Woman/Girl
- Man/Boy
- Nonbinary
- Gender Identity Not Listed
- Prefer Not to State."

5. How can 4-H personnel and volunteers ensure they are creating written 4-H materials and communications that are gender inclusive?

In all written documents and communications, 4-H personnel and volunteers should use gender neutral or inclusive language. This includes 4-H scholarships applications, registration forms, and program/activity announcements. Below are some examples of how gendered terms can be replaced with gender neutral language.

Gendered	Gender Neutral
Chairman	Chairperson, Chair

Boys and Girls	Youth, Children, 4-H members
Mother/Father	Parent, Caregiver
Gendered 4-H Project Titles	Gender Neutral 4-H Project Titles
Cooking for Boys	Cooking Methods
Girl's Health – Education on Periods	Menstrual Health

More information on gender inclusive writing is available [here](#).

6. Is it appropriate to verify that an individual is really nonbinary, intersex or transgender?

Note: The terms “intersex” and “transgender” are not interchangeable when listed in this instance or following considerations. See terminology on page 2.

Verification is neither necessary nor appropriate. 4-H does not require a medical diagnosis, treatment, or identification documentation that reflects an individual's gender, and the

4-H program may not ask for them. Individuals are not required to notify the 4-H program that they are nonbinary, transgender or intersex. Electing not to inform the 4-H program is perfectly fine. As soon as an individual lets the 4-H program know that they are nonbinary, intersex, or transgender, or that they are beginning gender transition, 4-H will treat that person consistent with this information.

7. Where should people who identify as transgender or intersex sleep, use the restroom, and shower when facilities are gender segregated?

When there are gender segregated facilities and/or activities, individuals who identify as transgender or intersex must be allowed to sleep, use the restroom, shower, and participate in alignment with their gender. Some individuals who are early in the stages of gender transition may feel more comfortable participating in alignment with their sex assigned at birth, which is okay too. If your event has room assignments, it is a great practice to let all campers indicate who they would prefer to share a room/cabin with. Regardless of sex and gender, people are often most comfortable in shared sleeping spaces when they select their own roommates.

Do not require an individual to utilize single-user facilities (sleeping, restroom, or shower) unless the other participants are also required to do so. Singling out one individual because of their gender can be alienating and, despite good intentions, may be harmful to the individual. A single-user facility or other private option should be made available to anyone who requests it. Some ways to offer private options include using dividers, hanging curtains, or arranging private bathing/showering times.

8. Where should people who are nonbinary, transgender, or intersex sleep, use the restroom, and shower when facilities are co-ed?

In a co-ed facility, people who identify as nonbinary, transgender, or intersex should utilize the common sleeping, restroom, and shower facilities in the same manner as the rest of the 4-H participants. Do not require an individual to utilize single-user facilities (sleeping, restroom, or shower) unless the other individuals are also required to do so. Singling out one individual because of their gender can be

alienating and, despite good intentions, may be harmful to the individual. At the same time, many people, regardless of gender, feel more comfortable showering and changing in private. As such, it is best practice to offer all participants the option of privacy at all 4-H events and camps. Some 4-H programs have installed curtains in the group showers and partitions in changing areas for all participants' privacy. Another successful strategy is to offer signups for private shower times throughout the day. The key is to make these options available to all participants, not just those who identify as nonbinary, transgender, or intersex.

- 9.** We have group showers. Where should people who identify as nonbinary, transgender, or intersex shower?

All 4-H participants must be treated in the same manner. If group showers and changing spaces are utilized at your 4-H event or camp, then everyone must be permitted to use them according to their gender. At the same time, many people feel more comfortable showering and changing in private. As such, it is a best practice to offer participants the option of privacy at all 4-H events and camps. Some 4-H programs have installed curtains in the group showers and partitions in changing areas for all participants' privacy. Another successful strategy is to offer signups for private shower times throughout the day. The key is to make these options available to all participants, not just those who identify as nonbinary, transgender, or intersex.

- 10.** What is the most inclusive response when participants who are openly gay request to share overnight accommodations?

This is a great time to think about the difference between identities and behaviors. An individual's participation may not be restricted because of their sexual orientation. Therefore, if other participants are allowed to identify roommates, then all participants should be allowed to. If the facility has gender-segregated sleeping arrangements, all individuals should participate in alignment with their gender and irrespective of their sexual orientation. 4-H programs should have clear guidelines about acceptable and unacceptable physical contact, as well as the consequences for violating these guidelines. Any participant who violates these guidelines should receive the same corrective action regardless of their sexual orientation. Note that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer youth members are no more likely to engage in inappropriate physical conduct than other youth.

- 11.** Our 4-H program has swimming times where participants wear bathing suits. What is the most affirming response if a participant wears a bathing suit that is revealing of their reproductive anatomy or buttocks?

This is another example of the need to respond to behaviors rather than identities.

4-H should provide the following guidelines about bathing suits and dress for all prospective participants and families:

All participants at 4-H programs should wear clothing (including swimsuits when needed) that is not revealing. Clothing and bathing suits should cover all reproductive anatomy, including breasts and genitals, as well as buttocks. Any participant whose clothing reveals reproductive anatomy or buttocks will be asked to change into clothing that is not revealing.

If any 4-H participants are wearing clothing (including a bathing suit when needed) that is revealing of their reproductive anatomy or buttocks, you should ask them to change their apparel in a non-judgmental way. You should simply remind them of the [4-H Dress Guidelines](#) and ask them to change.

It is important that all 4-H participants be held to the same standards of dress, regardless of gender and sexual orientation. You must be careful to prevent selective enforcement of these dress guidelines that targets individuals of certain genders, gender expressions, or sexual orientations, which would be discriminatory.

12. Should adult chaperones supervise youth during showering and changing times?

Adult chaperones should remain within hearing distances of youth members during showering and changing times. At no time should an adult visually supervise youth members during showering and changing times. Adult chaperones who remain within eyesight of youth changing and showering are at risk for violating youth privacy and safety.

13. Is it appropriate to notify youth members and/or parents of other youth members that a nonbinary, transgender or intersex individual will be participating in our 4-H event, activity, or camp?

No. Gender and sex assigned at birth are considered personally identifiable information, which must be kept confidential. Protecting nonbinary, transgender, and intersex individuals' privacy is critical to maintain safety and well-being, ensuring that individuals are treated consistent with their gender, and preventing potential harm. The same is true for sexual orientation. 4-H staff should inform all parents and youth members about the inclusive environment and non-discrimination policies. If parents or youth members are uncomfortable with these policies, they may decide to limit their participation in 4-H.

14. Is it appropriate to notify 4-H staff and volunteers that a transgender or intersex member will be participating in a 4-H program, event, activity, or camp?

Only in very limited situations. Personally identifiable information (including gender and sex assigned at birth) must be kept confidential. This information may only be disclosed to those 4-H staff and volunteers that have a legitimate programmatic need for the information. For example, a 4-H staff and/or volunteer may need to know to ensure a specific request by the individual is fulfilled. A participant simply identifying as nonbinary, transgender, or intersex does not constitute a legitimate programmatic need. 4-H staff and volunteers who do not have a legitimate programmatic need for the information may not be informed. Even if an individual has disclosed their gender to some members of the 4-H community, 4-H shall not disclose this information to others. Inclusivity training for your 4-H staff and volunteers is suggested as well as creating opportunities to discuss how to implement non-discrimination policies. These discussions and trainings will help prepare staff and volunteers to address questions, concerns, harassment, and bullying that may occur.

15. A youth member (or members' parents/guardians) contacted 4-H to say that they do not want to share sleeping accommodations with a youth who identifies as nonbinary or transgender. What is the most inclusive response?

As mentioned above, it is a great practice to let all campers indicate who they would prefer to share a room/cabin with. Regardless of gender, people are often most comfortable in shared sleeping spaces when they select their own roommates.

You should also inform the individual that you are required to follow the UC ANR's non-discrimination policies. According to these policies, 4-H does not disclose information about individuals' gender. Additionally, these policies state that a youth refusing to share sleeping accommodations with another youth who identifies as nonbinary or transgender is discriminatory. While 4-H members (or their parents/guardians) may choose to not participate in the 4-H event/camp, the 4-H program will not allow

discrimination against any individual, despite objections or concerns from staff, faculty, youth members, adult volunteers, families, or other community members.

Additionally, you may provide the contact information of the UC ANR Title IX Officer if someone continues to raise objections to the non-discrimination policy and how it influences University Extension programs, such as 4-H: (530) 750-1397.

- 16.** A parent/guardian of a 4-H member called and wants to know why, in their opinion, UC ANR is putting the rights of children who identify as nonbinary or transgender over the rights of their child. What is the most inclusive response?

UC ANR 4-H provides equal opportunities for all youth and families to participate in 4-H programming. Ensuring full participation for members who identify as nonbinary or transgender does not infringe on the rights or opportunities of other members. While a youth (or youth's parent/guardian) may decide to limit their own participation, 4-H will not allow discrimination against any individual, despite objections or concerns from staff, faculty, youth members, adult volunteers, families, or other community members. Also, you may provide the contact information to the UC ANR Title IX Officer if someone continues to raise objections to the non-discrimination policy: (530) 750-1397.

Individuals who object to the non-discrimination policies and decide to participate in 4-H anyway should be advised about prohibition of harassment. University personnel should also be aware that these individuals may present a higher risk to an individual who identifies as nonbinary and transgender.

- 17.** For an upcoming 4-H event this year, there is a female participant who is planning to wear a suit and wants to attend with a female partner. What is the most inclusive response?

4-H prohibits discrimination based on gender expression and sexual orientation. 4-H may not limit individuals' participation in activities because they appear or behave in a manner that is consistent with their gender or in a manner that does not conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity. This is true for uniforms, other attire requirements, recognition ceremonies, and all other activities. Please refer to the [California 4-H Dress Guidelines](#). If partners are allowed at the dance, then they must be allowed without regard to gender, gender expression and sexual orientation.

- 18.** What tips do you have for addressing questions from youth members about individuals who identify as transgender?

It is important to provide opportunities for positive discussion and educational moments as they arise. At the same time, it is also necessary to protect the privacy of individuals. Keep discussions generic, referring to "people" rather than a specific person. With younger members, a fairly simplistic discussion is often the most appropriate. For example:

Young Member: Why does that boy dress like a girl?

4-H Volunteer/Staff: I don't know about that member's experience. We often think there is one way to dress like a girl and one way to dress like a boy. But really, people can dress in lots of different ways. In 4-H, we want people to be comfortable to dress like themselves. What do you like to wear?

For older members, it may be helpful to provide more information. For example:

Older Member: Last year, that member stayed with us in the girls' room/cabin/section. Why is she staying in the boys' room/cabin/section this year?

4-H Volunteer/Staff: I don't know about that member's experience, but sometimes people are assigned female at birth and as they grow up they understand themselves as a boy and identify as a boy. Sometimes people are assigned male at birth and as they grow up they understand themselves as a girl and identify as a girl. Sometimes people grow up and realize that they do not identify as a boy or a girl. There are lots of ways people understand who they are. In 4-H, we want everyone to be comfortable being themselves.

- 19.** What is the appropriate response to a report that an individual is being harassed because of their sexual orientation, gender, and/or gender expression. How should we respond?

Whether this report comes directly from the individual, someone else, or direct observation, a thorough response is required. All 4-H programs must provide a safe environment free of harassment based on an individual's sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression. If harassment occurs, intervention should occur immediately. A single offensive comment should be discussed and a review of the 4-H code of conduct, and UC ANR's non-discrimination policy shall be implemented. Failing to treat individuals in a way that is consistent with their gender, including using their lived names and pronouns, may constitute harassment. If harassment continues, 4-H personnel should immediately stop the harassment, prevent the reoccurrence, and engage in appropriate corrective action. In all cases, take steps to ensure the individual who experienced the conduct is secure and safe and check in with them regularly to make sure the behavior has stopped. All reports of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or sexual violence must be reported to the UCANR, Affirmative Action Compliance & Title IX Officer, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2801 Second Street, Davis, CA 95618, (530) 750-1397. Alternatively, a program discrimination complaint may be filed with the UC Harassment & Discrimination Assistance and Prevention Program (HDAPP) by email hdapp@ucdavis.edu or phone: 530-304-3864; or contact the UC ANR Title IX Coordinator at (530) 752-9466.

For more information on how to report harassment and discrimination go to:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/DiscriminationSexual_Violence/Reporting/

- 20.** How can someone file a complaint in regard to the non-discrimination policy?

Share the UC ANR [non-discrimination policy](#) in materials distributed to 4-H families. Provide the contact information for the UC ANR, Affirmative Action Compliance & Title IX Officer: (530) 750-1397 or website: http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Diversity/Affirmative_Action/

Alternatively, a program discrimination complaint may be filed with the UC Harassment & Discrimination Assistance and Prevention Program (HDAPP) by email hdapp@ucdavis.edu or phone: 530-304-3864; or contact the UC ANR Title IX Coordinator at (530) 752-9466.

- 21.** What is the UC ANR Non-Discrimination Policy?

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, status as a U.S. veteran, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted by UC ANR. Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language) should contact the UC ANR Office of Diversity & Inclusion, phone: 530-786-0206, email: dewhite@ucanr.edu or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720- 2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

Alternatively, a program discrimination complaint may be filed with the UC Harassment & Discrimination Assistance and Prevention Program (HDAPP) by email hdapp@ucdavis.edu or phone: 530-304-3864; or contact the UC ANR Title IX Coordinator at (530) 752-9466.

The University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) is an equal opportunity provider.

Inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to: UC ANR, Interim Affirmative Action Compliance Officer, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2801 Second Street, Davis, CA 95618, (530) 750-1280. Email: tjordan@ucanr.edu. Website: [http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Diversity/Affirmative Action/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Diversity/Affirmative_Action/).

This policy statement supersedes the UC ANR Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action Policy Statement for University of California Publications Regarding Program Practices dated July 2013.

This document was developed with guidance from UC 4-H leadership, administration, Title IX Office, and legal counsel. The revised version was approved for statewide use on 5/10/2021. This document has been subsequently revised as of 6/2023.