

What to do if you experience bullying or harassment

You should tell someone with the authority to investigate and address the problem. This could be your principal, assistant principal, school counselor, or another trusted staff member.

In Washington State, every public school district is required to:

- Designate a Gender-Inclusive Schools Compliance Officer (sometimes called a Civil Rights or Equity Coordinator)
- Adopt and implement a Gender-Inclusive Schools Policy aligned with OSPI Guidelines
- Investigate any reported incidents of gender-based harassment or discrimination even if no formal complaint is filed
- You can find your school district's designated Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator on the district's website or by calling the main office

Escalating Reports

If your school doesn't address the issue properly, you have the right to escalate your complaint. You can:

- File a complaint with your school district under its Gender-Inclusive or Nondiscrimination Policy. Every district is required by law to have a procedure for handling these complaints.
- File a complaint with the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) through the Equity and Civil Rights Office:

Email: equity@k12.wa.us
Phone: (360) 725-6162



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Rights in Schools



Bullying & Harassment Protections

Washington State has some of the strongest protections in the country for transgender and gender-expansive students. Washington public schools are required to follow the Gender-Inclusive Schools Policy. This means they must prevent and respond to discriminatory harassment based on gender identity or expression.

RCW 281.642

Prohibits discrimination in public schools based on race, creed, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, and other characteristics.

RCW 281.642.080

Mandates that each school district adopts or amends policies and procedures to incorporate elements of the model transgender student policy, a standard template that provides the framework and requirements including:

- Designating a primary contact for transgender student policies
- Ensuring implementation of these policies
- Serving as the liaison between the school district and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

OSPI Guidelines

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides guidance to schools on creating gender-inclusive environments, emphasizing the rights of students to be treated consistent with their gender identity at school.

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Names and Pronouns in Public Schools

In Washington State, public schools must respect and use your chosen name and pronouns, regardless of whether you've legally changed your name or gender marker in most cases. Under Washington state law, students have the right to be addressed by their self-identified name and pronouns, even without a legal name or gender designation change.

Public schools must use this information in day-to-day settings such as:

- Class instruction
- Seating charts
- Roll call
- Tests and assignments
- School publications (e.g. playbills, yearbooks)
- Student ID cards and similar non-official documents

A legal name or gender marker change is not required for these uses. If a student has undergone a legal name or gender marker change, the school is required to update its official records accordingly from that point forward (not retroactively).

Recordkeeping: Legal vs. Non-Legal Names

<i>Non-Official Records</i>	
Schools must use the student's requested name, pronouns, and gender designation on non-official records. This includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student ID cards• Athletic team rosters• Attendance lists• Playbills and performance programs• Yearbooks and newsletters
<i>Official Records</i>	
Some official records may still require the use of a student's legal name. This includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transcripts• State assessments and testing records• Enrollment or state reporting documents

However, schools must update the legal name on official records if the student provides documentation of a legal name change. Additionally, a student or their parent may request a gender marker change on official records without proof of a legal gender designation change.

Coming Out / School Disclosure to Others

Disclosure to Parents

Under the new Parents' Bill of Rights, your school can disclose—and may be required to disclose—your transgender status to your parents. The law grants parents extensive rights to review:

- Mental health counseling records
- Medical or health records
- Student-specific files, documents, or emails

If your transgender status is mentioned in any of these, your parent can legally request and receive that information. This bill strictly applies to internal school records. For example:

- If you talk to a school counselor or nurse about being transgender, those notes may be accessible to your parent.
- If a staff member emails about using your preferred name or pronouns, that communication could count as part of your educational record and be disclosed.

Parental Notification Requirements

The law also requires schools to notify parents about:

- Any medical services (unless it's an emergency)
- Any services that impact insurance or require follow-up care

If your school offers gender-affirming services (such as counseling, support groups, or referrals), the school may have to inform your parents depending on how those services are classified.

Restrooms & Locker Rooms (Gendered Spaces)

Even though federal law permits schools to bar students from using restrooms and locker rooms pertaining to their gender identity, in Washington state public schools must allow students to use the restroom that matches their gender identity. Students should be allowed (but not required) to use an alternative private restroom if one is available.

WAC 162-32-060

This regulation requires that all covered entities, including public schools, allow individuals to use gender-segregated facilities (e.g. restrooms, locker rooms) consistent with their gender identity or expression.