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**The School Counselor and Gender Equity and Inclusivity**  
(Adopted 1983; revised 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2014, 2020, 2026 draft)

*Note: This draft combines two position statements – The School Counselor and Gender Equity (2020) and The School Counselor and Transgender and Nonbinary Youth (2022)*

**American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position**

School counselors affirm each and every student’s right to be treated with dignity and respect by creating safe learning environments that are free from discrimination, harassment and bullying based on gender, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors are committed to modeling gender inclusivity, promoting gender equity and safeguarding the well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming students. These principles are applied within the scope of the school counselor’s professional responsibilities and in accordance with applicable federal, state and local law and district policy.

**The Rationale**

School counselors recognize that gender-based discrimination negatively affects student outcomes across academic, career and social/emotional domains (Glisten, 2026; Leaper & Gutierrez, 2024). To expand the range of options available to students, it is important that school counselors become acutely aware of ways in which language, organizational structures, leader selection, expectations of individuals and activity implementation affect opportunities based on gender. Many federal and state laws have been passed protecting individuals from gender discrimination in education and work (e.g., Equal Pay Act of 1963; Civil Rights Act of 1964; Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Title IX, 1972; Women’s Educational Equity Act of 1974; Taylor Law, 1989; Vocational Amendments of 1976; Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009). These important legal mandates ensure equal treatment under the law but do not necessarily change ingrained attitudes and behaviors.

Although gender discrimination affects every student, transgender and gender-nonconforming students may face unique circumstances requiring additional support (Frost & Meyer, 2023; Glisten, 2026; Nath et al., 2024). For example, these students report higher negative mental health and

41 behavior outcomes (Russell et al., 2021). Research indicates that  
42 transgender and gender-nonconforming students with supportive adults in  
43 their school and affirming policies in their districts are more likely to feel  
44 safe and have a greater sense of belonging in school (Glisten, 2026).

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## 46 **The School Counselor's Role**

47 School counselors advocate for affirming, safe environments for each and  
48 every student, while aligning practice with law and policy at the federal,  
49 state, local and district levels (ASCA, 2022). Although the guidelines within  
50 this statement provide important suggestions, they cannot anticipate every  
51 situation that might arise in different settings.

52

53 School counselors:

- 54 ● Model gender-affirming language and inclusive attitudes for students  
55 and staff
- 56 ● Provide proactive, developmentally appropriate, classroom instruction  
57 to educate and reduce bullying and discrimination
- 58 ● Maintain awareness of continually evolving legislation and policy  
59 around gender equity and identity in educational settings and align  
60 practice accordingly
- 61 ● Deliver classroom instruction on postsecondary readiness that  
62 recognizes stereotypical gender role expectations and reduces bias  
63 that may influence students' career expectations and opportunities  
64 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023; National  
65 Science Foundation [NSF], 2023; Oliveria et al., 2020)
- 66 ● Advocate for each and every student to have access to curricular or  
67 extracurricular opportunities, including athletic programs, and work to  
68 alleviate discrimination when policies limit transgender and gender-  
69 nonconforming students' participation
- 70 ● Support dress codes that are free from discrimination and equally  
71 enforced for each and every student
- 72 ● Affirm that the determination of a student's gender identity rests solely  
73 with the student.
- 74 ● Consider how confidential, sensitive information about a student's  
75 identity may be accessible to other staff with a legitimate educational  
76 interest and parents/legal guardians, per the Family Educational Rights  
77 and Privacy Act
- 78 ● Respect student autonomy and provide accurate, transparent  
79 information to each and every student about confidentiality limits and  
80 relevant laws and policies (ASCA, 2022)
- 81 ● Are aware that it is best practice to refer to students by names and  
82 pronouns that affirm their gender, gender identity and gender  
83 expression (Russell et al., 2021)

- 84 • Advocate for affirming bathroom and locker room policies so each and  
85 every student can feel safe and use the selected facilities with dignity  
86 (Glisten, 2026)
- 87 • Encourage the routine re-evaluation of district operations, programs,  
88 policies and activities that promote gender-inclusive strategies and  
89 work collaboratively to remove barriers that inhibit gender equity  
90 (Glisten, 2026; McQuillan et al., 2024)

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## 92 **Summary**

93 School counselors are committed to creating emotionally, intellectually and  
94 physically safe learning environments for each and every student, regardless  
95 of gender, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors' model  
96 and advocate for gender equity and inclusivity that supports all members of  
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