

Gender Identity Resource

Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan invests in the positive growth of our communities by living our mission to build character, confidence, and courage, and make the world a better place. We are proud to be a vital and integral part of every community we serve. A diverse spectrum of race, ethnicity, income level, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and religion is represented in our 34 counties. Our goal is to reflect this diversity in our membership. We strive to make Girl Scouts a welcoming place for our members to belong and prosper. Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan is highly committed to being a positive instrument of change, promoting equitable outcomes for all, and a place to thrive and obtain leadership competencies that provide lifelong advantages for every individual who participates. We wholly commit to taking action to grow as an organization that practices and advocates for racial, economic, and social justice for everyone. We strive to create a safe harbor that celebrates differences and counters bigotry so that, through Girl Scouts, our members are affirmed as they work hard to make our community and world better.

Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan welcomes children to join as members from across the gender spectrum. We aim to provide a space for those who identify as cisgender girls (gender identity: girl; sex assigned at birth: female); gender non-conforming/gender neutral/non-binary; transgender boys (gender identity: boy; sex assigned at birth: female); and transgender girls (gender identity: girl; sex assigned at birth: male). Cisgender boys (gender identity: boy; sex assigned at birth: male) cannot be members.

The primary concern of Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan is the health and well-being of every single Girl Scout, and protecting her right to privacy.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who can join GSHOM? I identify as _____. Can I join Girl Scouts and participate in troops, camps and/or programming?

- Cisgender girl (gender identity: girl; sex assigned at birth: female): yes
- Gender non-conforming/gender neutral/non-binary: yes
- Transgender: yes
 - Transgender boy (gender identity: boy; sex assigned at birth: female): yes
 - Transgender girl (gender identity: girl; sex assigned at birth: male): yes
- Cisgender boy (gender identity: boy; sex assigned at birth: male): no

Q: How do I use preferred pronouns with Girl Scouts?

Girl Scouts are expected to be respectful to all individuals. Using preferred pronouns is another way to treat others with respect. Guidance can be provided for a respectful and productive dialogue.

Q: What do I tell people (whether they are related to the Girl Scout or not) if they have questions about another Girl Scout?

Remind them of Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan's (GSHOM) commitment and expectations to live by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Let them know that due to the individual Girl Scout's right to privacy, you cannot discuss specifics about any member and remind them that GSHOM is a welcoming environment for all individuals except cisgender boys (gender identity: boy; sex assigned at birth: male).

Q: How do I respond to or support parents or volunteers around this topic?

Please refer them to their Troop Support Specialist or Membership Team Leader. You may also direct them to any member of the Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan Executive Team. As always, you can direct a parent or volunteer to call the Help Desk to connect them to the appropriate person.

Q: Do I have to provide separate bathrooms/dressing rooms/showers for transgender and gender non-conforming Girl Scouts?

All members are entitled to privacy while using restroom facilities. This includes toilets, changing areas, and showers. Please continue to practice good privacy strategies for all individuals including access to private changing spaces and times for all individuals. Members have the right to use the facility of their choosing (men's, women's, or gender-neutral facilities [where available]). All Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan properties offer gender neutral facilities for the comfort and convenience of any guest.

Q: For overnight events, where should everyone sleep?

It is a best practice to provide an opportunity for families/campers to note accommodation requests of any sort for organizing logistics. Unless a camper states otherwise, we should treat them the same as all campers with regard to things like sleeping arrangements, etc. There is no need to discuss a camper's gender identity with others. If questions arise among members, address the issue with respect, protecting the needs of all participants, and in an age appropriate manner.

Q: What if gender identity topics are raised by youth or come up naturally during Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan events?

If topics relating to gender identity are raised organically, it is acceptable to discuss them depending on the volunteers' capacity and knowledge, with respect for individual girls' privacy and well-being. While a Sensitive Topics Permission Form isn't required by the council, please use your best judgment in consultation with Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan staff in deciding whether use of the Sensitive Topics Permission Form would be a good idea. If you decide that the Sensitive Topics permission form is needed, tell all individuals involved that you would like to place a hold on the conversation and that you will return to it if the application is accepted. Please keep every girl's best interest at heart.

Q: What if volunteers or employees identify as trans+ or gender non-conforming?

Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan proudly has a non-discrimination policy. The same guidelines are applicable regardless of whether the individuals are youth, volunteers, or employees.

Q: I don't feel knowledgeable enough to navigate gender issues, what can I do?

Talk to the individual, talk to the parents (if they are engaged and know), talk to the appropriate staff leader. We are excited to help and support you and there are lots of resources for you. We all have a responsibility to treat every individual with respect and dignity, and to honor the way they show up in the world.