

B. FAQ:

Transitioning at school

Terminology

This resource provides schools with information to support whakawāhine, tangata ira tane, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, akava'ine, trans, gender queer and other gender diverse and gender questioning students. The umbrella term 'trans' has been used in this resource to describe this wide range of people. It may not be the term individual students use to describe their gender identity.

Other useful factsheets in this series

- FAQ: Supporting trans students
- LINKS: Trans youth
- RESOURCES: Trans children, youth and their families
- RESOURCES: Terminology
- WORKSHOP: Young and trans

What does transitioning mean?

The steps trans people take to live in their appropriate gender identity are called 'transitioning'. Some steps are medical, such as hormone therapy or a range of surgeries. There is no single way of transitioning and some students may delay any 'medical transition' until they leave school. However, they may still 'socially transition' by dressing and living in their preferred gender.

Is it appropriate for students to transition at school?

It is unlawful for a school to discriminate against students because of their sex or gender identity. Trans students should be able to socially and/or medically transition at school. Choosing if, and when, to transist is a decision a trans young person makes, with support from family and health professionals. It is the school's role to enable trans students to have the same right to education as other students.

Will trans students need time off school for medical appointments?

Trans youth often see a counsellor or psychotherapist, particularly if they are considering medical transition. These appointments may be during school time. If a trans student medically transitions they may have appointments with a hospital specialist and/or a doctor.



Will trans students be on hormones?

Some trans youth may be taking hormones that have been prescribed by a medical specialist. These include hormone blockers that halt puberty, female hormones for trans girls and male hormones for trans boys.

Will trans students need time off school for surgery?

Surgery to create a male chest is often a relatively early step for trans boys, so may occur while a trans boy is still attending school. Breast augmentation for trans girls does not usually take place until at least 18 months after they have started hormones. Therefore a female trans student is less likely to have this surgery while at school. Typically other gender reassignment surgeries are not performed on someone under the age of 18.

Will trans students need special treatment and/or support?

Most of the support trans students require is addressed by developing a trans-inclusive policy spelling out a consistent approach to the issues raised here and in the *FAQ: Supporting Trans Students*. An inclusive policy reassures trans students and their families that the school is safe and supportive. Organisations listed in *LINKS: Trans youth* can provide further advice to individual schools, Boards of Trustees and parents.

Some trans students may need more support from the school counsellor, particularly if they do not have much support from family and friends.

Schools can use existing policies and practices to support trans students. When trans students transition, they require the same support as other students who need time off school for medical appointments or who are adjusting to new medication.

If trans students are bullied because of their gender identity or expression, they require the same support as other students who have been bullied.

How will transitioning at school impact on a student's school work?

If handled well, there should be no real impact on trans students' school work. Transitioning may even help to make trans students more focused and determined. Acceptance will allow trans students to concentrate on their studies instead of dealing with rejection and prejudice.

The best help the school can offer is to accept trans students just as they are, and provide enough flexibility so that students have room to sort things out for themselves.

