



Gegi's Tips for Gender-Friendly Overnight Field Trips

- 1. Learn what gender-based discrimination looks like.** In Canadian schools and their associated activities, every student has the right to access gender-segregated facilities or housing that they know to be right for them. No one may ask a transgender person (of any age) to stay in gender-segregated housing that does not align with their gender identity or to stay in a private room (if not self-selected), as this is gender identity discrimination. You can learn more about gender identity and gender expression human rights in Ontario at gegi.ca.
- 2. Do not expect that all transgender students will have the same needs.** Some trans boys feel safe and affirmed in boys' washrooms, changing rooms, dorms, etc., and some do not, for many reasons including harassment and violence. The same is true for some trans girls. Some nonbinary students feel comfortable in gendered housing, while others may not. Asking for a private room, or to share a room or be billeted along with a trusted friend or two (regardless of gender identity) can be what a trans student needs right now. This does not make them less of a boy or girl, or less nonbinary, but it can give trans students access to experiences that many students enjoy without thinking. Similarly, a trans student might make the call that being out is too risky for them for the purposes of this trip; that does not mean they are 'less trans' (etc.), and does not alter the school's legal responsibility to provide this student with an environment free from gender identity discrimination. And this call must be the student's alone; any coercion (subtle or overt) may constitute gender identity and/or gender expression discrimination.
- 3. Examine the itinerary through a gender diversity lens.** If gender isn't something staff have had to think much about as individuals, it can come as a shock just how much of everyday life involves binary gender segregation. Does your field trip (whether overnight or no, within Canada or internationally) include spaces where boys/men and girls/women are expected to dress or participate in gender-conforming ways? This includes but is not limited to 'semi-formal' dress required by some restaurants, faith-based settings, performances or ceremonies. In all venues on your itinerary, have you verified that there are all-gender washrooms and changing rooms (if applicable), or at least single-stall ones? If no, what accommodation can you create with venue staff, respecting the privacy and dignity of the student(s) in question? Don't wait until you are on site to let things work themselves out. Instead, discuss any gender segregation and related strategies with transgender students (more tips for checking in below). That said, the best plan is to organize field trips that work for *all* students, and to let potential venues know that you will not be bringing your group (e.g., because they do not have all-gender facilities or contingency plans) in order to encourage change. Lastly, remember that gender non-conforming students who are *not* transgender *also* do not have to dress in gender-conforming ways, and may not be coerced to do so, as this may constitute gender expression discrimination.
- 4. Long before an upcoming overnight field trip, check in with transgender student participants about housing.** The best judge of whether particular housing is best for a student is the student themselves. A teacher (etc.) who has formed a trusting relationship with the student can check in with open-ended questions: "how are you feeling about the trip? Is there anything I can do to make the trip awesome?" This will likely surface housing. If not, being direct is okay: "what kind of housing do you need on *this* trip?" As everyone's relationship to their gender and body changes over time, so too for trans people. Lastly, if you know that a trans student's parents or



guardians affirm who they are, checking in with them can be a good idea, but this should never replace or supersede the student's own articulation of their needs.

5. If a student does not want to bunk with another student because they are transgender, move the former not the latter. Consider how this strategy for addressing 'someone-is-in-the-wrong-washroom' complaints can be applied in the case of overnight field trip housing: "are they doing something to make you feel unsafe? No? Then move along and mind your business. If you like, the all-gender washroom is down the hall." Here, behaviour, not gender identity, is grounds for removing someone from a space. If a transgender student is doing their thing and minding their business, they have the right to be in the best-fit accommodation for them, just like a cisgender (non-trans) student. If another student objects, they can be accommodated elsewhere.

6. Costs associated with providing private or semi-private accommodations, if necessary, should not be borne by transgender students. Not much else to say, as this is very likely to be gender identity discrimination! Chances are there are other families in your school find overnight field trips to be a source of financial strain. Gegi suggests organizing everyone in raising funds to support all participants in needs-based ways.



About gegi.ca

gegi.ca is an Ontario-based online knowledge mobilization hub about gender expression and gender identity human rights protections and advocacy created by Dr. Lee Airton (Faculty of Education, Queen's University), Dr. Kyle Kirkup (Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa) and their research team. For more information, visit www.gegi.ca/about.