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Using Respectful Language

Although there is experience in youth serving organizations with transgender boys in a program like Scouting, the Scout Oath and Law remind us to treat all people – especially children – with dignity and respect. The following definitions, based on resources from various experts, are not meant to label, but are intended as functional descriptors to help encourage respectful conversations among Scouting professionals, leaders and volunteers.

- **Sex** - The classification of a person as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on a birth certificate.) A person's sex, however, is a combination of bodily characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs.
- **Gender Identity** - A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices.
- **Sexual Orientation** - Describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same.
- **Transgender (adj.)** - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon appearance or medical procedures.
- **Transition** - Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition can include some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Avoid the phrase "sex change".

A Word about Names, Pronoun Usage and Descriptions

The most respectful and courteous approach is to ask a transgender person what their preferred name is and what pronouns they prefer to use. It is also helpful to remember:

- Always use a transgender person's chosen name.
- Use the pronoun that matches the person's gender.
- If it is not possible to ask a transgender person which pronoun they use, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person's appearance and gender expression or use the singular they.
- It is never appropriate to put quotation marks around a transgender person's chosen name or the pronoun that reflects that person's gender identity.