



# Supporting Intersex Students

## *A Resource for Students, Families, and Educators*

Schools play an important role in supporting the dignity, safety, and well-being of all students, including intersex students who may face challenges specific to being intersex.

Federal civil rights laws protect all students, including intersex students, from sex discrimination. This protection includes, for example, protection against discrimination because students do not fit stereotypical views about boys and girls or men and women.

“Intersex” generally describes people with variations in physical sex characteristics. These variations may involve anatomy, hormones, chromosomes, and other traits that differ from expectations generally associated with male and female bodies.

While some people are identified as intersex at birth based on their visible sex characteristics, others may not know they have intersex traits until later in life, if ever. Intersex people may have any gender identity, such as male, female, or nonbinary.

### **What are some key issues intersex students may face in school?**

- Bullying, harassment, or other discrimination related to their physical characteristics or because they do not conform to sex stereotypes.
- Concerns about maintaining the confidentiality of their personal health information.
- Questions or skepticism from others about their bodies or gender identity.
- Social isolation or exclusion from certain activities where students are separated based on sex.
- Health needs, which may include complications from medical interventions.



## How Can Schools Support Intersex Students?

- Use inclusive language in school mission statements, such as a commitment to a safe and supportive campus for all students.
- Affirm students' right to be free from all forms of sex discrimination at school.
- Adopt policies that respect all students' gender identities and, where relevant, accurately reflect the diversity of human bodies.
- Advance gender-neutral practices (e.g., have students line up alphabetically).
- Maintain confidentiality about a student's medical information, except in the limited circumstances where disclosure is legally required.
- Facilitate opportunities for students to find support from peers, teachers, faculty, and staff, such as student-led organizations, and identify or provide supportive resources.
- Provide professional development opportunities for educators on supportive treatment of intersex students.

## What if Students Believe They Have Experienced Discrimination in School?

If you believe that you or another person has been discriminated against—for example, treated differently, denied an educational opportunity, harassed, bullied, or retaliated against—based on sex, there are a number of steps you can take:

1

**Tell a teacher or school leader** (for example, a principal or student affairs staff member) immediately. If you don't get the help you need, you may file a complaint with the school, school district, college, or university. Keep records of your complaint and responses you receive.

2

**Write down the details** about what happened, where and when the incident happened, who was involved, and the names of any witnesses. Do this for every incident of discrimination, and keep copies of any related documents or other information.

3

If you have contacted the school and it has not taken steps to appropriately address your concerns, you can **file a complaint** (in English or another language) with the **Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education**.