

# TRANS YOUTH IN SPORTS CONVERSATION GUIDE

## If They Ask, You Can Ask Back

### ON FAIRNESS & SAFETY

#### If They Ask

- “How can it be fair (or safe) for a girl to compete against a boy?”
- “Why can’t girls play with girls, boys play with boys, and trans kids play with trans kids—or the sex they were born as?”

#### You Can Ask Back

- “How would you define fairness in sports for everyone?”
- “What do you think matters most in sports?”
- “Have you ever been left out just because of who you are?”

#### What You Might Say

- \* Success in sports depends on so many things: sleep, nutrition, mindset, and some factors we can't control. Win or lose, the real benefits—for all of us—come from the lessons, like perseverance, that stay with us even after we leave the field.
- \* This isn't just about sports. It's about kids being fully accepted for who they are at school and beyond.
- \* There aren't enough young trans athletes for separate categories to work and trans girls playing with boys goes against their gender and how their teammates see them. Either option would leave kids on the sidelines, feeling marginalized and missing out on the crucial life lessons—like teamwork and leadership—we learn from sports and carry through our lives.
- \* History shows what's at stake: when schools shut people out, we all lose. Can you name a successful ban? When every person feels like they belong, we all grow stronger, even if it feels unfamiliar at first.
- \* We're talking about kids—kids who, at this age, aren't very different, whether they're boys or girls—and whether they have a chance to play school sports. As kids grow, local communities know their students best. Like in New Jersey, where schools figured out a fair solution, and trans students have played sports for 16 years without issue. In Los Angeles, it's been nearly 12 years, also problem-free.
- \* Every kid deserves the opportunity to learn the lessons sports teach, and Title IX has guaranteed fairness in sports for over fifty years without policing children's differences. Excluding trans kids would change that.

### ON BEING TRANS

#### If They Ask

- “I don't really understand what it means to be transgender. How can someone be a different gender than what they're born as?”
- “It feels like there are more transgender people now, especially kids. It seems like they're getting these ideas from social media?”

#### You Can Ask Back

- “What if the world kept telling you that you shouldn't exist?”
- “Can you imagine if people didn't believe something you know is true about yourself?”



#### What You Might Say

- \* People aren't defined just by pieces of paper. What's written on a birth certificate doesn't decide who I am, who you are, or who a trans person is.
- \* There's a lot of talk about transgender people, and much of it focuses on kids. But what often gets overlooked is how it feels to be left out at school—to sit alone at lunch, to not be picked for a team, or to not even get the chance to play. Every child deserves to feel like they belong. All this attention can make trans kids feel unsure of that.
- \* No matter what's being said, trans people have always been here. Trans people are students, teachers, firefighters, police officers, doctors—and so much more. They shape our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplaces, and our lives every single day.
- \* When every kid, and every person, has a fair chance to reach their full potential, we all benefit as a result. Our communities become stronger because everyone has a place to thrive and contribute.

### WHY THIS & WHY NOW FOR LGBTQ+

#### If They Ask

- “Why focus on youth sports? LGBTQ+ rights are being attacked, marriage equality is being targeted, and trans people are experiencing real violence, every day.”
- “Why is this such a big deal? Does this really need to be taken to the Supreme Court?”

#### You Can Ask Back

- “What do you think matters most when we're trying to protect kids?”
- “What kinds of issues deserve policymakers' attention?”
- “What do youth sports show us about how society sees trans people? What about the LGBTQ+ community?”

#### What You Might Say

- \* These attacks aren't just about who gets to play soccer or run track. Politicians are deciding who belongs, and who gets left out: trans kids, queer kids, and anyone seen as different.
- \* Trans kids face overwhelmingly high rates of bullying. Nearly half have seriously thought about suicide—nine times the rate of other kids. Being left out of school sports is one more important way these young people are being ostracized and having their dignity stripped away.
- \* This isn't just about who gets to play school sports. If politicians are willing to shut kids out of something as formative as playing alongside their friends, there's no telling what could come next.
- \* It's yet another step toward more discrimination and harm against the entire LGBTQ+ community. That's why we must protect rights—not just for some of us, but all of us. Rights that were hard-won, fought for over generations.

