



RINGETTE CANADA'S TRANS- INCLUSION POLICY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT PROMPTED THE REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS POLICY?

Under the previous policy, transgender players had only one option to participate in the gender category in which they identified (i.e., a transgender male had to play in a male-only or mixed division). While this was recognized as a supportive and gender-affirming approach, it ended up pushing some players prematurely out of the sport and creating negative social consequences for others by forcing them to join other teams.

Consider the situation with an individual assigned the female sex at birth who starts playing ringette on a girls' team. When he comes to a full understanding of his gender identity as a boy, he has only one option under the previous policy: to play on a male-only or mixed team. Besides forcing him to change teams, it also means that he has to leave behind some close friendships on his previous team. If there are no male or mixed teams in his part of the country, he's left with no option but to leave ringette.

As a values-based organization, Ringette Canada recognized that a policy review was needed to fulfill the organization's ongoing commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

WHAT DID THE REVIEW PROCESS CONSIST OF?

In September 2020, the Ringette Canada Board of Directors brought together an expert panel to review the organization's Trans-Inclusion policy and provide a recommendation to the Board. The panel had access to evidence-based information, recommendations from other leading sport organizations, and comprehensive decision-making tools to assist in their review. The panel unanimously agreed on policy changes that were approved by the Board of Directors.





WHO TOOK PART IN THE EXPERT PANEL?

The panel was made up of 9 individuals with a combination of trans-inclusion, legal and sport administration expertise.

Members included:

- David Master (he/his), JD and Ringette Canada Board of Directors (Chair)
- Steven Indig (he/his), LL.B. and Partner at Sport Law
- Natasha Johnston (she/hers), Ringette Canada Executive Director
- Mike Taylor (he/his), Ringette Canada Board of Directors
- Darrell Liebrecht (he/his), Ringette Canada Board of Directors
- Pamela Julian (she/hers), Ringette Ontario Executive Director
- Nicole Robb (she/hers), Ringette BC Executive Director
- Kai Scott (he/his), President and Gender Strategist with TransFocus
- Jillian Black (she/hers), Canada Centre for Ethics in Sport

WHAT ARE THE KEY CHANGES TO THE POLICY?

- The renewed policy allows trans players to participate on a team that corresponds with either their gender identity or their sex assigned at birth.
- The changes also make options more explicit for non-binary players who can participate on a team of their choice (male, female or mixed). This is an important change to harmonize with the [Equal Opportunity for Participation Guidelines](#).
- We also clarified that disclosure is a part of the process, but this is limited to invoking the policy rather than needing to share specifics of an athlete's gender identity.

ARE ATHLETES REQUIRED TO DISCLOSE THEIR GENDER IDENTITY OR GENDER HISTORY?

Athletes are not required to disclose or prove their gender identity or history to the ringette Association or any of the Association's representatives (e.g., coaches, staff, directors, officials, etc.). Depersonalized gender data is collected through the registration process to monitor trends and report aggregate data to provincial and federal bodies. However, individual data should be kept private and confidential. Provincial Ringette Organizations (PROs) and Local Ringette Associations (LRAs) are being encouraged to adopt the recommended changes to their registration process proposed in [Ringette Canada's Guidance on Collection and Use of Gender Data](#) to align with the national policy.

ARE ATHLETES REQUIRED TO UNDERGO GENDER AFFIRMING PROCEDURES TO INVOKE THE POLICY?

No, athletes are not required to undergo (nor disclose) any gender affirming procedures such as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), surgeries or any other procedure.



IS THERE ANYTHING THAT ADMINISTRATORS OR COACHES NEED TO DO IF THEY BELIEVE THAT A PARTICIPANT IDENTIFIES AS TRANS?

No action is needed. As the policy states, athletes can participate in the gender in which they identify. The athlete may choose to openly discuss their gender identity or gender expression or they may not. Gender identity and expression is confidential information, and athletes have the right to keep it private.

IF INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO DISCLOSE THEIR GENDER IDENTITY, HOW DOES A PROVINCIAL OR LOCAL RINGETTE ASSOCIATION REGISTER PLAYERS TO DIVISIONS (MALE, FEMALE OR MIXED)?

Provincial and local ringette associations do not assign athletes to divisions based on their gender identity; individuals select their division as part of the registration process. Associations should honour and accept transgender athlete's division selections, irrespective of their answer to the gender question on the registration form. Please see [Ringette Canada's Guidance on Collection and Use of Gender Data](#) for more information.

WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH FOR A PROVINCIAL OR LOCAL ASSOCIATION TO TAKE IF THEY BELIEVE SOMEONE MISTAKENLY REGISTERED FOR THE WRONG DIVISION (MALE, FEMALE OR MIXED)?

Gender identity and expression is confidential information, and athletes have the right to keep it private. Administrators do not have the right to question an individual's gender identity but can however confirm that all athletes have registered for the appropriate division, as long as all athletes are asked the same question rather than singling any athletes out. A best practice is to embed this question within other pre-season reminders that associations typically send out. Sample text "Welcome to the 2021 season! This email is to confirm that you have registered for the U16 Girls Division. Please contact example@ringetteassociation.ca should you need to make any changes. A reminder that tryouts will be held at "Arena X"..."

DOES THE NEW POLICY APPLY TO HIGH PERFORMANCE ATHLETES?

The same policy of inclusion applies to high performance athletes up until the point where they must comply with international federation rules. The eligibility guidelines of the International Ringette Federation and/or any international Games Organization will supersede those of Ringette Canada. Currently, the International Ringette Federation does not have a trans-inclusion policy.



HOW WILL TEAM CHANGE ROOMS WORK FOR PRACTICES AND GAMES?

All athletes, coaches, officials, staff, volunteers, and parents/guardians of ringette athletes have the right to access safe, inclusive and equitable change rooms and/or other gender-segregated spaces, such as washrooms, that align with their gender identity and/or gender expression. Please see [Ringette Canada's Change Room Guidelines and Implementation Guide](#) for more information and guidance.

AN ATHLETE MADE AN ACCOMMODATION REQUEST WITH RESPECT TO CHANGE ROOMS BUT DID NOT LIKE THE PROPOSED OPTION. WHAT DO WE DO?

It is important to always take an individualized, humanized approach to these sensitive situations. Athletes should not be pressured into any accommodation option and should instead be an active part of the decision making process. While [Ringette Canada's Change Room Guidelines and Implementation Guide](#) provides information for different scenarios and needs, there may be situations in which teams or leagues need to develop their own tailored solution using an athlete-focused, ethical, and values-based approach to guide them to a common sense and inclusive resolution.

HOW DOES THE RULE OF TWO WORK WITH NON-BINARY ATHLETES?

For meetings, it is important to follow the Coaching Association of Canada's [Rule of 2](#) by having two adults present for the conversation. Besides the coach, this could involve the athlete's parent or support person or another trained and screened adult. Sometimes, there is focus on matching the gender of the coach to the athlete; however, this is not always possible with non-binary athletes. As such, athletes should be asked if they have a preference for which of the coaches or trained staff they wish to be present.

WHY ARE TRANSGENDER MALES AND NON-BINARY ATHLETES ABLE TO PARTICIPATE ON FEMALE TEAMS BUT CISGENDER MALES ARE NOT?

The policy update is all about making our sport more welcoming for players who identify as transgender or non-binary. It's a progressive step that puts ringette among the leading sports in Canada when it comes to improving diversity and inclusion.

We also recognize that the system is not perfect. There are gaps in programming – specifically, male-only and mixed gender teams – that leave some participants with nowhere to play. Ringette Canada is working with the provincial associations to fill those gaps.

We also know that a sustainable solution is going to take time to design and implement, so we have taken these decisions now to support participants who were disadvantaged under the previous policy.



WHAT IS RINGETTE CANADA DOING TO INCREASE PROGRAMMING OPTIONS?

Ringette Canada recognizes there is a programming gap, with limited male or mixed gender teams across the country. We are committed to working with our Provincial Ringette Association partners to develop a full slate of program offerings for all participants. Ringette Canada's [Equal Opportunity for Participation Guidelines](#) released in March 2020 and revised in June 2021 represent an important step forward.

WHAT IS RINGETTE CANADA DOING TO SUPPORT THE APPLICATION OF THE POLICY?

We are working with the Provincial Ringette Organizations to develop education materials along with practical guides and tools to ensure a consistent approach across the country. Please visit the [Trans-Inclusion Resources Hub](#). Additional resources will be posted on the Ringette Canada website as they become available.

ARE GIRLS AND WOMEN BEING DISADVANTAGED IN ANY WAY BY THIS POLICY?

Not at all. Let's remember that ringette was started almost 60 years ago to give girls and women a welcoming sport to play in winter. That inclusive philosophy remains a fundamental core value today. Living our values means removing barriers for anyone who wants to participate. That's what this policy update is all about.

As [Canadian Women & Sport](#) have argued, the inclusion of girls and women in sport cannot and should not be achieved by excluding other marginalized groups. They advocate for sport organizations at all levels to take proactive measures to create inclusive environments that enable all to participate and compete, regardless of their gender identity and expression. That's what Ringette Canada has done through this policy update.

DOESN'T THIS POLICY GIVE TRANSGENDER AND NON-BINARY PARTICIPANTS AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE?

The notion that transgender boys and men have an unfair advantage over cisgender females is an unfortunate misconception. As Skate Canada points out, this assumes - incorrectly - that all boys / men are athletically superior to all girls / women.

There is also the unfounded concern that a cisgender male might "declare" a female gender identity in order to gain an unfair competitive advantage. There are no documented examples in the history of elite sport where this has happened. The notion that cisgender boys and men would pretend in order to compete in female sports is incredibly harmful and trivializes the challenges that transgender and nonbinary athletes face on a daily basis.



Ringette Canada updated its policy based on the unanimous recommendation of an expert panel which was informed by the best available research and policies on transgender athletes in sport. One of those documents was policy guidance from the Canadian Centre on Ethics in Sport, produced by experts from a variety of fields. It supports participation in sport based on a person's chosen gender identity in line with long-term athlete development guidelines for recreational and developmental levels of sport.

WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Please visit the Ringette Canada [Trans-Inclusion Resources Hub](#). Additional resources will be posted on the Ringette Canada website as they become available.

Many other leading organizations have excellent resources that you can also access:

- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) (2017 Second Edition). *Leading the Way: Working with LGBT Athletes and Coaches. A Practical Resource for Coaches*. Access at: <http://www.caaws.ca/e/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/LeadingTheWay-v2017.pdf>
- Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) - Sex and Gender Diversity <https://cces.ca/sex-and-gender-diversity>