



Information About All Gender Restrooms

Common Questions and Answers

What is an all gender restroom?

An all-gender restroom is a restroom that anyone of any gender can use. These restrooms can benefit many different people, including parents with differently gendered children, alter-abled people who may require the accompaniment of an attendant of a different gender, and trans and gender nonconforming people. All-gender restrooms are one way that students at Vashon Island High School (VHS) can work to provide a safer space for trans and gender nonconforming students, faculty, staff and community members.

Will there still be gender specific bathrooms at VIHS?

Yes. There are people who want or need to use gender specific bathrooms. The important thing is that there are equally accessible options for everyone.

If I use an all gender restroom will people with think/know I am transgender?

All gender restrooms are open to all students. In general, people pay very little attention to what other people are doing. If someone does notice a person enter an all gender restroom, what they are most likely to assume is that the person needs to use the restroom.

Why are all gender restrooms important to create a safe space for gender minorities?

All gender restrooms are a way to create a safer and more inclusive campus environment for transgender and gender nonconforming students, staff, faculty and community members. They are also a way for our school to show trans* and gender nonconforming people that our community values their presence and cares about their health and safety.

For trans* and gender nonconforming individuals, gender segregated bathrooms can be spaces where they are met with intimidation, harassment, and bullying. These occurrences happen when people using the restroom "police" the gender of others based on binary (either/or) assumptions and expectations of who men and women are and what they look like. This "policing" can affect trans* individuals, but also cisgender individuals (those who are not trans*) who present or express their gender in ways that are not culturally normative. This phenomenon is commonly referred to in gender minority communities as "The Bathroom Problem," and is an experience that most trans* and gender nonconforming people have encountered, often repeatedly, in their lives.

Gender segregated bathrooms threaten the safety of many trans* and gender nonconforming individuals. In addition to being a safety concern, this bathroom configuration can lead to health concerns. When one does not have a bathroom option that they feel comfortable and/or safe accessing, they may choose to not use the bathroom. Depending on how a person goes about avoiding the bathroom, whether it be by not eating or drinking all day or by "holding it", doing so can cause serious health problems.

All gender restrooms are safer for trans* and gender nonconforming people and not any less safe for others. When a restroom is all gender, a person who does not identify within the binary as a man or woman does not have to choose a bathroom that does not align with their gender identity. When a bathroom is all gender, trans* and gender nonconforming people do not stand out in ways that can make

them vulnerable to intimidation, harassment or attack. When a bathroom is all gender, "who counts" and "who is allowed" is expanded to include everyone, which lessens the likelihood of exclusionary gender policing in the bathroom. Finally, when a trans* or gender nonconforming person sees an all gender restroom when they access the VHS campus, the bathroom will act as a sign of the Vashon School District's commitment to serving and supporting a diverse student body and community.

Are all gender restrooms unsafe for women?

Allowing people to use the restroom that works best for their gender identity does not compromise the safety of women. Many people's first reaction to providing gender non-specific bathrooms is that women's safety will be compromised. However, an analysis of the safety precautions in bathrooms suggests that women are not currently protected by the existence of gender-specific bathrooms. Women's bathrooms do not provide any physical barrier to potential predators, who can just as easily walk through an unlocked door that reads "women" as any other unlocked door. Gender segregation in bathrooms does not prevent sexual assault, and if anything, provides an illusion of safety that is not true. While gender segregated bathrooms do not actually insure safety for women, they do actually compromise the safety of trans* and gender nonconforming people.

Are all gender restrooms a special privilege for transgender or gender nonconforming people?

Using the restroom is not a privilege, but a right. Many trans* and gender nonconforming people will avoid using the bathroom if not given a safe or anxiety-free option. Not using the restroom when one needs to can cause severe health problems such as dehydration, malnutrition, or a UTI depending on how one deals with not having a bathroom option. All gender restrooms increase restroom accessibility and safety for trans* and gender nonconforming individuals. All gender restrooms also increase access for guardians who accompany a child of another gender to the bathroom, thus increasing the safety of that child. All gender restrooms increase access for attendants who assist people of another gender in the restroom, thus increasing the safety of the person who necessitates assistance in the bathroom.

Will all gender restrooms make cisgender, or "cis", people (a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth) uncomfortable? Also, won't sharing the restroom with the "opposite" sex be embarrassing? Should the VISD go out of its way or spend money on creating a space for such a small population?

Comfort should not take precedence over safety. Avoiding embarrassment should not be more important than creating safety. The preferences of the majority should not be prioritized over the needs of a minority. It is true that for people who are used to using gender-specific bathrooms, using all gender bathrooms may feel strange or uncomfortable at first. Often times, social change that increases access for an excluded group and eliminates discrimination requires a reform of social practices that makes people who have not been negatively affected by the existing arrangements somewhat uncomfortable. However, discomfort or modesty, when compared with the inability to engage in basic necessary biological functions at work, school, and in public spaces, cannot be prioritized. As we make changes to increase access and reduce discrimination, we must all commit to investing in and adjusting to those changes.