

Gender Identity Guide and Policies
Diocese of Des Moines
FAQ

Why did we create this policy?

Parish and school leaders asked Bishop William Joensen to provide guidance on how they should welcome and minister to those coping with gender dysphoria while following Catholic Church teaching. After two years of study, prayer, listening, and consulting, a policy was developed that provides a comprehensive explanation of how to interpret and apply Catholic principles to daily life within our faith communities and schools.

Who is the policy intended for?

As a teaching document, this policy is for every Catholic within the Diocese of Des Moines. In implementation, its scope includes all diocesan organizations and institutions under the direct authority of the diocesan Bishop. Its foremost focus is that we recognize the real and profound struggles individuals of good will face when coping with gender identity issues. We are called to acknowledge the suffering and accompany those struggling with gender dysphoria.

What changes will we see in our parishes and schools as a result of this policy?

Most people will not see changes in programs and activities in our parishes and schools. The policy is intended to provide clarity where questions may arise in terms of attire, pronouns, restrooms and athletics.

Where does it say in the Bible that we should not accommodate those with gender dysphoria. I thought the Catholic Church says we must love one another?

Indeed, we are called to love God and love one another. Catholics believe that God created each one of us, and God's creation is good. This is truth and it helps us flourish as one human family. Therefore, respecting a person's dignity includes helping care for the gift of creation he or she has received. In this context, this would mean helping them achieve self-acceptance, integration, and peace within the context of their received creation. We know there are people who struggle with the gender into which they are born. Our faith calls on us to mirror God's unconditional love, to respect their freedom and also to witness to a path that leads to authentic human flourishing.

Does my son/daughter/family coping with gender identity issues have to leave our Catholic school or parish?

No, in fact parish and school leadership should be welcoming and accompany families and individuals experiencing gender dysphoria with compassion and courage, patiently supporting them in their life journey. At the same time, we ask those who choose to participate in our faith communities or attend our Catholic schools to respect the Church's mission to witness to truths of the Church and the application of those principles as outlined in the policy. Some families may disagree with our practices and we respect their freedom of conscience to withdraw from situations they find objectionable. This policy is predicated on the belief that, even when challenging, Church teaching enriches all lives and can help lead people to peace, joy and fulfillment. This document can be found on the Diocese of Des Moines website: dmdiocese.org.