Name Change and Pronouns at School

For many young people, socially transitioning from one gender to another may begin at school. To help those around you better understand how to address you, it's worth taking some time to inform friends and teachers of your desire to be referred to by your new name.

Does your school have a name change form?

Ask someone at the school's administrator's office if there is a form or process to change your name. Someone may ask why and it is up to you to disclose as much or as little information as you'd like.

It may be helpful to ask for these forms before school starts. It's helpful to start off a new school year with your preferred name so that teachers are made aware and can avoid any confusion or accidental "outings" by using an unwanted name in front of the class.

What if your school does not have a name change process?

If your school does not have a name change process, there are still steps you can take.

(a) Make an appointment to talk to your principal about your need for having teachers and students address you by your preferred name. An example talking point could be: "I identify as male/female/, which is different from my sex assigned at birth. In order to feel safe and secure at school, it is important for teachers and students to recognize my current gender identity. Having school documents reflect my preferred name will prevent any confusion."'

(b) If school has already started, you can still ask your teachers if they could start addressing you by your preferred name. This might be a good way to start if your school does not have a name change process. If you have a few teachers who support your name change at school, they may be able to support you during your talks with your school administration.

How do I change my pronoun at school?

By simply declaring your gender, schools must comply with your expressed gender identity. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the right of students to free speech and freedom of expression, including expression of one's gender identity. Schools nationwide are responsible for ensuring that gender-expansive students are respected and are safe at school. If your teacher or school refuses to refer to you by your desired name and/or gender, this may result in harassment. If your school does not ensure equal treatment and safety, students can seek protection from the U.S. Department of Education.