

## Key considerations to promote the inclusion of women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes

To help sport organizations and sport leaders begin working towards more inclusive environments for women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC) with the support of Canadian Women and Sport reviewed existing resources and academic literature to identify key areas of focus for promoting more inclusive sport spaces. By improving education around and practices in these key areas, individuals and organizations can take action to facilitate more inclusive sport environments.

Please note that this document is meant to provide a high-level overview of key inclusion topics. We found that after reviewing existing literature and resources, there was significant overlap in creating inclusive spaces for girls, women and 2SLGBTQI+ participants in sport. With this in mind, we have purposefully focused on 5 key areas<sup>1</sup> to support gender equity and inclusion in sport: (1) Policies, (2) Language, (3) Visibility, (4) Culture, and (5) Facilities.



We encourage you to consult the complementary resource list and key organization list available on [SIRC.ca](http://SIRC.ca) to further your education.

### 1. Policies

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Developing policies that are inclusive to women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes is an essential first step towards more welcoming and inclusive sport environments. Such policies may include non-discrimination statements, code of conduct employee policies, equity and access policies, gender equity policies, confidentiality policies, privacy policies, workplace bullying and harassment policies and trans athlete inclusion policies.

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<sup>1</sup> It's important to remember that additional considerations may be needed to promote inclusion when working with athletes with intersecting identities (for example, Indigenous women and girls).

Some tips for inclusive policies include:

- **Be clear** when it comes to how you are defining key terms. For example, clearly define gender versus sex and what inclusion means to your organization.
  - **Note:** Terminology, particularly in the 2SLGBTQI+ community, is often changing, so it is important to ensure that people know what you mean with the language you are using!
- **Ensure awareness** of policies for all sport stakeholders, including coaches, parents, administrators and athletes.
- **Document** your decisions as well as the steps your organization is taking to develop policies and best practices so that they can be referenced as needed to inform future decisions and updates.
- **Consult** the research to ensure your policies align with current evidence, best practices and recommendations.
- **Include** individuals with lived experience (women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals) as well as those with expertise around inclusive practices when creating your policies.

## 2. Language

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The language used in policies, promotional materials and in sport spaces plays a large role in creating inclusive sport environments. All written materials and verbal communication (including interactions between coaches and athletes) must use inclusive language.

Some tips for inclusive language include:

- **Educate** all sport participants about key language and definitions (for example, gender identity and gender expression) and ensure that the appropriate terms and language are used in all written materials.
- **Be clear** that non-inclusive language will not be tolerated in your organization and team. Jokes and casual discussions that use inappropriate terms or gendered language (for example, “you play like a girl”) contribute to unwelcoming environments for women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and have no space in sport.
- **Encourage** coaches to:
  - **Avoid** the use of gendered language. For example, rather than saying, “Great work, guys and girls,” they could say, “Great work, everyone.”
  - **Ask** athletes about their preferred pronouns and names at the start of the season and ensure that all members of the team address each other appropriately. Some examples of pronouns include him/he/her/she/them/ze.

## 3. Visibility

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Increasing the visibility of women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes can help show everyone they are welcome within your organization and team and provide young athletes with role models.

Some tips to enhance visibility include:

- **Invite** women and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes to be guest speakers at team and organization-wide events.
- **Run** causing different mediums that are focused on inclusivity. These can include posters, videos and social media posts. To increase the reach of your messages, consider partnering with other organizations with similar missions.
- **Use diverse** imagery that shows girls, women and 2SLGBTQI+ of all backgrounds, abilities and body shapes and sizes. It is important that all athletes can see themselves participating in your sport.
- **Provide** equal media coverage for girls and women athletes and their sporting events.
- **Deliver** education programs or provide education opportunities for people in sport to continue their learning around creating inclusive sport environments for girls, women and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes.
  - Canadian Women and Sport has a wide range of educational programs (for example, the [Gender Equity LENS e-learning module](#)) and resources (for example, the [Rally Report](#) and [She Belongs](#)) that you can explore to help you get started.
- **Include** resources and policies that support inclusive environments on your organization’s website so that they are easily accessible to anyone who wants to view them.
- **Display** overt signs that your organization is an inclusive space for all. For example, you could hang an “I support positive space in sport” sign from Canadian Women and Sport in all facilities used by your organization.
- **Celebrate** important dates (for example, International Women’s Day and Pride Week) and culturally significant events (for example, Ramadan and Yom Kippur) that are important to many girls, women and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes in your sport. This will help demonstrate your commitment to the inclusion of all girls, women and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes.
  - **Note:** If your organization chooses to run events to support inclusion (for example, pride events), it is important that they are done thoughtfully. Understanding what to do and what not to do is important to ensure a well-executed event. You may consult individuals within the target population to ensure that your efforts are appropriate.
- **Encourage** coaches to:
  - **Show support** for 2SLGBTQI+ athletes by attending or vocalizing their support for 2SLGBTQI+ initiatives (for example, pride events).
  - **Become** familiar with the struggles that many girls, women and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes face in sport. Some examples of barriers that girls and women face in sport are outlined in the [Rally Report](#) by Canadian Women and Sport.

## 4. Facilities

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Ensuring your organization and team have access to inclusive facilities and sport places is critical for helping all athletes feel welcomed and safe. Part of this, is ensuring the use of

facilities that are accessible for individuals with diverse abilities, so all girls, women and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes can participate. While it is not always possible to control the facilities that your organization or team uses, particularly when playing away games, there are steps that you can take to ensure an inclusive environment.

Some tips for inclusive facilities include:

- **Ensure** that all locker rooms have a n for any athlete who wants to use them.
- **Connect** with the facilities frequently used by your organization to identify opportunities for increased visibility (for example, pride flags) and to ensure that women's and men's teams have access to equal spaces.
- **Encourage** coaches to notify facilities of any needs prior to arriving at the venue to ensure that all athletes have access to facilities that are comfortable, accessible and safe. For example, providing appropriate accommodations for girls and women playing on boys' or mixed-gendered teams. This means ensuring that lone girls or women on teams are given a room equal to that of the boys (meaning, not a small closet).

## 5. Culture

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Sport and team culture can impact how welcomed or not welcomed women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes feel. Here, when referring to culture, we mean sport customs, social norms and social interaction between people in the sport environment (for example, coaches and spectators). By changing sport and team cultures to be more inclusive and welcoming, we can create better sports experiences for women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ athletes.

Some tips to promote a welcoming culture include:

- **Consider** having more mixed-gender training sessions to reduce segregation based on gender.
- **Educate** parents and spectators about respectful and non-discrimination behaviours and do not tolerate anyone who deviates from this.
- **Create** uniforms and dress codes that respect an individual's gender identity and are appropriate (meaning not revealing).
- **Ensure** that the same rules are applied to people of all genders. This may include ensuring that sports are scored the same way (not judging girls/women based on aesthetics rather than skill) for all genders.
- **Provide** equal opportunities for the women/girls and men/boys categories. For example, an equal number of competitions and an equal number of teams.
- **Use** the same competition structures between women/girls and men/boys sport categories to reduce gendered differences.
- **Promote** safe spaces in locker rooms. For example, by enforcing sexual harassment policies and by educating athletes about fairness.

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