

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LEGAL SERVICES of California

General Counsel
Margaret M. Merchat

Attorneys
Nancy L. Klein
Marko H. Fong
Carl D. Corbin
Patrick C. Wilson
Loren W. Soukup
Frank Zotter, Jr.
Kristina T. Jansen

A Joint Powers Authority serving school and
college districts throughout the state

Reply to:
Santa Rosa Office
5350 Skylane Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
(707) 524-2690
Fax: (707) 578-0517
santarosa@sclscal.org

Of Counsel
Robert J. Henry
Virginia A. Riegel
Janna L. Lambert

LEGAL UPDATE

March 9, 2012

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Susanne K. Reed  
(1947 - 2010)

**To:** Superintendents/Presidents, Member Community College Districts

**From:** Marko Fong, Assistant General Counsel *MF*

**Subject:** AB 887 – Gender Discrimination  
Memo No. 04-2012(CC)

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On January 1, 2012, AB 887 augmented all references to gender discrimination in California law to expressly include “gender identity” and “gender expression.” For example, these code sections were amended to read as follows.

1) Education Code section 66260.6

"Disability, gender, *gender identity*, *gender expression*, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code" includes a perception that the person has any of those characteristics or that the person is associated with a person who has, or is perceived to have, any of those characteristics.

2) Education Code section 66260.7

"Gender" means sex, and includes a person's gender identity and gender expression.  
"Gender expression" means a person's gender-related appearance and behavior whether or not stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth.

3) Education Code section 66270

No person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, *gender identity*, *gender expression*, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any characteristic listed or defined in Section 11135 of the Government Code or any other characteristic that is contained in the prohibition of hate crimes set forth in

subdivision (a) of Section 422.6 of the Penal Code in any program or activity conducted by any postsecondary educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance or enrolls students who receive state student financial aid.

4) Government Code section 12920

It is hereby declared as the public policy of this state that it is necessary to protect and safeguard the right and opportunity of all persons to seek, obtain, and hold employment without discrimination or abridgment on account of race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, *gender identity*, *gender expression*, age, or sexual orientation...

AB 887 makes it clear that transgendered and transsexual individuals have all the legal protections of California Civil Rights Law. These include protection from harassment/bullying, access to programs, and freedom from discrimination in the workplace. While it was clear previously that a transgendered staff member could not be disciplined simply for being transgendered, it was not necessarily clear that a physically male individual could dress as a “woman” while at work. The addition of “gender expression” means that a transgendered teacher who is physiologically male can neither be disciplined for wearing a dress in class or for presenting as a woman while at work. Attire that would be otherwise inappropriate for a staff member of that gender, however, would still be subject to reprimand or a request from a supervisor that the individual wear more appropriate clothing. Similarly, a prospective employee may come to a job interview dressed as a member of the gender with which he or she identifies and that may not negatively influence the hiring decision.

The amendments also make it clear that transgendered students can come to school dressed as the gender with which they identify and can expect to be treated as a member of gender they are expressing. Students who do this can also expect not to be harassed.

The changes in the law were not intended to affect eligibility for men’s and women’s sports or the maintenance of separate bathrooms and locker facilities designated as “male” or “female.”

Transgendered or transsexual individuals have a right to a conveniently located bathroom and/or locker facility where they will be safe and free from harassment or bullying. Although the Unruh Act’s<sup>1</sup> protections do not extend to forcing an institution to undertake new construction unless required by other laws, Community College Districts should, when practical, strongly consider making a private unisex bathroom an option for all students and staff. Some

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<sup>1</sup> Civil Code section 51(d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require any construction, alteration, repair, structural or otherwise, or modification of any sort whatsoever, beyond that construction, alteration, repair, or modification that is otherwise required by other provisions of law, to any new or existing establishment, facility, building, improvement, or any other structure, nor shall anything in this section be construed to augment, restrict, or alter in any way the authority of the State Architect to require construction, alteration, repair, or modifications that the State Architect otherwise possesses pursuant to other laws.

educational and other agencies in California have adopted policies that allow individuals to use the designated bathroom for the gender with which the individual identifies psychologically.

A public institution also may not require a transgendered individual to use a bathroom or locker facility where the individual has been or will be subject to ridicule, harassment, or physical abuse. If that is the case with existing “men’s” bathrooms for an individual who is physically male or for “women’s” bathrooms for a physically female individual, the Community College District must take measures to protect the transgendered individual and provide him or her with a safe, convenient bathroom or changing facility.

Community College Districts may adopt a policy that requires individuals who want to “express” as a gender other than their birth gender to support their status with documentation from a medical or health care professional.

When a legal name change has not been completed, transgendered individuals sometimes face issues with admissions, financial aid, and other areas where an individual’s “legal identity” may be required for the process. Staff should address the individual by his/her expressed gender both in person and in all correspondence and maintain confidentiality about the individual’s prior gender identity. Records should be cross-linked in files to indicate that the individual is the same person. Any high school records or proof of residency for purposes of Education Code 68130.5 established under the former gender identity would still apply to the individual. Staff may require the individual to provide “legal name” and any necessary educational records established under the prior gender identity, but must respect confidentiality in the process. Staff may also initially ask for documentation from a medical or mental health professional that supports the individual’s assertion of the current gender expression. All credits established at the college under the prior gender identity would transfer as would any fees owed.

Please contact any attorney in this office, if you have questions about these issues or a specific matter related to AB 887.