



# CISV INCLUSION GUIDE:

Supporting Gender Diversity and Accessibility  
through Active Listening and Engagement

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Committee



## PURPOSE

CISV USA members have experienced **real & perceived barriers** to inclusion, such as lack of accessible facilities, insensitive language, and limited representation in leadership roles, making them feel **unwelcome** and **reluctant to participate** in local, national, and international programs. These are primarily CISVers (referred to as “participants” or “members” throughout the document) who belong to minority groups that have been historically marginalized in our society at large. This guide is not the ultimate solution, but rather a tool for considering how CISV culture and programming can become more inclusive and accessible per our commitment to the strategic goals of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility established during the 2020-2022 strategic planning process.

## WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is intended for Chapter Presidents, Planners, Trainers, Risk Managers, JB (Junior Branch) Liaisons, the selection committee, and others who plan to host, form delegations, recruit, implement minicamps or mosaics, etc.

Each of us is unique, with diverse needs and experiences. Our identities are multilayered and intersectional, including CISVers with **disabilities** and **chronic health conditions**, **LGBTQIA2+**, and participants of diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As part of this guide, we have included a [Terminologies and Definitions](#) section to build a shared understanding.

This guide focuses explicitly on inclusion and accessibility for gender-expansive, disabled, neurodivergent and CISVers managing chronic health conditions. CISV members’ feedback on these identities has been instrumental in shaping this guide. Its purpose is to significantly enhance the program experience for people of these identities by advocating for their agency, uplifting their perspectives, and creating avenues for open communication and proactive risk management to ensure a safe and inclusive camp experience.

As a 501c3 nonprofit, we adhere to the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), the [Equality Act](#), and the [United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) to support CISV members in the US and abroad. The CISV USA DEIA committee is enthusiastic about collaborating with you to build a better future for everyone.

## CORE PRINCIPLES

- As community leaders, we are responsible for identifying and addressing real and perceived barriers to inclusion and accessibility. This ensures our members feel welcomed and valued.
- Recognize the power of collaboration to support inclusion and establish sustainable partnerships with various communities and organizations that represent minority groups historically marginalized in our society. Together, we can make a difference.
- Embrace complexity by taking the time to understand how disability, chronic health conditions, sexual orientation and gender identity (**SOGI**), and race and ethnicity function as identities with distinct and unique needs.
- Ensure accessibility is a process and conversation, with participants and communities working together as equals to solve problems and meet accommodations.
- Assess, reflect, and evaluate to adapt and provide accessible resources Strive to provide accessible and inclusive environments and experiences for all.
- Operate from a mindset of abundance. Limited resources and a lack of CISV volunteer participation should not justify lowering our standards and failing to assess and address the needs of program participants.
- Empower chapters to research and develop inclusive practices that respond to participants' needs, understanding that their states might not guarantee inclusion for all.
- Awareness of mental health and well-being grants participants the agency they deserve by giving them space to withdraw from activities.

## GOOD PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTIONS
<p><b>Confidentiality &amp; Safeguarding</b></p>	<p>When participants choose to share their identities (e.g., disabilities, SOGI, chronic health condition), discussing confidentiality and who they would like to share this information with is essential.</p> <p>Not all participants may feel comfortable revealing their identities, so when discussing accommodations, it is essential to consider whether the information must be shared or can remain confidential. According to the CISV Safeguarding Policy, confidentiality should only be breached if it is necessary to protect a youth participant. Identity in itself <i>does not</i> present a risk, meaning when a participant discloses their identity with you, this is <b>not a safeguarding concern</b>.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth may choose to withhold this information from their families or guardians.</li> <li>• Not all youth feel safe disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to their parents or guardians. It's important for staff, leaders, or chapter leadership to respect their privacy and not disclose this information to families or guardians.</li> <li>• Emotional safety is paramount; participants should not be burdened to request accommodations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program Selection &amp; Sending Delegations</b></p>	<p>CISV should strive to be inclusive and accessible to all. CISV USA acknowledges that with <b>reasonable accommodations</b> (see <a href="#">Terminologies and Definitions</a>), not limited to the <b>ADA</b> or basic legal requirements, all participants and volunteers can be integrated CISV members.</p> <p>Open communication is not just key but a cornerstone to ensuring everyone feels heard and understood. Most campsites in the U.S. meet ADA accommodations, and specific local policies protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and race/ethnicity. <b>Involve the participant</b> in conversations about any concerns the program has about accommodating their needs. Youth and families with these identities have found solutions to be active members of our society. Discuss what has worked in other settings, which can be replicated at a campsite.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CISV should take the lead in ensuring that individuals with disabilities feel included. Many disabilities are not immediately apparent, so it's essential for organizations to proactively provide the accommodations needed rather than placing the burden on the individual with disabilities to seek them out.</li> <li>• Not all young people share the same views as their parents, especially regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity. Offer an opportunity to communicate with the participant without their parents or guardians.</li> </ul>

## GOOD PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY CONT'D.

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTIONS
<p><b>Hosting Programs</b></p>	<p>Most campsites and program venues in the U.S. are already accessible or can make accommodations. It is essential, therefore, to discuss what reasonable accommodations participants and volunteers need for CISV to practice inclusivity. These can be simple steps, such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1)</b> Including video subtitles for participants who are deaf/ hard of hearing.</li> <li><b>2)</b> Ensuring all pathways are well-lit for participants with low vision/ blindness.</li> <li><b>3)</b> Ensuring a space with low stimuli for neurodivergent participants.</li> <li><b>4)</b> Having gender-neutral facilities (including sleeping arrangements) or private changing rooms for participants who request them.</li> <li><b>5)</b> Discussing medical needs and solutions for participants with dietary restrictions and chronic health conditions with the participant and their guardians.</li> <li><b>6)</b> Establishing a plan to support the mental health and emotional well-being of all participants</li> </ol> <p>Contact <a href="mailto:DEIA@cisvusa.org">DEIA@cisvusa.org</a> with any questions or if you need help engaging participants with diverse needs.</p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p>	<p>Respectful conversations are honest and thoughtful dialogues that help us understand each other. To communicate effectively across differences, we must combine dialog and inquiry skills with active listening and an appreciation of diversity. Everyone should strive for curiosity, authenticity, and vulnerability, taking responsibility for the impact of their words. We value diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and aim to learn from each other and foster mutual respect..</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Assess who might be the best party involved in the communication. For example, a trusted teacher or counselor could also be a good advocate.</p>
<p><b>Federal &amp; State Policies</b></p>	<p>Federal laws and regulations, such as the <a href="#">ADA</a>, <a href="#">Equality Act</a>, and <a href="#">Executive Order 13988</a>, require CISV USA to accommodate and protect our members against discrimination. Certain states have additional protection. Consider your local state laws.</p>

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELECTING AND PREPARING DELEGATIONS

### 1. Selecting Participants/Delegations

- a )** Have your forms been updated to accommodate gender identity?
  - i )** Note that health forms should reflect the gender assigned at birth for medical purposes.
- b )** Have your forms been updated to include gender-neutral parents?
- c )** Have participants shared what accommodations they need to succeed in the program?
  - i )** Discuss honestly and openly with the participant and the family to understand what reasonable accommodations can be given to the participants.
  - ii )** If you have any questions or concerns about chronic health conditions, consult your local medical support to understand how to make accommodations
- c )** Has the chapter trained the selection committee/volunteers on how to converse with participants with disabilities and chronic health conditions, LGBTQIA2S+ participants, and people with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds during the selection process?

### 2. Forming Delegations

- a )** Have you considered participants' travel preferences?
  - i )** Participants with disabilities might want to travel to countries where their medical insurance fully covers their needs in an emergency.
  - ii )** Participants who identify as LGBTQIA2+ may prefer to travel to countries and states where they feel safe, which requires an awareness of local laws and customs when forming delegations.
- b )** Strike a balance. Ensure leaders are prepared to travel with participants who identify as LGBTQIA2+ or those with disabilities or chronic health conditions. Distribute delegations so they reflect the diversity of your chapter and our country.
- c )** Consider pairing more experienced leaders with participants with different needs.

## CONSIDERATION FOR SELECTING AND ORGANIZING CAMP SITES

### 1. Program Sites

- a ) Are all the pathways well-lit to ensure those with limited vision can easily access all parts of the facilities?
- b ) How big are the campsites/facilities? Can participants using mobility devices (e.g., scooters, wheelchairs, etc.) access all the facilities?
- c ) Are there spaces to accommodate participants who are LGBTQIA2+?
- d ) Can there be gender-neutral accommodations, including bathrooms?
  - i ) It is recommended that private space be available if a participant prefers to change or dress in a private bathroom.
  - ii ) Review the [Headway: CISV's Mental Health Guide 2024](#)
  - iii ) Review the [Positive Behavior Policy 2024](#)
  - iv ) Review the [Guidance for Supporting LGBTQI+ Children and Young People In Programmes](#)
  - v ) Review the [CISV USA Guidance for Supporting Disabled participants and those with Chronic Health Conditions.](#)
  - vi ) Review [Risk Management Checklist-All Camp Programs with Gender Diversity, Chronic Health](#)

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES

- 1 )** Have you discussed with Leaders, JC, and Youth (when applicable) that accommodating all participants is essential to fostering an inclusive environment at camp?
  - a )** It is recommended that participants who are comfortable disclosing their identity and need accommodations be allowed to share with the group so everyone is aware.
- 2 )** Have you reviewed the CISV Activity Book to identify activities that may pose a physical or emotional risk to participants who identify as having disabilities, chronic health conditions, LGBTQIA2+, or of diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds?
- 3 )** Is the JB trained to plan and implement inclusive activities? What role can the JB liaison play in ensuring that the activities plan for local and regional camps are inclusive?
- 4 )** Have you considered more variety in activities balanced with different energy levels to support people's needs?
- 5 )** Remember that all activities should meet educational goals.

## TERMINOLOGIES & DEFINITIONS

**Accessibility:** Ensures everyone has equitable access regardless of ability, covering various disabilities like auditory, cognitive, and visual.

**Accessible Route:** A continuous, unobstructed path linking all accessible elements and spaces in a building.

**Alternative Text (Alt-Text):** Short descriptions of images, typically 125 characters or less.

**ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):** A 1990 civil rights law prohibiting disability discrimination, similar to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protections.

**American Sign Language (ASL):** The primary sign language for the Deaf community in the U.S., parts of Canada, and Mexico.

**Audio Description:** Describes visual elements and actions in videos, stage productions, or exhibitions for those who cannot see them.

**Braille:** A tactile writing system for the visually impaired, including refreshable displays for reading electronic content.

**Cane-Detectable Barriers:** Alerts for blind or low-vision individuals about hazards, often using truncated yellow sidewalk domes.

**Captioning:** Open captions are visible translations of audio into text, while closed captions can be turned on or off by the user.

**Captions:** Real-time textual representations of sounds, including speech and other sounds, typically in multimedia.

**Clear Floor Space:** The minimum unobstructed space required for a stationary wheelchair.

**Cognitive Disabilities:** Affect learning and socialization skills, including intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses.

**Chronic Health Condition:** A health condition or disease that is persistent or otherwise long-lasting in its effects or a disease that comes with time

**Detectable Warning:** Surface features to alert visually impaired individuals to hazards in their path.

**Disability:** Any condition hindering activities and interactions, affecting areas like vision, movement, and learning.

**Digital Accessibility:** Ensures digital platforms are usable and navigable by people with disabilities.

**Equity:** fairness or justice in the way people are treated.

**Equality Act:** The Statutory Instrument (SI) ensures that key rights and principles in equality law are safeguarded and enshrined in domestic legislation in the UK. Amended in 2024.

**Executive Order 13988:** Officially titled “Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation,” the fourth executive order signed by U.S. President Joe Biden on January 20, 2021.

**Gay:** A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women, and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

**Genderqueer:** people typically reject notions of static gender categories and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as “genderqueer” may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside these categories.

**Gender binary:** A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories: male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth, and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

**Gender dysphoria:** Clinically significant distress caused when a person’s assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

**Gender-expansive:** A person with a more comprehensive, flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. It is often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

**Gender expression:** External appearance of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics, or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

**Gender-fluid:** A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

**Homophobia:** The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

**Intersex:** people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of differences among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

**Inclusion:** Efforts to ensure full participation of diverse individuals in all aspects of an organization.

**Internationalization:** Designing systems to work across multiple languages and cultural contexts.

**Intersectionality:** a framework for understanding how various aspects of individual identity—including race, gender, social class, and sexuality—interact to create unique experiences of privilege or oppression.

**LGBTQIA2+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, plus

**Large Print:** Documents with legible font sizes for low-vision individuals, typically 18- to 20-point sans serif fonts.

**Means of Egress:** A continuous way of exit travel from any building point to a public way, complying with ADA for accessibility.

**Non-binary:** An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer, or gender-fluid.

**Outing:** Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender non-binary identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can severely affect employment, economic stability, personal safety, or religious or family situations.

**Pansexual:** Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes, it is used interchangeably with bisexual.

**Queer:** A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

**Questioning:** A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Reasonable accommodation:** making programs and services physically accessible, ensuring everyone can participate and benefit from CISV programs and services. It also includes providing auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communication with all individuals.

**Section 508:** Law requiring Federal electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities.

**SGM:** sexual and gender minority: an umbrella term for people whose sexual orientation, gender identity, or reproductive development is different from societal, cultural, or physiological norms


**SOGI:** Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

**Same-gender loving:** A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay, or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

**Sex assigned at birth:** The sex, male, female, or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

**Sexual orientation:** An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they



were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

**Transitioning:** Transgender individuals may go through a series of processes to fully embrace their true gender identity. This can involve social transition, such as changing their name and pronouns, medical transition, including hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgeries; and legal transition, which may include changing their name and gender on official documents. However, it's important to note that not all transgender individuals choose to undergo these processes.

**United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, it set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. ■