

# Trump's Anti-Trans Athletics Executive Order, Explained



FEBRUARY 2025

Since his first day in office, President Donald Trump has weaponized the power of the federal government to target transgender people and undermine the rule of law. His administration has released a flood of dangerous executive orders, all aimed at harming transgender people and excluding them from nearly every aspect of our society, including medical care, education, employment, travel, and military service.

Trump's latest executive order, *Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports*, has a similar goal. **The order is a blatant attack on transgender students** and their right to an education free from sex discrimination. It defines transgender women as men and calls on federal agencies to ban transgender girls from playing on girls' sports teams in every school that receives federal funds. In short, it requires discrimination against transgender students.

Title IX, the federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in education, protects transgender students. This order attempts to weaponize that law by creating a false binary between the rights of cisgender girls and transgender girls. It also sets schools and teachers on a collision course to violate students' rights or risk losing federal funds. The goal, like many of Trump's attacks on marginalized communities, is to combine the power of the federal government with mass misinformation to rob people of their civil rights and personal safety. But executive orders don't change laws passed by Congress. And they don't change court rulings interpreting those laws. Executive orders seek to change how federal agencies enforce the laws passed by Congress. **Here's what you need to know about Trump's anti-trans athletics executive order.**

## What does this order mean for children and schools?

This executive order might seem like it upends or dismantles critical legal protections for LGBTQ+ students, but that power is a smokescreen. **An executive order cannot undo students' civil rights protections** under the Constitution or Title IX. What the executive order does is try to use federal agencies to attack students and intimidate schools into violating the law.

**First, it threatens to punish schools for following the law.** This order requires federal agencies to apply other executive orders designed to erase the existence of transgender and intersex people. Only two sexes exist, according to President Trump, males and females. Schools that respect students' right to identify beyond that binary, for example schools that allow trans girls to play on their school's basketball team, will risk losing federal funds.

**Second, it creates a culture of fear and confusion that makes schools unsafe.** This order cannot change the law, but it can intimidate schools into adopting discriminatory policies. The intimidation tactics are not subtle. This order threatens to hold federal funds hostage for supporting transgender students, frames transgender and intersex students as a threat to their peers, and makes schools doubt whether they can support kids and follow the law at the same time. Trump's Department of Education has already opened investigations into two universities and one athletics association for upholding the Title IX rights of transgender

athletes. Rather than promoting equal opportunity, the Department is now actively creating hostile environments that endanger students' educations and lives. The first step to resisting this kind of intimidation is to resist misinformation. Trump cannot destroy those rights with the stroke of a pen.

**Finally, it directs federal agencies and international bodies to discriminate against transgender athletes.** This order calls on federal agencies to implement guidance denying entry to trans women seeking to participate in women's sports. It pushes international bodies like the International Olympic Committee to exclude trans women athletes from their chosen sports and deny support for any program that permits trans inclusion in women's sports. It also seeks to mobilize major athletic organizations and state leaders to target trans and intersex athletes.

## **Who is impacted by this order?**

**Targeting transgender, nonbinary, and intersex students is the undeniable goal of this executive order.** Joining a sports team is a well-documented physical and physiological boon to young people. It's a launch pad to community belonging, improved social skills, and mental and physical health. LGBTQ+ students will be most impacted by this order, but **every student is made less safe when the government regulates and polices gender.** The Trump administration wants to eliminate transgender identity, but it also wants to impose a vision of girlhood onto millions of students, many of whom eschew traditional sexist stereotypes. This order, and others like it, is a tool to impose sexist stereotypes into school settings and create fear for students who dare to show up as their authentic selves.

## **What happens now?**

We expect this order to be primarily enforced in K-12 public schools and university settings. If you are a school official who feels tempted to adopt new policies excluding trans students from their chosen sports, you should know you are not reducing your legal risk. You will invite legal action by students, parents, and civil rights nonprofits like Public Justice.

**If you are a student or a parent, be sure to stay informed and know your rights.** Title IX is not the only law protecting trans, intersex, and nonbinary students. You have rights under the Constitution and, possibly, state law. Stay informed and stay strong.

**If you believe your school might be violating your legal rights, you can reach out to Public Justice [here](#).**