

All-Gender Cabins & Gender Inclusivity at ABCMC Camps

The American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago welcome children and youth from a diversity of racial, ethnic, language, and cultural identities. This inclusion extends to all expressions of gender and sexuality. At summer camp, we welcome campers from all across the gender spectrum and assigns bunks based on a variety of factors. Our goal is to ensure that every child who attends camp is welcomed, included and celebrated. We offer “boys” cabins, “girls” cabins, and all-gender cabin options.

All-gender cabins are good options for children who prefer to bunk with children of other genders, for children who identify as non-binary, who want to bunk with a friend who is non-binary or for campers who feel this is the best fit for any reason. If you have a specific question or concern you'd like to discuss about your child's bunking, please reach out to us at ambn@abcmc.org

All-Gender Cabins in 2023

In 2023 we are pleased to offer up to 2 all-gender cabins based on sufficient interest, one per age group (typically ages 6-11 and ages 12+). Using best practices and guidelines from camps who have successfully implemented all-gender cabins, ALL of our counselors will be trained on how to create a safe and welcoming space for campers of all genders in EVERY cabin.

Who Can Live in All-Gender Cabins?

Anyone can! All-gender cabins are good options for children who prefer to bunk with children of other genders, for children who identify as non-binary, who want to bunk with a friend who is non-binary or for campers who feel this is the best fit for any reason. Fraternal twins who want to bunk together often enjoy living in an all-gender cabin as well. Trans campers are welcome in all bunks including the all-gender cabins.

The all-gender cabins will have access to all-gender bathrooms and showers, as well as the boys' and girls' bathroom and shower facilities.

Why Offer This Option?

Providing more choices for housing allows us to accommodate more campers' gender identities and housing preferences. This is aligned with our mission of encouraging all campers to be their authentic selves. Our goal is to ensure that every child who attends camp is welcomed, included and celebrated.

Our first priority is to meet the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of our campers and this option encourages all campers to be themselves regardless of what cabin they live in.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a chance that my camper could be housed in an all-gender cabin even if they don't want to be?

No. The all-gender cabins are an opt-in program. Your child will only be assigned to a predefined all-gender cabin if you register select that choice specifically. However, as a result of our bunking policy and our values as an organization, your child may be bunked with children with different gender identities than your child. For example, a "girls" cabin may include children who identify as girls, including trans girls, non-binary or somewhere else along the gender spectrum. In a predefined "girls" cabin, you can expect that the majority of the children will identify as girls, whereas in a predefined all-gender cabin, there will be a more diverse array of gender identities.

How will you handle privacy and changing clothes in all-gender cabins?

Campers can change clothes in the bathroom, in their sleeping bags, or in an open area of the bunk, depending on how much privacy they desire. This is a personal choice everyone gets to make for themselves.

Who should live in an all-gender cabin?

These cabins are open to anyone who opts in during registration. It is a great option for children with non-binary gender identity, children who prefer to bunk with children of other genders, children who want to bunk with a friend who is non-binary, and campers who feel this is the best fit for any reason. Fraternal twins who want to bunk together often enjoy living in an all-gender cabin as well. Trans campers are welcome in all bunks including the all-gender cabins.

What is the bathroom situation?

There are bathhouses that have assigned areas based on gender, and campers are welcome to use the bathhouse based on their gender identity. There are also numerous private all-gender bathrooms (each with a toilet, sink and shower). These bathrooms can be used by anyone who wants additional privacy. Regardless of gender identity, counselors and staff use separate bathhouses from campers.

Who will be the counselors of all-gender cabins?

We will assign caring ABCMC counselors to the all-gender cabins and provide additional training and resources to them. Counselors will include staff with a range of gender identities. For example, there could be one counselor who identifies as non-binary and one who identifies as male.

Will the all-gender cabins take away from the boys and girls cabins' bunk experience?

Not at all! Creating community within each cabin remains the cornerstone of the camp experience. We know there is a lot of power in girls creating a diverse sisterhood and boys creating a diverse brotherhood within their cabins, and that isn't going away. We will continue to train counselors that there are many ways to express gender, and all gender expressions will be accepted and celebrated in all cabins.

Will there still be diversity of gender expression within the boys and girls cabins?

Yes. At camp, there is not one right way to be a girl or be a boy and we encourage all campers to just be themselves regardless of what cabin they live in. We welcome children all across the gender spectrum and assign bunks based on a variety of factors. Our goal is to ensure that every child who attends is welcomed, included and celebrated. Trans campers are welcome in all cabins.

As a result of our bunking policy and our values as an organization, your child may be bunked with children with different gender identities than your child. For example, a "girls" cabin may include children who identify as girls, including trans girls, non-binary or somewhere else along the gender spectrum.

What if not enough campers opt-in to the all-gender cabin?

If there is not sufficient interest to implement an all-gender cabin for either age group, families will be notified before camp and given the option of selecting one of the other cabins or having their registration fees refunded.

Is our host, Camp Alexander Mack, aware of our new practice?

Yes! Camp Mack has experience providing gender-inclusive options to their campers. Their mission is "to provide a sanctuary where people connect with God, experience creation, and build Christian community." Making all campers feel comfortable and welcome serves their mission.