

# GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

PROVIDING CARE THROUGH A TRAUMA INFORMED LENS

## Trauma Informed Gender Affirming Care

*Provided by the Trauma Response Program*

With the rise of anti-trans policies being introduced in Missouri that make gender-affirming care less accessible to even banned, it is vital for helping professionals to understand how to be a supportive ally to transgender individuals, especially transgender youth. Becoming an ally and advocate for your patients can provide great support for those who identify with the LGBTQIA+ community. As helping professionals, being aware of and utilizing important trauma-informed care strategies when working with patients in the community is key. We must be part of the solution for care as it is proven that "affirmation of one's gender identity by others has implications for positive mental health outcomes" (1).

### SEX VS. GENDER

It is important to understand the difference between sexual identity and gender identity when working with clients.

"Sex is the classification of a person as **male**, **female**, or **intersex**"(2).

"Gender describes the internal experience of being a man, a woman, a non-binary person, or otherwise" (2) Gender can be through expression or perception.

"Being an ally to trans and nonbinary people in your life means refraining from making assumption's about people's gender in general."

### COMMON GENDER IDENTITY

**Cisgender** - a person's gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth

**Transgender** - a person's gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth

**Nonbinary** - an umbrella term to describe a person who experiences their gender identity and/or expression outside of the man/woman gender binary

**Two-Spirit** - an umbrella term created by Indigenous peoples to describe sexual orientation and/or gender/sex that exists outside of white colonial constructions of the gender binary. It is neither man nor woman, but a distinct, alternative gender status exclusive to their ethnicity

(2)

# Becoming an Ally

According to the Trevor Project's most recent survey on LGBTQIA+ youth's mental health, participants identified with more than 100 sexual orientations and more than 100 gender identities (2)! With these many unique labels, it can feel overwhelming to keep up with the many kinds. However, it is important to understand that labels can be liberating for LGBTQIA+ youths to find a label that helps find connection and community. It is also important to allow the child to choose the label themselves, as some children feel more comfortable to not label themselves as they experiment with their gender expressions (2).

- Allow for the child to take all the time they need to figure out their identity. Identity can be fluid, a child may have one identity during one appointment but their identity may have changed at the next appointment. Staying supportive and nonjudgemental, while also not questioning the child, is a part of gender-affirming care.
- Unsure about what pronouns the child uses? Simply ask the child what pronouns they prefer to use when you speak with them alone.

### GENDER EXPRESSION VS PERCEPTION

Expression is how a person presents their gender in public, such as clothing, hairstyles, makeup styles, and/or behavior (2).

Perception is how *other people* evaluates another person's gender expression (2).



When a child discloses their chosen name, pronouns, and gender identity, clarify with the child whether or not their parents or guardians are aware of and also support their chosen identities. Some parents are not aware that their child has a different identity and it is important to understand that disclosing the child's chosen identity to unaware parents can put the child in danger. About 28% of LGBTQIA+ individuals experience homelessness or housing instability, with about 54% of those individuals stating that they

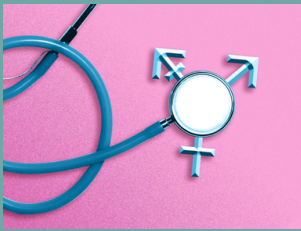
become homeless due to parents kicking them out of their homes after coming out (3). This puts the child at risk for further trauma to experience if a provider discloses gender identity information to unsupportive parents. Be mindful and respectful of the child's wishes of not disclosing their chosen identities to parents.

As helping professionals in the healthcare field, staying aware of current policies regarding gender-affirming care is important, as this can affect the quality of life and care your patient receives. Becoming an ally to transgender youth means advocating against gender-affirming care bans in not only Missouri, but in the United States. Utilizing resources such as **Human Rights Campaign**, linked below, are a great way to stay up to date on the state your are practicing in as well as the country. Being aware can help not only yourself in practice but those you are being an ally to as well.



Scan here for more resources





# Resources for Gender Affirming Care



For both patients and practitioners

While being an ally it is important to be aware of the resources you have accessible as well as the negative and positive information being presented about them.

Washington University's Transgender Center provides a high level of support and child centered care. The center provides care outside of surgery and gender affirming care does not only equal surgery. Many of these offerings are creating a transitioning plan, providing support in gender expression such as hair and clothing changes, voice and speech therapy, resource support for families and child, puberty blockers, and/or hormone therapy (5). The variety of offerings allow for the child and family to make the best choice for themselves.

Overall, the center is a resource in Missouri that is working to navigate the ever-changing anti-trans bills in congress to help meet the needs of trans people in the state.

## Social Media

Resources and people to follow that amplify LGBTQ+ voices and share important information regarding gender affirming care



**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**



**Translifeline**

**The Trevor Project**



Instagram



Website

click the icons to take you to the direct site!

Click here for more information on gender affirming mental health care

**Gender Affirming Care**  
Gender Care for the Primary Care Pediatrician

**Child Developmental Framework:**  
Gender identity formation is part of normal child development. Pediatricians should ask all kids at developmental nodal points about their gender as part of anticipatory guidance & screening.

**Using Affirming Language:**  
Start by asking any patient how they identify. Their terms, identifications, & descriptions should guide the language providers use. Use of chosen name in more contexts (ie home) is protective against depression.

**Modalities of Gender Affirmation**

- Legal**  
Can include updating:
  - Birth certificate
  - Social Security Card
  - Medical record
  - Driver's license/state or city ID
- Social**  
Can include changing:
  - Pronouns
  - Name
  - Clothing/style
  - Gender expression
- Medical**  
Commonly used:
  - GnRH agonists
  - Estradiol
  - Testosterone
  - Finasteride
  - Spironolactone
  - Birth control
- Surgical**  
Can include:
  - Chest/breast reconstruction, augmentation, removal
  - Hysterectomy, orchiectomy
  - Vaginoplasty, Phalloplasty
  - Facial feminization

Remember: all different kinds of affirmation are completely up to the patient, & providers should support patients in making the changes they want to without making any assumptions. Gender affirmation should be Patient-Centered Consent-Based Care.

**Take home points**

- Gender care is primary care!
- Trauma informed care is essential.
- Kids who are safe & loved at home do well.

**References**  
1. Raymond-Kolker R, Forcier M, Chiu C, Berk J. "Gender Affirming Care: Gender Care for the Primary Care Pediatrician." The Cribstiders Pediatric Podcast. <https://www.thecribstiders.com/> April 2021.

