

How to Improve School Support for Transgender Students



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THRIVE

Partners in School-Based Mental Wellness

Introduction

- Transgender students may experience a more complicated adjustment to the school setting.
- Adjustment issues may lead to both psychological and physical damage.
- Schools are responsible for providing support for their students and to ensure the well-being of those students questioning their gender identity.



Key Terms

- Transgender
- Sex
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Gender Expression
- Cisgender
- Transitioning
 - Social
 - Physical
 - Medical & Surgical





The Facts

- Transgender students are at risk for victimization.
- Harassment has been reported by **almost 80%** of youth struggling with gender identity.
- Physical harassment in the form of pushing or shoving is quite common for **at least 55%** of transgender students.
- Transgender students are at high risk for school avoidance.
- **Close to 50%** of transgender youth have attempted suicide at some point in their life.



Legal & Policy Guidelines



- Federal Law protects gender nonconforming and transgender students.
- Anti-bullying policies **MUST** be reevaluated and updated on a regular basis.
- Policy must be aligned with the law.
- Policymakers need to be in communication with staff, administrators
- and students.
- Risk of “deliberate indifference”
- Schools have authority and therefore responsibility to act.
- Possible knowledge of harassment
- Failure to act
- Child Injury resulting from failure to act



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



5. Self-Actualization
(morality, creativity, problem solving, lack of prejudice.)

4. Esteem
(self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect & by others.)

3. Love / Belonging
(friendship, family, sexual intimacy.)

2. Safety
(security of body, employment, resources, morality, family, health, prosperity.)

1. Physiological
(breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion.)



Preparing Staff: Education and Exploration

- Provide safe atmosphere for staff to express their own feelings and concerns.
- Validate feelings and concerns while reinforcing laws and policies.
- Identify Staff who need Targeted Training.
- Continue to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- Form a Gender Support Team.
- Public sharing is not essential.



Culture & Language

Language is an absolutely vital part of setting the tone for an inclusive environment. School professionals are responsible for using language that is non-discriminatory.

- Use the child's chosen name.
- Use appropriate pronouns in response to a student's gender identity.
- Identify their gender expression, or simply ask their preference.
- Use the word transgender as an adjective; not a noun.
- In reference to gender identity, use "assigned male at birth" or "assigned female at birth."



Creating a welcoming environment involves teachers, administrators, parents, and advocacy or support groups.

Take into account the following as you work to create a more welcoming environment:

- Use inclusive language such as “everyone” as opposed to “boys and girls.”
- Refrain from assembling students into groups based on gender.
- Avoid offensive/stereotyped characters in posters, literature, and other media.
- Provide guidance to staff on incorporating safe, inclusive policies surrounding lesson plans, language, and bullying.



Creating an All-Inclusive Environment



More Tips for Creating an All-Inclusive Environment

- Create lunchtime and/or after-school groups designed to support LGBT students.
- Provide psychotherapeutic assistance for students and families.
- Maintain open lines of communication for students faced with harassment.
- Have updated bank of available community resources for students and families
- Include in Curriculum (Health, Sexuality, Choices of Literature, Social Studies, etc.)



Community Resources

- Hetrick-Martin Institute - Empowerment, Education, and Advocacy for LGBTQ Youth. www.hmi.org
- CALLEN-LORDE provides sensitive, quality health care and related services targeted to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. callen-lorde.org/transhealth
- GLSEN - Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. glsen.org
- PFlag of Bergen County - Support for parents of LGBTQ kids. bergenpflag.com
- RAINBOW CAFE - A place where LGBTQ youth ages 13-19 can meet and support each other in a safe place and space. rainbowcafenj.org
- Gender Spectrum - Resources for parents, families, teens, educators and medical professionals.
- www.enderspectrum.org
- The Ackerman Institutes's Gender & Family Project: Offers youth, families and communities with gender affirmative services, training and research www.ackerman.org/special-projects/gfp



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