



Working with Transgender Adolescents and Young Adults (AYA)

Provided by AYA Interest Group
APA Div 38

Transgender and gender diverse youth are a rapidly growing, underserved population with significant psychological and health disparities.

Psychological Disparities

Compared to cisgender peers, transgender youth...

- ❖ Report higher levels of anxiety, depression, and co-occurring psychiatric disorders^{1,2,3,4,5}
- ❖ Are 2 to 4 times more likely to experience substance misuse (depending on substance)⁶
- ❖ Have more frequent self-harm,⁷ suicidal ideation and suicide attempts^{8,9}
- ❖ Show higher rates of disordered eating behaviors¹⁰

Health Disparities

Compared to cisgender peers, transgender youth...

- ❖ Report poorer overall health, lower rates of preventative health check-ups, and more frequent emergency room avoidance¹¹
- ❖ Show increased risk for acquiring sexually transmitted infections and HIV¹²
- ❖ Experience elevated rates of high blood pressure and asthma and poorer physical health that kept them from doing their usual activities¹³

Having a gender-affirming provider is associated with significant decreases in lifetime depression and suicidality¹⁴

Providing Gender-Affirmative Care

1. Set the stage at intake that providers are always open to gender/pronouns changing
2. Maintain a non-judgmental stance that is supportive and free of stigma
3. Frequently assess AYA's pronouns and gender identity
4. If a provider accidentally misgenders a patient (i.e., uses the incorrect pronoun), self-correct with the patient's pronouns without excessive apologies that put the AYA in a position of having to absolve/forgive the provider

Learn More

- [WPATH Standards of Care¹⁵](#)
- [A Guide for Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Students¹⁶](#)
- [Supporting & Caring for Transgender Children¹⁷](#)
- [The Gender Affirmative Model¹⁸](#)
- [Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Trans & GNC People¹⁹](#)
- [Conceptual Framework for Clinical work with Trans & GNC Clients²⁰](#)

Setting the Stage

“Over the course of our work together, you may experience changes in your gender identity or your pronouns, which is completely normal. I will check in about this periodically, and, of course, you can always let me know anytime things change.”

McKelvey, ER, McComas, M., & Angiolillo, A. (2021). *Working with Transgender AYA*. [Fact Sheet]. American Psychological Association Division 38.

Establishing Supportive Facilities

- ❖ Provide gender-neutral bathrooms
- ❖ Place LGBTQ+ magazines, posters, or flyers in your waiting room
- ❖ Employ staff who have received diversity training in LGBTQ+ issues and provide regular diversity trainings
- ❖ Ensure your intake forms are inclusive of trans identities
- ❖ Use patient-asserted name and pronouns in electronic health records, billing systems, notification systems, and clinical research
- ❖ Include pronouns on staff badges and in email signatures
- ❖ Introduce yourself (and others, when relevant) using their pronouns
- ❖ Utilize appropriate instruments if assessing aspects of trans and gender non-conforming patients' adjustment and functioning²¹

What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

Male

Female

Intersex

Other: _____

Prefer not to answer

How do you describe your gender?

Man

Woman

Transgender Man

Transgender Woman

Nonbinary

Two-spirit

Other: _____

Prefer not to answer

What are your pronouns?

He/him/his

She/her/hers

They/them/theirs

Other: _____

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