

Clinical Considerations

For work with Transgender Clients



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Learning Goals ~ Participants will:

Learn three basic barriers to care for gender non-conforming persons

Learn at least five ways to ask needed information and avoid inappropriate or hurtful questioning of gender non-conforming persons

Learn three primary risk and protective factors relating to transgender suicide attempts

Learn rudimentary language related to gender non-conforming communities



Overview

Terminology & Communication

Barriers to Care & Suicide Risks

Physical Environment & Staff



Terminology Basics

- **Sex:** What's between your legs (male or female)
- **Gender/ Gender Identity:** What's between your ears (masculine, feminine, androgynous)
- **Gender Expression:** clothes, language, movement, work, recreation, friends, etc.
- **Sexual Orientation :** not based on behavior AND body parts ≠ Orientation
- **Transgender:** Umbrella term, Community based



Terminology Basics

- **Transsexual:** Clinical term, gender affirmation seeking
- **Gender Queer:** both or neither gender – often non transitioning – most often female bodied and college students
- **Transition/ Affirmation:** the process of body changes
- **Passing:** perception is in line with intention
- **Stealth:** not self-disclosing, seeking to remain invisible, blend in, just be



National Snapshot of Trans People

- Four times more likely to live on < \$10,000 annual income
- Double the rate of unemployment overall
 - 4x the rate for trans people of color
- 90% harassed on the job – 71% report hiding gender at work
- 78% report work performance improvement after transition
- 16% work in street economies for income (sex &/or drugs)
- Twice the national rate of homelessness
- 53% harassed in public accommodations
 - 29% by police
 - 12% by judges and court officials
- 57% experience family rejection

Grant, J. M., Mottet, L. A., Tanis, J., Herman, J. L., Harrison, J., and Keisling, M. (2010). *Injustice at Every Turn: National Transgender Discrimination Survey Report on health and health care.*
<http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_report_on_health.pdf>



National State of Medical Care Experience

- 25% harassed in places of medical care
- 24% denied equal treatment in doctor's offices & hospitals
- 19% refused care altogether when gender incongruence was known or discovered
- 2% physically assaulted in doctor's offices or hospitals
- If unemployed, reported double the rate of HIV infection
- 76% are taking hormones whether or not monitored

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Communication: What did you say?



Helpful ways to ask general questions

- Follow the person's language or explain when unable to do so (e.g., documentation, referrals)
 - What name do you prefer/go by?
 - How do you identify your sex or gender?
 - What pronouns do you prefer?
 - Do you identify with any sexual orientation?
 - Have you told other people about your gender identity? What has been their response?
 - Do you feel safe to tell your medical provider? Professors? Family? Friends? Roommates?
 - Is it safe for you at home? In bathrooms? At work? On the street?
 - Do you need me to help you find other trans-friendly care providers?



Possible ways to ask about sexual activities

- Are you currently in a relationship with anyone?
- Are you attracted to men, women, trans men or women?
- Who do you engage sexual activities with?
- Do you have male-bodied, female-bodied, or transgender sexual partners?
- Do you engage in any sexual activities that involve penetration or sharing of body fluids?
- Do you engage in any type of sexual activity with others that involves contact with your genitals?
- What type of protection from STI's or HIV do you use during sexual activities? What % of the time?



Some ways to ask about health care

- When was your last physical?
- Have you ever had a _____ exam?
 - When was the last _____ exam you had?
 - What would make you more comfortable for that exam?
- Have you had any surgeries or body modifications to affirm your gender?
- Do you take any hormones?
 - Are they prescribed by a medical provider or how do you get them? What is your usual dose? How often?



Un-Helpful questions and comments

- When did you decide to be a man/woman?
- You're so attractive, why would you want to...?
- Why would you want to be/ be with a trans person? Don't you know what happens to them?
- You look so real, I never would have known.
- You will never be a *real* man/woman.
- Have you had/Do you want THE surgery?
- You will make an ugly _____. You won't pass.



Common Concerns – General

- Coming out to family and friends
- Transitioning in living situations/ Housing
- Bathroom/locker room use
- Work/School documentation &/or termination
- Government Forms/documentation
- Health Insurance coverage and trans exclusions
- Access to trans-sensitive and competent care
- Finances/loans/draft registration



Common Concerns—Name Changes

- Technical processes
 - Probate Court
 - Social Security
 - RMV
 - Birth Certificates/Passports
 - Everything else with one's name on it
- Health Care System Issues
 - Charts
 - Insurance



Common Gender Affirmation Options

- Social – manner of expression, name, pronouns
- Medical – hormones – surgeries
- Legal – documentation changes

- Private
- Part-time
- Full-time



Barriers to health care

- Barriers to care may include any combination of:
 - Stigma, discrimination, prejudice, ignorance, violence
 - Family & cultural values
 - Finances, insurance
 - Access, training, competence
 - Fear



Barriers to Gender Affirmation (Transition)

○ Access to trans competent providers

Most trans people have to educate their medical providers in order to get adequate care

A lack of therapists experienced in working with trans clients

An absence of trans-sensitive substance abuse treatment

Hostile and inappropriate health care



Clements-Nolle, K., Marx, R., and Katz, M. (2006). Attempted Suicide Among Transgender Persons: The Influence of Gender-Based Discrimination and Victimization. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 51(3), 53-69. PMID: 17135115 DOI: 10.1300/J082v51n03_04

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Barriers to Gender Affirmation (Transition)

- Financial ability to pay for services – Induced poverty
 - Top surgery: \$8,000
 - Facial Surgery: \$25,000
 - Genital Surgery: \$25-300,000
 - Routine labs: \$1,000
 - Medical Care
 - Hair removal
 - Skin care
 - Mental health care



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Barriers to Gender Affirmation (Transition)

- Health issues that impede transition



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The adult **transgender suicide attempt rate**
in the United States is **41%**

The USA adult suicide attempt rate 10.4% -- MA 0.6%

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in ages 18-24



NGLTF & the National Center for Transgender Discrimination. (In Press). *Attempted suicide among transgender persons: National transgender discrimination survey.* (A Study of 6,500 Gender variant people in the United States)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).

http://www.sprc.org/stateinformation/PDF/statedatasheets/sprc_national_data.pdf AND

<http://www2.sprc.org/collegesanduniversities/campus-data-prevalence>



Transgender Suicide Risk Factors in Order

Discrimination, Rejection, and victimization

1. By Parents/Family of Origin
2. By Other Significant People
3. By Strangers

~ Increased by any of the Following ~

Low Self-Esteem - History of Depression

History of Substance Abuse – Job Loss

Harassment – Discrimination – Assault – Poverty



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Medical Transition Factors

Hormone therapy may affect mood & coping

- Estrogen therapy
may increase or activate depression
- Testosterone therapy
may increase risk of self-harm initially
over time may decrease depression

*Denying hormones and/or
gender affirmation procedures may increase
suicidal feelings or initiate suicidal thinking*



Protective Factors for Suicide

- Strong connections to family and other supports
- Access to effective & timely clinical interventions
- Restricted access to lethal means
- Skills in problem-solving, conflict resolution, & coping
- Frustration tolerance and ability to regulate emotions
- Community support (*any* positive community)
- Positive beliefs about future and life in general
- Cultural or religious beliefs discouraging suicide

How can you help?



Creating a Transgender-friendly Office/Center Environment



- Place symbols in areas that will be noticed
- Single occupancy or gender neutral bathroom
- LGBT Newspapers, magazines, etc.
- Call people in by preferred name
- Post non-discrimination policy
 - Include “Gender identity or expression”
- Ensure safety in lobby and parking areas
- Offer a safe area to change clothing for visits if needed
- Display photos/ads reflecting gender variance



Supporting Front-Line Staff

- Create and follow a protocol for noting preferred names, pronouns, mail, and voice message instructions
- Have clear lines of referral for questions
 - appoint a point staff who will provide guidance, assistance with your procedures, referrals to other trans-competent and safe providers of myriad services, and complaints.
- Accountability for transphobic responses
- Ongoing training and retraining as needed
- Lead by example whether in front of or absent clients



Other Support Staff and Colleagues

- Annual transgender competency and boundaries trainings (e.g., know what not to ask about)
- Train new staff on protocols within 1 month
- Address unwanted or inappropriate behaviors and advocate for clients
- Advanced trainings for staff involved in care with expectations of continuing education on transgender issues
- Protect client/patient gender affirmation or transition information – it IS medical information



Make Referrals When Indicated



Assess and Act on Self Harm Warning Signs

Use a Strengths-Based Approach



Community Resources

- The GLBT Helpline 1-888-240-GLBT (4528)
- The Gay and Lesbian National Hotline 1-888-843-4564
- LGBT Peer Listening Line – 617-267-2535
- Samaritans: 877-870-HOPE (4673)
- Trevor Helpline: 866-4-U-TREVOR (866-488-7386) - Serves GLBT youth.
- International resource: www.befrienders.org/
- BAGLY – meets every Wednesday night
 - www.bagly.org/meetings – Ages 22 and under
- Sidney Borum, Jr. Health Center – 617-457-8140
 - Ages 12-29
- Fenway Health – 617-927-6000
 - Ages 18 and over



Terminology Reference Materials

Fenway Health Glossary of Gender and Transgender Terms.

Published online. January 2010. URL:

http://www.fenwayhealth.org/site/DocServer/Handout_7-C_Glossary_of_Gender_and_Transgender_Terms__fi.pdf?docID=7081

QUESTIONS

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Thank You!



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