

Statement On Supporting Gender-Affirming Care For TGD Youth

Dear SPP Members,

On February 22, 2022, Texas Governor, Greg Abbot, wrote a letter to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) directing the agency to conduct “a prompt and thorough investigation of any reported instances” of “elective procedures for gender transitioning” which were described as puberty suppression, cross-sex hormone therapy, and surgery. Mandated reporters of child abuse would be required to report and DFPS staff would be required to investigate families of youth receiving gender-affirming care as well as healthcare professionals providing this gender-affirming care and their home institutions.

Governor Abbot’s letter comes after a year of widespread anti-trans legislation. In 2021 at least 22 states introduced legislation that would criminalize the provision of transition-related cares for transgender or gender diverse youth (TGD). Such legislation has already been passed in two states.

As pediatric psychologists, we have been on the forefront of research and clinical practice with TGD youth.

We know that providing timely and research-informed gender-affirming care for youth:

- Is essential and life-saving
- Promotes positive mental health outcomes- lowers the risk of depression and suicide (Achille et al., 2020, Allen et al., 2019, Sorbara et al., 2020,)
- Should be approached as a collaborative decision between a provider, patient, and the patient’s parent/guardian(s), based on a patient’s individual goals and needs
- Is best practice in accordance with the standards of care and professional guidelines (See APA Guidelines)

We also know that denying such care and persecuting the families who seek it for youth:

- Constitutes healthcare discrimination
- Violates human rights
- Perpetuates healthcare disparities
- Will contribute to poorer mental health outcomes for TGD, especially in relation to self-harm, suicidality, depression and anxiety
- May increase the demands on an already overburdened Department of Family and Protective Services

The Society of Pediatric Psychology joins the American Psychological Association ([statement](#) from APA president), American Medical Association, and American Academy of Pediatrics, among others, in **supporting gender-affirming care for TGD youth.**

“Asking licensed medical and mental health professionals to ‘turn in’ parents who are merely trying to give their children needed and evidence-based care would violate patient confidentiality as well as professional ethics. The American Psychological Association opposes politicized intrusions into the decisions that parents make with medical providers about caring for their children.”

Frank C. Worrell, PhD, APA President

We invite members to consider taking the following actions in support of TGD youth and our colleagues in Texas

1. **Learn** more about Gender Health and Gender-Affirming Care
 - a. See attached [statement](#) from SPP Gender Health SIG
 - b. Review APA resources below
2. **Reach out** to TGD youth and families to let them know you support them
3. **Create** gender-affirming spaces
 - a. Share and list your pronouns
 - b. Ask patient pronouns
 - c. Utilize gender-inclusive language
 - d. Correct or interrupt harmful language/behavior or microaggressions
 - e. Acknowledge mistakes made and work to correct them
4. **Join** the Gender Health SIG to learn more about how to help
 - a. Gender Health SIG leaders: Kelly Donahue, PhD (kldonahu@iu.edu); Kerry McGregor, PsyD, (kerry.mcgregor@childrens.harvard.edu)
 - b. Attend the LGBTQ+ Affinity Group meetings in solidarity
5. **Form** peer consultation groups to support ethical and legal decision making in the midst of uncertainty

6. **Contact** your local legislative representative(s) and provide testimony at a committee hearing (<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>)
7. **Participate** in advocacy individually or as a part of community advocacy groups
 - a. One *timely* option https://secure.everyaction.com/89_voPSkHUiqpCb4gpWHHQ2
8. **Commit** to taking actionable steps to address your own blind spots and confront injustice

To support colleagues:

- 1) Affirm your organization's stance on diversity, equity, and inclusion, including support for transgender and gender diverse employees and patients. Release a statement denouncing legislation that blocks access to life-saving medical care for transgender and gender diverse youth.
- 2) Consider hosting a program-wide listening session that allows trans and gender diverse colleagues and their allies to speak freely about the impact this legislation has on their own well-being.
- 3) Consider organizing a group of providers within your practice who have experience working with transgender and gender diverse clients. Encourage providers to consult with this group when questions arise with the families they are treating.

To support families:

- 1) Make it a practice to share your pronouns at the beginning of sessions, on your ID badge, and in your email signature. This is a quick way to let youth and families know that they are in an affirming space.
- 2) Do not make assumptions about gender identity just because someone does not share a different name or pronoun.
- 3) When possible, spend some time with youth one on one and remind them of the bounds of confidentiality to increase comfort with discussing gender.
- 4) Families may have concerns about the documentation of their visits. Discuss confidentiality in detail to reassure families as to who can access their visit notes.
- 5) Develop a list of local resources and supports to help increase connection to the LGBTQ+ community and safe spaces. If possible, make this list available and easily accessible on your organization's website.
- 6) When providing crisis resources, include the Trevor Project hotline.

Resources:

1. <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy/issues/gender-affirmative-care>
2. https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2022/02/report-parents-transgender-children?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=apa-press-release&utm_content=texas-transgender-children-feb24
3. <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/resolution-gender-identity-change-efforts.pdf>
4. See Gender Health SIG statement for broad citation list

Thank you to members of the SPP Gender Health SIG for your thoughtful contributions to this statement.

Sincerely,
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MAL for Diversity

Laura E. Simons, PhD (she/her/hers)
SPP President

Members of the SPP Gender Health SIG