



A GUIDEBOOK: CARING FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

309-762-5433

www.tpqc.org

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IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

Although the diverse terminology surrounding the LGBTQ+ community can be challenging to understand, the language is an important reflection of the individual. The words provide insight into the identity of your young person. Here is a list of LGBTQ+ inclusive terms to help you better understand the terminology.

Ally | Refers to individuals that are supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. You do not have to be a member of the LGBTQ+ community to be an ally but provide advocacy and support to the community.

Asexual | Someone that experiences little or no sexual interest or desire towards anyone.

Aromantic | Refers to individuals that do not experience a romantic attraction towards other individuals, but may still experience sexual attraction.

Bisexual | Refers to an individual that is sexually or romantically attracted to men and women. This attraction does not have to be based on experience but on the person's feelings towards more than one gender.

Cisgender | Refers to individuals that have a heteronormative gender expression and/or identity that aligns with their biological sex assigned at birth.

Gay | Refers to male, female, and gender-nonconforming people that are romantically and sexually attracted to individuals of the same gender.

Gender | The term gender tends to be a very binary word pertaining to either male or female. However, gender is a spectrum that is separate from how we define biological sex assigned at birth. Gender refers to the traits and feelings that are stereotypically associated with biological sex.

Gender Binary | The enforcement of heteronormative male and female gender identities within society.

Gender Expression | Gender expression is how individuals express an intrinsic feeling of gender identity outwardly. Physical characteristics like hairstyles, clothes, and makeup can reflect gender expression. For example, A young girl may choose to wear clothing typically attributed to cisgender men. This does not mean that the adolescent identifies as a male or transgender.

Gender Identity | Gender Identity refers to an individual's internal sense of being male, female, transgender, or somewhere else on the gender spectrum. Gender identity in no way refers to or assumes the sexuality of an individual. For example, A transgender person may also identify as gay, lesbian, pansexual, or asexual. Sexual attraction is separate from gender identity, gender expression, and emotional attraction.

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Gender Nonconforming (GNC) | refers to an individual that identifies outside the social constructs and normative values of male and female.

Heterosexual | Refers to individuals that have a sexual and romantic attraction towards individuals of the opposite sex.

Heteronormativity | The ideology that heterosexuality is the status quo in society.

Intersectionality | The application of interconnection between race, class, and gender for an individual or group of people.

Intersex | Refers to an individual that was born with sex traits or genitalia that are different from the typical male and female characteristics. Generally, these differences can be attributed to the DNA sequence and chromosomes that make up who the person is.

Non-binary | An adjective describing a gender identity not confined to either masculine or feminine.

Lesbian | A woman that is romantically involved with another woman.

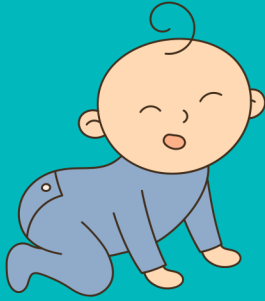
Queer | refers to someone that is not exclusively heterosexual. This once-derogatory term has been recently reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community.

Sex Assigned At Birth | Gender identity assigned at birth based on external genitals.

Transgender | A person that identifies with the sex that is opposite from the sex assigned at birth.

Transitioning | A verb referring to a process or processes that a transgender person will go through in order to allow themselves to live more comfortably with their identity.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT



2-6 years

- Learn their gender identity
- Engage in gender-typed play
- Learn stereotypes associated with each gender

- Associate jobs and school subjects to each gender
- Only spend time with people of same gender
- Attribute certain traits to men and women



7-10 years

- Self-conscious about physical changes
- Feel pressure to conform to societal gender norms
- Concerned about dating
- Intolerant of cross gender behaviors



11-13 years

- More social with peers of the opposite gender
- More flexible about gender stereotypes
- Preoccupied with future careers
- Care more about appearance
- Want to learn gender-based expectations for how to behave in romantic and sexual situations.

14-17 years



What Is Gender Dysphoria?

Gender dysphoria refers to psychological distress as a result of an internal disconnect with their gender identity and their biological sex (APA, 2022; Dominquez & Troy, 2020). Gender dysphoria is more common among youth and adolescents, but can occur at any point in life. Gender dysphoria is generally persistent and children will continually express their disconnection or unhappiness with their biological sex.



What to Watchout For:

- ✓ **Statements that the child identifies with the opposite biological sex.**
- ✓ **Rejection of typical gender norms.**
- ✓ **Persistent negative talk about genitals.**
- ✓ **Outward changes in appearance such as clothes, makeup, hairstyles.**
- ✓ **Observing or expression of depression, anxiety, and distress.**



If your child starts to express feelings of disconnect with their biological sex, it is important that you support them! As a caregiver, you can support your child by getting them in contact with someone that can help them work through their emotions. You can also support them by helping them explore a gender identity that they feel more comfortable with. This can be accomplished through both social transitioning and affirmation. Legal and medical affirmation strategies may also be important to discuss with your child.

Transitioning

What is Transitioning?

Transitioning can be completed both socially and physically, but these do not occur at the same time. Social transitioning allows individuals to gain a better feel of their own identity. This can be accomplished through experimenting with gender expression. For example, changing hairstyles, clothing styles, or trying makeup. Social transitioning can also be accompanied by name and pronoun changes. While this may seem challenging to get the hang of at first, it's an opportunity for your gender-non-conforming child to have fun navigating this process. If they are comfortable sharing this process with you, encourage them to journal and start experimenting with their external identity or name.

As a concerned caregiver, you may be worried about the effects of transitioning before adulthood. However, transitioning does not have negative impacts on the health of LGBTQ+ adolescents (Turban et al., 2021). This process is an affirming and ethical way to help preserve the gender identity of your loved one.

If your child decides to change their name or pronouns, it is important that family and friends use them. Learning the new name may be challenging at first, but it will only take some practice.

Benefits of Transitioning

Improved Well-Being and Quality of Life

Can Reduce Anxiety, Depression, Suicidality, and Substance Usage

Greater Relationship Satisfaction

Higher Self-Esteem and Confidence

Effective at Treating Gender Dysphoria

(Cornell University, 2018)

Transitioning can be a challenging and exciting time for both parents and children. If your child decides to transition socially or physically, it is important to get all the resources you need.

Gender-Affirming Care

Gender-affirming care is a form of healthcare that provides necessary attention to transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. This type of care is inclusive of medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical care (HHS, 2022). Gender-affirming care is vital for children who are transitioning physically, emotionally, and/or socially.



Gender-affirming care also encompasses the quality of care that is received by transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. On average 1 out of 4 transgender individuals will miss necessary doctor's appointments because they fear being mistreated (James et al., 2015). As a caregiver, you must advocate for the physical and mental health needs of your young person. Discuss with a trained pediatric physician the steps that your young person and you are comfortable with regarding social, medical, or surgical affirmations.

Depending on where your child and you reside, it may be difficult to access gender-affirming medical services due to lack of resources within communities. Therefore, it is important that social transition and affirmation at home are a priority. As a caregiver, your response to your child's identity is crucial. Validating the identity of your child is the first step towards building their self-esteem and decreasing their risk of negative health outcomes that disproportionately affect this vulnerable community.

Example of Gender-Affirming Care

- Social transitioning: name, pronouns, expression changes
- Puberty blockers
- Cross-sex hormone therapy
- Gender-affirming surgeries
- Legal affirmation: birth certificate, government ID's

*Trans
Power!*

(Rafferty, 2018)

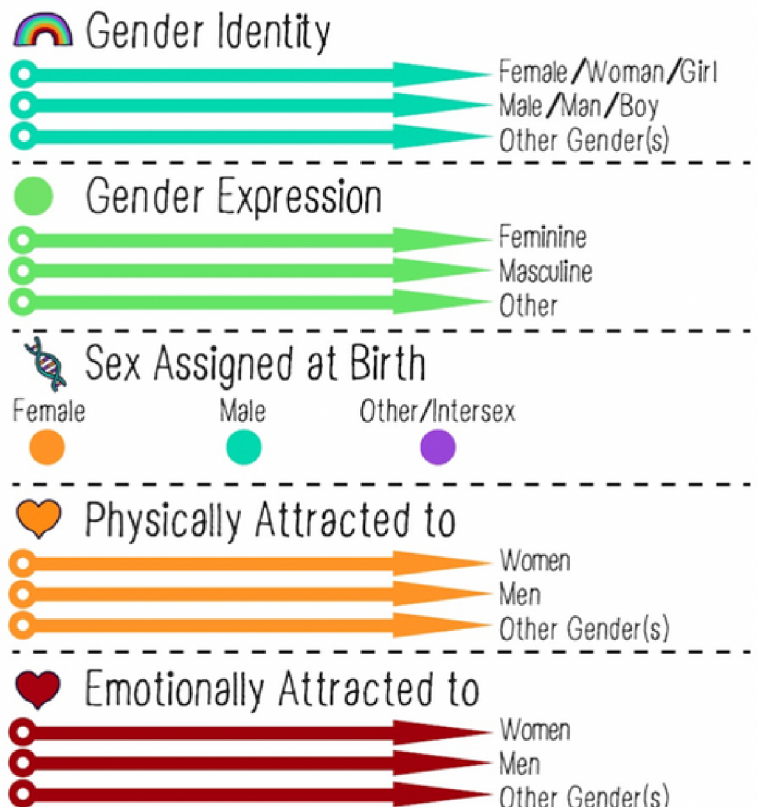
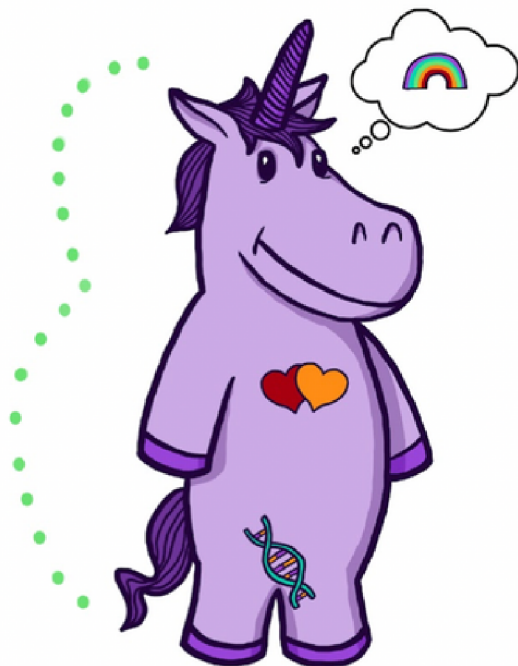
The Gender Unicorn

In order to better understand gender, we can visualize how all the different pieces fit together with the Gender Unicorn. The Gender Unicorn departs from binary views associated with normative terminology of gender (Ho & Massup, 2019). It allows individuals to inquire about parts of their own intrinsic gender identity that they may not have known prior to the exercise. For example, someone may identify as a male but have a more feminine expression and emotional attraction to men. Take some time to reflect on you own gender identity.

Try it out!

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore
Trans Student Educational Resources, 2015. "The Gender Unicorn. <http://www.transstudent.org/gender>.

Follow-up Questions

- Does your Gender Unicorn look different than you thought it would?
- What areas of your identity may not be so obvious to others?
- What do you think influences your gender unicorn?
- Has your gender Unicorn always looked like this, or has it changed over time?

Neopronouns

Some transgender and nonbinary individuals have decided that neopronouns are a better fit for their identity. While not super popular across the United States, it has been estimated that around 4% of LGBTQ+ youth utilize neopronouns (The Trevor Project, 2020).

Neopronoun Examples

Subjective

Objective

Possessive

Xe

Xir

Xirs

Ze

Zir

Zirs

Fae

Faer

Faers

Some transgender and nonbinary individuals believe that they/them still have connotations of gender surrounding them. Neopronouns are used the same way as stereotypical he/him/his and non-binary they/them pronouns. They just take some practice!

Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

The Importance of Pronouns

In society, we view sex as a binary: he/him or she/her. However, not every individual's gender identity aligns with either of these choices. Instead, many gender nonconforming or transgender students are opting for more gender-neutral pronouns like they/them. While they/them pronouns are more commonly used for plural situations, we use them for singular use all the time. For example, we say "They are really noisy" when referring to an upstairs neighbor that we do not know the gender of. We typically use they/them when unsure of the specified gender identity. However, we favor he/him and she/her pronouns when we are more acquainted with the individuals or have more context (Camilliere et al., 2021). However, we should not just assume someone's gender identity or their pronouns.

For example, a coworker tells you that their brother "John" went to the store. A tendency may be to use more gendered pronouns when describing John. However, we do not know John's pronouns. You want to ask your coworker what John bought at the store but want to avoid assuming John's gender or asking your coworker. There are two effective and appropriate responses you could use.

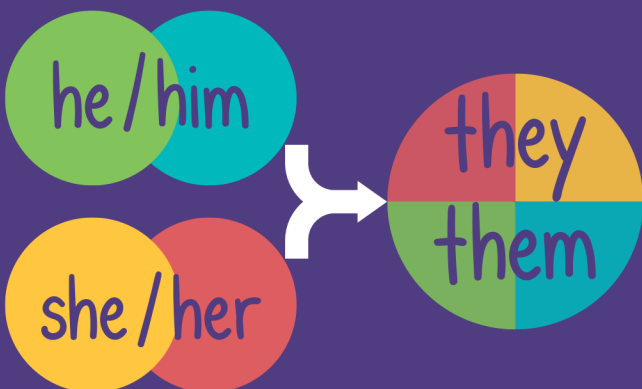
OR

What did they buy?

What did John buy?



In the first statement, we are able to ask a question and use "they" for addressing a single person. The second statement ignores gendered words and only addresses the person you are discussing by name. Using this type of inclusive language helps avoid misgendering friends, family, and strangers.



Respecting Gender Identity

Microaggressions

Both deadnaming and misgendering are common forms of microaggressions experienced by transgender and non-binary individuals. Other examples of microaggressions include jokes and negative comments on appearance, gender identity, and sexual orientation. While microaggressions are not always intentional, they can also be subtle ways to attack these vulnerable individuals.

Microaggressions experienced within social relationships and the environment heavily impact the minority stress faced by this community (Sterzing & Gartner, 2020). As a caregiver, it is important to be mindful of the family's acceptance within the home. Strong family acceptance can help decrease the risk of adverse health outcomes faced by the community (Ryan et al., 2010).

What is Misgendering?

Misgendering is when we refer to someone by using words or pronouns that do not align with that person's gender identity. Research notes that misgendering can cause psychological distress and depressive-related feelings (McLemore, 2018). Increased frequency of misgendering is correlated with a lack of social support. Misgendering can also be a form of microaggressions toward individuals.

What is Deadnaming?

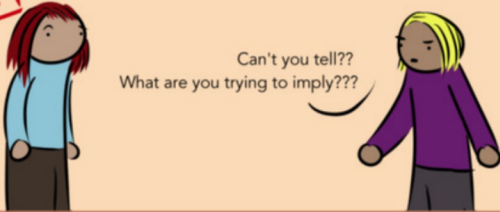
Deadnaming is another form of microaggression that transgender and gender-nonconforming folks potentially experience. People experience this when we use a past name that does not align with the individual's new identity.



What If I Use the Wrong Pronoun?

As a caregiver to an LGBTQ+ loved one, it is vitally important that we address our family and friends with pronouns that correlate with their identity. We are their support system and should find it important to respect their identity. While misgendering from time to time is expected from strangers, using the appropriate pronouns is necessary for respect and validation.

When someone asks you your preferred pronouns:



DON'T

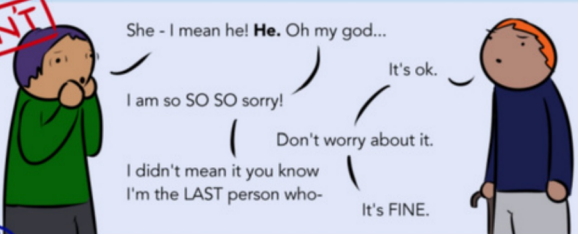
Can't you tell??
What are you trying to imply???

WHY? This person is trying to show you respect and courtesy by not making assumptions about how you identify, don't be rude in return.

DO

I use she/her, thanks for asking!
Yourself?

When you accidentally misgender someone:



DON'T

She - I mean he! **He**. Oh my god...
I am so SO SO sorry!
I didn't mean it you know I'm the LAST person who-

It's ok.
Don't worry about it.
It's FINE.

WHY? Your mistake should not turn into a weird self-flagellation 'make me feel better' moment. It's really not about you.

I'm not familiar with those pronouns.
Could you go over them with me so I know I'm using them right?

DO

Oh, of course.
I'll do my best!

DO



She - sorry, I mean **he** - he and I used to...

DO

(if necessary, probably in private)

Hey man, I know I keep messing up this pronoun thing, I promise I'm doing my best. Thanks for your patience so far.



DO Practice!

Greg is my friend, I've known him for 7 years. He works in landscaping and he has 3 dogs...

A survey by The Trevor Project (2020) found that only 1 in 5 transgender or nonbinary youth claimed that their pronouns were respected by all or most of their family members. Using the correct pronouns is the best way to promote the success of transgender and nonbinary youth. A child that has their pronouns validated experiences suicide attempts at half the rate of youth that do not receive the same respect. Validating your child's pronouns promotes acceptance and respect for gender identity and expression.

STRONGER TOGETHER

Talking Points

Young people in your life may be apprehensive about coming out to you or discussing their identity. However, these conversations are important to building a relationship with them. It can be difficult to initiate conversation, but you can ease in until your child is willing to open up.



Discussion Questions

- Do you know what LGBTQ+ stands for?
- Do you know anyone that identifies within the LGBTQ+ community?
- Do you feel comfortable sharing your gender identity or sexuality with friends or family?
- How can I support you?

(Robinson & Spears, 2020)

When you have these valuable conversations, it is important that you utilize active listening strategies.

How to Actively Listen:

- Stop current tasks to give your full attention.
- Make eye contact.
- Do not interrupt or interject.
- Show interest by using positive body language like gentle nods and smiling.



Practicing active listening with your child is a very important skill. During a discussion, you may want to interject or comment on the feelings that they are communicating. However, it is important not to put your feelings and emotions over theirs. Take time and let the young person finish communicating their thoughts. Then you can add your own input to the conversation.

Coming Out

Coming out can be a very challenging time for LGBTQ+ youth and adolescents. Safety should be the primary concern for LGBTQ+ youth. If someone feels comfortable sharing their gender and sexual identity with you, it is important you maintain a safe and loving environment in which they can continue to grow and develop.

Support is vital to the success of young people. Moreover, rejection from family or mentors can have a variety of negative consequences on their health. For example, rejection can lead to mental health issues, substance misuse, suicidality, and at-risk sexual behaviors (Newcomb et al., 2019). Unsafe and unaccepting homes contribute to the disproportionate rates of homelessness experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals. Coming out can be hard on parental figures and caregivers as well as the young person, but acceptance has been shown to improve the risk for negative health outcomes. A supportive adult-young person relationship can be defined as having open and low-conflict communication (Newcomb et al., 2019). While it is important to communicate with them, they will need some space during this overwhelming time.

The Do's

- Thank them for telling you.
- Tell them you care about them and that you are proud of them
- Provide them with LGBTQ+ resources
- Continue to educate yourself on ways to take care of their needs.



The Do Not's

- Don't pry. If your young person has come out, listen to understand their needs.
- Do not ignore it
- Do not ask "How do you know?"
- Do not say "It's just a phase"
- Do not discuss other family members' views or religion to shame them.



What Are Some Challenges that LGBTQ+ Students Face?

Notable Disparities



Being Bullied:
33% LGB Students
16% Heterosexual



Considering Suicide:
48% LGB Students
13% Heterosexual



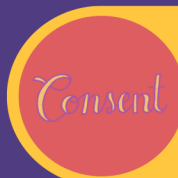
Feeling sad or hopeless:
63% LGB Students
28% Heterosexual



Usage of Illicit Drugs:
23% LGB Students
12% Heterosexual



Misuse of Prescription Drugs:
24% LGB Students
13% Heterosexual



Forced to Have Sex:
22% LGB Students
5% Heterosexual

LGBTQ+ youth are a particularly vulnerable group of individuals within our community. As a result, LGBTQ+ students face a disproportionate rate of health disparities than their cisgender and straight peers. According to the CDC (2019), sexual minority youth are at a greater risk for bullying, depression, usage of illicit drugs, misuse of prescription drugs, and even encountering forced sex situations than their heterosexual counterparts. These disparities can often be attributed to the stigma and discrimination faced by the community.

Discrimination and stigmas surrounding this population produce unmitigated violence and hate crimes against the community. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs noted that there was an 86% increase in single homicides against LGBTQ+ persons from 2016 to 2017. Other attacks take the shape of verbal harassment, assault, and intimidation (Casey et al., 2021; James et al., 2016; Waters et al., 2018). Discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth can occur even in common safe places such as their home and schools.

At school, LGBTQ+ students continue to face discrimination and adverse situations. In 2021, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) conducted a national school climate survey.

Some key findings of challenges of the GLSEN Survey:

Students that felt unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression

68%



4 out of 10 students reported avoiding bathrooms, locker rooms, and gym class because they felt unsafe

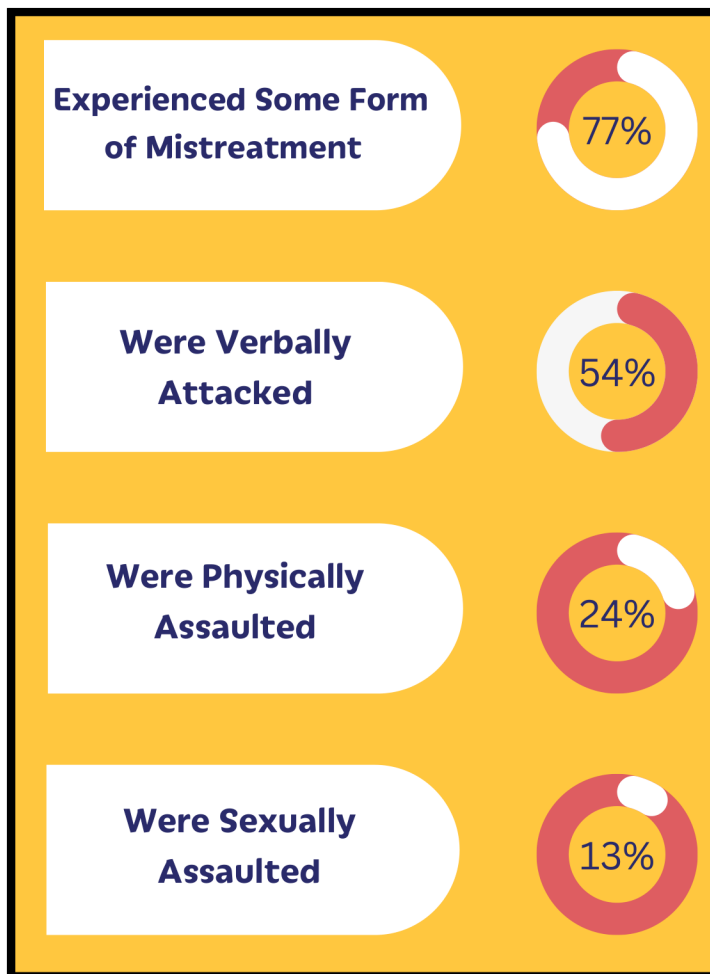
Percent of students that were prevented from using their chosen name or pronouns

29%

Challenges for Transgender Students

The United States Transgender Survey collected information on over 27,000 transgender people. This information helps us better understand the challenges that individuals face.

The Survey Found That From Grade K-12:



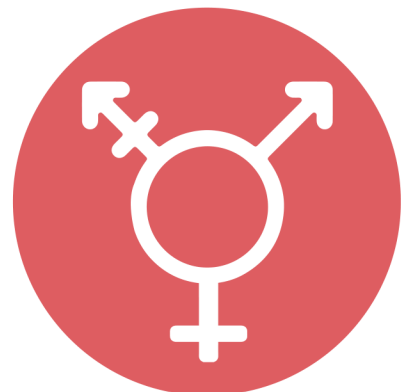
As caregivers, we want to make sure that the safety of your young person is the top priority. We can do this by ensuring that their home and school are a safe place to grow and learn!



While there are many challenges for the LGBTQ+ community, transgender and nonbinary students face these issues at a disproportionate rate. Transgender youth experience mental health illnesses like anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide at a disproportionate rate than their peers (Rafferty et al., 2018).

Transgender and non-binary youth may not have the same opportunity to blend in with their fellow LGBTQ+ peers. As they express, explore, and affirm their new identities, stigma and discrimination surrounding the trans community can lead to social isolation and rejection. It is important to provide a safe and supportive environment for youth to navigate their experiences.

At first, it may be difficult to understand the experiences of transgender and non-binary youth. It is important to take the initiative to educate yourself. There are some resources at the end of this guide to get you started.



RESOURCES

National Center for Transgender Equality
www.transequality.org

The Trevor Project
www.thetrevorproject.org

My Kid Is Gay
www.mykidisgay.com

GLSEN
www.glsen.org

Matthew Shepard Foundation
www.glsen.org

GLAAD
www.glaad.org

Gender Spectrum
www.genderspectrum.org

Parenting a Gender-Nonconforming Child | Michele Yulo
bit.ly/3Jg347F

Community Resources

THE PROJECT OF THE QUAD CITIES
www.tpqc.org/309.762.5433

24-HOUR CRISIS LINES (FAMILY RESOURCES)
IA: 866.921.3354 or IL: 309.797.1777

ONEIOWA
www.oneiowa.org

QUAD CITIANS AFFIRMING DIVERSITY
www.qcadoutforgood.org/309.786.2580

CLOCK, INC
www.clockinc.org/309.558.0956

EQUALITY ILLINOIS
www.equalityillinois.us

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