

# The Benefits of Gender-Affirming Healthcare

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## INTRODUCTION

Gender-affirming care refers to any healthcare treatment that affirms the gender of an individual. Transgender people have a physical body they feel does not match who they are emotionally or mentally and is referred to as gender dysphoria. There are various ways to match those two counterparts, however, medically, stances diverge. Medical professionals worry about the long-term physical complications of gender-affirming care. Providing gender-affirming care supports the overall well being of the patient.

## SIGNIFICANCE

- ❖ 52% of transgender & nonbinary youth considered suicide in the past year (Trevor Project, 2021)
- ❖ 20% of transgender & nonbinary youth attempted suicide in the past year (Trevor Project, 2021)
- ❖ 75% of LGBTQ+ youth reported experiencing discrimination at least once in their lifetime (Trevor Project, 2021)
- ❖ Several states are enacting discriminatory laws toward LGBTQ+ youth that includes:
  - Florida legislation (HB 1557/SB 1834) eliminating classroom discussion of gender and sexuality while also requiring teachers to out their students
  - V-CAP (AL SB5) criminalizing gender-affirming care as a class C felony

## POSITION STATEMENT

Gender-affirming healthcare contains a variety of ways to aid a transgender individual to medically transition and improve their physical, emotional and social well-being. The healthcare team may also facilitate other forms of transition such as social or legal.

### SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- ❖ “The mosaic of maleness and femaleness is present in all individuals, including both transgender and cisgender individuals...during puberty, gonadal steroids, life experiences, and genetics influence the programmed brain to form a phenotype along the continuum” (Nguyen et. al, 2018)
- ❖ Decrease the severity of gender dysphoria
- ❖ Improves general quality of life
- ❖ Improve sexual satisfaction
- ❖ Significantly decreased suicidal ideation
- ❖ Pubertal suppression can cause a decrease in behavioral and emotional problems
- ❖ Allows more time for gender expression exploration
- ❖ Gender-affirming care interventions have a low regret rate
- ❖ Care guidelines are in place to structure care individually and effectively through organizations such as World Professional Association for Transgender Health

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- ❖ Calling patients by their preferred name and pronouns can facilitate patient rapport
- ❖ Institute longitudinal studies to further examine the long-term effects of GAHT across longer time spans such as seven years or longer (Kranz et. al, 2020)
- ❖ Timely intervention is vital to transgender survival
- ❖ Screen the patient for the following conditions before beginning feminizing/masculinizing hormone therapy:
  - Hormone-sensitive cancer (e.g., prostate and breast)
  - Thromboembolic diseases
  - Uncontrolled behavioral or medical conditions
- ❖ Nurses can be criminalized in certain states, such as Alabama, in the US by providing gender-affirming care to prepubescent children that includes:
  - Administering puberty suppression medications
  - Administering hormone induction therapy (e.g., testosterone and estrogen)
  - Participating in procedures that alter or remove body tissue or part that is healthy
  - Encouraging or coercing a minor to withhold gender or sex information from parents or guardians

## CONCLUSION

Gender-affirming care should be provided to any individual that struggles with gender dysphoria. There are solutions that are reversible to an extent such as gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) which has shown a significant impact on their life. People receiving gender-affirming treatment have crucial improvements in their body image, sexual satisfaction, behavioral and emotional problems, and a general increase in quality of life. Considering the societal and legal implications stacked against them, their mental health is important to decrease suicidal attempts and ideation. It is important because all humans are valid regardless of their struggle and should be supported in their journey to their most authentic self.

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