



# Caring for LGBTQ+ Patients and Families in Pediatric Settings

Reference Manual for Staff

2022



**NATIONWIDE  
CHILDREN'S**

*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.<sup>SM</sup>*

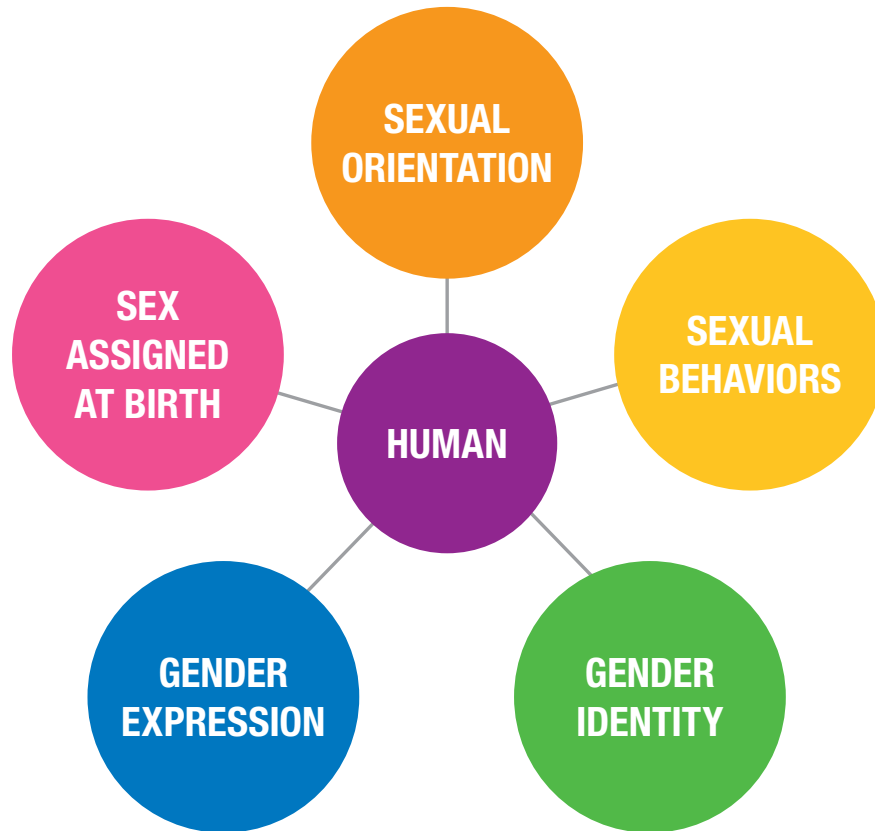


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# Background: Concepts

Independent variables of every person's identity



Do not assume one of the above identities implicates another.  
Often they can be related, there is no prescribed way to define these relationships.

## Terms and Definitions

The *independent* variables:

- **Gender Identity (n.):** a person's internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or another gender – *who we are*
- **Gender Expression (n.):** the way a person acts, dresses, speaks, and behaves – *how we act and present ourselves in society (clothing, hair, voice, body shape, etc.)*
- **Sex Assigned at Birth (n.):** the sex (male, female, or intersex) assigned to a child at birth, most often based on external anatomy – *what organs our body is born with*
- **Sexual Orientation (n.):** how a person characterizes their emotional and sexual attraction to others – *whom we are attracted to*

### Terms related to gender identity:

**Agender (adj.):** describes a person who identifies as having no gender, or who does not experience gender as a primary identity component

**Cisgender (adj.):** describes a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth correspond

**Gender diverse (adj.):** describes a community of people who fall outside of the gender binary structure (e.g., non-binary, genderqueer, gender fluid people)

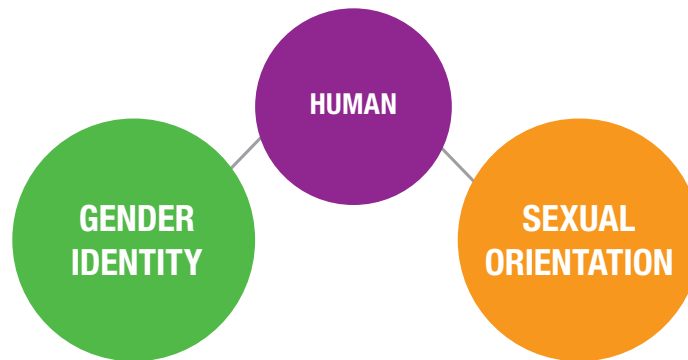
**Gender fluid (adj.):** describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed

**Gender non-conforming (adj.):** describes a gender expression that differs from a given society's norms for males and females

**Genderqueer (adj.):** an umbrella term that describes a person whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary of male and female. Some people use the term gender expansive.

**Non-binary (adj.):** describes a person whose gender identity falls outside of the traditional gender binary structure of girl/woman and boy/man. Sometimes abbreviated as NB or enby.

**Transgender (adj.):** describes a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth do not correspond based on traditional expectations



### Terms related to sexual orientation:

**Asexual (adj.):** describes a person who experiences little to no sexual attraction to others

**Bisexual (adj.):** a sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to women and men – some people define it as attraction to people of their own gender and people of other genders

**Gay (adj.):** describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of their own gender

**Lesbian (adj./n.):** describes a woman who is emotionally and sexually attracted to other women

**Pansexual (adj.):** describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people regardless of gender

**Polyamorous (adj.):** describes a person who has or is open to having more than one romantic or sexual relationship at a time, with the knowledge and consent of all partners

**Queer (adj.):** umbrella term used to describe people who think of their sexual orientation or gender identity as outside of societal norms (though reclaimed by many, this term may be sensitive or offensive to LGBTQ+ people)

For a more extensive glossary of terms visit:  
[www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Glossary-2022.02.22-1.pdf](http://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Glossary-2022.02.22-1.pdf)

## Increasing Understanding

Understanding different gender identities or sexual orientations may be challenging, and that is OK. Our responsibility is to meet patients where they are, listen and trust their experience is true for them, and provide high-quality care to meet their health care and wellness needs.

- Every person has a gender identity and sexual orientation. It may be helpful to reflect on these two aspects of your own identity, what they mean to you, and how they impact your life and your roles.
  - It is also important to recognize how various aspects of identity intersect and influence each other (e.g., cultural or religious traditions may influence how gender and/or sexual orientation is experienced, interpreted, and accepted).
- It may also be beneficial to reflect on the assumptions and stereotypes you may have learned throughout your life related to how a person dresses, wears their hair, makeup, etc. or acts, talks, participates in activities, or carries out roles.



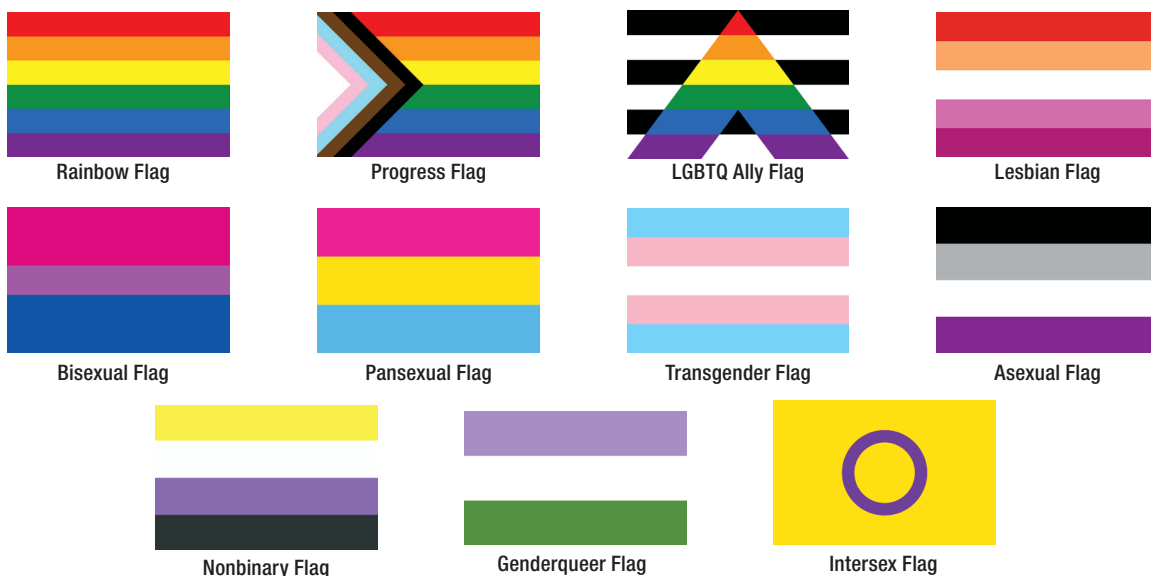
It is not expected to know everything there is to know about the LGBTQ+ community; however, it is expected to be open to learning how to provide the highest quality care to our patients and families toward best outcomes and how to contribute to an inclusive work environment.

- Conversations around gender identity and/or sexual orientation at appropriate times and for appropriate reasons should not be avoided.
    - Normalize & validate
      - Allow conversations about gender identity and/or sexual orientation to come up naturally and in respectful ways
      - Remember everyone's experience is their own
  - If you see/hear something, say something.
    - Lateral violence is not tolerated at NCH
    - Report any gender- or sexuality-related harassment, discrimination, or victimization
  - You may hear the term "transition" when talking about transgender or gender diverse people. Transition is a broad term that refers to making changes to align gender related aspects of a person's identity.
    - Social transition – may include someone "coming out" (e.g., sharing their gender identity with social groups), changing their name/pronouns, or expressing their gender in ways that align with their gender identity
    - Physical transition – may include someone pursuing hormone replacement therapy and/or gender-affirming surgeries
- \*\* Importantly, there is no right or wrong way to be transgender or gender diverse. There may be several reasons why a transgender or gender diverse person does not transition either socially, physically, or both. Transition is not required to identify as a transgender or gender diverse person.
- It may not be obvious that as person identifies as transgender or gender diverse, which is why it is important to ask about name and pronouns to avoid making false assumptions about their identity.
    - How transgender and gender diverse people present themselves and express their gender will vary from person to person.

- Gender-affirming care is recommended for transgender youth by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Endocrine Society and is viewed by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the American Psychiatric Association as evidenced-based patient care.
  - Gender-affirming care is a need of every patient because we all have a gender identity worthy of being affirmed.
- Safe Spaces – Areas open to talking about and supporting LGBTQ+ individuals. LGBTQ+ folks sometimes question whether they will be safe, welcomed or supported in new environments.
  - Before your unit/area displays Safe Space signage, ensure the healthcare team members can provide that safe space. This may involve requiring education and/or training of staff. See resources for those available at Nationwide Children’s Hospital.
  - By displaying the Safe Space signage, we communicate our commitment to creating inclusive environments. To obtain NCH Safe Space signage for your unit/department, contact All Equal ERG.



- Visual indications/symbols of safe spaces can include images of LGBTQ+ flags or Pride flags. If you are unfamiliar with the Pride flags beyond the mainstream rainbow flag, feel free to visit: [www.yopapride.org/resources/education-center/lgbtq-pride-flags](http://www.yopapride.org/resources/education-center/lgbtq-pride-flags)



# Health Disparities

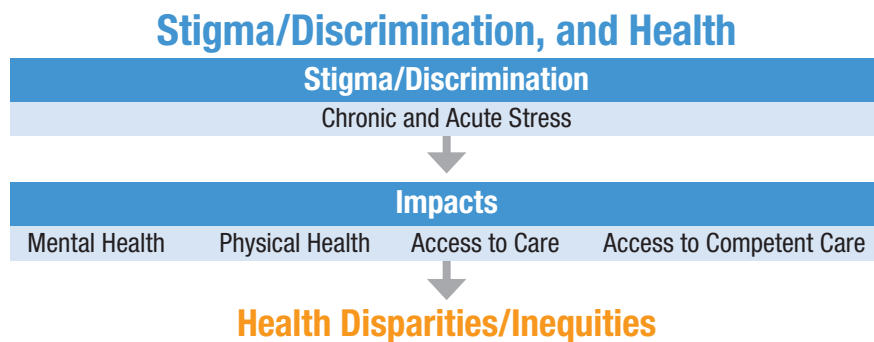
## Healthy People 2030 Goal & Objectives:

Goal: Improve the health, safety, and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

Some Objectives:

1. Reduce bullying of lesbian, gay or bisexual high school students
2. Reduce bullying of transgender students
3. Reduce the proportion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender high school students who have used illicit drugs
4. Reduce suicidal thoughts in lesbian, gay, or bisexual high school students
5. Reduce suicidal thoughts in transgender students

*The health, safety, and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth is a high-priority public health issue.*



*Source: National LGBT Health Education Center*

## National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021 (The Trevor Project, 2021):

[www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021)

- **75%** of LGBTQ youth reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime.
  - **More than half** within the past year
- **94%** of LGBTQ youth reported that recent politics negatively impacted their mental health.
- **More than 80%** of LGBTQ youth stated that COVID-19 made their living situation more stressful.
  - **Only 1 in 3** LGBTQ youth found their home to be LGBTQ-affirming.
- **30%** of LGBTQ youth experienced food insecurity in the past month.
- More than **1.8 million LGBTQ youth** (13-24) seriously consider suicide each year.
- **42%** of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.
  - Including **more than half** of transgender and nonbinary youth



## The good news!

- Transgender and nonbinary youth who reported having pronouns respected by all the people they lived with **attempted suicide at half the rate** of those who did not have their pronouns respected by anyone with whom they lived.
- Transgender and nonbinary youth who were able to change their name and/or gender marker on legal documents, such as driver's licenses and birth certificates, reported **lower rates of attempting suicide**.
- LGBTQ youth who had access to spaces that affirmed their sexual orientation and gender identity reported **lower rates of attempting suicide**.



## Providing Care for LGBTQ+ Patients

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Communication is a key to success when we are working toward best outcomes for our patients and families. Our goals with all communication involve being respectful, exchanging information clearly and completely, and active listening.

- Share your name and pronouns in introductions.
  - Why? To express how you would like others to refer to you and communicate a safe space for patients/family members to express how they would like to be referred to
- Ask patient's name and pronouns in your introduction.
  - Why? Assuming someone's name or pronouns can potentially be harmful to the that person and the therapeutic relationship
  - Examples: *"Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my pronouns are \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me yours?"* or *"Can you tell me your name and pronouns?"* or *"What name and pronouns do you use?"*
    - Avoid using *"preferred pronouns"* because it implies gender identity is a choice
  - If a patient or family member asks why you asked about pronouns, an appropriate response is: *"We want to respect everyone's gender identity and not make false assumptions."*
- Be careful to not use gendered pleasantries to address individuals before they have told you their gender identity and/or the pronouns they use.
  - Examples to avoid: *"sir"* or *"ma'am"*
- If you have entered into a conversation without knowing a person's pronouns, then it is best practice to use gender-neutral language until you are made aware of language the patient wants you to use.
  - Tips on gender-neutral language: referring to the person by their name or using words such as *"child/teen/kiddo," "friend,"* or *"individual."*
- Do not ask presumptive questions related to sexual orientation.
  - Examples to avoid: *"Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?"*
  - Use instead gender-neutral language: *"Are you dating anyone?"* or *"Do you have a romantic partner?"*
- If you need to refer to the name on the medical record, use *"birth name," "legal name,"* or *"medical record name"* NOT *"real name"* or *"actual name."*



- When the child tells you the name and pronouns to use and indicates this information can be shared, make sure this is communicated to the rest of the treatment team (written on their board, passed on in 5-P handoff, etc.) and documented.
  - You have access to add a ‘preferred name’ in Epic that will show up next to the legal name in quotes. The instructions for doing so can be found [HERE](#).
  - You should use the name and pronouns the patient has indicated to use in your documentation. If you suspect this may cause confusion, here is an example of a sentence you can add preceding your note: *The patient expressed to be referred to as Joe and uses he/him pronouns.*
  - The decision to disclose information about the child’s gender identity or sexual orientation to others is the choice of the child. Hospital staff should be cautious to **not** “out” (verbally or in written documentation) any individual without their consent – as this may present a serious safety risk to the child.
- Acknowledge that the disclosure of name and pronouns for transgender and gender diverse youth may have been difficult and that you will keep it confidential to others if desired or needed for patient safety
  - Examples: *“Thank you for sharing that with me, I recognize that may have been difficult. Would you like me to share this information with other health care team members or document it?”*

COMMON PRONOUNS USED (not a comprehensive list)		
		Pronunciation
<b>Masculine identity</b>	He/Him/His	
<b>Feminine identity</b>	She/Her/Hers	
<b>Genderqueer, Gender fluid, or Non-binary identity</b>	He/They* She/They* They/Them/Theirs	
<b>Sometimes referred to as “neopronouns”</b>	Ze/Zir/Zirs Xe/Xem/Xyr	zhee, zhere, zheres zhee, zhem, zhere

*\*indicates either pronouns are appropriate to use. To learn more about pronouns visit: [mypronouns.org](http://mypronouns.org)*



- Ways to normalize usage of pronouns include adding your pronouns to your email signature, wearing a pronoun badge behind your employee ID, adding your pronouns to your virtual meeting platforms, etc.
  - To order a Pronoun Badge Buddy (or several), submit your request with the form found on the All Equal SharePoint
  - See image for examples. There are additional pronoun sets and an option to customize.
- Remember when using terms to describe someone’s gender identity make sure to use them as an adjective.
  - Example: *“I have a transgender patient on my assignment list today.”*
    - NOT: *“I have a transgender on my assignment list today.”*
- Questions regarding personal aspects of a patient’s identity, should only be done when the information is needed for clinical care.
  - Tips to help determine if a question is appropriate:
    - Would you ask a cisgender person the same question?

- Have you built a foundation of trust with the patient prior to sensitive topics being discussed?
- Ask if you can ask a personal gender- or sexuality-related question before actually asking the question.
  - Example: *“Some questions we have to go over today are related to ensuring your sexual health, are you ready for those questions or would you prefer to get to those later in our conversation?”* OR *“Because we’re talking about starting a new medication today, can we talk about what medications you’re taking currently?”*
    - Make sure the environment is private and safe for that individual.
    - If the purpose of the question is solely to increase your own knowledge, then you probably should not ask it. Only YOU are responsible for educating yourself. Refer to the Resources section for help.
- Avoid using terms such as “preference,” “preferred,” “lifestyle,” or “choice” when asking for someone’s name and pronouns as well as when referring to someone’s gender identity or sexual orientation because it implies a lack of respect for the truth of their identity.
- Here are some additional language tips:

MOST OFTEN OK TERMS	TERMS TO AVOID USING
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer	Homosexual
Transgender person Transgender man, Trans man, Transmasculine Transgender woman, Trans woman, Transfeminine	Transgendered, Tranny, Using transgender as a noun
Sexual Orientation	Sexual Preference Chosen Lifestyle
Intersex	Hermaphrodite
Gender Affirmation Surgery	Sex Change

- When a patient uses gender- or sexuality-related terminology to describe themselves, it is OK to ask what that means.
  - Examples: *“What does that mean to you?”* or *“Can you share with me what that means to you?”* or *“Would you be willing to explain what that means to you?”*

**When families/guardians are unaccepting of LGBTQ identities:**

- When speaking with only parents or legal guardians, then we should use gender neutral language, or you can use the name and pronouns they use. This is family-centered care.
  - However, if it is safe to do so and desired by the child, then when the child is present with the family we use the affirming name and pronouns the child uses.
    - Why? This is to support the patient’s mental health and well-being.
- If parents or legal guardians are unaccepting of the child’s identity, then provide educational materials as well as support resources to help encourage them to increase understanding and acceptance.
- If there is any risk of safety to disclose the child’s LGBTQ+ identity to the parents or legal guardians, then it is **essential hospital staff maintain the confidentiality of this information to ensure the safety of the child.**

## Clinical Considerations

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- Ensure you can direct or find resources to help direct patients to gender neutral restrooms. In some areas, this may be directing the patient to a family restroom.
- Use trauma-informed practices and be sensitive to patient's potential hesitation, discomfort, or even severe anxiety in physical examination. Many people are uncomfortable with exposing their bodies, so clinical staff should normalize trauma-informed approaches to all patients.
  - Do not assume a patient is ready to be touched without asking.
  - Provide anticipatory guidance to allow the patient to prepare for the next steps.
  - Make accommodations as applicable and desired by the patient (e.g., using terminology the patient uses to refer to body parts; allowing the patient to decide the order of the examination).
- Patients may be on puberty suppressing or hormone replacement medications as part of their gender-affirming treatment plan. Both approaches are considered safe and evidence-based when prescribed and used according to best practice standards.
  - Examples of puberty suppressing agents: spironolactone and gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GrRH) agonists
  - Examples of hormone replacement agents: estrogen, progesterone, or testosterone
- Remember: How transgender and gender diverse people present themselves and express their gender will vary from person to person. Not all transgender and gender diverse people transition either socially, physically, or both.



- Possible body-affirming behaviors:
  - **For masculine identifying patients** –
    - Binding/Chest binding – when an individual uses clothing or accessories to flatten their chest to appear more masculine.
      - May require assessing for skin breakdown and educating on safe binding practices
      - Do not use ace bandages, duct tape, or other methods not intended for binding. Safer methods of binding include binders (specifically created for this purpose), wearing multiple sports bras, layering clothing, or kinesiology tape/”trans tape.”
      - Do not bind longer than 8 consecutive hours.
        - More on safe binding practices: [health.clevelandclinic.org/safe-chest-binding/](https://health.clevelandclinic.org/safe-chest-binding/)
  - **For feminine identifying patients** –
    - Tucking – when an individual adjusts the placement of their penis and testicles to not be noticeable through clothing.
      - May require assessing for circulation and skin breakdown and educating on safe tucking practices.
      - Do not use ace bandages, duct tape, or other methods not intended for tucking. Safer methods of tucking include wearing control briefs, tucking panties, or proper use of medical tape.
      - Do not tuck 24/7. Take breaks when able.
    - More on safe tucking practices: [daphealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Safer-Tucking-Brochure.pdf](https://daphealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Safer-Tucking-Brochure.pdf)



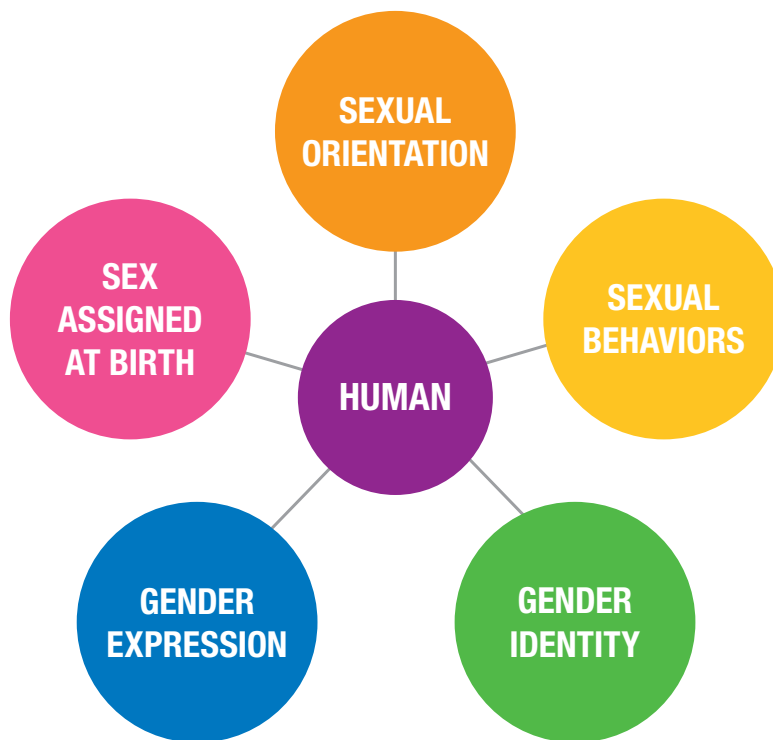
## Take Home Points:

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- Gender and sexuality are INDEPENDENT & IMPORTANT parts of every person's identity
- Do NOT assume the identity of any person – coworker, patient, family member or visitor
- Use the affirming name and pronouns (unless the patient or treatment team has stated otherwise)
- Apologize if a mistake is made and correct yourself

*Thank you for correcting me, I apologize. I meant "he" and I'll do better next time.*

- Ask questions respectfully to learn individual meaning of terms
- Let the patients' needs direct our interactions and questions
- There are hospital resources available to help support you!



At Nationwide Children's Hospital

*Everyone* Matters

# Resources

## Nationwide Children's Hospital

- The Learning Center

Training results

	<b>Developmental Considerations in the Clinical Approach to Gender Diverse and Transgender Children and Adolescents</b> Video   Nationwide Children's Hospital   \$0.00 Dr. Scott Lebowitz, Medical Director of NCH's THRIVE Program presents information about clinical work with transgender youth.
	<b>NCH 2019 THRIVE Module 1 - Gender, Sex and Sexuality 101</b> Completed: 6/17/2019   Status: Completed
	<b>NCH 2018 Trans 101</b> Online Class   Nationwide Children's Hospital   \$0.00 NCH 2018 Trans 101

- All Equal SharePoint – Offers additional resources, events, and projects at NCH and our surrounding community
- On Our Sleeves
  - How to Talk to Kids About Gender Identity: [www.onoursleeves.org/mental-health-resources/minority-mental-health/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-gender-identity](http://www.onoursleeves.org/mental-health-resources/minority-mental-health/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-gender-identity)
  - BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ Conversation Starters: [www.onoursleeves.org/mental-health-resources/minority-mental-health/bipoc-lgbtq-conversation-starters](http://www.onoursleeves.org/mental-health-resources/minority-mental-health/bipoc-lgbtq-conversation-starters)
  - [www.youtube.com/c/OnOurSleeves/videos](http://www.youtube.com/c/OnOurSleeves/videos)
- DISCOVERYx: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7i69hmmzQs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7i69hmmzQs)
- Everything Matters: In Patient Care - Winter 2019 - pg. 7-9: [www.nationwidechildrens.org/newsroom/newsletters/in-patient-care](http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/newsroom/newsletters/in-patient-care)
- THRIVE Gender Development Program
  - The THRIVE Gender Development Program works with transgender/gender diverse children and adolescents that are experiencing distress or dysphoria related to their gender identity. THRIVE is a multidisciplinary team that consists of behavioral health therapists, psychiatry, adolescent medicine, endocrinology, and medical social work. Clinical services include individual,

family, and caregiver therapy sessions, groups for children and their caregivers, medication management from our psychiatry providers, and gender affirming treatment interventions from our medical teams. Visit [www.nationwidechildrens.org/thrive](http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/thrive) to learn more

- The Office of Inclusion & Culture: [nationwidechildrens.sharepoint.com/sites/A10093](https://nationwidechildrens.sharepoint.com/sites/A10093)

## Local Resources in Columbus/Ohio

- Kaleidoscope Youth Center
  - Open to youth and young adults aged 12-20, who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, identify as queer, or are straight allies. We are a safe, supportive, and confidential environment that allows you to build your understanding of the LGBT community, to explore your feelings and experiences, and to meet other young people. Call for details (614) 294-5437
  - o Also offers Family of Trans\* Youth Support & Discussion Group – Check out their calendar at [www.kycoho.org/calendar.html](http://www.kycoho.org/calendar.html) or call (614) 294-5437 for details and to register
- TransOhio
  - Serves the Ohio transgender and ally communities by providing services, education, support, and advocacy which promotes and improves the health, safety and life experience of the Ohio transgender individual and community
  - Visit [www.transohio.com](http://www.transohio.com) to explore resources
- Columbus PFLAG: Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
  - A national support, education, and advocacy organization, visit [columbuspflag.com](http://columbuspflag.com) for more



information or email [pflagcolumbus@gmail.com](mailto:pflagcolumbus@gmail.com)

- Meetings occur twice per month in Columbus area
- National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE):
  - Ohio ID Documents Center - [transequality.org/documents/state/ohio](http://transequality.org/documents/state/ohio)

### **National/Widely Available**

- National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center
  - Learning modules: [www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/resources/in/lgbtqi-youth/type/learning-module](http://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/resources/in/lgbtqi-youth/type/learning-module)
  - Engaging the Families of Transgender and Gender Diverse Children: [www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Engaging-the-Families-of-Transgender-and-Gender-Diverse-Children-9.10.21.pdf](http://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Engaging-the-Families-of-Transgender-and-Gender-Diverse-Children-9.10.21.pdf)
- The Trevor Project
  - An organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ teens and young adults, that provide a safe, confidential space for LGBTQ young people to connect and seek support through TrevorChat, TrevorText, and TrevorSpace programs
  - Also offers resources and educations for families and allies of LGBTQ youth at [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
    - A Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth [www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth) (easy to download and print!)
- A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children
  - Resource created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep14-lgbtkids.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep14-lgbtkids.pdf)
- A federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/lgbtq](http://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/lgbtq)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm)
- TransYouth Family Allies
  - Providing a community of support, respect, and validation for trans, gender variant and gender questioning children and their families. Learn more by visiting [www.imatyfa.org](http://www.imatyfa.org)
- Gender Spectrum Lounge
  - Online support community for youth and parents, visit [genderspectrum.org/lounge](http://genderspectrum.org/lounge) for events
- Hudson's FTM Resource Guide
  - This Guide is intended to provide information on topics of interest to female-to-male (FTM) trans men, and their friends and loved ones
  - Transgender, cisgender, intersex, non-binary, genderqueer, questioning, and all people are welcome. Visit [www.ftmguide.org](http://www.ftmguide.org)
- UCSF Center of Excellence for Transgender Health Guidelines for the Primary and Gender-Affirming Care of Transgender and Gender Nonbinary People
  - [transcare.ucsf.edu/guidelines/youth](http://transcare.ucsf.edu/guidelines/youth)
- National Center for Transgender Equality
  - [transequality.org](http://transequality.org)

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