

Confidentiality When Working with Youth and Their Families

Confidential care is recommended for all adolescents. It is clinically essential, developmentally appropriate, and supported by expert consensus.

Not all LGBTQIA+ youth are out to their families or caregivers. It is important to separate parents and caregivers from the youth—especially when asking important questions about gender identity, sexual orientation, reproductive health, substance use, and mental health. Having parents or caregivers present may discourage some youth from being honest with healthcare professionals.

Although confidential healthcare is important, LGBTQ+ youth should be made aware that healthcare professionals must break confidentiality for certain reasons. Sometimes, billing and insurance statements include information youth may not want disclosed. Inform youth of this possibility and provide them with resources to access free and confidential healthcare services.

1. Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine Statement on the 21st Century Cures Act & Adolescent Confidentiality

This statement outlines the 21st Century Cures Act, which provides parents/guardians access to electronic records. Healthcare professionals need to carefully monitor how they take clinical notes, so they do not compromise the confidentiality of LGBTQ+ youth. The law allows healthcare professionals to block the online release of sensitive information and other notes that could potentially cause harm. Be sure to consult with legal counsel to ensure compliance with all local/tribal, state, and federal laws.

2. American Medical Association Case and Commentary on a Gay Teenage Patient

This case study by Quigley and Moreno (2010) provides a commentary on confidential care with an LGBTQIA+ youth.

3. National LGBT Health Education Center Webinar

This 90-minute webinar focuses on providing confidential care to LGBTQ youth.

4. Guidelines for Managing Information Related to the Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity and Expression of Children in Child Welfare Systems

This guide discusses managing confidential information with sexual and gender minority youth.