

Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Transgender College Students

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October 23, 2008

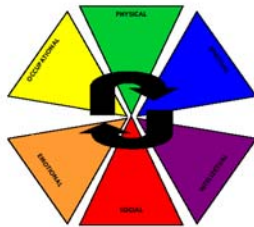
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Objectives

- Describe the needs of transgender college students, and key areas that impact transgender students in higher education
- Identify concrete examples, best practices, and suggestions that can be implemented to improve the campus climate for transgender students
- Discuss specific strategies for making college health services welcoming to trans students, including intake forms, tools to assess transgender-friendliness, policies and practices

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6 Dimensions of Wellness



Developed by Dr. Bill Hartler, Co-founder and President of the Board of Directors of the National Wellness Institute.

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Language

- Gender Identity—An individual's internal sense of being female, male, feminine, masculine, or another gender. Since gender identity is internal, it is not necessarily visible to others.
- Trans or Transgender—An umbrella term describing a range of people who experience or express their gender differently from what most people expect.
- Genderqueer—A term used by individuals, often transgender youth, who identify as neither female nor male, as both, or as somewhere in between. Those who identify as genderqueer may transition partly, completely, or not at all, and may dress and present exclusively as one gender, vary their presentation, or present androgynously. The one commonality between genderqueer people is that they understand themselves in ways that challenge binary constructions of gender.

- Some definitions were adapted from *Transgender Terminology* by Brett-Genny Beemyn

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Language

- What are other terms that you or others use to define themselves?
 - Gender Variant
 - FTM
 - MTF
 - Transsexual
 - Crossdresser
 - Gender Non-Conforming
 - Please add to this list

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What is the impact on students who are unable to access transgender health care?

- **Academic performance may suffer** as they devote time, energy, and money toward their health care needs rather than other concerns.
- May struggle with **mental health issues** that result from being unable to access appropriate and necessary medical care. This may also contribute to a climate of stigmatization and discrimination of transgender people, which can result in depression, anxiety, and other challenges to mental health.
- May seek hormones online, or find other **unsafe and unmonitored sources for obtaining hormones**, which may be dangerous. May self-administer hormones rather than be under the expert care of a physician.
- May be **unable to travel** to conferences or seminars which are necessary for **professional development**, nor are they able to represent the institution at these events because they may be unable to change the gender on their birth certificate and thus acquire identification meeting the REAL ID Act standards.
- Risk the **development or worsening of existing medical problems** due to fear of discrimination by medical professionals or lack of access to medical care.

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Overview of Key Areas that Impact Transgender Students in Higher Education

General

- Safety
- Resources
- Financial
- Support in Transitioning and Streamlining the Process
- Inclusion
- Campus Education/Training
- Gender Queer Students vs. Transitioning Students
- Adjustment to College for First-Year Students

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Overview of Key Areas that Impact Transgender Students in Higher Education

Bathrooms

- Designate gender-neutral bathrooms around campus
- For all restrooms that are single stall, but currently designated as male or female, consider converting to gendered-neutral restrooms
- Create an accessible list of gender-neutral restrooms
- Develop a plan for non-gendered bathrooms in new construction and make an attempt to include in all building renovations

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Overview of Key Areas that Impact Transgender Students in Higher Education

Locker Rooms and Changing Facilities

- Provide private changing facilities with locker accessibility
- Examine intercollegiate facilities (i.e. gyms, pools, hockey rinks, boat houses, etc.)
- Work with athletics department; contact the NCAA about expanding their policy to include trans students in all aspects of collegiate athletics
- Examine other changing facilities on campus, such as performing arts

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Overview of Key Areas that Impact Transgender Students in Higher Education

Housing

- Make housing application process inclusive of transgender and genderqueer students
- Ask for gender rather than binary sex on forms
- Allow a multitude of options during room placement and room draw for trans students from singles to quads (i.e. all options should be available) and place students according to how they identify
- Equip residence halls with lockable private and/or gender neutral bathrooms and shower facilities
- Provide training with housing and residential staff
- Some schools offer gender neutral housing floors or LGBT themed living-learning housing as an additional option

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Overview of Key Areas that Impact Transgender Students in Higher Education

Health Care

- Offer training and education to medical and mental health providers
- Review intake forms for inclusion
- Conduct an environmental audit
- Work with staff for inclusive health services in all areas, including general medical, mental, sexual, and peer health, campus pharmacies, etc.

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Overview of Key Areas that Impact Transgender Students in Higher Education

Health Care, cont'd

- Ensure there are counselors on campus and in the community who are trans-inclusive and gender specialists
- Expand insurance options to include hormones and surgery for both student and employee plans
- Work with providers to build/expand referral listings
- Work with local EMT staff and emergency rooms

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Does your campus:

- o **offer support groups** for LGBT individuals in the process of coming out and for other LGBT issues/concerns?
- o **offer individual counseling** for students that is sensitive and affirming for (supportive) LGBT issues/concerns?
- o **provide training for health-center staff** to increase their sensitivity to the special health care needs of LGBT individuals?
- o **actively distribute condoms and LGBT-inclusive information** on HIV/STD/STI services and resources?
- o enable transitioning transsexual students to have their **hormone replacement therapy covered by insurance**?

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- o **provide training for public safety officers** on gender identity/expression issues and concerns and/or anti-transgender violence?
- o have inclusive **methods for transgender students to self-identify** their gender identity/expression on **standard forms** for the following:
 - Application for Admission
 - Application/Designation for Housing
 - **Student Health Forms**
- o have a significant number of **transgender-inclusive books and periodicals** on gender identity/expression topics in the campus library/libraries?
- o regularly offer activities and **events to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of transgender people**?
- o **Do senior administrators** (e.g. chancellor, president, vice-president, academic deans) actively **demonstrate inclusive use of the words** "gender identity/expression" and/or "transgender" when discussing community, multicultural and/or diversity issues on campus?

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What additional medical services (and coverage) might be needed by transgender students?

- Hormone therapy, consultation, prescription, and maintenance provided by physicians familiar with transgender health concerns
- Sex reassignment surgery (SRS) which may include various surgical procedures that can foster congruence between physical body and gender identity

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- o **Institutions Providing Hormones and SRS include** Emerson College , University of California San Diego , UC San Francisco, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, University of Michigan, University of Vermont , Washington University
- o **Institutions Providing Hormones only include** Bridgewater State College, Harvard University , Ohio State University , Penn State University , Princeton University, Suffolk University, UC Riverside

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What can you do?

- o Transgender and non-transgender people alike benefit from peers, role models and mentors who:
 - Model how to listen and how to act
 - Interrupt stereotypes
 - Use inclusive language
 - Meet needs within current structures,
 - o or advocate for change that will be more effective

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lgbtampus.org

glma.org

Trans-health.com

vch.ca/transhealth
Transgender health program

lgbthealth.net

campusclimateindex.org

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GLMA
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Vancouver Coastal Health
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The National Coalition for LGBT Health

LGBT-friendly campusclimate index

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Books that explore issues of transgender people and their loved ones

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Videos that explore issues of transgender people and their loved ones

- o Boys Don't Cry (1999)
- o Ma Vie En Rose (1997)
- o Soldier's Girl (2003)
- o No Dumb Questions (2001)
- o Southern Comfort (2001)
- o Normal (2003)
- o Transgeneration (2005)
- o Transamerica (2005)

