

Caring for Sexual Minority Youth in the Office Setting

Sexual Identity—Male or female (or intersex) genitalia noted at birth. This is sex.

Gender Identity—The feeling of being male, female, or somewhere in between. This is gender.

Sexual Attractions—A person attracted to someone of a different gender is heterosexual, attracted to someone of the same gender is homosexual (lesbian or gay), attracted to males and females (bisexual), everyone (pansexual), no one (asexual).

Gender Expression—How a person expresses themselves. Do they dress in male or female attire, or androgynously?

Sexual Behavior—What types of sexual activity a person has.

Transgender—A person whose sexual identity is different than their gender identity. For example, a person with male genitalia feels that they are a female.

Transsexual—A person who has undergone some sort of treatment (hormones or surgery) to align their sexual and gender identities.

Gender non-conforming, gender creative, gender expansive, non-binary—Different terms for a person who does not feel that they are 100% female or 100% male.

Trans*—An umbrella term for many of the transgender-related definitions.

Creating an Inclusive Office Environment

- Waiting rooms and common areas should reflect the patients we serve and be inclusive (consider décor that contains photos of non-traditional families, single parent, grandparents as primary care givers, 2 moms, 2 dads, multiethnic families). Non-discrimination policy (for sex, gender, sexual orientation, expression/identity, etc.) should be displayed.
- Brochures, information and resources for LGBTQ youth
- Rainbow stickers for badges
- Single stall, family, or gender-neutral restrooms
- Gowns for well child checks—are there gender neutral gowns or boy/girl gowns?—If there are boy/girl gowns, children should be allowed to choose the gown they would like to wear.
- Rewards—if the office gives out books, stickers or other small prizes, consider offering the patient a choice, instead of handing them gender stereotypical offering. Consider adding gender neutral choices.

Providing Staff Education

- When addressing patients, ask them what name and pronouns they want, and use them. “What name do you go by? What are your pronouns? (He, him, she, her, they, their, something else?) What name would you like us to use?”
- When talking about patients, avoid gendered terms, or use they. “The patient is here for cold symptoms.” “They are ready to see the physician now.” Never refer to a person as “it.”
- Ask respectfully about names if they do not match what is in the system. “Have you ever gone by a different name?” “What name is on the insurance?”
- If you use the wrong pronoun, apologize and move on. “I’m sorry I used the wrong pronoun. I didn’t mean to disrespect you.”
- Only ask for required information that is in your scope of practice. Is it something that you need to know? If so, how can you ask about it in a sensitive way? If you are checking a patient in at the front desk, you probably do not need to ask if they have had surgery.

Provider Screening and Counseling of Sexual Minority Youth

It is recommended that we complete systematic screening and counseling about gender, just as we do other developmental milestones, in order to identify and support sexual minority youth. In doing so, we create a safe environment and model support and acceptance.

18–24 months

Able to describe their own and others' genders

2 years

Demonstrate preferences for toys, games, types of play

4 years

Able to use gendered words—he/him, she/her

Ask families of young children:

- Do you have any concerns about gender?
- Does your child have any behaviors or preferences that are more common in a different gender (for example, toileting, underwear or bathing suit style, or type of toys that they play with)?
- Has your child expressed thoughts that they are a different gender?

Ask younger and older children:

- Do you consider yourself a girl or a boy?
- Do you ever wish you were a different gender?

Ask adolescents and young adults:

- Do you consider yourself male, female, somewhere in between, or other?
- Are you attracted to males, females, both, neither, or everyone?
- Ask about different types of sexual behaviors if they are sexually active.
- Remember that gender and sexual attractions may be fluid and change over time.

Resources for Providers

Human Rights Campaign

LGBT cultural competence

www.hrc.org

GLMA

Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality—

Cultural competence webinars

www.glma.org

Advocates for Youth

Publications for working with LGBT youth

www.advocatesforyouth.org

Physicians for Reproductive Health

Training modules for working with LGBT youth

www.prh.org

Resources for Families

Family Acceptance Project

Best practices for suicide prevention for families

www.familyproject.sfsu.edu

Trans Youth Family Allies

Information and FAQs for families

www.imatyfa.org

Human Rights Campaign

www.hrc.org

PFLAG

Information and support groups for families
and friends of LGBT youth

www.pflag.org

GLSEN

Information about schools

www.glsen.org

Advocates for Youth

www.advocatesforyouth.org