

Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: How To Be A Trusted Adult



Alliance for

SUICIDE PREVENTION

of Larimer County

Agenda

- Why are trusted adults important?
- What is a trusted adult?
- Developing skills to be safe for LGBTQ+ youth
- Getting comfortable talking about LGBTQ+ topics
- If a teen comes out to you

Trusted adults are suicide prevention

- “Teens in the YST (youth support team) group were more likely to go to their therapy and medication-related appointments, and to attend substance use-related sessions during the year following their hospitalization for suicide risk.”¹
- “Emotion regulation difficulties and a lack of trusted adults at home and school were associated with increased risk for making a past-year suicide attempt . . . Having a trusted adult in the community (outside of school and family) was associated with fewer suicide attempts.”²

¹JAMA Psychiatry, doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2018.4358

²Pisani, A, Wyman, P, Petrova, M, Schmeelk-Cone, K, Goldston, D, Xia, Y., & Gould, S. (2013). Emotion regulation difficulties, youth-adult relationships, and suicide attempts among high school students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(6), 807-20.

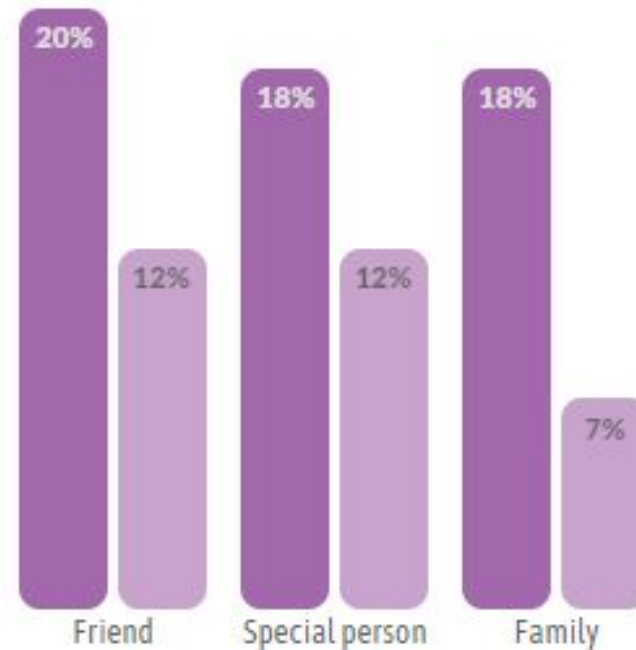
Trusted adults are suicide prevention

- “Two factors increased SA [suicide attempts]: student isolation from adults and suicidal students' popularity and clustering. . . Schoolwide peer and youth-adult relationship patterns influence SA rates beyond individual student connections. Network characteristics associated with suicide attempts map onto three theory-informed domains: social integration versus thwarted relational needs, group cohesion, and suicidal students' social influence. ”³

Trusted adults are suicide prevention

13% of youth who reported high levels of support from family, friends, or a special person reported attempting suicide in the past year **compared to 22% of those with lower levels of support.**

Youth who attempted suicide in the past year, receiving ● low or moderate support or ● high support from the following individuals:



- **Over 80% of youth** said that celebrities who are LGBTQ positively impact how they feel about being LGBTQ
- **More than half of youth** said brands who support the LGBTQ community positively impact how they feel about being LGBTQ

So... what actually is a trusted adult?

- “Trusted adults are committed to having strong, effective, and affirming relationships with youth using positive communication to develop trust and connectedness.”¹
- Youth-selected
- Listen, make youth feel safe, respect physical & emotional boundaries
- Have a familiarity with a young person’s world - could have overlapping identities.

¹MadHope.org, adapted from the Vermont Network “Askable Adult Campaign – as shared by the National Council for Behavioral Health / Agents of Change newsletter

What is a trusted adult?

- They might say...
 - “I’m here if you need anything.”
 - “Your experience is valid.”
 - “I hear you.”
- Humility, presence, spaciousness
 - Not prying for information - “I’m here when you want to talk about this.”
- Honors boundaries, including emotional boundaries.

What *isn't* a trusted adult?

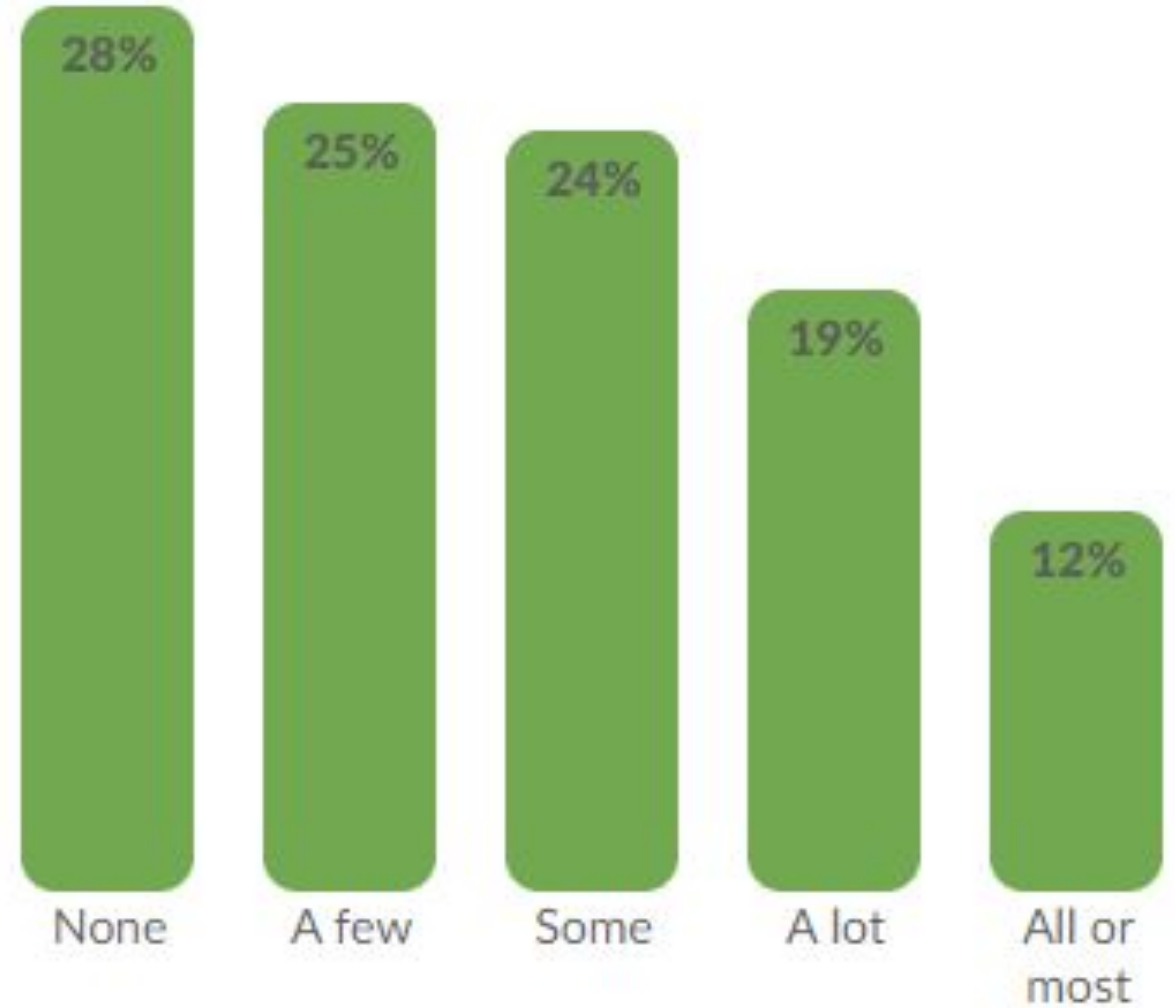
- Someone who doesn't believe a young person when they come out.
- Intentionally misgendering or misnaming, not working on growing/correcting or speaks as if cis het experience is the only one that exists.
- Someone who dismisses or invalidates a person's experiences.
- Someone who betrays/reveals a young person's experiences without consent.

What *isn't* a trusted adult?

- Someone who says:
 - “That’s just a phase.”
 - “Being trans is trendy. This is just a fad.”
 - “They’re too young to really know.”
 - “They’re just doing it for attention.”

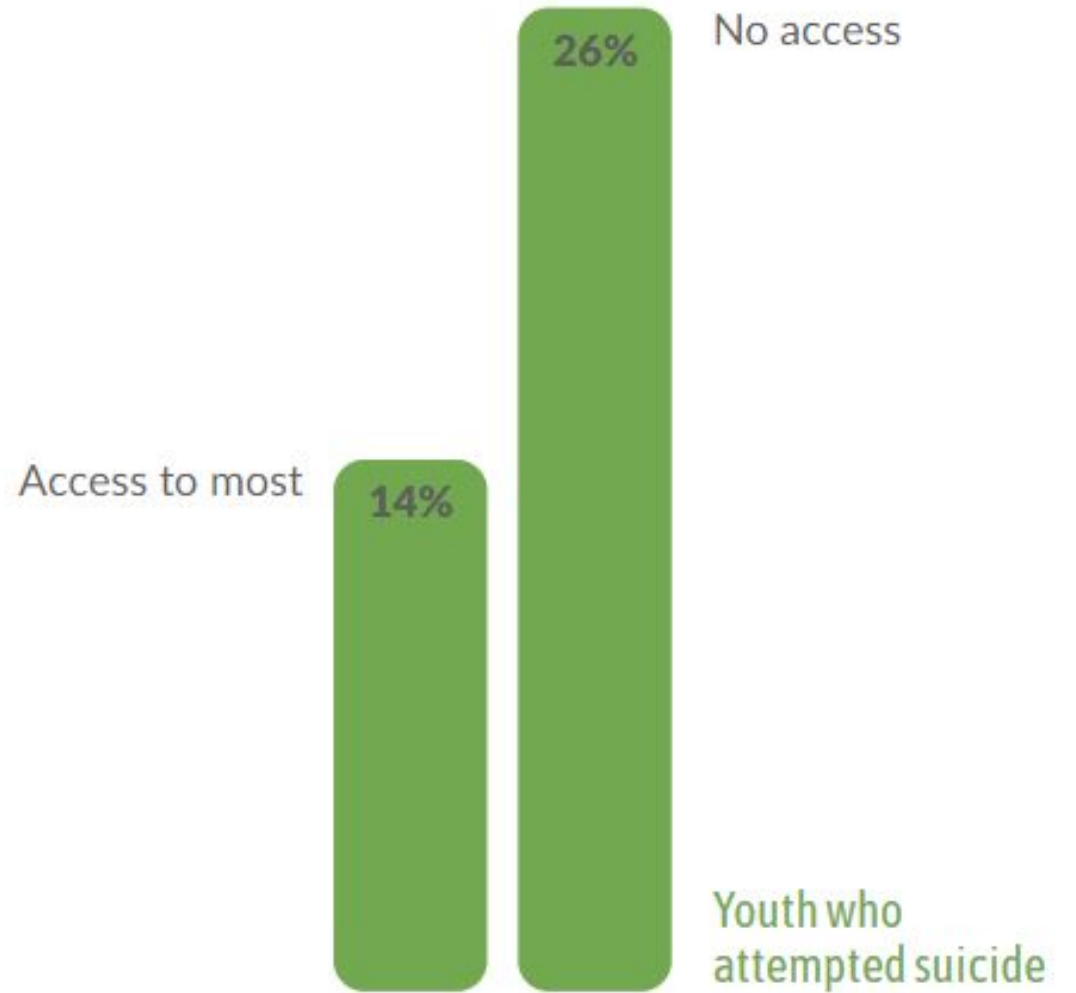
**Just “doing it
for attention”?**

Youth who attempted suicide, comparison of number of people who respected their pronouns:

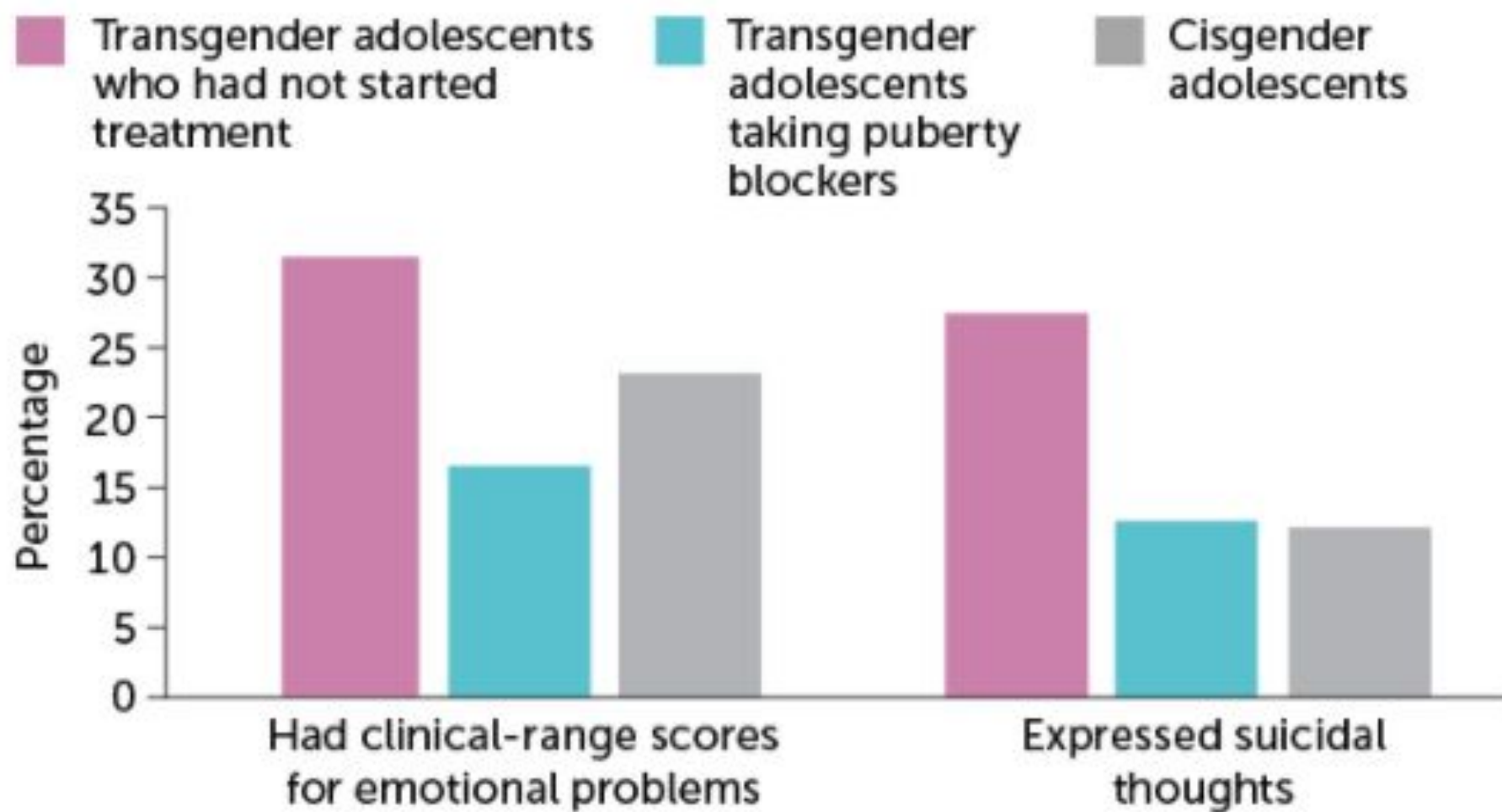


Just “trendy”?

Youth who attempted suicide, comparison of those who had access to binders, shapewear, and gender-affirming clothing to those who had not:



Differences in mental health among Dutch adolescents

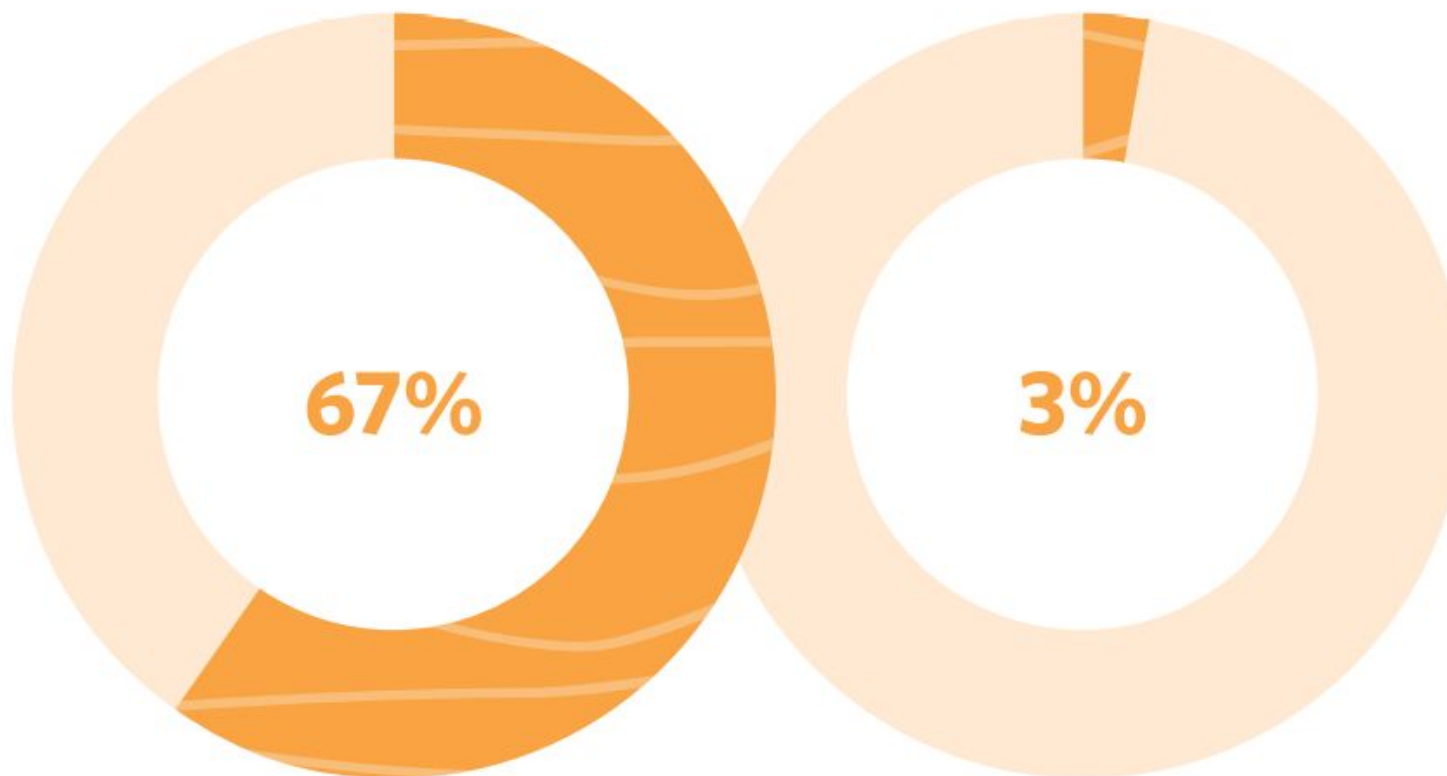


C. CHANG

SOURCE: A.I.R. VAN DERMIESEN ET AL./J. ADOLESCENT HEALTH 2020

Just “a phase”?

67% of transitioning people thought about suicide pre-transition and only **3%** post-medical transition (Bailey et al., 2014).



When talking to teens...

- Get on their level
- It's about the teen, not you
- Trivial things are not trivial
- Don't tell them what to do
- Be authentic, be vulnerable

Ways to Signal LGBTQ+ Inclusion

- Physical space - posters, pride flags, know where a gender neutral restroom is
- Introduce yourself with pronouns/put them in your email signature
- Bring awareness to the way you talk & owning when you make mistakes
- Using LGBTQ+ examples in your teaching
- Don't make assumptions, be curious!

Getting Comfortable with LGBTQ+ Topics

Getting Comfortable with LGBTQ+ Topics



Read and Research!



Think About It!



Talk About It!



Read and Research!

- Read especially from sources written by LGBTQ+ people
- Be wary of sources that...
 - Claim gender or sexuality can be “fixed.”
 - Say being LGBTQ+ is a mental illness.
 - Say being LGBTQ+ is a fad.



Think about it!

- How does gender and sexuality relate to your own life? What is your sexuality? What is your gender identity? When did you know?
- Most of the time, when we refer to sexuality, we are referring to more than just physical attraction.
- Notice how you experience your own gender identity & sexual orientation.



Think about it!

- What are your own experiences with gender? Have you ever felt ashamed (or were shamed) because you didn't live up to gender norms?
- Think about how you learned about gender, messages you received.
- “Trans issues are cis issues.” -Alok Vaid Menon



Talk about it!

- Talk about the things you're learning, process with other people around you.
- Get comfortable saying the words "gay," "transgender," "aromantic."



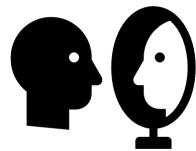
Starting the LGBTQ+ Conversation



Keep it general!



Ask them to talk!



Focus on you!

Talk to the Teen or Young Person in Your Life: The Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- Invite them to talk with you
- Make them comfortable
- Let them know you love and care about them
- Ask questions
- Acknowledge your mistakes

Don't:

- Don't make Assumptions
- Don't ask if they're gay
- Don't ask if they're straight
- Don't be too serious!
- Don't be afraid of being vulnerable!

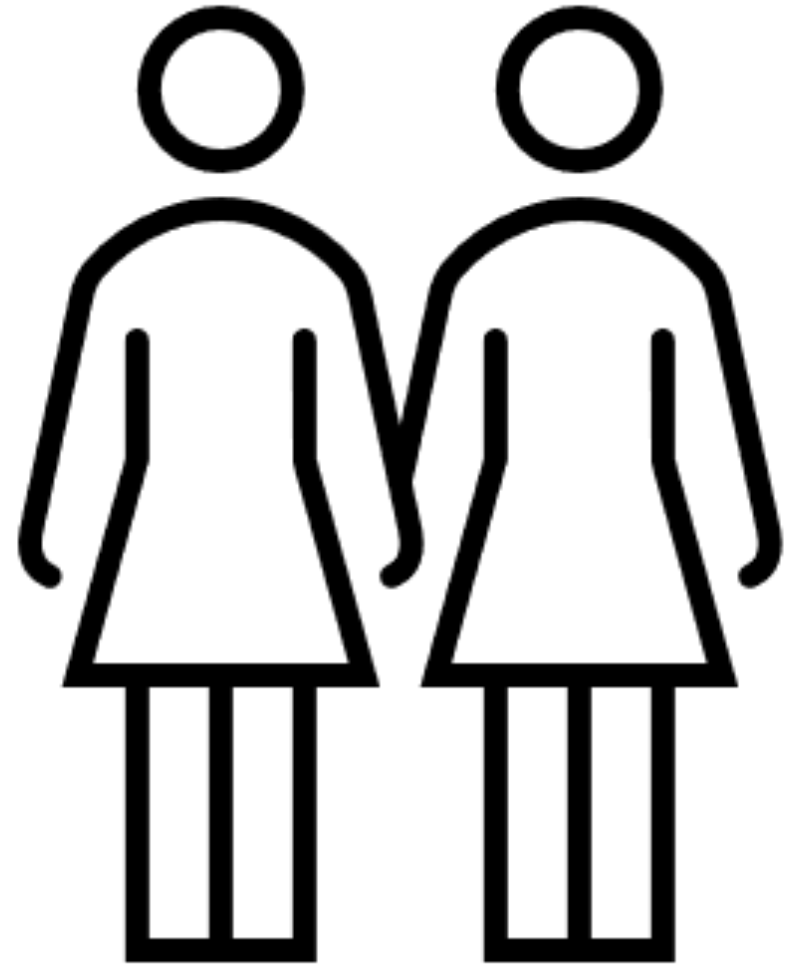
When a Young Person Comes Out

The 5 A's

- Acknowledge
 - Affirm
 - Ask
- Address
 - Affirm

What if I Already Know?

- That's okay!
- Don't say, "I know."
- Instead, say, **"Thank you for telling me that."**



Acknowledge

- Coming out is scary
- Coming out is hard
- Acknowledge their courage
- Thank them for trusting you with this information



Acknowledge Continued

- Believe that they are telling the truth
- Accept that this is important
- Accept that this is not about you
- Do not second guess them or question them

Affirm!

- Let them know that **you care about them**
- Let them know that **you support them**
- Let them know that **you trust them**



Ask (and Listen!)

- Is there anything I can do for you?
- If there's ever been anything I've done that hurt you or made you uncomfortable, please let me know.
- What do those terms mean to you?

Ask

Have you told anyone else?

Is there anyone else you feel comfortable talking to?

Do you have supports in your life who you can process with?

Can I talk to anyone about this?

Address

- Challenges they may face
- Discrimination
- Safety
- Support

Address the Implications of Coming Out

- If they're open to it: discuss pros and cons
- Is there potential danger?
- Remind them you support them no matter what

Re-Affirm!



You care about this person! Let them know!



Remind them that you are there for them



Do something lighthearted and fun to celebrate!

**These steps
don't just
apply to
coming out
about gender
& sexuality!**

The 5 A's

- Acknowledge
 - Affirm
 - Ask
- Address
 - Affirm

Call to Action!

Clinicians: learn how to write letters for gender diverse clients so we can access the gender affirming care we need.

Free, asynchronous training, plus live Q&A sessions scheduled for: Friday 11/12 & 12/3 from 2-3pm

GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE LETTER WRITING

A TWO PART TRAINING SERIES TO IMPROVE ACCESS
TO MEDICALLY NECESSARY CARE FOR TRANSGENDER
AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE

Part 1: Gender-Affirming Healthcare Letter-Writing

This multimedia training is for mental health professionals who have been asked to, or are interested in, writing evaluative mental health letters for clients seeking gender-affirming hormones and/or surgery. We cover the impacts of gatekeeping, the historical context of letters, common guidelines, and how to write a letter that supports client dignity and challenges harmful stereotypes. The workshop contains pre-recorded videos, audio, and slides for you to go at your own pace, with the opportunity to attend a live Q&A following completion of all pre-recorded material.

Part 1: Self Paced - Only Available
Asynchronously

Part 2: Gender-Affirming Healthcare Letter-Writing Q&A

In this follow-up Q&A session, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and hear questions from others about the process of writing evaluative mental health letters for clients needing access to gender-affirming healthcare. This live session is available to mental health professionals who have already completed the "Gender-Affirming Healthcare Letter-Writing" training.

Part 2: Live Q&A Training
Dates Available:
11/12, 12/3 @
2:00pm-3:00pm

Resources

- [Robbie's Hope](#)
- SPLASH NoCo Youth: groups for LGBTQ+ youth ages 5-18 & a parent group
- TYES Colorado, groups/activities for trans youth & their families
- PFLAG, parent groups
- ECHO: peer support groups for youth ages 14-18, meets every Tuesday at the Matthew's House, 5-6:30pm

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