

Supporting Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Diverse Youth in Schools

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Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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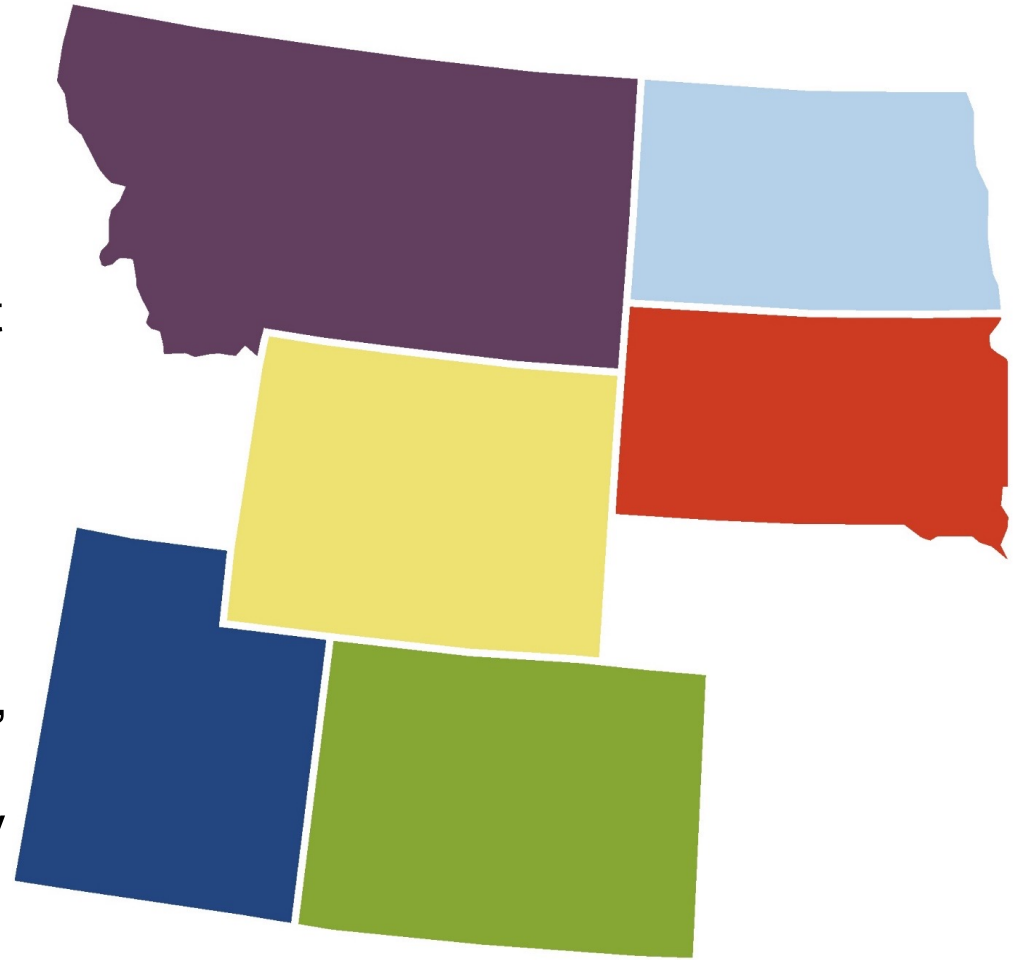
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The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND
ACCEPTING OF
DIVERSE CULTURES,
GENDERS,
PERSPECTIVES,
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND
FREE OF LABELS

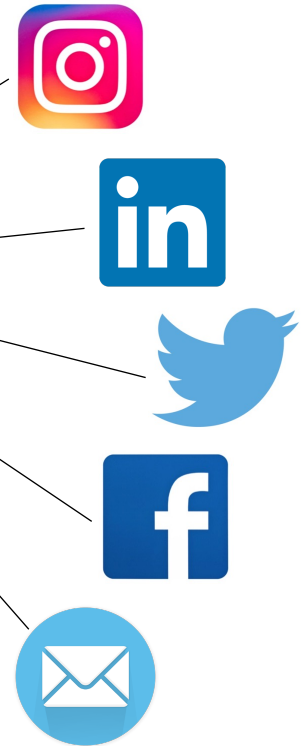
NON-JUDGMENTAL AND
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH
OUR ACTIONS,
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

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Supporting Transgender, Non- binary, and Gender Diverse Youth in Schools

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Outline

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Introductions

Some Ground Assumptions

- Gender is complex and exists on (and beyond) a spectrum
- Identity is constantly evolving, changing, and growing
- Labels and language that an individual may use for their identity should be respected
- As advocates, our main goal is to empathetically listen to transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals and follow their lead
- We won't know everything, and we may make mistakes, but it is essential that we own up to these mistakes and their impact, and learn from them



Orientation and Overview: Why Our Acceptance Matters

Our Responsibilities in Schools

- As teachers and school-based mental health professionals, we are some of the most important contacts in a student's life – we are asked to teach, care for, and support our students
- At school, we are part of a system that is responsible for their:
 - Wellbeing
 - Education
 - Academic and Social Success
- We are obligated to provide all students with equal opportunity and access to a meaningful education

How do Trans, Non-binary, and Gender Diverse Students Fit In?

- Research indicates that transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse students are significantly less successful when their home and school environment are not accepting (Parley, 2021; Russell et al., 2018)
 - Unaccepting environments increase:
 - Drop-out rates
 - School suspensions
 - Reports of bullying and harassment
 - Mental health crises
 - Suicide attempts and completed suicides
 - Unaccepting environments decrease:
 - Grade point average
 - College acceptance and success
 - Self-esteem
 - Wellbeing
 - Social circles and community
 - School involvement



Names and Pronouns: Working with Students In and Outside of the Classroom

History of Pronouns in the Classroom

- In recent years, many classrooms, both K-12 and at the collegiate level have begun asking students for their pronouns at the start of the year
 - What is your experience with asking students their pronouns in classrooms?
 - Have you heard of other teachers, schools, or institutions doing this?
- More recently many gender diverse students have spoken about the way this model can be unintentionally harmful
 - Safety
 - Being Outed
 - Unclear boundaries of pronoun use
 - Discomfort

Towards a More Inclusive Model

Hello! Welcome to class!

Please tell me:

Name you'd like me to call you:	
Name that's on the roster:	
Pronouns:	
Which name would you like me to use in class? Pronouns?	
What name and pronouns should I use if I see you outside of school?	
What name and pronouns should I use if I need to talk to the office and/or other teachers about you?	
What name and pronouns should I use if I need to call home?	
Would you like me to follow up with you to talk more about this?	

Why This Model?

- Avoids outing students in front of the class or drawing attention to a trans, non-binary, or gender diverse student
- Allows a student to clearly outline boundaries of when and where to use pronouns so that they can maintain safety while still affirming their identity
- Allows a student to inform you when and if they need support

These sheets can even be completed via a google doc before the first day of school to avoid using class time or unwanted attention from peers

An Example of the Model at Work

Hello! Welcome to class!

Please tell me:

Name you'd like me to call you:	Layla Smith
Name that's on the roster:	John Smith
Pronouns:	She/her
Which name would you like me to use in class? Pronouns?	Layla, she/her
What name and pronouns should I use if I see you outside of school?	John, he/him
What name and pronouns should I use if I need to talk to the office and/or other teachers about you?	John, he/him
What name and pronouns should I use if I need to call home?	John, he/him
Would you like me to follow up with you to talk more about this?	Not right now



Vignette 1

You are a biology teacher at a local high school. One of your students, Eli, came out as a transgender man at the start of the semester and has begun to use he/him pronouns in your classroom. You have not been able to have a discussion with him about other spaces where he is or is not out as transgender to others. In your staff meeting at the end of the week, several teachers mention that they have noticed changes in Eli's dress and behavior and note that they are concerned about him. Namely that he has cut his hair short, begun wearing more baggy clothing, and appears more reserved and quieter than he had been the previous semester. One of his other teachers even mentions the possibility of bringing in his parents for a conference to discuss their concerns. None of them appear aware of his transgender identity. You wonder how you should respond.

Discussion

- What are some things you would want to consider before responding in the meeting?
- What are some concerns that you have for Eli after reading this vignette? What might be some factors that have influenced his social withdrawal?
- How do you feel about discussing Eli's identity with other teachers? With his parents?
- How might you go about checking in with Eli about the concerns brought up in the meeting?
- After considering these questions, what do you think your response would be?



Misgendering

Misgendering: Definitions and Guidelines

- Misgendering is the purposeful or accidental misuse of a word (usually a pronoun or form of address) that does not correctly reflect an individual's identity (*Misgender Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster, 2021*)
- Misgendering, especially when it is repeated and chronic can have a significant toll on an individual's wellbeing and mental health (Russell et al., 2018)
- When misgendering occurs, its important to acknowledge impact and not intent
- In responding, our priority should always be the misgendered individual's feelings, wellbeing, and safety

When We Misgender a Student

- Recognize, correct, and apologize for our mistake and move forward
 - Ex. “I noticed that he, sorry, she, did not turn in her homework for several days”
- It is important that we don’t let it slide – we need to acknowledge and correct our mistake in the moment
- Follow-ups are not always necessary and can sometimes be unwelcome
 - Circling back can sometimes be unwelcome and harmful
 - Don’t try and explain “why” you did it – own up to it, apologize, and move forward

Ways to Avoid Misgendering Students

- Practice the correct pronouns for students outside of the classroom
- Avoid gendered language generally
 - Instead of “Good morning, ladies and gentlemen!”, instead try “Good morning, everyone!” or “Good morning, students!”
 - Model using non-gendered terms for groups: “y’all” instead of “guys”, “ladies”, “girls”, or “boys”

When We See Students Getting Misgendered

- Important to think about context
 - Are they out to this individual or group?
 - Is there a safety concern here?
- Also, important to think about the potential for harassment and/or bullying
 - Is this a repeated occurrence between the individual and another student/staff member?
 - Has the offending student been spoken to about the impact of their actions?

When We See Students Getting Misgendered: Tactics

- Intervene and stop the ongoing incident
 - Distraction vs Correction
- Speak to the transgender, non-binary, or gender diverse individual about the incident
 - What are their support needs?
 - Would they like you to discuss the incident with the offending party?
 - Would they prefer not to acknowledge the incident?
 - What are other steps they might like to take (avoiding group work with offending individual(s), changing classes, etc.)
- Help student implement desired steps

When We See Students Getting Misgendered: Tactics

Dani uses they/them pronouns and has shared this with the class and has given you permission to use these pronouns and correct others. At the start of an activity, another student says “Give her the book.”

- “Give them the book.”
- “They/them not she/her”
- “Dani uses they/them”

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Advocating for Mental Health

Minority Stress and Its Impact

- Experiences of discrimination, rejection, marginalization, and fear of the future are significant stressors for transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals
- Transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals are also more likely to experience significant traumas including homelessness; sexual assault; bullying; physical, emotional, and verbal abuse; and parental rejection

42%

of transgender, non-binary, and/or gender diverse youth considered suicide in the last 12 months (Paley, 2021)

31%

of transgender, non-binary, and/or gender diverse youth have attempted suicide in their lifetime (Paley, 2021)

2 in 3

LGBTQ+ youth report living in a non-affirming environment (Paley, 2021)

Minority Stress: What We Can Do

- Transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse youth who endorse a strong support system display fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression and are less likely to endorse suicidal ideation or past suicide attempts (Price & Green, 2021; Russell et al., 2018)
- Transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse youth who have access to LGBTQ+ specific groups and events report higher levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing, as well as fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety (Price & Green, 2021; Russell et al., 2018)
- Access to and connection with other transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse youth has also been shown to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety (Russell et al., 2018)

Minority Stress: What We Can Do

- Does your school have a GSA? What might the steps be to establish one?
- Is there a strong LGBTQ+ presence in your school or community? If there isn't, what might be some reasons why LGBTQ+ individuals aren't as open?
- There are online communities that you can refer students to for further support
 - Important to ask their consent before giving them additional resources

Resources

National

- [Trevor Project](#)
- [GLSEN](#)
- [It Gets Better Project](#)
- [Stomp Out Bullying](#)
- [PFLAG](#)

Where Do We Go Next?

- Understanding and Addressing Mental Health Needs *of Sexual Minority (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Queer) Youth* in Schools
 - April 14, 2022 2:00-3:00



Questions?

References

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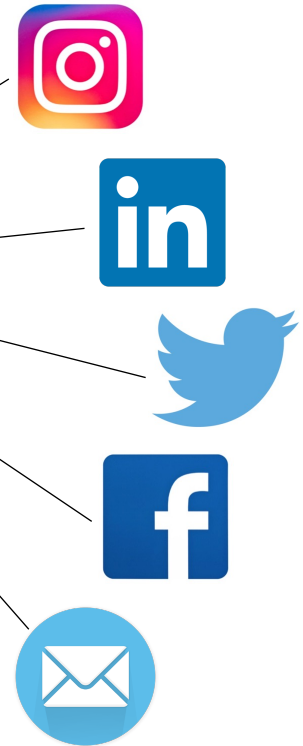
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Thank You!

