



# Gender-Affirmative Care Model

When reading about gender identity, you will likely see many words used to describe individuals who are exploring gender identity or asserting identities that are different from cultural norms. These terms include Gender Nonconforming, Gender Diverse, Gender Expansive, Gender Creative, and Gender Variant. Some of these terms (like nonconforming and variant) have negative connotations, so recent recommendations are to use the term **Gender Diverse** to represent children who are **Transgender or Gender Expansive (TGE)**.

The Gender-Affirmative Model was developed to promote **Gender Health** (i.e., the freedom to acknowledge and express your unique, authentic gender identity without rejection or restrictions). Promoting Gender Health for children involves many individuals including supportive parents, behavioral health providers, school personnel, and medical providers who are all seeking to provide supports for the child expressing their authentic gender identity.

## *Key Principles of the Gender Affirmative Model*

Gender ≠ Pathology	Gender Identity and Expression are not disorders
Culturally Sensitive	Gender Presentations are diverse and vary across cultures
Multifaceted	Current research supports gender as an integration of biology, development and socialization, and culture and context.
Fluid and Non-Binary	Gender <b>may be</b> fluid, and is NOT binary at any given time point and over the course of an individual's identity development
Relationship with Mental Health	Pathology that may be present is typically related to socio-cultural reactions to gender diversity (e.g. transphobia, homophobia, sexism) rather than internal psychological concerns

When implementing the Gender-Affirmative Model, one primary goal is for the Integrated Care Team is alleviating anxiety for:

## Parents

### Concerns

- Parents may have concerns about medical treatments, school concerns, and safety
- Some parents may be supportive while others may be dismissive/punishing

### Recommendations

- Encourage an open mind and flexibility
- Provide education that gender exploration and expression is healthy
- Validate difficulties adjusting and praise parent use of chosen name and pronouns

## Patients

### Concerns

- Worries about body and puberty
- Fear of parental and societal reaction and rejection

### Recommendations

- You may discuss tucking, compression, or binders
- Help patients understand the roles of both medical treatment and behavioral treatment

## Providers

### Concerns

- Evidence based treatments for gender transitions and gender diverse youth are still emerging
- Pressure from families, colleagues, and media to provide the right care

### Recommendations

- Consult with colleagues about clinical decisions
- Seek out continuing education, resources, and readings about serving gender diverse families

For more information: The gender-affirmative model: An interdisciplinary approach to supporting transgender and gender expansive children <https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/4317487>

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