



Supporting Gender-Diverse Youth Mental Health

Gender Diversity is Not a Mental Health Concern

Gender Dysphoria is a diagnosis in the DSM-5 referring to the experience of **emotional distress related to incongruence between assigned gender and asserted gender.**

- This term replaced Gender Identity Disorder to move away from the idea that identifying as gender diverse is “disordered.”
- Some individuals who are gender diverse experience gender dysphoria but NOT everyone does.

Mental Health Concerns Commonly Faced by Gender Diverse Youth

Increased bullying, marginalization, and rejection. Minority stress, lack of support, stigma, and discrimination are directly linked to the increased rates of mental health concerns. Mental health concerns for gender-diverse youth are very common and often occur at higher frequencies than cisgender peers. Becerra-Culqui et al. (2018) found the following rates of mental health concerns among gender diverse-youth:

Ages 3-9:

Any mental health diagnosis	31-34%
Anxiety disorders	12-16%
Mood disorders	5-11%
Conduct disorders	7-8%

Ages 10-17:

Any mental health diagnosis	71-74%
Anxiety disorders	37-38%
Mood disorders	48-62%
Conduct disorders	9-14%
Suicidal Ideation	7-10%
Self Harm	2-8%
Substance Use	7-8%

Suicidal Ideation

In a population-based sample of transgender/gender non-conforming youth:

33.6% reported **non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI)** only during the previous year.

18.0% reported **NSSI and a suicide attempt** during the previous year.

Trans males were significantly more likely to **report NSSI**.

Evidence-Based Strategies For Supporting Mental Health of Gender Diverse Youth

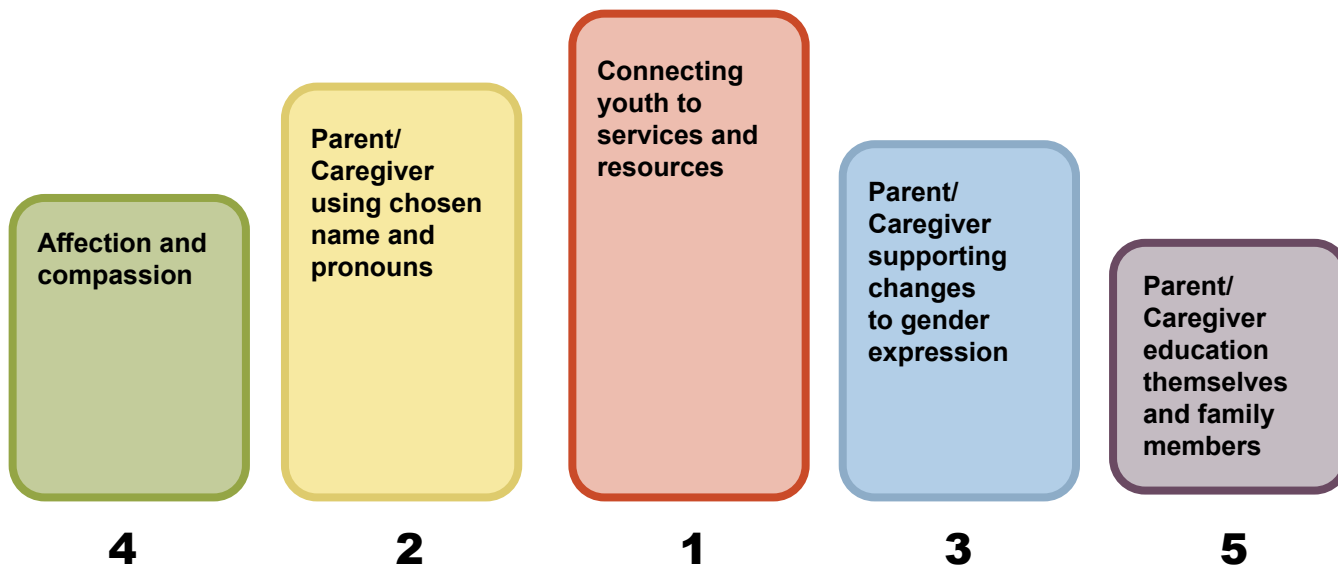
Protective factors include:

- Feeling connected to and supported by parents was the most significant protective factor at reducing risk of mental health concerns and substance abuse.
- Support from other adults in the community and safety at school were also significant protective factors.

Gender-diverse youth need “broad, flexible support networks comprising caring and connected parents, teachers, and other adults in the community and safe, supportive environments” (Gower et al., 2018). This could include:

- Incorporating strengths-based approaches when assessing wellbeing.
- Signs that indicate inclusive spaces at schools and clinics.
- Gender inclusive restrooms.
- Education for parents, educators, health care providers, and other community members about gender diversity.

Parents and youth were surveyed about the most impactful supports and both groups identified the following (Hale et al., 2021):



Authors:

Johnson, K., Roberts, H., and Clarke, B.

References:

Becerra-Culqui, T. A., Liu, Y., Nash, R., Cromwell, L., Flanders, W. D., Getahun, D., Giammattei, S. V., Hunkeler, E. M., Lash, T. L., Millman, A., Quinn, V. P., Robinson, B., Roblin, D., Sanberg, D. E., Silverberg, M. J., Tangpricha, V., & Goodman, M. (2018). Mental health of transgender and gender nonconforming youth compared with their peers. *Pediatrics*, 141(5).

Chen, D., Hidalgo, M. A., Leibowitz, S., Leininger, J., Simons, L., Finlayson, C., & Garofalo, R. (2016). Multidisciplinary care for gender-diverse youth: A narrative review and unique model of gender-affirming care. *Transgender Health*, 1(1), 117-123.

Gower, A. L., Rider, G. N., Brown, C., McMorris, B. J., Coleman, E., Taliaferro, L. A., & Eisenberg, M. E. (2018). Supporting transgender and gender diverse youth: Protection against emotional distress and substance use. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 55(6), 787-794.

Hale, A. E., Chertow, S. Y., Weng, Y., Tabuenca, A., & Aye, T. (2021). Perceptions of support among transgender and gender-expansive adolescents and their parents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68(6), 1075-1081.

Taliaferro, L. A., McMorris, B. J., Rider, G. N., & Eisenberg, M. E. (2019). Risk and protective factors for self-harm in a population-based sample of transgender youth. *Archives of suicide research*, 23(2), 203-221.