

ACHA Guidelines

Trans-Inclusive College Health Programs

An increasing number of college students are identifying as transgender or gender non-conforming. As college health programs work to support the overall goals of their institutions, providing trans-inclusive healthcare will enhance academic success for transgender students and comply with Title IX guidelines requiring educational institutions to not discriminate on the basis of gender identity in the provision of services. Likewise, under the Affordable Care Act, non-discrimination in healthcare on the basis of gender identity is increasingly emphasized.

The following recommendations are designed to create climates and environments in college health that are inclusive and affirming of transgender,^{1,2} gender nonconforming,³ genderqueer,⁴ and similarly self-identified students. Students' gender expressions span a wide spectrum. The following recommendations can help mitigate barriers that trans students face when accessing mental health, physical health and preventative services on campus.

Recognizing differences in campus size, funding, or other resource challenges, ACHA identifies these practices as best strategies to meet the needs of transgender

¹ For the purpose and context of this document, the terms trans, trans*, transgender, gender nonconforming and genderqueer are meant to describe a diverse and complex set of experiences and identities across the spectrum of gender identity and gender expression. Whenever possible, apply these best practices in a way that reflects the term(s) that your campus community employs.

² Transgender is an inclusive term that refers to bending, breaking, moving across, between, or outside gender norms. Individuals who self-identify as trans may identify as transsexual (pre/non or post-op), non-gender, multi- or bi-gender, other gender, or use other terms.

³ Gender nonconforming individuals do not adhere to society's rules about dress and activities based on an individual's sex.

⁴ Genderqueer individuals do not adhere to strictly male or female identities and roles.

students. Not all college health programs provide the same services and in circumstances with limited services, college health professionals should partner with other campus and community organizations to best meet the needs of transgender students. In this document, unless otherwise specified, college health staff includes health care providers, prevention educators, clerical staff, lab staff, and other support staff.

Access

- Include the perspectives of trans students in all college health trainings and use universal language that is inclusive of individuals outside the gender binary.
- Identify clinicians knowledgeable and supportive of the medical aspects of trans health to provide trans-specific health care services. Communicate availability of these providers through college health program's website and with relevant campus departments (e.g. counseling center, LGBT office).
- Identify mental health providers knowledgeable and supportive of trans mental health issues. Communicate availability of these providers to medical staff and other departments on campus to allow for appropriate referrals.
- Have all gender (sometimes referred to as gender neutral) bathrooms available throughout the building.
- Appoint one or more patient advocates and/or have a visible procedure for trans students (as well as other students) to report concerns and instances of suboptimal care and treatment. At least one patient advocate should be trained on the complexities of insurance coverage and medical care that trans-identified people often face. Having another patient advocate outside of the health center allows for individuals to

perceive the availability of a neutral, unbiased resource that can also address concerns.

- Include clear, complete information about accessing trans-related health care services on websites and in health center literature, including appropriate representations of gender expressions across the spectrum of experience. Representations may include website content, trans-specific brochures, and pictures or posters.
- Research and determine relevant campus and community agencies that complement and/or provide trans-affirming medical, mental health, and social support services. Develop plans to partner and/or refer as needed to these organizations.

Health Insurance

- Strive to offer insurance coverage for gender-affirming hormones and gender-affirming surgical procedures under university/college provided student health insurance plans.

Names, Identity, Medical Records, and Health Informatics

- Ensure that only medically-necessary information is collected; this includes avoiding questions that are not relevant to the specific patient interaction needed at that visit.
- Allow for a patient/client to indicate their “sex assigned at birth” alongside their current gender.
- Revise standardized language across medical forms so that the language is the most inclusive possible. For example, use “relationship status” instead of “marital status.”
- Enable students to indicate the name they use (sometimes referred to as “preferred name”), and not just their legal name, on intake forms. Use this chosen name when calling students in for appointments.
- Train staff to recognize that students may prefer to use a pronoun that may not be obvious from their

physical presentation. Clinicians may want to refrain from using a pronoun (and can use the individual’s name instead) or as the relationship develops, can ask the student about their preferred pronoun.

- Enable students to self-identify gender on the intake forms and, where there are limitations posed by electronic medical record (EMR) software, provide paper-based solutions to ensure a student is represented in ways that are appropriate to them. Suggested wording:

Gender Identity (choose all that apply)

woman

man

trans or transgender (please specify):

another identity (please specify):

- Work with the EMR provider to find solutions if there are challenges with an EMR system. In the meantime, provide the paper solution outlined above until the problem is resolved. Be aware of how an EMR system interacts with other computer systems on campus (e.g., registrar) which may limit the control of a college health program.
- Write prescriptions and lab orders so that the name a student uses is called out at the pharmacy and lab.
- Provide written information about how a student can legally change their name, if they desire to do so. Some campuses allow a student’s name to be changed at the registrar, even if the student has not changed it legally. Staff members need to be aware of applicable university policies.

Personnel, Continuing Education, and Training

- Develop a policy that outlines procedures and practices for working with trans students to ensure quality care in all areas.
- Work in concert with staff across the institution to care for a trans person’s whole self and holistic

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wellness. Such cross-campus partnerships might include student services, counseling center, registrar, public safety, and university facilities.

- Hire trans-knowledgeable and trans-supportive college health professionals. Allow staff with subspecialties in trans health care to be identified so that a student may request that provider.
- Train college health staff at all levels to be aware of trans identities and needs. Train specific staff based on their role, e.g. train mental health professionals to author letters of referral for gender-affirming hormones and/or gender-affirming surgical procedures, and train clinical health care providers on the initiation and continuation of gender-affirming hormones.
- Incorporate training and education about trans individuals, their experiences and their health care needs into regular meetings throughout the year. Training opportunities should be designed to be accessible for health care providers and staff at all levels.

Mental Health Services

- Identify providers who are knowledgeable about trans mental health, including, but not limited to, those who have training and experience to write letters for transitioning students to access hormones or undergo surgery.
- Understand and be able to explain the required mental health services for students who are transitioning under the student health insurance plan.
- Provide access to mental health providers knowledgeable about gender transition medical procedures and their impact on mental health overall and the possible interactions with current medications.
- Offer a support group for trans and gender-nonconforming students.
- Develop marketing strategy for mental health services to highlight specialized care for trans students.

Health Promotion/ Prevention

- Develop prevention strategies to address issues that disproportionately affect transgender individuals. These strategies can include, but should not be limited to, violence prevention (including harassment/bullying, relationship and sexual violence); HIV/AIDS and other STI prevention and treatment; substance abuse prevention and treatment; and mental health issues such as depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide prevention.
- Acknowledge and address the intersection of race and ethnicity for trans people (i.e., ethnic and racial minorities may experience more discrimination and challenges as stigma and access to physical and mental health care can be compounded for some individuals).
- Adapt appropriate education and prevention services to the trans population.
- Develop education and prevention efforts in concert with the trans community as stakeholders. Provide these services in both trans-specific venues in addition to general education sessions.
- Ensure that language and examples allow for inclusion of trans people in both written and verbal education efforts.

This document was developed collaboratively between the American College Health Association Coalition of Allies for LGBT Health and the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals.



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