

El Camino

Helping Young People Find LGBTQ+ Friendly Care

The questions in the student resource “Finding LGBTQ+ Friendly Care” are designed to help young people determine whether providers and clinics are LGBTQ+ friendly. Before they contact potential clinics or providers, you can encourage young people to think about what they want in a provider:

- Does the young person want someone who shares an important aspect of their identity?
- Is the provider’s gender or age important to the young person?
- Are the provider’s values and beliefs about LGBTQ+ people important to the young person?

Anything that might impact how comfortable a young person feels with their provider is important to think about beforehand. Young people can use the student resource to identify clinics with multiple “green flags,” which are overt or covert signs suggesting that these clinics and providers are more inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.

Finding sexual health providers

Providers should be knowledgeable about the ways in which sexual and gender identity impacts LGBTQ+ young people’s sexual health needs. In addition to asking a provider about their training in LGBTQ+ sexual health, it’s important for a young person to know if a clinic’s frontline staff have training in LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Even if a provider is LGBTQ+ friendly, a negative interaction with another staff member can impact a young person’s experience with care.



Not all providers with experience in LGBTQ+ sexual health have worked with LGBTQ+ young people before. Asking about a provider’s experience specifically working with LGBTQ+ young people can help the young person gauge a provider’s willingness to adapt materials to be youth-friendly and to approach conversations in an accessible way.

For many LGBTQ+ young people, having an LGBTQ+ provider and access to gender-neutral bathrooms is necessary. But even if this isn’t important to a young person, asking about it can still help them learn more about the degree to which a clinic is LGBTQ+ friendly. Having LGBTQ+ providers on staff can indicate the overall inclusivity of a clinic, and the presence of a gender-neutral bathroom can also signal a clinic’s trans-inclusivity.



Finding gender-affirming care providers

One component of gender-affirming care involves medical treatments—including gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) and surgeries—that people undertake to align their physical body more closely with their gender identity.¹ Providing trans and nonbinary young people with gender-affirming care has been shown to improve their mental health and quality of life.^{2,3}



It is important for providers to work collaboratively with young people. Ultimately, young people are the experts in their own gender identity; providers should use their experience to help young people make their own choices rather than make assumptions about goals for treatment. Asking about a provider's training in gender-affirming care, approach to working with young people, and motivation behind their work can help young people determine whether a provider's experience and beliefs about gender-affirming care are compatible with their treatment goals.

Asking about the treatment process can help young people learn more about what it looks like to receive gender-affirming care and which options a provider might offer. Because states have various limitations around gender-affirming care, this conversation can also give young people an idea of what is and is not feasible for their current circumstances. When discussing gender-affirming care, providers should also talk about social transition and any additional ways young people can express their gender, like binding their chest or getting laser hair removal.

Resources

- [How to Find Affirming Care: A Guide for LGBTQ+ Youth and Their Parents and Caregivers](#): guidance on finding and choosing an LGBTQ+ affirming health care provider
- [Feminizing hormone therapy](#): information on the effects feminizing hormone therapy and how to prepare for it
- [Masculinizing hormone therapy](#): information on the effects of masculinizing hormone therapy and how to prepare for it
- [Q Chat Space](#): online, chat-based discussion groups for youth facilitated by staff who work at LGBTQ+ centers
- [Trans Lifeline](#): fully confidential and anonymous peer support to connect trans people to community, resources, and support via a hotline number (877-565-8860); Trans Lifeline is committed to never calling the police
- [LGBT National Help Center](#): confidential peer support for LGBTQ+ people via a national hotline number (888-843-4564) and youth hotline (800-246-7743)
- [Finding Your Voice: A Short Guide to Vocalization](#): guide to feminizing and masculinizing voice exercises
- [Resources for Trans and GNC youth](#): collection of national and state-level organizations that support trans and gender non-conforming people

¹ HHS Office of Population Affairs (2023). *Gender-affirming care and young people*. <https://opa.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/gender-affirming-care-young-people.pdf>

² Tordoff, D. M., Wanta, J. W., Collin, A., Stepney, C., Inwards-Breland, D. J., & Ahrens, K. (2022). Mental health outcomes in transgender and nonbinary youths receiving gender-affirming care. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(2), e220978. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978>

³ Allen, L. R., Watson, L. B., Egan, A. M., & Moser, C. N. (2019). Well-being and suicidality among transgender youth after gender-affirming hormones. *Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology*, 7(3), 302-311. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/cpp0000288>