

Transitioning to Inclusion

A guide to welcoming transgender children and their families
in your community of faith



By Kelsey Pacha

A resource from the Center for Lesbian
and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry



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A guide to welcoming transgender children and LGBT youth and their families in your community of faith

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Fully Including Transgender Youth in Spiritual Spaces

In recent years, transgender people have become much more visible in pop culture and media. Despite the emergence of figures like Chaz Bono or Janet Mock, most people have never actually met a transgender person, not to mention a young transgender person. It is even more difficult for transgender people to come out within faith contexts. In a recent Human Rights Campaign survey of trans* and gender variant youth, only 8% of youth rated their church or place of worship as “very accepting,” with 22% rating their place of worship as “not at all accepting.” 53% of youth surveyed said they did not know whether their own place of worship was accepting of LGBT people.¹ But it doesn’t have to be that way, and your community can be a part of creating a safe faith space for transgender and gender variant young people.

When you realize that a person you care about is transgender, you recognize that trans*² people deserve happiness and respect. You might feel surprised or uncertain when someone comes out to you as transgender—this is a common response. By learning more about trans* people and acknowledging the strengths you and your community already have, you might be surprised by the capacity you have to welcome and affirm trans* youth. With children coming out as young as the age of two, medical professionals are recognizing the importance of honoring children’s gender identities to support their future well-being. The American Academy of Pediatrics released a policy statement in 2013 outlining best practices for physicians to do so while also discussing the health disparities that occur as a result of discrimination and misunderstanding.³ Faith communities can play a pivotal role in protecting and nurturing this ever growing, ever younger population reach their full potential, and it is an issue that will likely touch your community at some point.

It may be helpful to know that California public schools have already set a precedent for respecting young people’s gender identities and expression and are required⁴ to allow young people to be referred to by their chosen name and gender pronouns (regardless of legal name or gender change) and to use facilities like restrooms and locker rooms that are consistent with their gender identity. Doing the same in your religious education program or youth ministry simply aligns your program with already-existing protections for this often vulnerable population. Children and parents who are already experiencing that welcome in school will appreciate and expect inclusion in their faith community.

Welcoming and honoring trans* and gender variant young people in their identity is not only about basic values of respect and appreciating diversity, but is also about supporting a population of young people that is disproportionately vulnerable to violence, substance abuse, and negative media messaging.⁵ Trans* and gender variant youth face particular challenges as young people who often lack the emotional and economic resources to combat the discrimination they face from not following social convention. Parents and children alike are looking for spaces to be welcomed and affirmed while on their journeys towards fullness and authenticity.

1 Human Rights Campaign and Gender Spectrum, Supporting and Caring for Our Gender-Expansive Youth: Lessons From the Human Rights Campaign’s Youth Survey. June 2012.

2 The term “transgender” is often shortened to read simply “trans” for simplicity. However, the term transgender can mean many different things to many different individuals and can encompass many other more specific terms. For the purposes of this guide, we will use the term “trans*” with an asterisk to denote that we are talking about any person who self-identifies as under the transgender umbrella, without being limited to any particular definition of what transgender means, in an effort to be as inclusive as possible. For a more detailed look at terms, please see page 14 at the back of this guide.

3 American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adolescence Policy Statement: “Office-Based Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth,” July 2013.

4 Under California law AB1266. The bill’s text can be found here: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1266

5 National Transgender Discrimination Survey. For more information on the pervasiveness of trans* discrimination, see endtransdiscrimination.org.

This guide is intended to help support religious educators and other spiritual leaders in welcoming and supporting transgender and gender variant youth in faith spaces. In the creation of this guide we interviewed parents, religious educators like Sunday and Hebrew School teachers, pastors, and young people who have come out in faith communities. We spoke with representatives from Christian, Jewish, and Pagan traditions, as well as those with an interfaith perspective. We have included a glossary of terms related to gender and sexuality on pages 14-15 of this guide. If you encounter a word you're unfamiliar with, please check our definitions to learn more. While we cannot provide an exhaustive list of terms (or ensure that every person defines words exactly the same way), we have tried our best to be clear within the context of this guide. We are also using "the divine" in place of terms like "God" or "Creator" in order to be inclusive of multiple religious traditions, including those that include multiple deities or none at all.

We will provide you with guidelines for practical support if and when a child comes out in your religious education program while also empowering you to discover affirming resources that already exist in your faith tradition. Being welcoming and affirming to transgender and gender variant youth is not simply about attending a training or displaying a sticker that says you've been educated on transgender issues. It's not even just about transgender people. It's about a greater awareness of how socially-imposed and so-called faith-based prescriptions of gender affect everyone—whether a boy who wants to wear a dress to his First Communion or one's discomfort around the masculine/feminine duality in a Pagan tradition.

Your community can be a safe haven for a child to explore their identity, an essential process that is often neglected by religious educators. Your ministry might be the first place where a child is comfortable exploring, even before school or within their family. What a tremendous opportunity your community has, and what a gift you could give! Thank you for embarking on this journey.

Section 1: Coming Out: For the Child and For Your Community

A young person may come out to you as questioning their gender themselves, and/or they may be accompanied by their parents. If and when a child comes out to you as questioning their gender identity, the first thing to keep in mind is that they likely have been considering how to talk about this with you for a long time, and that they trust you a great deal to share this information in the first place. It is okay to feel nervous about how to respond—this may be unfamiliar territory, and it means you care about the youth and want them to be safe! Parents who bring the news of their transgender child to you are likely consulting with their pediatrician or other health professional on their child's treatment, and it is important to both trust and respect the process they are engaged in. If you or a parent is looking for more information about how to create a supportive environment for trans* and gender variant youth, please refer to our resources listed on pages 15-19.

It is possible that a young person will not want you to share their gender journey with anyone else. For younger children, consulting with their parents or other caregivers about any statements they make may be appropriate, as it may be a sign of exploration rather than a firm identity. Adolescents, particularly those going through puberty, may have strong emotional responses to their body changing. Youth ministers and pastors should respect the wishes of individual youth about whether to tell anyone else, including the youth's parents, about the youth's gender identity.⁶ Young people can reasonably expect that any information they give to youth ministers and pastors is confidential unless they indicate otherwise. Youth ministers and pastors have no legal obligation to tell parents about their child's gender identity. More importantly, disclosing the information to the parents could jeopardize the youth's safety and well-being.

By paying attention to how inclusive your religious education or youth ministry program is, you provide a home for trans* youth that might not otherwise exist. Within your program, it is a good practice to continually check-in about children's preferred gender pronouns. If youth use name tags for your gatherings, leave a space for them to write their pronouns, and have extras on hand if they need to be changed. If each child introduces themselves in gatherings, make it a practice for every child to say what pronoun they would like to use. Modeling this practice as the educator every meeting might call attention to assumptions about everyone's gender, and takes the focus off of any one child by raising general awareness about treating people as they would like to be treated (by calling them what they would like to be called.) This practice signals to trans* and questioning youth that you are creating a safe space, and provides awareness to non-trans youth while not causing them to question their own identity. It also gives exploring youth the opportunity to share how they identify as it may change day-to-day, and provides a system of accountability for both the youth and teachers as they interact with each other. However, try to be aware of any negative impact this might have on a child who is questioning or going through a rough coming out process, and use your best judgment for when this might not be appropriate.

Space for Exploration

"I identify as male, but when I was younger, I experimented with my gender by wearing dresses, mainly at church camp. It was a really comfortable space where no one was telling me who I had to be, and I was free to explore. I'm glad no one put expectations on me to identify a certain way."
—Xander, queer-identified man and Unitarian Universalist Educator

One important aspect of supporting a young trans* or gender variant person is recognizing when a child is experimenting with gender presentation versus stating an identity, or vacillating between the two. The reason this is so important is that you want your community to allow the young person to explore all the ways they might express their gender without limiting them to one particular stated identity. Paying attention to the youth's developmental

⁶ If you have any questions about a specific child, please consult with an attorney or youth advocacy organization for legal advice.

context is important both in how you relate to the young person and in setting age-appropriate boundaries for the other young people in your class.

If the child or the child's parents would like you to inform other youth in your program, it's important to be clear about expectations for respecting that child, particularly in using their chosen (and possibly new) name or pronouns. But it is also important to not locate all discussion of gender within one individual's journey. Creating activities that encourage all youth to share something unique about themselves, or looking at stories in your tradition where someone is renamed (i.e. in the Hebrew Scriptures, Jacob becomes Israel, in the Acts of the Apostles, Saul becomes Paul) makes the conversation more general and relieves the pressure off of that child.

Children can be very adaptable, but for some, using appropriate pronouns and support of other children's bathroom use might be difficult or confusing. They may ask questions about other children's genitals, or continually forget the correct name for a child. These mistakes should be corrected, but depending on the age of the child, you may want to take their lead on how it should be addressed. These slip-ups will likely happen for a while and should be handled with compassion and patience. However, if it is intended to hurt the child, you should follow your program's procedures for addressing bullying.

Keep in mind that gender exploration and possibly gender transition may bring up emotions for other youth, parents and caregivers, and other adults in your religious community. It is a good idea to have a resource list on-hand about support offered by members of your community as well as outside of it to address any issues that come up. These can include your community's spiritual leaders and fellow educators as well as outside spiritual counselors, therapists, social workers, and other mental health professionals who are experienced with transgender issues. Your community's local LGBT community center may be a good place to start searching for trans* competent providers. As with any sensitive identity issue, being aware of what your community can reasonably offer (which might include who is the best person to provide pastoral care on this particular issue and who is not) and what falls outside of its skill sets will ensure the safety of all involved.

“When I used the wrong pronoun for one of my youth, I was really worried. But then I realized that education is reciprocal, and I realized that I am not just here to educate them, but we are here to educate each other.” –Mona, Hebrew School teacher

Lastly, accept that you will make mistakes. Even with the best training and best intentions, you may forget a young person's pronouns, or make an unhelpful assumption about how someone identifies. When this happens, remember to have compassion for yourself, just as the divine has compassion for you. Even though you might feel terrible, repeating apologies can draw more attention to a slip-up than simply correcting yourself and moving on. As reflected in the above quote, having an attitude of lifelong learning, and being open to being taught by your students can help you handle tough moments with grace.

Section 2: Using What You Have

Religious leaders, especially those who have been part of traditions that have historically emphasized gender differences, often feel nervous about using their sacred texts and other resources to embrace gender non-conforming people. In many traditions, important historical figures have been quite subversive in terms of upending culturally-acceptable gender roles of the time, such as Joan of Arc.

An easy way to do this is to pay attention to sacred readings that highlight gender non-conforming protagonists. In the Jewish tradition, the stories of Esther (in *The Scroll*, or *Megillah*) and Deborah (Judges 4-5) portray women as taking on roles typically reserved only for men, like ruling and leading soldiers into battle. In the Christian tradition, the man carrying water who shows the disciples the way to the Last Supper (Luke 22:10-13) is doing a task almost exclusively reserved for women. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:25-39), one of the first converts to Christianity, is a figure viewed as neither male nor female, but a third gender—that of a castrated male who serves the Ethiopian queen. There are many deities within the global pantheon of gods and goddesses, including Hermes, Ganesh, and Dionysus, who are variously presented as male or female, neither, or both. In traditions that revere shamans as mediators of the divine, like Hinduism or many indigenous practices, some of the most powerful shamans are viewed as transcending gender. There are a variety of names for these spiritual leaders depending on the community and culture, although the most common general term is two-spirit.

More resources for finding gender variant figures in various traditions is included on pages 15-19 of this guide. If you are having trouble locating people who defied gender stereotypes in your traditions, try a thought experiment with your youth. When looking at a story, ask questions like, “How might this story be different if this person was a man, rather than a woman?” or “How did the divine use this person’s gender to teach us something?” This also gives you an opportunity as an educator to invite youth to share personal stories, by asking them to reflect on times where it felt like their gender really mattered in a spiritual space, or where they felt limited by expectations around their gender.

Community Values That Support Inclusivity

“Who we are is based on being children of God, and made in the image of God. We love each other because we are all in this together.”

—Lizzie, United Church of Christ youth minister

Besides locating figures within your tradition’s history or sacred text, there are likely many overarching community values that align with trans* inclusivity. The ethic of reciprocity, better known as the Golden Rule—“Treat others as you’d like to be treated”—is present in many of the world’s religious traditions, from the Baha’i Faith to Hinduism to Buddhism, as well as in many indigenous practices. A similar sentiment is expressed in the Great Commandment of Jesus (Matt 22:35-40, among others), which restates a section of the Torah called the Shema, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...” and follows with, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Even the youngest children instinctively understand the ethical soundness of this rule, that you should treat others as you expect to be treated, regardless of how similar or different those others might be from you. This lesson can be extended to specifically address trans* or gender variant people or be made general—“How can we love people who are different than us? Who look different than us?”

Though stated differently depending on tradition, most religions value the inherent worth and dignity of all people, recognizing our interconnectedness and interdependence as human beings. This can include a belief in the divinity present in all people, sometimes expressed in Christianity as the “*imago Dei*,” or being made in “image of God.” It could also be expressed as being part of “the Great Family” inhabiting the Earth, under the same moon and stars. If we are all reflections of the same mystery and awesome beauty, we should work to appreciate all of

the ways the divine manifests itself in humanity. Framing differences as positive and present within everyone can orient the conversation towards fellowship and away from pity or fear. However, but be careful not to minimize the unique struggles of trans* people.

On a more systemic level, many communities respond to a call for social justice and an end to suffering. As mentioned earlier, trans* and gender variant people experience disproportionate amounts of violence and discrimination, which are not only perpetuated among and between individuals, but are present in employment, housing, social services, and certainly within faith communities. Is there a social action committee that would be interested in representing your community at rallies, protests, or pride events? Could you include trans*phobia as part of your diversity curriculum? Is the word transgender on any posters or photos, and are the unique struggles of the trans* community reflected in your religious education/youth ministry space? Connecting the struggle for trans* justice to persecution your community has faced, or persecution faced by historical or mythological figures in your sacred texts, can be a powerful way not only to connect all struggles for justice, but to take action.

Section 3: Logistical Concerns

“There needs to be clear room for change in your community in order to make people feel comfortable sharing or coming out. I needed people to tell me that things would be okay and that they were going to fight for me, and not be expected to know everything about gender or being trans* in that moment. I didn’t have any spaces where I could just go and say, what do I do? Where do I go from here? And who can have a sociological conversation when they have nowhere to pee?”

–Micah, Methodist transman

Restrooms

Gender-segregated spaces, like boys’ and girls’ Bible study groups, bar/bat mitzvah study, cabins at overnight camp sites, and facilities like bathrooms can cause a lot of anxiety and stress for a transgender child, especially if that child does not identify as male or as female. A gender inclusive bathroom is one that is not strictly intended for “just men/boys” or “just women/girls” but is open to people of any gender. A simple first step is to make all single-stall bathrooms in your community spaces gender-inclusive. No physical changes (like removing urinals) are required to make a bathroom gender inclusive—in most cases, simply changing the sign outside of the restroom to say “All Genders” is all that is needed. In addition to alleviating the pressure for a child to choose a gender when using the bathroom, it also allows for people with caregivers or personal attendants who are a different gender from them to have the assistance they may need in your community space.

Your individual community’s capacity to create gender-inclusive bathrooms may vary depending on how large your space is, whether your youth program has its own bathrooms, and whether you own or rent your building(s). Even if you cannot permanently change all of your restrooms, however, there are always ways to be gender-inclusive. If you rent your space, you can simply tape a piece of paper with a gender-inclusive logo on your restrooms and remove them once your time in the space has ended. To alleviate confusion, you might also include a statement on the sign that says something like, “Our community welcomes and affirms all people, regardless of gender identity. Please respect everyone’s choice to be in the restroom where they are most comfortable.” If confusion or questions arise among other young people about which bathrooms to use, it may be a learning opportunity for the young person to consider that transgender people frequently experience confusion about which restroom is “right” for them in any given space. It may be important to label restrooms with diaper changing tables, if they are not present in all restrooms. Some communities automatically make restrooms with urinals (even if they have multiple stalls) single occupancy to give people who want to use urinals privacy.

If your community is unable or unwilling to change multi-stall restroom signs, posting a notice on all restrooms that says something like “Gender diversity is welcome here. Everyone is welcome to use the restroom that best fits their identity” with directions to the nearest single stall restroom (i.e. “A gender-inclusive single stall restroom is located on the first floor”) can provide options. See the “Additional Resources” page on pages 15-19 of this guide for a list of organizations that distribute gender inclusive restroom signage.

Other Gender-Segregated Spaces

While your faith community or governing body may have guidelines that mandate gender separation at overnight camps and retreats, there is no legal basis for gender segregation from a liability standpoint in the state of California. As a general rule, youth ministers and pastors should permit youth access to housing and sleeping arrangements in which the youth are most safe and comfortable. There are no laws or cases in California that impose liability on a pastor or youth minister for housing trans* and gender variant youth consistent with their gender

identity (rather than their assigned sex) on field trips or at sleep away camps. To avoid liability in connection with overnight trips with young people, the responsible adults should emphasize safety and supervision, and take steps to create an environment in which every child is treated with respect and protected from emotional or physical harm.

It is important to remember to prioritize the safety of a trans* child over the comfort of a non-trans child or their parent when offering bathroom options. What we mean by this is that there is a difference between addressing the discomfort of a non-trans child and/or their parents versus granting basic access to bathroom facilities to a trans* child. You can assure parents that their children are safe in the restrooms. One of the most common tactics that right-wing religious extremists who oppose trans* inclusion use is to sexualize trans* restroom inclusion for young children, implying that non-trans children will be assaulted or harassed by trans* children in these restrooms. In the more than 9 years that the Los Angeles Unified School District has allowed for trans* inclusive bathrooms in its schools, there have been 0 incidents of assault or harassment by a trans* child who was “taking advantage” of shared space.⁷

If you would not instruct a non-trans child to regularly use a private bathroom in the pastor’s office (and it would be disruptive), then don’t instruct a trans* child to do so. If a non-trans child is uncomfortable sharing a bathroom with a transgender child, the non-trans child can be accommodated separately. If a child’s parents are uncomfortable, speaking with them about your tradition’s most cherished values (like compassion or fairness), and reminding uneasy adults that these arrangements are being made for the benefit of an innocent child may be helpful in diffusing any fear or trepidation. It may be helpful to frame the situation as one where the divine is stretching your community’s comfort zone or calling you into a new, good work. As Isaiah unexpectedly remarks when predicting the divine’s new way of being in the world, “And a child shall lead them” (Is 11:6).

Working With Teenagers

Adolescents may discuss their gender more in terms of permanent identity than younger children. Unlike younger children, whose parents may be working with health professionals to ensure their child’s well-being, parents of an adolescent may be unaware of their child’s gender journey and may be uneducated about transgender issues. Both because of their cognitive sophistication and likely increased independence, they are more apt to request and warrant privacy about their gender than younger children. You may encounter a situation in which an adolescent is embraced by your faith community, but not by their parents or other caretakers. In this situation, it is important to consult with your supervisor about how the information should be shared with other youth in your program as well as with your main religious leader, who may need to provide spiritual care or make referrals for emotional care to preserve the youth’s well-being, particularly in a tense or volatile situation. It is helpful to have a “gender support plan” that includes needs stated by the youth (such as chosen name, pronouns, facilities they feel most comfortable in), safe people the youth can talk to in crisis, and how much information they would like to be shared with their family/caregivers. This document should be kept in confidence by staff and if deemed necessary, should include input from their caregivers, any mentors in your community, and other trusted adults like therapists or doctors.

⁷ “California transgender students have new law but still face old struggles,” Los Angeles Daily News, November 2013. <http://www.dailynews.com/social-affairs/20131105/california-transgender-students-have-new-law-but-still-face-old-struggles>

Section 4: Making a Statement

“My daughter was nervous about bringing her trans* boyfriend to our church’s holiday picnic. But when they got there, people really treated them both like family, and didn’t treat him any differently. It felt so good to not even have to worry.” –Rita, parent of queer child

Locating Resources, Being a Resource

Many faith communities, whether LGBT-friendly as an overall organization or not, have an LGBT-friendly network established. Most of these groups have a wealth of denomination or tradition-specific resources for being welcoming to LGBT people and can send resources like pamphlets, examples of trans-inclusive sermons, meditations, sacred text studies, or rituals. They may also be able to connect you to online sharing networks like email listservs or message boards. If you are concerned about particular persons in power or authority not being willing to be inclusive, it may be helpful to have a strategic plan of how you can support any children coming out in your program. This can include identifying other colleagues sympathetic to your cause within your specific community and/or within your larger tradition to speak to those who may not be supportive.

Depending on your decision-making process as a faith community, you may also want to make a public statement of affirmation for transgender and gender variant people. This may involve consulting with your entire worship community, pastor, board, or regional body, and further strategizing. While it may be easy to make a statement on your community’s website, social media page, or in your newsletter, remember to be intentional about the language you use and make sure it accurately reflects your community’s process. For example, if the youth ministry is open and affirming to trans* youth but the larger community has never heard the term transgender, it would be wise to have conversation between adults and youth before declaring your community a safe space.

The lives of transgender and gender variant people should be reflected in your community’s liturgy, library, language, and curriculum. Think about how your faith group could create a ritual for a child’s coming out or transition process, perhaps as a variation on an existing coming-of-age ceremony or rite of passage. Ritual is a powerful way to commune with the divine and commemorate significant life experiences, both for the person being honored as well as the community who bears witness to their journey.

Pay attention to the language used to describe the divine in your gatherings. Is God always a He? Are the only options He and She? Are there sources in your tradition (often these come from mystics or commentators) that challenge a binary conception of the divine? Challenging your community’s typical conception of the divine can not only be fruitful for theological contemplation, but can also make space for transgender people to feel especially treasured or manifesting mysterious aspects of the divine. Finding ways to have these discussions by slightly modifying already existing curriculum can make all the difference. In your day care and/or youth program, are children encouraged to play with gender-specific toys (i.e. dolls for girls, trucks for boys?) Do adults in these spaces allow children to dress up in whatever outfit they choose? On youth program enrollment forms, are there more gender options than simply “male” or “female?”

If you have out trans* or gender variant adults in your community, or in analogous local groups part of your tradition, think about ways you could support other less-resourced groups struggling with how to welcome trans* folks in their community. Are there regional gatherings, conferences, mission trips, or retreats where your community could lead a training or discussion group? Is there a statement of inclusivity on your website that explicitly mentions trans* people? Knowing what gifts your community can share with others as well as the skills that you need augmented will empower your community to be a witness for transgender inclusivity and will encourage continual engagement with other communities who can help increase your public presence and keep your community accountable.

From Merely Supported to Thriving:

"After coming out, I didn't know of a religion that spoke to me like Catholicism did and I felt lost. I didn't know of any LGBT Catholics/Christians to talk to so I became very lonely. After really analyzing and studying the Bible and the main teaching of my religion, which was to love yourself, love thy neighbor and love the Lord, recently I was able to connect with another queer person who shared my religious views. The fact that I had found a community that also shared my views on religion was just amazing. With my faith I am able to take on my everyday. My religion gives me strength and I know that the Lord is there with me when I continue my life as an activist."

–Moxie, gender-fluid Catholic youth

Some transgender people have spoken about their gender transition as a spiritual journey, as a divine calling to experience multiple ways of being in the world. Many of the loudest religious voices opposed to trans* inclusion present gender questioning as an affront to divine creation, rather than as a fulfillment of it. Ultimately, creating a space that honors and respects varying expressions of gender is not just about welcoming trans* youth. It is also about "drawing the circle ever wider" around our expectations for how all young people, regardless of identity, live into the fullness of who the divine made them to be. We hope that you and your community draw your circle ever wider, and heed the prophetic call of this new work being done within so many wonderful young people.

On Children

by Kahlil Gibran

...You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday...

Glossary of Terms

Gender: A person's actual sex or perceived sex, and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance, or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with a person's sex at birth [Title 5, California Code of Regulations, §4910(k)].

Gender Identity: A person's internal, deeply rooted identification as female, male or a non-binary understanding of gender, regardless of one's assigned sex at birth. The responsibility for determining an individual's gender identity rests with the individual.

Gender Expression/Gender Presentation: A person's gender-related appearance and behavior, whether or not stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth. Students who adopt a presentation that varies from the stereotypic gender expectations sometimes may describe themselves as gender nonconforming, gender queer, or gender fluid.

Gender Variant/Gender Nonconforming: Displaying a gender identity or expression that may differ from those typically associated with one's sex assigned at birth. A person's gender expression may differ from stereotypical expectations about how females and males are "supposed to" look or act. Gender nonconforming is not synonymous with transgender; not all gender nonconforming students identify as transgender.

Genderqueer: People who identify as genderqueer may think of themselves as being both a man and a woman, as being neither a man nor a woman, or as falling completely outside the gender binary. Some wish to have certain features of their assigned sex and not all characteristics; others want it all. The terms "transgender" and "genderqueer" are not synonymous, but there is some overlap between people who identify as transgender and people who identify as genderqueer.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity differs from their gender assigned at birth, and whose gender expression consistently varies from stereotypical expectations and norms. A transgender person desires to live persistently by a gender that differs from that which was assigned at birth.

Transgender man (or female-to-male): People who were assigned female at birth but identify and live as a man may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten it to trans man. (Note: *trans man*, not "transman.") Some may also use FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male. Some may prefer to simply be called *men*, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. (GLAAD)

Transgender woman (or male-to-female): People who were assigned male at birth but identify and live as a woman may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten to trans woman. (Note: *trans woman*, not "transwoman.") Some may also use MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female. Some may prefer to simply be called *women*, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. (GLAAD)

Transition: The period of time when a person changes from living and identifying as one gender to another (notice this does not say *the* other). This process usually begins with internal exploration and acceptance and moves to external changes, which can be legal, medical, or social in nature.

LGBTQ: An acronym that stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning." Questioning incorporates those who are uncertain or fluid about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sex: The biological condition or quality of being female or male as determined by a combination of chromosomes, hormones, and/or sex organs.

Sexual Orientation: A person's emotional and sexual attraction to another person based on the gender of the other person. Common terms used to describe sexual orientation include, but are not limited to, heterosexual, lesbian, gay, and bisexual. Sexual orientation and gender identity are different.

Adapted from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Institute for Welcoming Resource's "Transaction: A Transgender Curriculum for Churches and Religious Institutions" and Los Angeles Unified School District's Policy Bulletin: "Transgender Students: Ensuring Equality and Non-Discrimination" by David Holmquist; February 7, 2014.

Online resources:

GLAAD Media Reference Guide-- Transgender Issues: <http://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

CLGS Trans* Inclusivity Guide Resource List

Health Care Information for Transitioning Youth:

Center of Excellence for Transgender Health

<http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=protocol-youth>

This page has information about treatment options for youth under 18 who are interested in transitioning. The CoE website also has a wealth of general information for physicians as well as potential patients about protocols for medical transition and research.

The Center for Transyouth Health and Development at Children's Hospital Los Angeles

<http://www.chla.org/site/c.ipINKTOAJsG/b.7501767/#.VCRMn-ePZ5U>

The Center for Transyouth Health and Development at Children's Hospital L.A. provides medical care for trans* youth in Southern California. In addition to descriptions of their clinic's protocols, there are links to research on youth gender transition and to multiple providers across the country.

American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adolescence Policy Statement: "Office-Based Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth," July 2013

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/132/1/198.full.pdf+html>

This policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adolescence outlines recommendations by and for pediatricians in their treatment of LGBTQ youth. These recommendations are based on peer-reviewed research on the positive health effects of affirming LGBTQ youth identities, which is summarized in the document. Great resource to bring to your children's health provider.

Gender Spectrum

<https://genderspectrum.org/>

Gender Spectrum is a national organization that provides education, training, and support for families of transgender children as well as their educators and health providers. Gender Spectrum provides an annual summer family conference to bring together trans* and gender variant youth and their caregivers for a weekend of camaraderie and mutual support. Their resources page includes links to legal, medical, social, and mental health resources.

Human Rights Campaign 2012 Youth Survey

<http://www.hrc.org/youth>

This report, released in June 2012, surveyed more than 10,000 LGBT-identified youth, ages 13-17, across America. It covers a multitude of issues including health care, the coming out process, school, bullying, and relationships from the LGBT youth perspective. A summary of findings specifically related to trans* and gender variant youth can be found at <http://www.hrc.org/youth/supporting-and-caring-for-our-gender-expansive-youth> to view on the web or to download.

Transgender Law Center

<http://transgenderlawcenter.org/issues/youth>

This link includes a YouTube playlist of various media representations of trans* youth in the media, from talk shows like Katie Couric to news programs like Anderson Cooper. Other tabs include summaries of the legal rights of trans* youth on the federal and (primarily California) state level, as well as resources for crafting a trans* inclusive school policy.

Refuge Restrooms

<http://www.refugerestrooms.org/>

This website includes a searchable index of gender neutral and single stall restrooms across the country. After you enter your address, a list of reported gender neutral restrooms will come up with their distance from your starting point. Users can also submit their own restroom finds. Although it is still in its beta version and has some bugs, this might be useful for young trans* people in your area.

Purchasing Gender Neutral Door Signs

<http://www.mydoorsign.com/unisex-restroom-signs>

Mydoorsign.com donated gender neutral bathroom signs to several non-profit organizations in 2014, including San Francisco's Transgender Law Center, in order to convey the ease with which many communities can create gender neutral restrooms simply by changing the signs. These are just some examples of various signage that might be used in your community.

Trans* Inclusive Educational Activities/Lessons:

The Genderbread Person

<http://thesafezoneproject.com/activity/genderbread-person/>

The Genderbread Person activity is a great way to distinguish between the various axes of gender—from identity to expression to role to anatomical sex, as well as to differentiate from sexual orientation. This activity is also useful in helping young people understand that gender affects everyone regardless of how one identifies.

Crisis Intervention Links:

The Trevor Project

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now#tc>

The Trevor Project provides a 24/7 LGBT youth-specific crisis hotline focused on suicide prevention, as well as an online chat with other youth, text advice, and general information about LGBT issues. Having the 24/7 crisis hotline number available (866-488-7386) could be a good resource for young people.

Workbook:

My Gender Workbook by Kate Bornstein

This workbook includes helpful surveys and multiple choice questions that are focused on helping the reader to explore and deconstruct their gender. It is simple, and often hilariously breaks down our society's expectations around what it means to be a man or a woman, and includes great insights and stories from one of the wisest transgender warriors, Kate Bornstein.

Picture Books:

10,000 Dresses by Marcus Ewert

This picture book tells the story of Bailey, a child who dreams every night of dresses. Her family does not want to hear about Bailey's dreams, insisting she is a boy. Soon, Bailey meets an older girl who wants to help make Bailey's dreams come true.

The Princess Knight by Cornelia Funke

This picture book shares the story of Violet, a princess whose father demands that her hand in marriage be won by a male knight. Violet trains and disguises herself as a boy to win her own hand and her freedom.

I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings

This picture book, written by young transwoman Jazz Jennings, tells her real life story transitioning from being born a boy into growing into her identity as a girl.

My Princess Boy by Cheryl Kilodavis

This picture book tells the story of a young boy who likes to dress and play with traditionally feminine toys, and the acceptance of his parents and family. This is one of the only books that not only celebrates gender variant youth, but also depicts people of color embracing their identity.

Old Turtle by Douglas Wood

This picture book tackles the nature of God through a series of arguments among plants and animals as to what God is like. Is God male or female? Is God up above or present with us here? Simple, but beautiful tale suitable for all ages.

Young Adult Books:

Luna by Julie Ann Peers

This young adult novel tells the story of Liam, a young boy who reveals his true female self, Luna, at night, and follows her coming out to her family and community.

Parrotfish by Ellen Wittlinger (novel, transmasculine focus)

This novel follows Grady, formerly Angela, a high school junior, as he comes out as being transgender, and experiences acceptance and rejection at school and at home.

Non-fiction/Biography:

Cassell's Encyclopedia of Queer Myth, Symbol, and Spirit by Randy P. Conner, David Hatfield Sparks, and Mariya Sparks

This volume, written in 1997, contains over 1,500 entries (arranged alphabetically) of deities, saints, religious figures, spiritual communities, and seminal events that highlight the connections between queer and trans* people and spirituality. Informed by traditions and folklore from around the world and a variety of disciplines, this book is a great place to locate queer and trans* spiritual ancestors as well as to start discussion about the myriad ways the divine manifests itself.

Nina Here Nor There by Nick Krieger

One transman's story of finding himself through transition.

Trans Bodies, Trans Selves edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth

This compendium is written for and by trans* and gender variant people in the spirit of the pioneering *Our Bodies, Our Selves*. Sections cover everything from gender theory, gender development, legal/medical/social transition(s), religion and spirituality, arts/culture, activism, and youth issues. Well-rounded and dense resource that uplifts a variety of voices within the transgender umbrella.

Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality edited by Leanne McCall Tigert and Maren Tirabassi

This collection includes reflections, sermons, and rituals written by and for trans* and gender variant people of faith.

Transgendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith by Justin Tanis

Tanis, a transgender ordained minister in the Metropolitan Community Churches, offers several perspectives on the spiritual journeys of trans* and gender variant people, while also providing an overview of gender variance in the Bible and how to create a faith communities that are truly trans* inclusive.

Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul by Leslie Feinberg

This book reexamines many historical figures and profiles more recent gender-bending folks in light of their non-conforming ways. A powerful way to see transpeople making a difference yesterday and today.

For parents:

The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals by Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper
Written by two professionals with extensive experience working with trans* and gender variant youth, this book is a comprehensive look at the process of transitioning for children and their families, tackling even the most difficult questions.

TV Series:

Transgeneration

This mini-series features 4 college students, 2 FTM-identified and 2 MTF-identified, as they balance the demands of college life and transitioning in their communities. Wonderful series that follows these 4 young people as they get surgery, start hormones, and navigate family and romantic relationships.

DeGrassi: the Next Generation

This Canadian TV show follows a group of teenagers as they face various issues at Degrassi High School. In Season 10, Adam, a female-to-male character, is introduced and followed on his journey to be accepted and respected.

Glee

The third season of high school musical show "Glee" introduces character Wayne Adams, who experiments with gender through musical performance. Wayne later comes out as a transwoman and goes by Unique, who has been a full cast member since season five.

The L Word (seasons 3-6)

Although "the L Word" was a show focused on a group of queer women, its first female-to-male trans character, Max Sweeney, was introduced in Season 3 as Moira. Max's transition from being female to being male is shown, from coming out to friends to going on hormones and having surgery.

RuPaul's Drag Race

Although Drag Race isn't specifically transgender-focused, this reality show featuring drag queens completing various challenges to compete for the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar" shows a wide variety of gender representations, and offers insight into the world of drag queens. Many episodes from Seasons 1-6 are available on logotv.com.

Movies:

“Paris is Burning” (documentary)

“Paris is Burning” follows several groups of young men and transwomen who compete in the drag balls of the late 1980s-early 1990s in New York City. Through footage of actual competition and behind-the-scenes interviews, many drag-related terms still in use today are defined and questioned.

“Ma Vie en Rose (My Life in Pink)”

This French film (make sure to turn on the English subtitles!) follows a young boy named Ludovic as he insists to his family and friends that he is a girl. Very whimsical coming-of-age tale.

TV Clips:

The Trans Kids Purple Rainbow Foundation

<http://www.transkidspurplerainbow.org/>

This foundation was started by the parents of Jazz Jennings, a young transgirl who has been open about her transition process since she was first interviewed by Barbara Walters when she was six years old (and author of *I Am Jazz*, above). Links to Jazz and her parents' interviews with various news outlets are linked on the homepage.

YouTube

Many television features on transgender and gender variant children can be found on this YouTube playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTRw2QiOfOM&list=PLDfAytgdAAdvoKW6gEGR9iNKoW5F4m8pL>



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Our Mission: To advance the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people and to transform faith communities and the wider society by taking a leading role in shaping a new public discourse on religion and sexuality through education, research, community building and advocacy.