

Promoting PCEs for Children and Youth who are Transgender or Nonbinary

Children and youth need strong and secure relationships, safe environments to live, learn, and grow, and opportunities for engagement and emotional growth. Those who identify as trans and nonbinary are children, too – and need these same positive experiences to thrive. They grow up in a world that operates largely in a gender binary, leaving them, often at a very young age, needing to understand and articulate who they are- even when the reflection in the mirror staring back at them begs to differ. While many trans and

nonbinary children are supported by friends and family, it is common for trans and nonbinary youth to experience disapproval and bullying, leading to a higher risk of anxiety and depression.



The health and well-being of children and youth who are transgender (or trans) or nonbinary has been a topic of much political debate over the past year as some states are making gender-affirming healthcare illegal, and school boards are banning books with LGBTQ+ content. These young people are children and should be able to learn about themselves and their identities in a supportive environment; issues of healthcare belong to them and their parents, with the advice and guidance of professionals who can offer care.

Like all other children, children and youth who are trans and nonbinary need us to actively support their health and resilience. Trans and nonbinary children who supported by their families and feel safe in their schools are at less risk of serious depression and suicidality.



10 Ways to Help Trans and Nonbinary Youth Access the Four Building Blocks of HOPE

1.	Check your local library. Are there books there about trans and nonbinary youth? If not, <u>consider donating some</u> . Help youth feel seen and represented in their community.
2.	Ensure your community offers a safe place for children and youth who are trans and nonbinary to gather- whether this is a community center, a school club, or a local nonprofit. All children need to feel like they belong, and they matter.
3.	Include trans and nonbinary children and youth in school and out-of-school program sports. Youth sports are about fostering important life skills like teamwork, persistence, and the art of losing gracefully! Remember that the goal of youth sports is to develop lifelong health and enjoyment - not just to produce professional athletes. All children and youth should be allowed to choose the activities that match their interests, whatever their gender identity.
4.	Make sure your place of employment clearly posts their nondiscrimination policy on their website or in the office. Some organizations post the Pride or Trans and Nonbinary Pride flag to let others know that they have created a safe place for trans and nonbinary children and youth.
5.	No one should feel uncomfortable when they need to use the restroom. Help create a safe environment by ensuring your building has at least one bathroom option for “all genders.”



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6.	Stop name calling, teasing, taunting, and bullying when you see it. <u>Be an upstander not a bystander!</u>
7.	Get into the habit of sharing your pronouns when you introduce yourself. This is a very small thing that everyone can do to create a safer space for those whose pronouns may not be immediately obvious. The Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio has a <u>comprehensive guide</u> , complete with great videos, on asking for and sharing pronouns.
8.	Talk with the children in your life about what it means to be transgender and nonbinary. People tend to fear what they do not understand. Help our children be supportive friends to their trans and nonbinary classmates.
9.	Be a safe relationship for the trans and nonbinary children and youth in your life. We know that every child needs the support of at least two adults who are not their parents. Some trans and nonbinary children and youth have an even greater need when they do not get unconditional support from members of their own families.
10.	Gender affirming healthcare dramatically reduces suicidality in trans and nonbinary youth. Whenever access is threatened, call your legislators and tell them that medical decisions need to be made for each individual child, not by the government.

