

# DID YOU KNOW...

A 2006 study conducted by the Greater Worcester Community Foundation\* "... identified the lack of access to GLBT-welcoming health care as a critical service gap." The three major reasons for seeking care outside of Worcester were:

1

Welcoming services not available in Worcester-experience of discrimination

2

Lack of reputation for serving the GLBT community

3

Perception of quality of service lower than outside Worcester County

\*[www.greaterworcester.org](http://www.greaterworcester.org): "Voices of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People in Worcester County," September 2006.

## RESOURCES

For more in-depth information about providing quality care to trans people, here are some good places to start:

### [www.aidsprojectworcester.org](http://www.aidsprojectworcester.org)

AIDS Project Worcester provides education about, and services for, transgender people

### [www.fenwayhealth.org](http://www.fenwayhealth.org)

Fenway Health provides services to the whole spectrum of GLBT people. Its Transgender Health Services site includes a module called "Understanding the T in LGBT: A Role for Clinicians"

### [www.nickgorton.org](http://www.nickgorton.org)

Nick Gorton is a physician who is a transman. You can download his 2005 paper, "Medical Therapy and Health Maintenance for Transgender Men"

### [www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org)

World Professional Association for Transgender Health Once known as the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association; dedicated to research, education and advocacy

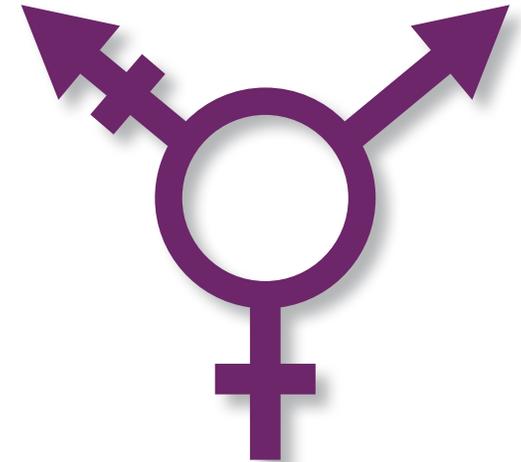
### [The Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health](#)

by Harvey J. Makadon (ed.), et al.

This pamphlet is gratefully adapted from Trans/Formative Healthcare by Anthony Ricardi, University of Washington – School of Nursing

# TRANSGENDER HEALTHCARE

## Improving Services for Transgender People Basic Information for Providers



Provided by:  
Diversity & Inclusion Office  
508-856-2179  
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# TRANSGENDER

an umbrella term used to describe gender-variant people with identities, expressions and/or behaviors not traditionally associated with their assigned birth sex

## Why is this IMPORTANT?

Transgender patients are a medically underserved population whose health care needs are often misunderstood and neglected.

A lack of knowledge and sensitivity on the part of health care providers can lead to misinformation, distress and discrimination. Many transgender people feel alienated and pathologized and choose not to seek medical intervention for basic and emergent health care needs.

Trans people may have internalized both shame and anxiety about their bodies. Many health care providers fail to understand these complexities, either discounting or exploiting their transgender identities.

Transgender patients deserve equal and excellent health care. To reach this goal, all health science students and care providers need mandatory education from diverse sources about transgender health and wellness, including cultural awareness and sensitivity, and information about available hormonal and surgical options.

## You don't have to know everything, but you can learn to ask the right QUESTIONS

Asking questions in an open and affirming way is the key to building trust in any relationship between patient and provider.

You can't tell gender identity based on how a person looks; the only way to know is to incorporate pertinent questions into the initial assessment.

Respectfully ask **all** new patients how they would like to be addressed. What name would they like to be called? Do they have a pronoun preference?

**Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different things.** Like everyone else, trans people may be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

- Instead of assuming the gender of a person's partner(s), ask open questions that reflect diverse sexual identities and practices.
- Use the language people employ to describe themselves, their partner(s), and their sex acts.

**Not all trans people want to or are able to change their bodies.**

- Some trans people want hormones and/or surgeries, while some do not.
- Not everyone who wants to make a physical transition can afford that option.
- Do not assume that every trans person is on the same path or that you can tell what a person's body will look like.

**Only ask what is relevant to your care.**

- Do not ask intrusive questions about a trans person's anatomy when it is not relevant to the current care. You do not need to know about genitals to treat a cough.
- If something is related to assessment or care, ask in a sensitive manner, and let the patient know why you are asking.

## A few ways to be more trans INCLUSIVE in your place of practice

- Learn about transgender people and the health issues that affect them.
- Visit local LGBT\* health organizations.
- Ask for staff-wide trainings and educate coworkers.

### Change intake forms

- Instead of a binary male/female check box, use a blank line (gender identity \_\_\_\_\_); people who aren't transgender can continue to write male or female.
- Trans clients may or may not use this opportunity to disclose their trans identity, but all will be relieved to have the option.

### Create a welcoming atmosphere

- Post a sign on non-discrimination policy.
- Hang flyers about LGBT community events and post Safe Space stickers and GLBT logos.

- Display pictures that show diverse genders and sexualities, depicting people of all ages and ethnicities.
- Use health education materials that are culturally relevant to LGBT people and their families.

### Provide a single-use, accessible family restroom

- Many gender-variant people are not comfortable or would not be safe using a gender-designated bathroom.
- A single-use restroom provides privacy and safety for trans people, people with children, and people with disabilities.

### Educate all frontline staff

- Everyone should know how to address each person respectfully and create a warm and welcoming environment.
- Educate all staff answering the phones, collecting bills, conducting intake interviews, performing exams, etc.

\*LGBT=lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender