



A Resource Guide for Parents of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth within Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB)

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Seven things that other parents who have been there really want you to know...

(excerpted from *Families in Transition: A Resource Guide for Parents of Trans Youth*, 2008 Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS))



1. You and your child are not alone

Although there are no solid statistics, researchers estimate 1 in 1000 people are born feeling that the gender of his or her body (how it looks on the outside) and spirit (how he or she feels on the inside) are different. There are many wonderful people and sources of information that can help to support you, your child, and your family.

2. Trans is not the same as gay

The word "transsexuality" sounds like something related to sexuality, but it's not. Sexual orientation and sexual identity are terms used to describe who we are attracted to and who we love. Transgender or transsexual is about gender identity.

3. Parents don't "make" a child trans

That's not how it works. Be proud your child is brave and honest enough to embark on this scary and necessary process – and trusts you enough to tell you about it. You have done well. Your relationship with your child has an opportunity to be more close, trusting, and loving through this process.

4. Listen, and allow your child to set the pace

Your child likely waited a long time before telling you about this. They may have done so now because the need to live how they truly are has become too difficult to hide. Our youth are often afraid too, of rejection or how their lives might change. They have ideas about what makes them comfortable, how they want to look, and what they want to be called. They may open themselves up to a parent when still deciding things for themselves. Be careful not to make assumptions or decisions about who your child will become or what steps they should take.

5. Your child is taking important steps toward being happier and healthier

You may not notice it right away, but as time passes you will see your child become happier, more comfortable, and more at ease. It is much more difficult and stressful pretending to be someone you're not. The serious distress many trans youth feel about their bodies begins to resolve itself during transition.

6. Your struggles are different from your child's struggles

The child you know is still with you, but different. You may need to grieve the loss of a son or daughter before you can truly welcome a new daughter or son into your life. Let yourself do this. It's also possible your child does not clearly identify as female or male, and that can be confusing and disorienting in its own right. These feelings are natural. Be patient with yourself as you move through them.

7. Don't let fear hold you or your child back

All your child's dreams are still possible– finishing school, getting a good job, finding someone to love, having a family. Some extra planning or precautions may be necessary, but anything is possible. The world goes on, life doesn't end. There is acceptance in the world that you might not have known about before.

New beginnings...



"That first step is the most difficult to do, as it's the most selfless. For their whole lives we have been creating a safe space for our children to grow in—and now it is more important than ever that we do not abandon that parental instinct... even when everything feels upside down. You and your home may be the only safe place they have separating them from complete social isolation. Try to avoid making it about you." - mother of a 14 year old trans youth, Hamilton, ON



"Our son was ready to transition NOW but we weren't. We weren't even sure of how to begin the

transition process. We were told to let our son take the lead. He wanted to see what it was like to act and dress like a girl in public. He wanted to go to the mall so we picked one in a different city because he was so afraid that some of his friends might see him. It felt as if we were doing something wrong. We were so scared. I guess we were both so afraid that people would know that he was a boy dressing up as a girl. Our first trip to the mall was fantastic. My son was so happy that he could go into all the stores that he always wanted to but was too afraid to. Nobody gave us a second look and all the store clerks referred to him as sweetie! It was a huge success. Afterwards I asked him how it had felt to be a girl. He said it was awesome, that it was the first time that he could truly be who he was. He had felt so free. And he wanted to know if we could do it again tomorrow. When I asked him how it felt to be a boy he said that it felt like a dark and stormy day. That day it finally became clear to me that we had no choice but to let him transition. This was who he was." - parent of a 9 year old trans girl, Hamilton, ON



Helpful Terminology

Cisgender (from cis: "on this side of" and/or "not across") - is a relatively unfamiliar word meaning "not transgender;" that is, having a gender identity or performing in a gender role that society considers appropriate for one's sex. For example, if a person was born male and identifies as a man, then they are usually considered a cisgender person. The prefix "cis" is pronounced like "sis."

Gender Assignment (or birth sex) - This term refers to the gender identity assigned to an individual at birth based on that person's physical body. Birth sex is typically limited to either male or female and tends to exclude intersex as a legitimate option.

Gender Equity - A term that refers to the belief and practice that everyone deserves the basic right to respect, safety and equitable access regardless of their gender identity or expression.

Gender Expression - A term that refers to how an individual chooses to express their gender to the world.

Gender Identity - A term that refers to a person's actual or perceived sex, and includes a person's identity appearance or behaviour whether or not the person's identity, appearance or behaviour is different from that traditionally associated with the person's sex at birth. A person's individual sense of being may include being male, female, neither, or any other identity along the gender spectrum.

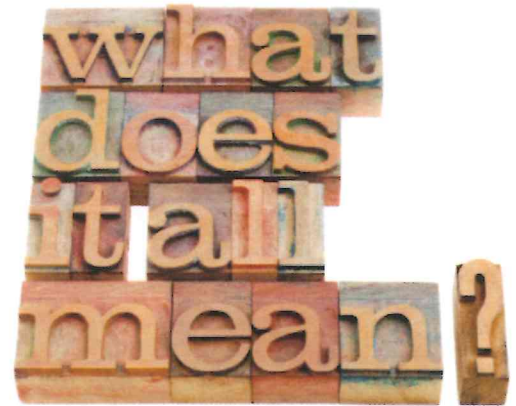
Gender Non-Conforming - A description of a person whose gender expression and/or characteristics are or are perceived to be different from the gender assigned to the person at birth.

GenderQueer - An identity and/or expression of gender that is neither male nor female exclusively.

Transgender - A term used to describe a person who lives as a member of a gender other than that which is expected based on their anatomical sex. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity.

Transsexual - A person who identifies as a sex other than the one to which they were born. Transsexual individuals have often transitioned hormonally and/or surgically to the sex they identify as.

Transition - This term is primarily used to refer to the process that a trans person undergoes when changing their body, mind or appearance to be more congruent with their gender identity. Transitioning may include medical support and procedures such as hormone therapy and surgery.



A Parent's Story

A few months ago, our 16 year old daughter told us that she is transgender, and is actually male. He had already gone to the teachers at his school and his sports club, and asked them to call him by his "male" name, and use male pronouns. His friends already knew, and were very accepting. Although it came as quite a shock to us, we weren't completely surprised, because he had come out as being bisexual about a year before that, so we had noticed him questioning many things about his sexuality and gender over the last year. He had been dressing in male clothing for a long time, chopped off his waist-length hair, and began binding his chest a few months before telling us that he is transgender.

However, even though we were kind of expecting it, it's still quite a shock to hear the child you've raised as a daughter for 16 years, tell you that they are your son! At first, we thought it might be a stage, and didn't really understand a lot about it. We were overwhelmed by what this would mean, for him, for his future, for his safety, and for us, as a family. We wanted information, lots of it, to understand what it all meant, and what to do next. We immediately reached out to find support in the community (The Well), both for us and for our teen. We began attending information sessions for the parents of trans youth, reading books on the subject, and having many discussions with our child about what it means, and what his life has been like over the last few years...when he was keeping this all inside, and what his future will be.

We love our child, no matter what. We are proud of him for having the courage to come out to us and others, and we are grateful that he trusted us enough to know that we will help, and be there for him. It broke our hearts to know that he was so unhappy living in a female body, and hearing the anguish, fear, guilt and shame that he has been living with for so long.

Although we know the road ahead will be difficult for him, and challenging for our family too, we will support him in making the transition, and in helping him with the challenges he will face throughout his future. Don't get me wrong...we are worried about the obstacles he will face. We worry about his future career prospects, about his physical safety, about him finding a partner that will love him, about him finding happiness. (And aren't those the things that all parents worry about for their children?). However, we know that the most important factor to determine the successful outcome for a transgender person is parental support. And he has plenty of that!

The more we learn, and talk to other people who have gone through the same situation, we realize that there is hope! Once our son transitions, he can have a very bright future! And we know that he will be living the life he was meant to live, and will love himself again, and then hopefully...be happy.

Local (and Global) Resources...

In Hamilton, The LGBTQ Community Wellness Centre (The Well) is a local resource which provides individual, family, and peer support services and information and can be found at www.thewellhamilton.ca.

Attend a local parents of trans youth group meeting. Find out when the next meeting is at <http://www.thetransparent.ca>.

Please note The Well and HWDSB have included links to resources provided by third parties. The Well and HWDSB are not responsible for the accuracy or content of information contained on these sites.

Doctors, healthcare practitioners:

If you're unsure of your next step, sometimes the best place to start is with your family doctor. Unfortunately, your family doctor may not know much more than you, but it may be helpful to keep your family doctor in the loop as a home-base for information, both medical and emotional.



Local Trans-specific healthcare clinics are as follows:



Quest Community HealthCare - Trans specific healthcare clinic, St. Catharines, ON -
Tel: 905-688-2558

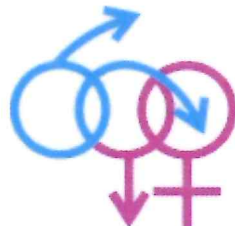


McMaster Family Practice - 690 Main Street West, Hamilton ON, - Tel: 905-521-5016, 905-521-5015



Dr. Joey Bonifacio - Working with Gender Independent Children and Youth, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, ON, - Tel: 416-813-1500

Many health practitioners follow the guidelines suggested by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (www.wpath.org/resources_transgender.cfm.html). These guidelines, known as the WPATH Standards of Care can be accessed on this site. The Canadian counterpart to WPATH is CPATH (www.cpath.org).



WPATH WORLD PROFESSIONAL
ASSOCIATION for
TRANSGENDER HEALTH

Helpful Websites and Informative books:



Rainbow Health Ontario is also building an interactive directory of relevant service providers and important fact sheets, so check out: www.RainbowHealthOntario.on.ca



Another useful resource for information on trans human rights and community organizing is the Rainbow Health Network at www.rainbowhealthnetwork.ca/transhealth.html



The TransPULSE research project has created a Canadian Resource Directory which can be accessed at: www.transpulseproject.ca

A wide range of protocols describing practice in a Canadian context can be accessed through the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority at www.vch.ca/transhealth/resources/careguidelines.html.

Legal Name Change and Sex Designation Change in Ontario:

<http://www.ontario.ca/government/how-do-i-apply-legal-name-change>,

<http://www.ontario.ca/government/changing-your-sex-designation-your-birth-registration-and-birth-certificate>

Ontario Human Rights Commission: www.hrlsc.on.ca

PFLAG Canada - Resources for parents and allies of LGBTQ children. www.pflagcanada.ca

Camp Ten Oaks - Camp and other programs for gender independent children and LGBTQ youth. www.camptenoaks.org

Egale Canada - Canada Human Rights Trust Organization, advancing equality, diversity, education and justice: <http://www.egale.ca/index.asp>

Gender Creative Kids Canada - A Canadian portal for information and resource sharing: www.Gendercreativekids.ca



Gender Creative Kids
Enfants transgenres
CANADA

The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals, Stephanie Brill & Rachel Pepper, 2008

Gender Born, Gender Made: Raising Healthy Gender-Nonconforming Children, Diane Ehrensaft, 2011

Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones, Mary Boenke, 1999

Transitions of the Heart: Stories of Love, Struggle and Acceptance by Mothers of Transgender and Gender Variant Children, Rachel Pepper, 2012

Questions you may have...



About Protecting trans and gender non-conforming youth [legislative excerpts]

Ontario's Human Rights Code (<http://www.ohrc.on.ca>)

The Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the *Code*) provides for equal rights and opportunities, and freedom from discrimination. The *Code* recognizes the dignity and worth of every person in Ontario, in employment, housing, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trade or professional associations.

People who are discriminated against or harassed because of gender identity are legally protected. This includes transsexual, transgender and intersex persons, cross-dressers, and other people whose gender identity or expression is, or is seen to be, different from their birth-identified sex.

What are gender identity and expression?

Gender identity is linked to a person's sense of self, and the sense of being male or female. A person's gender identity is different from their sexual orientation, which is also protected under the *Code*. People's gender identity may be different from their birth-assigned sex, and may include:

Gender expression refers to the external attributes, behaviour, appearance, dress, etc. by which people express themselves and through which others perceive that person's gender.

Discrimination and harassment

Discrimination happens when a person is treated unequally or differently because of their gender identity or gender expression and it results in a disadvantage to that person. Discrimination includes any action, intentional or not, that treats someone less favourably than other members of society because of the person's identified or perceived gender identity or gender expression.

This can be obvious or subtle. Discrimination can also happen on a bigger, systemic level, such as when a rule or policy may appear to be neutral, but is not designed in an inclusive way. This may harm the rights of people because of their gender identity or gender expression. Harassment is a form of discrimination. It includes comments, jokes, name-calling, or behaviour or display of pictures that insult or demean you because of your gender identity or gender expression.

No person should be treated differently while at work, at school, trying to rent an apartment, eating a meal in a restaurant, or at any other time, because of their gender identity or gender expression.

Organizations cannot discriminate, must deal with harassment complaints, and must provide a non-discriminatory environment for trans people. This also applies to "third parties," such as people doing contract work or who regularly come into contact with the organization. People should be recognized as the gender they live in, regardless of whether they have undergone any type of surgery. Trans individuals should also be given access to washrooms and change facilities on this basis, unless they specifically ask for accommodation (such as for their own safety or privacy reasons).

The duty to accommodate

Under the *Code*, employers, unions, landlords and service providers have a legal duty to accommodate people because of their gender identity. The goal of accommodation is to allow people to equally benefit from and take part in services, housing or the workplace.

Accommodation is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved, including the person asking for accommodation, should cooperate in the process, share information, and jointly explore accommodation solutions.

Keeping information private

An employer or service provider must have a valid reason for collecting and using personal information, such as from a driver's licence or birth certificate, that either directly or indirectly lists a person's sex as different from his or her lived gender identity. They must also ensure the maximum degree of privacy and confidentiality. This applies in all cases, including employment records and files, insurance company records, medical information, etc.

Ontario Ministry of Education Bill 13 Accepting Schools Act, 2012

[\(<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/safeschools.html>\)](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/safeschools.html)

An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters believe that all students should feel safe at school and deserve a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability;

Believe that a healthy, safe and inclusive learning environment where all students feel accepted is a necessary condition for student success;

Recognize that a whole-school approach is required, and that everyone — government, educators, school staff, parents, students and the wider community — has a role to play in creating a positive school climate and preventing inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, sexual assault, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia, transphobia or biphobia;

Hamilton Wentworth District School Board Policy Excerpts

[\(<http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/board/policies/>\)](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/board/policies/)



Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy Directive

3.7 Sexual: leaving a person or persons out, or treating them badly because of their gender, gender identity or gender expression, repeatedly making sexist or transphobic comments or jokes, or grabbing someone in a sexual way; repeatedly spreading sexual rumours about a person or persons.

3.8 Sexual Orientation: Repeatedly leaving a person or persons out, or treating them badly because of their sexual orientation; repeatedly making crude comments about a person or person's sexual behaviour; repeatedly calling a person or persons derogatory or inappropriate names regarding their sexual orientation.

EQUITY POLICY-SUPPORTING GUIDELINES: GENDER EQUITY

Removal of Barriers

2.3 The leadership of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will strive to ensure that educational practices are inclusive and reflect the contributions of persons of all genders including the diverse groups of girls, women and transgender persons in our communities. Further, it will strive to ensure that all forms of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, sexism, and violence against all genders, in particular, girls, women and transgender persons, are challenged and eliminated.

Commitment to Equity

3.1 The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board recognizes that school communities include people of all genders and gender identities and will promote active engagement to ensure inclusive school community partnerships



"Through my son I have had the pleasure of meeting other trans people and they are some of the best people I have ever met. They have courage and strength beyond their years. They live their lives with quiet dignity. I am honoured to be the parent of a trans youth. My son is my inspiration and my light." - parent of trans youth, Hamilton, ON

About Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) and Trans Health Care in Ontario **[Adapted from the SRS and Trans Health Policy Group's "Information on Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) and Trans Health Care in Ontario", July 2009]**

1. Has Sex Reassignment Surgery been re-listed as an OHIP covered procedure?

On June 3rd 2008, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care re-listed Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) as an OHIP covered procedure for approved individuals. The Ministry's Bulletin 4480 was distributed on June 20th 2008 to physicians, hospitals and labs to announce this change in policy. It is posted on the MOHLTC website at:

www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bulletin_4000_mn.html

2. Who provides approvals for OHIP covered SRS?

At present, the Ministry has directed that the approval process for this surgery may only be carried out by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Gender Identity Clinics (GICs). For details of the Clinic's services and approach, see

[www.camh.net/Care_Treatment/Program_Descriptions/Mental_Health_Programs/Gender Identity Clinic/gender identity criteriasurgery.html](http://www.camh.net/Care_Treatment/Program_Descriptions/Mental_Health_Programs/Gender_Identity_Clinic/gender_identity_criteriasurgery.html)

3. What kinds of surgical body changing procedures does OHIP cover for approved sex reassignment surgery?

Male to Female Sex Reassignment Surgery:

- Vaginoplasty - removal of male genitals, construction of vagina, labia, clitoris

Female to Male Sex Reassignment Surgery:

- Mastectomy - removal of breasts and chest reconstruction
- Metoidioplasty/Phalloplasty – (two different options) freeing of the clitoris and construction of testes, or removal of female genitals, construction of male genitals
- Hysterectomy - removal of uterus and ovaries upon recommendation by GIC at CAMH as part of transition.

4. Are there body changing procedures that are not covered by OHIP?

OHIP does not provide coverage for the following procedures: Breast implants, Facial surgeries such as lip augmentation, lip reduction, jaw shortening, rhinoplasty (nose reshaping), Neck or vocal chord surgery, Hair transplants, Electrolysis (removal of beard or body hair), Male chest contouring unless part of a mastectomy procedure, Liposuction

5. Where are approved surgical procedures?

Patients who meet eligibility requirements for OHIP funding are referred to *The Centre Metropolitain de Chirurgie Plastique* in Montreal, Quebec. See their website at www.grsmontreal.com.html. In exceptional circumstances, OHIP will sometimes cover the cost of Out of Country services but this is only where the service is insured by OHIP, the service is not available within Ontario or delay in accessing services would result in medically significant irreversible tissue damage or death. Those wishing to pursue surgical options outside Canada still require a referral from CAMH's GIC and the CAMH physician will need to complete a "Prior Approval Application for Full payment of Insured Out-of-Country Health Services" form. More information on seeking OHIP insured services out-of-country can be accessed at www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ohip/outcountry_services.htm

If you are uncertain as to whether or not the services being sought would be covered by OHIP, please contact the Ministry in writing prior to accessing services.

6. Is there a waiting list to be seen at CAMH's Gender Identity Clinics?

Due to high demand, there may be a waiting list for the initial visit with a GIC. Once approval has been granted, the referral is sent to OHIP. An OHIP representative then advises the client of the approval and sends copies to the surgeons in Montreal. Scheduling decisions are then made between the client and the Montreal Clinic. Currently, the waiting list to be seen at CAMH is approximately 18 months from the time of referral to first appointment. The surgery can take up to another year after that.

7. What if I live in an area that is far from the GICs? Is there funding for travel expenses?

If you live in Northern Ontario you may qualify for a Northern Travel Grant which will assist you with travel costs and accommodation if required. You must receive a referral from a Northern Health Care practitioner. More information on this grant may be accessed at <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/ohip/northern.html>

8. Where can I get other kinds of care like hormone therapy, counselling, or find a support group?

Ontario does not yet have an accessible, integrated network of care for trans people, but many do find services at health centres, family health teams and family doctors' offices. Some physicians will send you for a consultation with a psychiatrist or an endocrinologist before prescribing hormones but this is not always necessary. For MTF (Male-to-female) youth, puberty blockers may be necessary and an endocrinologist will prescribe Lupron injections. Lupron can be very expensive, up to \$480 per needle, depending on the dosage.

9. Are hormones covered by OHIP?

Hormones are like any other prescription medication. They are either paid for by the patient, a company health insurance program or, for those who qualify, a government program such as the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. For ODBP coverage, a doctor must complete a "Request for an Unlisted Drug Product-ICR" form. It only needs to be filled out once and is available at www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/forms/form_menus/odb_fm.html. If you do not have company health insurance, you may be eligible for The Trillium Drug Program (TDP) offered through the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, which offers coverage for prescription drugs through an income deductible. You can find information on this program here: <http://www.integratis.ca/pdfs/TrilliumHealthProgram.pdf>