

INTRODUCTION

Protecting gender-affirming care is protecting bodily autonomy. Freedom to access the full range of health care options that allows you to express your gender and sexuality is fundamental to [reproductive justice](#). Still, across the country, extremists target transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse people by weaponizing affirming care. These attacks are pervasive and impact all areas of life, such as denying young people autonomy to use their [name and pronouns](#) in school, prohibiting [gender self-identification](#) on federal documents, and [banning health care](#) for trans youth.

Transgender people depend on gender-affirming care, including gender-affirming health care. Every [major medical association and leading world health authority](#) supports gender-affirming health care for transgender people and youth. Providers play a crucial role as caregivers, messengers, and advocates in the fight to protect gender-affirming care.

This factsheet summarizes the different models of gender-affirming care. Providers, partners, and policymakers should use this document to learn more about gender-affirming care and transgender people's experiences. We hope this factsheet will serve as more than an educational tool, but also as a means to destigmatize and demystify gender-affirming care, combat misinformation, and advance trans justice.

WHAT IS GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE?

[Gender-affirming care](#) involves a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions that help transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people align various aspects of their lives with their gender identity. Gender-affirming care supports positive mental, emotional, and physical health outcomes. Transgender people, regardless of age, should have access to all types of care that affirm their gender identity. Unfortunately, transgender people often face [systemic and social barriers to care](#). These barriers disproportionately impact [immigrants](#) and [Black](#), [Indigenous](#), and [transgender people of color](#) who experience intersecting forms of oppression.

Gender-affirming care is often willfully misconstrued and misrepresented by extremists to criminalize providers, scare parents, and discourage diversity. But gender-affirming care is essential and life-saving care that serves as a foundation in the lives that transgender people lead. The narrative on gender-affirming care often focuses on health care, but gender-affirming care includes much more. The models of gender-affirming care can be broken down into three categories: social, legal, and health.

Social

[Social gender-affirming care](#) is gender-affirmation that one can do on their own and with the support of their friends, family, or community. This model of care may include changing one's name, pronouns, [hair](#), [voice](#), or [clothing](#). Socially affirming one's gender may also include modifying the shape of their body, such as [tucking](#), [binding](#), and using [prosthetics](#). Social gender-affirmation includes building community support that makes oneself feel acknowledged, empowered, and safe. For many transgender people, social affirmation is the first type of gender-affirming care they will try. Social affirmation is generally

reversible and appropriate for any age. Social affirmation looks different for every person because there is no one way to be transgender, transition, or affirm one's gender.

Legal

Legal gender-affirming care is affirming one's gender through legal, legislative, and administrative systems. This aspect of care may include [updating one's name and gender marker on identification documents](#), such as driver's licenses, passports, or immigration documents. Legal affirming care also includes using [legal services](#) to address discrimination and ensuring that transgender people understand their legal rights. Whether it is at work, school, home, or interacting with criminal, family policing, or immigration systems, transgender people have legal protections against discrimination, coercion, and violence. The legal aspect of gender-affirming care is integral to a person's ability to feel affirmed and safe in their identity.

Health

Gender-affirming health care is affirming care obtained with the help of health professionals. [Gender-affirming health care is a part of comprehensive primary care](#) that includes supportive behavioral health care, gender-affirming hormones, puberty blockers, surgical interventions, and other medical procedures. [Puberty blockers](#) are fully reversible medications that can temporarily pause puberty. [Hormone replacement therapy](#) is medicine to replace or suppress the hormones the body makes, typically estrogen and testosterone. [Hormone replacement therapy is safe](#) for both youth and adults. Gender-affirming [surgery](#) includes, but is not limited to, chest or breast removal or augmentation, hysterectomy, phalloplasty, and vaginoplasty.

Surgical affirmation for youth is [uncommon](#), but care for transgender youth is always age-appropriate and designed to support and affirm young people. The [most common medical intervention for transgender youth](#) is puberty blockers. When transgender youth have access to the broad range of gender-affirming care, they are [more likely to have better mental and physical health outcomes](#), including [lower levels of depression, anxiety, and suicidality](#). Gender-affirming care for young people should not be restricted or banned.

Gender-affirming health care is [medically necessary, safe, and life-saving care backed by decades of evidence-based research](#) and the lived experiences of transgender people. Despite false claims that gender-affirming health care is associated with regret, research [overwhelmingly](#) shows [high levels](#) of satisfaction with care. [Providers should support patients](#) in their decision to seek affirming health care. However, bans and restrictions stop best-practice care by influencing hospitals to halt gender-affirming services and instilling fear of criminalization in providers. It is true that not all transgender people seek gender-affirming health care, but politics has no place in the exam room.

CONCLUSION

Everyone deserves access to the care that they want and need, including transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse people of all ages. Gender-affirming care impacts the most personal and most public parts of a person's life. Therefore, bans and restrictions on gender-affirming care intrude on the [universal right](#) to live freely and safely in one's body. These attacks target each model of gender-affirming care: [prohibiting pronouns](#) in email signatures, redefining the [meaning of "sex"](#), and eliminating gender-affirming health care coverage from [government insurance programs](#). Challenging discriminatory efforts to limit people's ability to live their lives as their true selves is a crucial part of the fight for reproductive freedom. Transgender people deserve unconditional support, and safeguarding access to comprehensive gender-affirming care is a part of demonstrating support.

APPENDIX

TYPES OF GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE AT A GLANCE

SOCIAL GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE	GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE	LEGAL GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking friends and family to refer to the person by a different name• Pronoun changes• Tucking, binding, wearing packers• Haircuts, hair extensions• Changes in clothing	<p><i>Surgical</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facial Surgeries• Chest or breast removal or augmentation• Hysterectomies• Phalloplasty• Vaginoplasty <p><i>Non-Surgical</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Puberty Blockers• Hormone Therapies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updating one's name and gender marker on identification documents• Using legal services to address discrimination and deepen understanding of legal rights