Gender Nonconforming Children: Education for Rural Vermont Families

Zachary Silberman
University of Vermont
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ZACHARY SILBERMAN, MS3  
ST. ALBANS, VT  
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MENTORS: JEREMIAH DICKERSON, MD  
DEANA CHASE, LICSW
Problem Identification and Need

Although the incidence of Trans and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) children is not known, some studies have indicated up to 27% of adolescents in certain populations identify as TGNC.

According to experts, there is a general lack of education for providers and families of TGNC children.

Rural areas generally have a lack of awareness and resources about LGBTQ topics.

There are many different guidelines for successful supporting and raising of TGNC children.

The rapidly changing field can be hard to interpret for patients and providers alike.
Public Health Cost and Community Considerations

TGNC youth have higher rates of mental health disorders, including depression and suicidality.

Increased family support shows fewer episodes of these disorders, higher overall life satisfaction, and improved academic success.

Unfortunately, a lack of awareness of the issue has resulted in minimal studies evaluating incidence, let alone specific outcomes.
Community Perspective and Support

Dr. Jeremiah Dickerson, Child and Adolescent psychiatrist at the Vermont Center for Children, Youth and Families
- Outside of Chittenden county, there is significant confusion about any type of gender variant population
- Parents especially need facts and tools to talk with other family members

Deana Chase, LICSW, Parent of a TGNC child
- There is a general lack of knowledge on gender binary and the social construct of gender
- Even when parents and family have knowledge, there is often a sense of grief, fear, and loss when their child “comes out”

Other Community Leaders
- Many misconceptions exist between physicians and the TGNC community about terminology how to address the topic
Intervention and Methodology

Reviewed current literature and community websites for commonly used terminology

Conducted interviews with community healthcare providers and family members of TGNC children

Developed family oriented pamphlet with
- Terminology
- Myths and Misconception
- Community resources
- Tools for discussing the topic
Myths and Misconceptions

All kids who are gender creative will stay that way.

RURAL: Many mothers or somone will feel like identifying with a child who is gender non-conforming, and feel they have no choice to identify with their child in order to avoid gender tensions.

Dealing with gender creative means something is wrong with my child. Not something wrong as a person to make up for being gender non-conforming. You are not alone. You are not unique. You are not abnormal.

It's your child's right to wear clothes and express gender non-conforming ideas. You should not force your child to conform to gender norms.

What does gender creative and related terminology mean?

Gender identity: every individual's internal sense of self, male, female, something in between, or something else entirely.

Ex: transgender, gender non-conforming

Gender expression: outward expression of gender identity.

Ex: "I like women's shoes," or "I use a hairbrush, and I like to wear makeup.,

You are not alone. You are not unique. You are not abnormal.

It's your child's right to wear clothes and express gender non-conforming ideas. You should not force your child to conform to gender norms.

Why is my kid wearing different clothes and using new pronouns?

A guide for Vermont parents of Gender Creative/Non-binary children.

The University of Vermont
LaMarre College of Medicine

Intervention - Brochure

Resolutions and Citations:

Outright VT, outright.org

Based in Burlington VT, Outright hosts and sponsors a variety of gender creative kids and parent groups. They are dedicated to building healthy, healthy, and supportive environments for LGBTQ youth.

Gay Mountain Crossings, gaymountaincrossings.org

Rural Vermont oriented LGBTQ resource and advocacy group based in Brattleboro VT.

Gender Spectrum, genderspectrum.org

National organization that helps create gender sensitive and inclusive environment for all children and teens.

How can I explain gender creative to other family members?

The Gender Unicorn, developed by TSER, is a great starting place. It shows how components of our identity are just sliding scales. This is a great tool for starting a conversation with anybody.

The Gender Unicorn

TSER

Gender Identity

Gender Expression

Sex Assigned at Birth

Physically Attracted to

Emotionally Attracted to
Results and Response

The educational pamphlet serves to address the general lack of knowledge about TGNC children.

Pamphlet was well received by providers and staff, with several people commenting on the necessity of the topic for providers and patients.

The pamphlet was distributed out to the 8 practice offices of the Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH) group, and a pdf was requested for continued distribution.
Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

**Evaluation of Effectiveness**

Evaluation of effectiveness could be accomplished by surveying providers on the frequency that patients mention the topic. Additionally, surveys of the topic could be conducted at community resources to see if the pamphlet was a reason for contact.

**Limitations**

There was no time within the scope of the clerkship project to evaluate the effectiveness of the pamphlet.

The population of TGNC children is considered vulnerable and so could not be interviewed without a lengthy IRB approval process.

There is minimal demographic information regarding the TGNC population, especially in rural areas.
Future Recommendations

Expand on project scope to develop family education tools for a broader aspect of the TGNC population

Distribute pamphlet to rural primary care offices in Southern Vermont

Develop provider training modules for talking with TGNC children and their families

Rework pamphlet for distribution to schools and other areas to increase family awareness
References

Center of Excellence for Transgender Health, Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of California San Francisco. Guidelines for the Primary and Gender-Affirming Care of Transgender and Gender Nonbinary People; 2nd edition. Deutsch MB, ed. June 2016. Available at www.transhealth.ucsf.edu/guidelines.


outrightvt.org
transstudent.org
Interview Consent

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. This project is a requirement for the Family Medicine clerkship. It will be stored on the Dana Library ScholarWorks website. Your name will be attached to your interview and you may be cited directly or indirectly in subsequent unpublished or published work. The interviewer affirms that he/she has explained the nature and purpose of this project. The interviewee affirms that he/she has consented to this interview.

Yes __X__ Deana Chase – Verbal

Yes __X__ Jeremiah Dickerson – Verbal