

Transgender youths may struggle to find gender-affirming care

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- Gridley SJ, et al. *J Adolesc Health*. May 24, 2016, <http://bit.ly/29eC48R>.

Transgender youths report multiple barriers to receiving gender-affirming health care, according to a new study.

Delaying such care comes with a price as it is connected to increased risk of psychiatric issues like anxiety and depression, which already are higher in transgender youths than in their peers.

The Academy and other health organizations recommend supporting transgender youths and providing referrals for transitions.

Researchers set out to see if these youths were able to find gender-affirming care. They used surveys, interviews and focus groups to garner input from 15 youths ages 14-22 and 50 caregivers of transgender youths. They found six common barriers:

- limited number of providers trained in supporting transgender youths who were accessible in terms of insurance coverage and distance;
- lack of office protocols or awareness of professional guidelines;
- providers who did not use the patient's chosen name or pronoun;
- lack of coordination between providers;
- trouble accessing pubertal blockers and cross-sex hormones due to age, parental approval or lack of provider training; and
- insurance exclusions.

The team suggested remedies for each barrier, including training providers and staff, developing office protocols, opening multidisciplinary gender clinics and providing cross-sex hormones at an age that allows adolescents to develop at the same time as their peers.

"Our data suggest that the implementation of clear, comprehensive, evidence-based best practices and policies that take into account patient age, pubertal stage, desired future treatments, and comorbid conditions and address barriers to gender-affirming care are likely to improve mental and physical health outcomes for transgender youth," authors wrote.

Please see related ["Letter from the President: Pediatricians should not be transgender children's first bully"](#)

Resources

- [AAP policy "Office-Based Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth"](#)
- [Information for parents of LGBT teens](#)
- [AAP News story "Study: Depression, anxiety low for transgender children with family support"](#)

