

Copyright American Psychological Association

Accessible. Powerful. Urgently needed. In a time marked by escalating misinformation, political attacks, and systemic harm targeting trans communities, this new edition offers a clear, evidence-based road map for clinicians, educators, advocates, and families committed to protecting and affirming trans and gender diverse youth. Grounded in the latest research and rich in clinical implications, this second edition of *Pediatric Gender Health Care* powerfully demonstrates what justice-centered, developmentally responsive, and strength-based care for trans and gender diverse youth looks like in real-world practice.

—**Roberto L. Abreu, PhD**, Associate Professor, Psychology Department, University of Florida, Gainesville

This is a critical compendium on pediatric gender health care written by many of the world's foremost experts in the area. I recommend this book to any and all clinicians and clinicians-in-training working with gender diverse youth.

—**Kristina R. Olson, PhD**, Professor of Psychology, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

If you work with, advocate for, or care about gender diverse children and adolescents, this book belongs on your shelf. This timely and thoroughly updated edition covers empirically-grounded best practices for working with gender diverse youth, complete with rich case examples and a strong framework of cultural humility and intersectionality.

—**Diane Chen, PhD, ABPP**, Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Pediatrics, and Medical Social Sciences, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago/ Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, IL; Fellow of the American Psychological Association

Copyright American Psychological Association

This book masterfully blends clinical expertise, rigorous research, and community perspectives to offer an indispensable, grounded guide for clinicians supporting trans and nonbinary children and their families across diverse contexts. It will quickly become the go-to recommendation for providers at every level of experience.

—**Sebastian Barr, PhD**, licensed psychologist; coauthor of *Transness Is Our Salve: Trans People's Experiences of Healing From Parental Trauma*

Once again, these authors have compiled an ideally crafted compilation of topics covering every area of pediatric gender care. The depth and breadth of clinical information makes this book a perfect resource to use for a college course, and the contemporary relevance makes it a must-have for every professional's desktop. This is an indispensable book for all professionals who want the best science, research, and references at this important time.

—**Linda A. Hawkins, PhD, MSEd, LPC**, Director, LGBTQ+ Policy & Practice, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Authored by pioneering leaders in the field, this book offers a rigorous, evidence-based guide to supporting transgender and gender diverse youth. During a time of widespread misinformation, it is an essential resource for clinicians, researchers, and anyone wanting to better understand and support today's youth.

—**Jack Turban, MD, MHS**, author of *Free to Be: Understanding Kids & Gender Identity*

Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	vii
Introduction: Honoring and Not Dulling the Light of the Youngest Among Us	3
G. Nic Rider, Diane Ehrensaft, and Colt St. Amand	
1. Gender Identity Development	11
Johanna Olson-Kennedy, Aydin Olson-Kennedy, and Darlene Tando	
2. Collaborative Treatment Across Disciplines: Medical and Mental Health Care Coordination	33
Laura Kuper and Colt St. Amand	
3. Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Children of Color and Their Families in Clinical Care	59
Elizabeth Panetta, De'Shay Thomas, and Jonathan Poquiz	
4. Building Resilience in Transgender and Gender Diverse Children, Families, and Communities: A Multidimensional Family Approach	77
Jean Malpas, Elizabeth Glaeser, Shawn V. Giammattei, and Derrick T. Jordan	
5. Supporting the Mental Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse Children	93
Matthew Ethan Goldenberg and Karisa L. Barrow	

6. Gender-Related Trauma	111
Amy Tishelman, Aydin Olson-Kennedy, and AndreAs Neumann-Mascis	
7. The Space to Try: Creative Arts Approaches to Identity Exploration With Children	131
Mak Morin	
8. Child and Family Assessment	147
Benjamin Parchem, Dianne Berg, Catherine Schaefer, and G. Nic Rider	
9. Helping Families Move From Distress to Attunement With a Child’s Gender	175
Deb Coolhart, Jessie Rose Cohen, and Molly Ober Fechter-Leggett	
10. Networks of Care for Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth	199
Catelyn G. Devlin and Kayden J. Schumacher	
11. Transgender Youth Medical Care Bans: Legislation, Psychological Impacts, and Advocacy	223
Sara A. Mar, Claire Coyne, Jessica M. Bernacki, and Kellan Baker	
12. Ethical Practice in the Care of Transgender and Gender Diverse Children	245
Drew B. A. Clark	
Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?	271
Diane Ehrensaft, Colt St. Amand, and G. Nic Rider	
<i>Index</i>	<i>279</i>
<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>287</i>

INTRODUCTION

Honoring and Not Dulling the Light of the Youngest Among Us

G. NIC RIDER, DIANE EHRENSAFT, AND COLT ST. AMAND

To say much has changed since the publication of the first edition of this book in 2018 (*The Gender Affirmative Model: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Supporting Transgender and Gender Expansive Children*; Keo-Meier & Ehrensaft, 2018) would be an understatement. There has been an unprecedented amount of interest in the topic of gender health, particularly in children and adolescents, across the globe. The gender affirmative model (GAM; Hidalgo et al., 2013; Keo-Meier & Ehrensaft, 2018) has become the leading model of care for transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse people and has a large evidence base supporting the work of professionals who provide care in line with the theoretical bases of the GAM. Since 2018, we have seen a devastating increase in legislative attacks and harmful rhetoric toward transgender and gender diverse (TGD) youth and the weaponization of gender-affirming terminology. Major media outlets continue to cover stories featuring TGD children and adolescents, but those accounts are often riddled with misinformation and disinformation (Billard, 2024; McNamara et al., 2022).

Several professional organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (Rafferty et al., 2018), the American Medical Association (2021),

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000494-001>

Pediatric Gender Health Care: The Gender Affirmative Model Revisited, Second Edition,
G. N. Rider, D. Ehrensaft, and C. St. Amand (Editors)

Copyright © 2026 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.

the American Psychiatric Association (2020, 2025), and the American Psychological Association (2024), have issued statements in support of TGD gender health care. At the same time, an organized political effort to deny access to gender health care has succeeded in banning or limiting access to gender health care for TGD youth in 28 U.S. states, as of July 2025 (Dawson & Kates, n.d.). Thus, the need to prepare mental health professionals and professionals from all disciplines who work with children and families has never been more dire.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) recently published version 8 of the Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, which addresses treatment of children and adolescents (Coleman et al., 2022). The chapter on children in the latest WPATH guidelines cites the first edition of this book (Keo-Meier & Ehrensaft, 2018). Despite the proliferation of pediatric transgender health research in recent years and even in the time since the first edition of this book was published, treatment of prepubertal children continues to be a topic of great controversy. This is a particularly glaring problem because research has indicated that social support of children in their gender development is directly correlated with positive mental health outcomes for children (e.g., Durwood et al., 2021; Grossman et al., 2021; Simons et al., 2013). This edition will continue to address this concern in our field, present up-to-date scholarship on the GAM, and describe the evolution of the model, which we posit continues to be best practice for children and youth in their gender development.

With the increase in political attacks on access to gender health care for TGD youth, many outpatient clinics that specialize in working with this group of children have closed (e.g., the GENECIS Clinic at Texas Children's Hospital and the gender program at Children's Hospital Los Angeles), even though referral numbers continue to increase (Kim et al., 2025). Graduate students and practitioners alike in counseling, health, and education programs continue to report that they are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of TGD youth (Carroll, 2010; Corliss et al., 2007; Gonzalez & McNulty, 2010; Knudson et al., 2023; Obedin-Maliver et al., 2011; Rider et al., 2019). Even programs that include training for professionals who provide care to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) individuals either only briefly comment on or completely exclude the topic of transgender issues. When transgender health is included, the experiences of adults who transition after puberty are typically discussed, and prepubertal children may not be mentioned at all (Carroll, 2010; Case et al., 2009). Because

gender identity develops as early as age 3 years (Ehrensaft, 2016), access to information about how to work with TGD children is essential for professionals who work with young children (Gonzalez & McNulty, 2010).

A NEW EDITION

The prior edition of this book (Keo-Meier & Ehrensaft, 2018) was the first of its kind representing the expertise of several gender specialists in the field, and it served as a substantive guide to inform interdisciplinary clinical work with prepubertal children using the GAM as the predominant framework. It laid the groundwork for further dialogue on and research into incorporating and developing evidence-based practice for working with TGD children and their families.

Given the substantive developments and advancements in the care of TGD people of all ages, we posit that *gender health* is now an entire field of study and practice. Thus, the second edition incorporates this broad term, as reflected in the new title (*Pediatric Gender Health Care: The Gender Affirmative Model Revisited*), and we aim to improve pediatric gender health. At this point in time, efforts to improve gender health are inherently affirming, supporting an individual's gender development within their culture and context; in this way, we view the term *gender affirmative care* as redundant. Further, as more professionals of lived experience shape the field, the need for attention to social and structural power dynamics has become increasingly apparent.

In this edition, the GAM will be supplemented with frameworks and concepts such as intersectionality (Bowleg, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991), cultural humility (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998), trauma-informed care (Butler et al., 2011), and gender embodiment (DuBois et al., 2022; Hastings et al., 2021). Additional chapters and content are included that focus on the ethical basis of providing pediatric gender health care, interventions to use when working with children, and advocacy given the recent restrictions on gender care. Although several authors from the first edition returned for this volume, the editors were intentional in their efforts to include more TGD authors from disciplines relevant to the field of gender health.

Whereas the first edition of this volume presented an affirming model of therapy for clinicians to use with TGD children and their families, this edition incorporates an intersectional lens to improve gender health in children and their families. We also highlight the GAM as one of the foundational frameworks to inform the field of gender health and guide interdisciplinary

collaborative practice to address medical, psychosocial, educational, legal, and ethical matters pertaining to the gender health of children.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

We have had the privilege of working with an expanded group of experts from coast to coast in the United States and beyond to bring this volume together. Some of us are transgender ourselves, some have raised TGD children, some have had TGD partners, and all of us have been touched by the lives of TGD people around us. We lecture, educate, write, advocate, build a professional community, and conduct research on the lives of TGD people who have been our greatest teachers.

Each of the following chapters is designed to be its own independent learning module about psychological, social, and community issues as we get in clearer focus of the infinite variety and rapidly growing population of TGD children. Chapters 1 through 7 focus on child gender development, psychotherapy, and fostering resilience. These chapters guide a reader through what is currently understood about gender development, describe the importance of collaborative interdisciplinary care coordination, increase consciousness about intersectional issues that TGD children and their families face, emphasize resilience and empowerment in mental health care, and discuss trauma-informed practice. Chapter 8 details a strengths-based comprehensive assessment process with TGD children and their families. Chapter 9 centers on family therapy and helping family members move toward greater attunement with regard to a child's gender. Chapter 10 covers the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of GAM providers in their pediatric gender health care. Chapter 11 focuses on the current sociopolitical climate for gender health care, particularly for children and youth, and considerations for advocacy. Chapter 12 brings the reader through ethical concepts relevant to gender health care for children and their families, ethical reasoning, and strategies for ethically navigating constraints on practice.

OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS

When we think about future generations, we often think about children as well as our children's children and perhaps their children too. We want to work toward a better world for them and continue the pathways and strength from those who came before us. When we think about children, it is not uncommon for images of movement, singing, laughter, play, curiosity, and joy to come to

mind. The familiar saying, “we take care of each other,” is more salient now than ever. Everyone has a role—even the youngest among us—in our collective well-being. The update and continuation of this book is an organized effort to honor and not dull the light of the youngest among us.

REFERENCES

- American Medical Association. (2021). *AMA reinforces opposition to restrictions on transgender medical care*. <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-reinforces-opposition-restrictions-transgender-medical-care>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *Position statement on treatment of transgender (trans) and gender diverse youth*. <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/07e14cc0-12d9-49d2-9d91-e13208928839/downloads/Position-Treatment-of-Transgender-Gender-Diver.pdf?ver=1774319065667>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2025). *Position statement on gender-affirming care for transgender youth*. <https://www.psychiatry.org/getattachment/8665a2f2-0b73-4477-8f60-79015ba9f815/Position-Treatment-of-Transgender-Gender-Diverse-Youth.pdf>
- American Psychological Association. (2024). *APA policy statement on affirming evidence-based inclusive care for transgender, gender diverse, and nonbinary individuals, addressing misinformation, and the role of psychological practice and science*. <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/transgender-nonbinary-inclusive-care>
- Billard, T. J. (2024). The politics of transgender health misinformation. *Political Communication*, 41(2), 344–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2024.2303148>
- Bowleg, L. (2012, July). The problem with the phrase women and minorities: Intersectionality—An important theoretical framework for public health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(7), 1267–1273. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2012.300750>
- Butler, L. D., Critelli, F. M., & Rinfrette, E. S. (2011). Trauma-informed care and mental health. *Directions in Psychiatry*, 31(3), 197–212.
- Carroll, L. (2010). *Counseling sexual and gender minorities*. Merrill/Pearson Education.
- Case, K. A., Stewart, B., & Tittsworth, J. (2009). Transgender across the curriculum: A psychology for inclusion. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36(2), 117–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00986280902739446>
- Coleman, E., Radix, A. E., Bouman, W. P., Brown, G. R., De Vries, A. L., Deutsch, M. B., Ettner, R., Fraser, L., Goodman, M., Green, J., Hancock, A. B., Johnson, T. W., Karasic, D. H., Knudson, G. A., Leibowitz, S. F., Meyer-Bahlburg, H. F. L., Monstrey, S. J., Motmans, J., Nahata, L., . . . Arcelus, J. (2022). Standards of care for the health of transgender and gender diverse people, version 8. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 23(Suppl. 1), S1–S259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644>
- Corliss, H. L., Shankle, M. D., & Moyer, M. B. (2007). Research, curricula, and resources related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health in U.S. schools of public health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(6), 1023–1027. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2006.086157>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>

- Dawson, L., & Kates, J. (n.d.). *Policy tracker: Youth access to gender affirming care and state policy restrictions*. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/other/dashboard/gender-affirming-care-policy-tracker/>
- DuBois, L. Z., Puckett, J. A., & Langer, S. J. (2022). Development of the gender embodiment scale: Trans masculine spectrum. *Transgender Health*, 7(4), 287–291. <https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2020.0088>
- Durwood, L., Eisner, L., Fladeboe, K., Ji, C. G., Barney, S., McLaughlin, K. A., & Olson, K. R. (2021). Social support and internalizing psychopathology in transgender youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(5), 841–854. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01391-y>
- Ehrensaft, D. (2016). *The gender creative child: Pathways for nurturing and supporting children who live outside gender boxes*. The Experiment.
- Gonzalez, M., & McNulty, J. (2010). Achieving competency with transgender youth: School counselors as collaborative advocates. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 4(3–4), 176–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2010.524841>
- Grossman, A. H., Park, J. Y., Frank, J. A., & Russell, S. T. (2021). Parental responses to transgender and gender nonconforming youth: Associations with parent support, parental abuse, and youths' psychological adjustment. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 68(8), 1260–1277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1696103>
- Hastings, J., Bobb, C., Wolfe, M., Amaro Jimenez, Z., & St. Amand, C. (2021). Medical care for nonbinary youth: Individualized gender care beyond a binary framework. *Pediatric Annals*, 50(9), e384–e390. <https://doi.org/10.3928/19382359-20210818-03>
- Hidalgo, M. A., Ehrensaft, D., Tishelman, A. C., Clark, L. F., Garofalo, R., Rosenthal, S. M., Spack, N. P., & Olson, J. (2013). The gender affirmative model: What we know and what we aim to learn. *Human Development*, 56(5), 285–290. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000355235>
- Keo-Meier, C., & Ehrensaft, D. (Eds.). (2018). *The gender affirmative model: An interdisciplinary approach to supporting transgender and gender expansive children*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000095-000>
- Kim, H.-H., Thayer, N., Bernstein, C., Cruz, R., Roby, C., & Keuroghlian, A. S. (2025). On the frontlines: Protecting and advancing gender-affirming care in a hostile sociopolitical environment. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 40(2), 458–461. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-024-09080-3>
- Knudson, G. A., Feldman, J., Neira, P., & Fraser, L. (2023). Closing the gap in education: Raising medical professionals' knowledge and attitudes in transgender health. *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 89, 102339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2023.102339>
- McNamara, M., Lepore, C., Alstott, A., Kamody, R., Kuper, L., Szilagyi, N., Boulware, S., & Olezeski, C. (2022). Scientific misinformation and gender affirming care: Tools for providers on the front lines. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 71(3), 251–253. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2022.06.008>
- Obedin-Maliver, J., Goldsmith, E. S., Stewart, L., White, W., Tran, E., Brenman, S., Wells, M., Fetterman, D. M., Garcia, G., & Lunn, M. R. (2011). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender-related content in undergraduate medical education. *JAMA*, 306(9), 971–977. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2011.1255>
- Rafferty, J., AAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, AAP Committee on Adolescence, AAP Section on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans-

- gender Health and Wellness. (2018). Ensuring comprehensive care and support for transgender and gender-diverse children and adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 142(4), e20182162. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2162>
- Rider, G. N., McMorris, B. J., Gower, A. L., Coleman, E., Brown, C., & Eisenberg, M. E. (2019). Perspectives from nurses and physicians on training needs and comfort working with transgender and gender-diverse youth. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 33(4), 379–385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedhc.2018.11.003>
- Simons, L., Schrager, S. M., Clark, L. F., Belzer, M., & Olson, J. (2013). Parental support and mental health among transgender adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53(6), 791–793. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.07.019>
- Tervalon, M., & Murray-García, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 9(2), 117–125. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2010.0233>