

# BEING AFFIRMING

**IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL ORGANIZATIONS TO BE SAFE, WELCOMING, AND AFFIRMING FOR PEOPLE OF ALL GENDER IDENTITIES AND EXPRESSIONS.**

## CISSEXISM OR CISNORMATIVITY ASSUMES THAT ALL PEOPLE ARE CISGENDER AND THAT IS THE “NORM”

It can create systemic prejudice that may be unintentional or unrecognized by people or organizations responsible.

## GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

- Is a respectful approach to supporting trans and gender diverse children, youth, families and colleagues.
- Enhances and improves mental health outcomes when provided by caring adults inside and outside of the home.
- Is widely supported by trans and gender diverse communities, professional organizations and experts in the field.
- States that transgender identities and diverse expressions are NOT a mental health disorder.
- Supports that variations in expression are a normal part of human diversity and are impacted by biology, development, socialization and culture.
- Addresses mental health concerns for trans and gender diverse individuals most often stem from stigma, negative experiences and transphobia.



## CHANGING SOCIAL CLIMATE

- More access to information and open discussion about transgender identities in mainstream and social media helps many people to identify their experience.
- Changing social norms may make it easier and safer for some people to come out.
- For many people it is unsafe or less safe with the increase in hateful rhetoric, laws etc.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Be specific and avoid equating gender identity with body parts
- Consider diversity of families – not all have “mom and dad”
- Use gender neutral terms: “partner” instead of “husband/wife” or “child/youth” instead of “son/boy/daughter/girl”
- Include gender diverse characters in books, stories, resources
- Change approach to separating children by gender as this is difficult for diverse folks to navigate
- Maintain confidentiality – do not “out” people without their consent. This could be a safety issue if not all caregivers are supportive
- Intervene when you hear inappropriate comments (interrupt, question, educate, echo)



## HOW TO BE AFFIRMING

- Listen to children and support them to feel safe and comfortable expressing their needs
- Encourage a supportive family environment given a child’s positive self esteem is better achieved this way
- Dispel myths and biases about gender diversity
- Encourage caregivers to reflect and be aware of their own biases and adjust over time the words they use (children are listening)
- Support individuals to feel comfortable and welcome in all spaces
- Acknowledge that transition may be a fluid process that can change and adjust over time
- Support and facilitate communication and problem solving when challenges arise