

### **Alberta's Gender Policy:**

#### **Psychological Science in Relation to Transgender & Gender Non-Conforming Youth**

PAA advances the science-based profession of psychology & promotes the well-being & potential of all Albertans. CAP serves the interests of the public & guides the professional of psychology. Psychology can benefit services & policies in relation to gender by informing effective program design, providing empirically supported & trauma-sensitive interventions, & ensuring relevant assessment & treatment.

#### **Actionable Recommendations / Solutions**

Supporting the psychological health & development of transgender & gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth requires specialized practices tailored to their unique needs.

1. Developmentally Tailor Policies / Interventions
2. Engage Family/Caregivers
3. Encourage Skills & Unstructured Process
4. Comprehensively Assess Readiness & Mental Health

Successful policies & practices emphasize affirmation, comprehensive care, & the crucial role of family support in promoting the well-being of TGNC youth.

**Tailor Policies & Interventions to Developmental Stages** -- Children & adolescents differ, developmentally. Gender development is fluid & continues to evolve over the course of human development. As an example, a questioning phase differs significantly from an exploratory phase which both differ from action or maintenance stages.

**Engage Family as Naturally Occurring Support** -- Family/caregivers play a crucial role in promoting the well-being of TGNC youth (particularly in relation to the significant mental health risks). Family interventions should include relevant psychoeducation, outcome-informed psychotherapy, & expansion of relevant family social support networks all of which should integrate intersectional approaches. This is particularly key for unsupportive caregivers who should be engaged to reduce major mental health symptoms.

**Encourage Skills & an Unstructured Process** -- Gender identity should unfold naturally without expectation of a specific outcome. In assisting youth to socially transition (and, when appropriate, medically transition) the primary goal should be coping strategies & emotional tools to integrate a positive TGNC identity if gender questioning persists. This provides choice through the development of coping skills for navigating birth-assigned sex, medical interventions, & a stigmatizing society.

**Comprehensively Assess Readiness & Mental Health** -- Psychologists should conduct comprehensive evaluations & ensure both the adolescent's & family's readiness to progress, while avoiding unnecessary delays for those prepared to move forward. Psychoeducation about medical treatment options (such as puberty-suppressing medication & hormone therapy) in addition to treatment of any psychological distress is crucial. Psychologists collaborate with medical providers to offer appropriate care & involve youth in developmentally appropriate decision-making about their health care. Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, & goal-setting are empirically validated.