



Gender Affirming Care in Mental Health Settings

This resource will:

- Explain what gender affirming care is and why it's integral to embed in every mental health worker's practice
- Outline practical ways workers can signal to clients that gender affirming care is embedded in the way they work
- Share the positive impacts on clients' experiences with mental health systems and professionals who work in gender affirming ways

Gender affirming care is an approach that enables and empowers transgender and gender diverse clients to safely explore and affirm their gender. In a youth mental health context, it is a way of working that aims to support a young person's autonomy and agency in their decision-making processes about their gender identity, experience and affirmation.

A gender affirming approach lessens any harm and distress young people may experience when accessing care and intends to improve their overall health and wellbeing in our clinical settings.

Gender affirming care needs to be consistent throughout the whole client journey. From their first point of contact with a service through to the referral and handover process. Consider how you can embed gender affirming care in these parts of your practice.

Intake

- Do your intake forms ask questions specifically about gender and are there a range of options for clients to choose from?
- Are admin staff and intake workers confident asking these questions and explaining why they're being asked?
- Are all staff trained to ask clients their pronouns and to offer their own?
- Does the workplace have visual signs that clearly signify to trans and gender diverse clients that they will be safe, affirmed and supported?



Clinical Practice

- Is there a culture in your teams of correcting each other without judgement when mistakes are made with names and pronouns?
- Is there a clear process for clinicians to uphold client confidentiality and safety when using a client's chosen or birth name?
- Do clinicians only include relevant information about a clients' gender on clinical documentation?
- Can clinicians find ways to make non-affirming systems work to adequately capture the breadth of clients' diverse identities?
- Do clinicians prioritise gender affirming care and treatment alongside any presenting client needs?



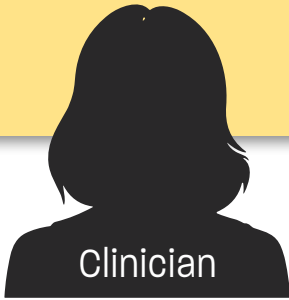
Referral & Advocacy

- Are clinicians certain that the services they refer clients to will be gender affirming?
- If clinicians can't be certain that gender affirming care will be embedded in their referrals, do they advocate that the service provides staff with training on gender affirming care?
- Do clinicians make considerations that are intersectional and sensitive to some clients' experiences of multiple marginalisation?
- Can clinicians advocate for improvement on a systemic level to ensure clients' diversity is reflected in the systems used by their organisation?
- Are clinicians trained to provide gender affirming care so that they don't need to refer all trans and gender diverse clients to specialised LGBTIQ+ services?

"Affirmation comes from others truly seeing who I am but also internally from how I present, act and think of myself. It's important because feeling affirmed improves confidence and well-being"

**- Twenty10 Youth
Queerleader**

Clinicians who individualise care and treatment for their transgender and gender diverse clients create safety through affirming practices, advocacy and relationship building.



Clinician

"I use **respectful** and **affirming language** that doesn't make assumptions about a client's identity, body or affirmation goals."

"I **believe** a client when they tell me who they are. I hold **respectful curiosity** to learn more about their truth when it's clinically relevant to the care I'm providing"

"I am guided by my client's own language and descriptions of their gender experience and identity. I always **mirror this language**, whether they are present or not, and when writing my clinical notes."

"I advocate for and **amplify my client's voice** when I notice it is missing from conversations and from systems that may delegitimise or pathologise their identity"

"I individualise the care and treatment I provide for my client and as much as I can and ensure their **continuity of care is affirming across the health system**"

"I feel **validated** when my clinician addresses me using the name and pronouns I've told them to use, even though I'm yet to change things medically and legally"

"I feel **seen and believed** when the clinician adapts their practice to the language I use and when they have clearly done some work to skill themselves around gender"

"I can **trust** my health team when they respect my wishes around who to tell about parts of my identity, at what times and in what settings."

"I feel **respected** when the clinician doesn't interrogate me about parts of my identity that aren't relevant to why I'm there"

Transgender and gender diverse young people in mental health settings feel safer and affirmed when clinicians adapt their practice and demonstrate their solidarity and allyship.



Client



Twenty10 is an LGBTQIA+ organisation based in Sydney that provides young people with housing, counselling, and social support across NSW.

This resource is part of Safe and Affirmed Guidesheets, a series of five resources created by Twenty10 for clinicians and youth mental health workers. To view the series, **scan the QR code**.

Twenty10 delivers LGBTQIA+ inclusivity training to workplaces and schools. [Click here to learn more.](#)