



GENDER AFFIRMING CARE DO'S AND DON'TS

Being a provider of gender affirming services requires a continuous commitment to being aware of and adjusting your communication/methods to reflect the continually evolving landscape of affirming care.

DO'S

- DO: UPDATE PAPERWORK**
Think about the necessity of the questions on your forms. Do you need to know about all surgeries, or just those involving certain body parts? Can you ask about gender identity in an open-ended way instead of with boxes?
- DO: TELL THEM YOUR PRONOUNS**
Beginning interactions with your clients by introducing yourself and your pronouns first can build rapport and help your client feel safe.
- DO: BE UPFRONT ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE**
Our clients to deserve to know if we've never worked with a transgender/gender-diverse client before. Assuring you both are on the same page can open the door for more productive interactions.
- DO: CONTINUOUSLY RE-EVALUATE**
Assure that your clients feel empowered over their care and included in the process by frequently checking in with them about their perception of goals and processes.
- DO: KEEP DOING THE WORK**
Seek out continuing education and other resources to utilize best practices with your clients.
- DO: APOLOGIZE WHEN YOU MESS UP**
We're all human, and we don't get everything right all the time. Own up, apologize (*without* using excuses), and commit yourself to avoiding that mistake in future interactions.
- DO: REFER OUT WHEN NEEDED**
Not everything is going to be within your scope or practice or best suited for you to handle. If possible, try and be involved within a network of affirming providers to make it easier to get your clients help.
- DO: HAVE A PATIENT FEEDBACK PROCESS**
It's important to identify what works best in practice and what falls short. Giving your clients an outlet to share their perspectives can help you continue to develop as a provider.
- DO: ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CLIENTS**
Unfortunately, our ability to improve our client's quality of life can be somewhat limited outside of clinic doors. Becoming involved in groups that advocate and support rights for our clients can increase our influence.
- DO: REST**
Just like our clients, we need to practice self-care so we can be the best version of ourselves.

DON'TS

- DON'T: ASSUME ANYTHING**
If your client hasn't specifically told you or written down a piece of information, then you'll have to ask if you need it. This includes things like gender identity and age but also things like support networks and religion.
- DON'T: BE THE DECISION MAKER**
Even if our clients ask us to make the decisions for them, we must make sure they are educated and empowered about their healthcare options.
- DON'T: IGNORE YOUR ENVIRONMENT**
Big things like accessible all-gender restrooms are a must. Little things like pins, badge pulls, and artwork that have affirming/inclusive images and language can go a long way to reinforcing a welcoming vibe.
- DON'T: TRY TO DO IT ALL ALONE**
There is a breadth of resources about providing gender-affirming care, and various interest groups and forums for professionals to join and discuss issues and solutions.
- DON'T: BE UNNECESSARILY STRICT**
While some policies may be out of your control, do what you can to offer your clients flexibility and grace. Subjecting them to rigid rules for the sake of control may reduce your client's trust and buy-in.
- DON'T: FORGET TO TRAIN ALL STAFF**
Even if you're doing your best to provide affirming and inclusive care, your clients could still end having a negative experience if the rest of the staff isn't properly trained.
- DON'T: HAVE VAGUE EXPECTATIONS**
Work with your team to create actionable policies for gender-affirming care. Put these policies in writing and refer to them often to ensure care is up to the standard it should be.
- DON'T: BE ANOTHER BARRIER**
Individuals often have many barriers to getting gender-affirming health services. When working with them, make it clear that you are both working together towards a shared goal.

REFERENCES:

Loo, Almazan, A. N., Vedilago, V., Stott, B., Reisner, S. L., & Keuroghlian, A. S. (2021). Understanding community member and health care professional perspectives on gender-affirming care—A qualitative study. *PloS One*, *16*(8), e0255568–e0255568.
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