

Developing and Maintaining a Gender Specialization

For Licensed Mental Health Clinicians in the United States

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Developing a Gender Specialization

1. Receive individual consultation, which may include group consultation, over the course of 2 years with Senior Gender Specialist(s) who have over 5 years of experience in the field. During the time cases should include a wide range of gender-focused cases in an active practice or clinical setting.
2. Attended a significant number of weekend-long and day-long trainings over the course of a number of years. Training must be relevant to the development of basic clinical skills, assessment and cultural competence through conferences such as: WPATH, Gender Spectrum, Gender Odyssey, UCSF National Transgender Health Summit, Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference as well as other University or continuing education courses.
3. Consider formal certification or courses through the WPATH program, which began in 2016.
4. Reading of current professional articles and literature relevant to the field such as *Trans Bodies Trans Selves* (2014) and the International Journal of Transgenderism.
5. Have the ability to conduct gender-focused assessments for clients seeking to make physical, legal or other changes.
6. Awareness of common issues in the field of transgender health, the biology of gender and common surgical options for transition.
7. Awareness of current research in the field related to transgender health, including hormones, surgery and gender identity/expression.
8. Develop a basic understanding of hormone treatment options including common methods of administration. Have skills to provide basic informed consent for clients to have realistic expectations of hormone treatment.
9. Have the ability to discuss fertility goals for all clients who are being referred for hormone treatment or surgeries that may result in the inability to have biologically-related children.
10. Gender specialists must understand and feel comfortable discussing options beyond surgery and hormones. These options may help clients better express their gender and feel satisfied with their body such as voice coaching or the use of various prosthetics.
11. Develop an understanding of non-binary gender identity and the level of oppression that may result for clients possessing that identity. Within this understanding therapists must work to explore personal biases around the gender binary and how this bias manifests during clinical work.
12. Develop an understanding of local, state and national resources relating to gender identity and expression including groups for people who enjoy dressing in clothing not typical of the sex they were assigned at birth.
13. Ability to work with a broad spectrum of gender concerns such as people who identify as MTF, FTM, genderqueer, eunuch, agender, gender nonconforming, non binary, crossdressers, intersex as well as helping questioning.
14. Have an understanding of how to work with family members, children of transgender people and spouses/partners and the resources available.

15. Possess skills to help clients create disclosure plans which take into account factors such as safety, culture, workplace, socioeconomic status, religion and region.
16. Be aware of developmental models of gender identity in both cisgender and transgender people. In addition, understand how stages of gender identity development are impacted by culture and society, among other important factors.
17. Understand how the field has evolved over time including definitions of terms, paradigms (binary versus spectrum), language and depathologization. Be able to discuss changes in the field such as early gatekeeping protocols, the current standards of care as well as common informed consent protocols.
18. Knowledge of theories about minority stress, impact of stigma, intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class, gender identity, abilities, religion, and immigration status.
19. Understand common co-occurring issues and diagnoses such as depression and rates of suicidality, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, autism spectrum diagnosis and post-traumatic stress disorder.
20. Ability to discuss client's sexuality and sex history in the context of their gender identity and relationship to their body. Help clients improve sexual satisfaction and comfort in their bodies related to sexuality regardless of whether a physical transition has occurred.
21. Have a fundamental understanding of controversies in the field particularly about the treatment of children, global movement issues and WPATH policy statements.
22. Have taken part in personal exploration related to countertransference, understanding of ethics, and how your own experiences, including various areas of privilege, may impact the work you do with clients.
23. Read first person accounts in the form of non-fiction literature, written by transgender, genderqueer, gender fluid, agender and people who identify outside of conventional gender norms.
24. Attendance at events or conferences created and/or organized by people who are transgender, genderqueer, gender non conforming, intersex, or by people we may work with. These events may include Southern Comfort, Transcending Boundaries, Accord Alliance, Transgender Law Center, Gender Odyssey, Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference and events in your area including LGBT conferences. These can include events for self-expression such as dance, film, art, poetry or book readings. Note, some events may be "Closed" to outside attendees so be please be sensitive to any restrictions on participation when registering.

Additional Skills Needed for Developing a Gender Specialization for Work with Children and Adolescents

1. The clinician's consultation, which may include some group consultation, over the course of 2-3 years with Senior Gender Specialist(s), will be with a specialist who has experience working with children and adolescents.
2. Have attended a significant number of relevant conferences over the course of a number of years specific to child and adolescent transgender and gender non conforming youth such as Gender Spectrum or Gender Odyssey Family conference.
3. Attendance of courses, workshops or seminars relevant to clinical work with gender dysphoric, gender variant, gender exploring or transgender youth.
4. Reading of professional articles and literature relevant to the field such as "*Gender Born, Gender Made* (Diane Ehrensaft, 2011) and *The Transgender Child* (Brill and Pepper, 2008).
5. Have a fundamental understanding of child and adolescent physical development including but not limited to puberty.
6. Have an understanding of child and adolescent social and emotional development including how various stages are impacted by suppression and rejection of a child or teen's gender identity and expression.
7. Possess training, through continuing education or individual consultation, on how to discuss and/or prepare children and families for puberty blocker treatment if that has been determined to be an appropriate part of the treatment plan.
8. Understand how to support families, including siblings and extended family, through a child's or teen's gender exploration and/or social or medical gender transition. This includes an advanced skill set to provide family therapy.
9. Possess the clinical skills to engage with children and teens of various ages, and to have experience with clients of various gender identities.
10. Be able to advocate and intervene outside of the office in the school or other settings, as needed, to facilitate clients' comfort and safety. This may include an understanding of local, country and national law related to gender protections at any given time.
11. Attendance of LGBT youth events, listening to programs, viewing websites, watching documentaries, reading books and watching videos produced by transgender youth and families to learn about our clients' lived experiences.
12. Be an active reader and member of online groups where the provider can engage in dialogue, learn about controversies and new research with other mental health (gender specialist) and medical professionals engaged in the field of gender-related healthcare specific to children and teens.

Recommendations for Maintaining a Gender Specialization

1. Membership in gender related professional organizations (WPATH or CPATH)
2. Attendance of professional conferences every 1-2 years which include mental health material such as WPATH, Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference, Gender Spectrum, Gender Odyssey or the UCSF National Transgender Health Summit.
3. Ongoing personal exploration related to countertransference, your ethics, and how your own experiences, including that of privilege, may impact your clinical work.
4. Receive ongoing individual or group consultation on a range of gender-focused cases in an active practice or clinic setting. Over time, consultation may take place through peer consultation groups or by using consultants on an “as needed” basis for complex cases.
5. Membership in online groups where the provider can engage in dialogue, learning about controversies and become aware of new research. Groups are often made up of other mental health (gender specialists) as well as multi-disciplinary with medical professionals engaged in the field of gender-related healthcare.
6. Ongoing attendance of classes, trainings or continuing education courses that help with assessment and treatment of people on the gender spectrum. Education can include receiving additional education and updating existing education on intersectionality, sexuality, sex therapy and gender identities and treatment for clients.
7. Ongoing attendance at events or conferences created and/or organized by people who are transgender, genderqueer, gender non conforming, intersex, or other people with gender identities we may work with.
8. Ongoing awareness of state and national laws/policies relating to gender identity and expression.
9. Ongoing reading of books, community websites and blogs, clinically focused provider websites and first person accounts, as well as the WPATH Standards of Care current edition for updates related to expectations for Adult and Child Gender Specialists