

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

for Parents and Caregivers of Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

for Parents and Caregivers of Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth

VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT 2017

*Please check our website for translated versions of this booklet:
www.vsb.bc.ca*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Vancouver School District would like to thank the members of the District DIVERSITY & PRIDE Advisory Committees, TransCARE BC and the ARC Foundation for their contributions to the development of the Questions & Answers for Parents and Caregivers of Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth.



TRANS CARE BC
Provincial Health Services Authority



All young people deserve to feel good about themselves. In order for our children and youth to become healthy and happy adults, they need to feel safe, supported and encouraged to be themselves. This can be a challenge for children and youth who are trans and gender diverse, as our society has quite rigid expectations regarding what it means to be either a boy or a girl. Gender diverse children and youth can be more vulnerable to bullying and discrimination in their schools simply for being themselves.

As parents and caregivers, it is our responsibility to encourage our children to be themselves. The purpose of this booklet is to guide parents and caregivers on how to best support, love and appreciate their children and keep them safe, healthy and happy.

Because language is a key component to understanding you will find a glossary at the end of this booklet for words you may not be familiar with.

Like many human differences, gender is not cut and dry. A person's gender identity refers to their internal sense of being a woman/girl, a man/boy, or non-binary, agender, genderqueer, etc. Gender identity does not refer to their sexual and romantic attractions to others, which is a person's sexual or romantic orientation. While sexual orientation and gender identity are closely linked, this booklet is meant for families of youth who are transgender (trans) or gender diverse. For more information about supporting your lesbian, gay or bisexual child, please see the Resources section.

HERE ARE SOME COMMON QUESTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT BE ASKING:

How do I know my child is trans or gender diverse?

They may tell you. Many trans and gender diverse children and youth have significant and persistent feelings and behaviours that are often associated with a gender that is different from the sex that they were assigned at birth. Sometimes this will be quite visible in terms of youth preferring clothing and hairstyle more often associated with the “opposite” gender, such as boys wanting to wear dresses. Sometimes it will surface in less obvious ways such as identifying more with opposite sex characters, family members or friends, such as girls preferring to play a prince instead of the princess.

You may notice gender non-conforming behaviours or identifying as a gender different than the one they were assigned at birth in children as young as 2-4 years old. Others may not display these traits until they are well into adolescence. In fact, some people don't begin experiencing or expressing these feelings and behaviours until they enter adulthood.

Most children will use play to experiment with their ideas about gender as they try to gain an understanding of who they are and how they fit into the world around them- this is very common. At the same time, childhood and adolescence are times of significant pressure to conform to societal expectations around gender. Imagine the pressure that we face even as adults to be the “perfect woman” or the “perfect man”. It is important to reassure your child that everyone is unique and that you love them for who they are.

You may have noted our use of the term “gender diverse” in this booklet so far. This can mean a variety of things, such as youth who identify as a gender outside of the binary of girl/woman and boy/man (maybe “non-binary”, “agender” or “genderqueer” are terms you've heard them use). “Gender diverse” can also be used in reference to children and youth who are perfectly comfortable in the gender identities they were assigned at birth, but feel most themselves when expressing their gender in creative ways. Gender diversity is for all human beings, and is not only for people who identify as trans, and being gender diverse does not necessarily mean that your child identifies any way other than how they were assigned at birth.

I think my child may be trans, how should I approach this?

If your child has already talked to you about this, it probably means that they trust you and hope that you will be supportive. Keep the lines of communication open, but try to respect their privacy. Most adolescents find it difficult to talk to their parents and caregivers about personal topics in general. If your child has not spoken to you about their gender but you wonder if they might be questioning their gender identity, remember that parents are often the last to know because children care deeply about their caregivers' response. They may also not be aware of it themselves, or may just be beginning to question their identity. If the opportunity comes up to ask them about their feelings about their gender, be sure to ask gently and avoid being confrontational- understand that they may be just beginning to explore gender on their own and may not be ready for a conversation.

If they are a youth, an effective approach may be to communicate your support indirectly by commenting positively on recent trans topics in the media or on gender diversity in general. Speaking about trans friends or colleagues in an affirming way can also send a positive message. Another way to introduce the topic might be to ask if your child's high school has a Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA) club. More and more schools in BC, especially in Vancouver, have these clubs which act as a supportive place for students who are concerned about homophobia and transphobia regardless of their own gender or sexual identity. Once you and your child begin this discussion remember to stay positive and receptive to their point of view. While it sometimes seems as though society is becoming more inclusive and accepting, it may have taken your child a long time to be comfortable with this part of themselves, and you may also need some time to adjust and understand this aspect of who they are. Parents and caregivers need to be patient and gentle with themselves and their child during this time of conversation and exploration.

Remember your child is still the same person, with the same interests, skills and talents as always. Despite some tendencies in the media to stereotype trans people as sad, lonely, confused or as a humorous oddity. Many gender diverse and trans people lead highly productive and satisfying lives, and feel included in their communities and families. Your child hasn't changed; it's simply that you now know an important part of who they are, which is different from what you expected.

In families with Indigenous children and youth, it may be helpful to you to gain a deeper understanding of the roles and gifts of Two-Spirit people within their nations and communities, and generate meaningful discussion with your young person on whether this is a way of being that makes sense to them. For more information on Two-Spirit, please see the Resources section of this guide for organizations that may be helpful to you in your learning.

What if members of my family or community are not accepting of trans people or gender diversity?

Family and community members may have different viewpoints, thoughts and personal connections to trans and gender diverse people. Research continues to show that trans and gender diverse youth are at increased risk of harassment, violence, mental health concerns, substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide as a result of the discrimination, rejection, and isolation they experience. For example, in a 2015 study that surveyed trans and gender diverse youth across Canada, two thirds of these youth reported facing discrimination due to their gender identity and fewer than half of youth surveyed considered their overall mental health (including self-esteem, depression, happiness, and suicidality) to be good or excellent (Veale et al., 2015). As a result of the impacts of racism and colonialism, these risks are known to be higher for Indigenous youth and youth of colour.

However, parent and caregiver attitudes and support for their children can make a huge difference. This same study reported that youth who feel supported by adult family and community members (teachers, service providers, neighbours etc.) were “four times more likely to report good or excellent mental health...and far less likely to attempt suicide.” (Veale et al., 2015). Research from the TransPULSE Project in Ontario also found that “trans youth who have strong parental support for their gender identity and expression report higher life satisfaction, higher self-esteem, better mental health” (Travers, et al., 2012).

Building resilience in our children begins at home, but can also include positive role-models, books and resources that gender diverse children and youth can access whether in or outside their community. If extended family members are not supportive, you may need to help educate them, and ultimately make choices that will help maintain your child’s self esteem. Also remember that gender diversity is found all over the world, in every culture and religion, and had always been a part of history. If your or your child are experiencing a lack of support or rejection based on a family members’ sense of cultural values, it may be helpful to look into the history of gender diverse people in their particular culture (eg. Two-Spirit

people in Indigenous Canada & US, Bakla in the Phillipines). For example, a direct result of colonization on Indigenous people, families and communities has been the erasure of Two-Spirit people, as well as an imposition of homophobic and transphobic values by European colonizers. In this sense, it may be helpful to seek further information on the traditional roles and gifts of Two-Spirit people within your nation (if it is known to you, as one of the other many tremendous impacts of the cultural genocide that occurred as part of colonization is the loss of connection to culture and tradition by many Indigenous people).

In any community there are likely other parents and caregivers just like you, including many who are very supportive of their gender diverse children. You may want to get in touch with some of the resources in the back, such as Trans Care BC, to help you find a peer support group in or near your area, or an online support network for parents and caregivers of trans and gender diverse youth. There are also many books, films, online resources, and videos which can help you understand that you are certainly not alone in having a gender diverse child in your family.

How can I show support for my child?

Being supportive will look different for everyone, depending on your child's age, needs and areas they may struggle in. A fantastic way to show support is to be just as encouraging of your child's gender creative behaviours, goals and accomplishments as you would of their gender normative ones. For instance, your child uses the same amount of creativity and initiative no matter if they are playing with dolls or trucks, dressing up like a princess, nurse or firefighter or learning how to bake, dance or create a lego town.

You should be aware that there is a difference between being actively supportive, generally non-supportive, and rejecting. Rejecting looks a lot like teasing or putting your child down for their gender creative behaviour, insisting that they act/dress/think in a more gender normative way, taking away toys/clothing/friendships that are seen to "encourage" their gender diverse behaviour. In some cases, rejection can quite literally be parents and caregivers forcing their child to leave the home because they feel that their child's gender identity is not something they can accept. Being non-supportive can be much less obvious and looks like withholding compliments/approval/encouragement of their gender identity, neglecting to use their new name or pronouns, avoiding ask questions about their feelings on gender or some of the struggles they may be going through with friends or at school. Being non-supportive may seem less hurtful but actually just withholds affection, encouragement and nurturing - things

that are essential for developing a healthy self-esteem, and can be just as harmful to a gender diverse child as rejection.

Active support looks like encouragement, making time to listen, being comfortable with asking questions, complimenting your child on things they are proud of and standing up for your child's rights in their home, school and social lives. It may also look like doing the work to connect them with other trans youth, doing research of your own to understand gender diversity better and showing them films or reading them books that portray gender diverse people in a positive light. Isolation is especially common for gender diverse youth living in rural areas where there may be little access to resources or positive representations of trans people in their community. Because of this, the internet and social networking sites in particular can be instrumental in creating a sense of community for gender diverse youth. While social networking and other online sites can be great tools for learning and connecting with other trans and gender diverse youth it also presents certain risks so be sure to speak with all children about safe internet usage (not giving out personal information or meeting up with strangers). Building resilience in our children begins at home, but can also include positive role-models, books and resources that young gender diverse people can access in their communities.

The key to supporting others is to ensure that you have both the tools and the personal resources (emotional, mental, etc.) to do this. Ensure that you have someone to talk to about your feelings; a professional or friend or other parents of gender diverse youth. Do not place the expectation on your child to provide you with emotional support or education as you work to support them- they are already working to support themselves. Reaching out to other adults creates the support that you may need as a caregiver, so that you can be strong, confident and present when your child needs you.

For Indigenous families, or for parents or caregivers to Indigenous children and youth, there may be great benefit to exploring the roles and gifts of Two-Spirit people in Indigenous communities in general as well as within your child or youth's specific nation (if it is known). Centering this young person's culture in a way that is affirming of their gender expression and identity can create an opportunity for healing and empowerment not only for the young person but also their family and community.

What is the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity?

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two separate things. Sexual orientation (being gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, pansexual, asexual) is about who you are physically and emotionally attracted to. Gender identity is about how a person knows themselves as a girl, boy, agender, gender non-binary, genderqueer, etc.) While some trans people may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual or asexual, many are not. A trans person's sexual orientation depends on who they are attracted to. Make sure that you are supporting your child not only in their gender identity but also their sexual orientation.

Historically, for many Two-Spirit people, sexual orientation was considered as part of their gender role. So, if your child and family are doing exploration into the roles and gifts of Two-Spirit people, you may actually discover a close relationship between gender identity and expression and sexual orientation. There are however, many different ways of being Two-Spirit, and this may not always be the case, depending on the specific nation.

What causes gender diversity? Why are some people trans and other people cisgender?

No one knows with 100% certainty why some people are gender diverse or trans and some are not. Some researchers believe that a person's gender identity is determined by a combination of influences before and after birth. These influences (whether genetic, hormonal, emotional, environmental, etc.), may act together during a person's growth and development to determine, among other characteristics, sexual orientation and gender identity. What is clear, is that most trans people do not feel that they ever had a choice in their gender identity, it is simply who they are. Many, in fact, spend considerable time and energy trying to fit into society's gender norms.

It is common for parents to wonder if they have done something to cause their child to be gender diverse. Like being gay, lesbian or bisexual-there is no scientifically valid research to suggest that parenting style or choices determines a child's sexual orientation or gender identity. The important part to remember is that regardless of why some children are gender diverse, there is no evidence that gender diversity is something that can be "cured" or "corrected" whether through parenting approaches or psychotherapy. In fact, evidence shows that attempting to "correct" gender diversity in children only does more harm than good to the child and to a trusting parent-child relationship. The Canadian Association of Social

Workers (CASW) states that gender diverse children and youth should be affirmed in their self-identified gender and considers any professional's attempt to alter the gender identity or expression of children and youth to align with social norms unethical and an abuse of power and authority (<http://www.casw-acts.ca/en/joint-statement-affirmation-gender-diverse-children-and-youth>).

Should I take my child to see a professional (doctor, counsellor, etc.)?

This will depend on your child's comfort level with their gender diversity. Some youth will simply want support from their loved ones in continuing to express their gender. Others may feel that counselling and exploring medical options may be necessary for them to be comfortable, particularly if they are experiencing a significant amount of gender dysphoria. Some of the medical options that may be available to your child include hormone blockers, which can help pause the bodily changes that come along with puberty. In terms of counselling or therapy, many youth may benefit from having someone to talk to about coping with some of the stressors that can be common for trans youth such as being bullied or receiving a lack of support in their community. Some young people may find this support in peer groups or with school counsellors. The best way to know how to support your child is to offer them some thoughtful options and give them the chance to choose or tell you which kind of support feels best for them.

As much as we love our children and are working hard to support them, not everyone is at the same place in their understanding, even doctors and mental health professionals. It is advisable to research or ask some preliminary questions from the professional you are seeking help from, to ensure that they will be supportive of your child. Encourage honest feedback from your child and engage in ongoing discussions with them about how they feel about the doctor, counsellor or youth worker they are seeing.

For Two-Spirit youth, they may also find affirming space in spending time with an elder either in their community, from their nation (if it is known to them), or from within the Two-Spirit community. Again, due to the impact of colonization and the resulting cultural genocide, many Indigenous people may not be fully aware of the valuable role that Two-Spirit people historically had in their communities and families. Therefore, it is still important to ensure that the elder or other Indigenous mentor your child is connecting with have some understanding of the value and gifts that Two-Spirit people bring to their communities.

In some parts of BC it is possible to find doctors, nurses, counsellors, youth workers and social workers who have been trained to support gender diverse youth and their families. Resources can be found at the back of this booklet.

Is this just a phase?

Childhood and adolescence are periods of tremendous growth and change both physically and emotionally. This involves self-reflection and discovery by young people about who they are and how they see themselves in the world. As a parent or caregiver, the important part is to be supportive of your child as they are. Exploring gender identity and expression is a normal and healthy part of development. It can be difficult for parents and caregivers, especially those with younger children, to be a part of their child's gender journey and not know with certainty where it will lead. Some trans and gender diverse children continue to identify as such over their lifetime and others do not. The important thing is to keep the lines of communication open and be respectful, so your child will be more likely to continue sharing new discoveries with you along the road to adulthood. If your child does continue to identify as trans or gender diverse in the future, you'll both feel good about the support you provided early on.

How common is it to be trans and gender diverse?

Due to the complexity, invisibility and very personal nature of a person's gender identity, this question is extremely difficult to answer in a statistically valid way. Do we measure this by how many people seek medical options, how many people we observe showing visible signs of gender diversity, or how many people feel comfortable/safe enough to identify themselves as gender diverse on a survey? Really, what we're trying to measure is how many of us deviate from gender "norms". Because these ideas of what is considered most desirable for girls/women and boys/men in terms of how they present themselves and how they behave changes over time and varies by culture and community, it is a very difficult thing to define and track. But, something to keep in mind is that EVERYONE has a gender, not only gender diverse people, and everyone expresses theirs a little bit differently. If we were to take a not-so-close look at some of the standards out there for what an ideal man or woman looked or acted like, we'd see that the gender binary system has upheld some unrealistic standards that really no average person can achieve, nor should they need to.

What will relationships look like for my trans or gender diverse child?

We all want our children to experience happy and healthy relationships and friendships. Trans people are just as diverse as the rest of society; many will find wonderful partners, others will struggle to find the right person and some may choose to be happily independent. In Canada, your child can grow up to marry whomever they fall in love with, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

Learning how to maintain healthy relationships (with friends, family, romantic partners etc.) starts at home. The more positive role models your children have for creating healthy relationships, the better their chances will be at having successful relationships themselves. A parent or caregiver's love and support is very important in maintaining any relationship. It is also very valuable to feel support from extended family and community. Therefore, including your trans child and their partner in family functions may be important for them. Some parents have found that they may need to be clear with extended family about what support your child needs from them, so that everyone is treated with respect.

Should I talk to my child about safer sex?

As you would for other children, you will need to talk to your gender diverse child about your hopes and expectations for them to practice safer sex. Also encourage them to talk to a school counsellor, health care provider or youth worker. Again, you should help your child to find support that will be affirming of their gender. Any teens who are sexually active should regularly visit a health clinic for testing. While sexually transmitted infections (STI's) can affect anyone, those with a supportive and healthy living environment are less vulnerable and less likely to engage in risky behaviours. An often overlooked component of talking to your teen about practicing safer sex is the topic of consent, so ensure that you also explain to them the importance of both knowing and communicating their boundaries, as well as respecting the boundaries of others.

Will/can my trans child still have their own children one day?

Transition does not mean that a person becomes infertile or is no longer able to have children, although some medical options may impact the functioning of a person's reproductive system. For trans people, decisions around conceiving and raising children may also have a lot to do with the level of support and resources

they have access to. As with all individuals, the decision to conceive or have children is a personal one and is something that is decided on an individual basis.

Will my child or my family experience discrimination?

Sometimes families will discourage gender diversity in their children out of fear that their child's life will be unhappy, lonely, or difficult. Ironically, it is a lack of affirmation and acceptance from a key support, the family, which is a significant source of difficulty. Your child may face some sort of discrimination, teasing or alienation. But, parents, families, and schools have the power to build resilience in children and create safer, more inclusive communities. It starts with providing our children with the love and support they need to be healthy and secure in themselves and goes on to include advocating for them in their wider community, including school and healthcare systems.

Transphobia exists in many forms and can range from remarks and jokes that reinforce gender stereotypes, to denying rights enjoyed by the general population, to serious physical harassment. Many parents and caregivers show their support to their gender diverse children by speaking up when and where transphobia happens. Being supported by friends, teachers and community member helps them to develop healthy self-esteem, which is an essential part of coping and weathering the hurt that comes when one experiences transphobia.

In British Columbia and Canada there are laws that protect trans and gender diverse people from discrimination. In BC, gender identity and expression are protected grounds in the BC Human Rights Code, a provincial law that protects and promotes our human rights. At the federal level, gender identity and expression have now been added to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Will my child be safe at school?

Your child has a right to be safe at school. All BC schools are required to have policies that help create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for trans and gender diverse students. To view Vancouver School Board's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Policy and Regulations please visit our website at: <https://www.vsb.bc.ca>

The Vancouver School Board employs a Diversity Mentor who is available to provide school support, help with a social transition plan and collaborate with school staff on inclusive curriculum and classrooms.

How can I learn more and connect with other parents of gender diverse children?

Luckily, connecting with other caregivers and families of gender diverse youth is much easier than it used to be thanks to the internet and growing interest by the media. If you live anywhere in BC, Trans Care BC can connect you with any available resources in your area. See the resources section at the back of this booklet for more information on Trans Care BC. One example of a community group is PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbian, Gay and Trans people), a non-profit group that has chapters across BC, and is an excellent way for parents to connect with others who are in a similar situation or simply want to learn more. For more information or to find a local chapter that can put you in touch with another parent, please refer to www.pflagcanada.ca

There are also numerous books, films, conferences, online support networks and websites offering information and support for gender diverse youth and their allies. You can find more information in our resources section below.

REFERENCES

Travers R, Bauer G, Pyne J, Bradley K, for the Trans PULSE Project; Gale L, Papadimitriou M. (2012). *Impacts of Strong Parental Support for Trans Youth: A Report Prepared for Children's Aid Society of Toronto and Delisle Youth Services.*

Veale J, Saewyc E, Frohard-Dourlent H, Dobson S, Clark B & the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey Research Group (2015). *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey.* Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia.

Our Trans Children. 2007. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc.

Action Tips for Allies of Trans People. 2006. Trans @ MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). <http://web.mit.edu/trans>

Let's Talk Trans- Trans Care Youth. 2006. Vancouver Coastal Health, Transcend Transgender Support & Education Society, Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition.

GLOSSARY:

Language is a key component to understanding and respectful dialogue. This glossary is adapted from the Vancouver School Board's SOGI Policy and Regulations glossary.

Agender: A term for a person who identifies as either not having a gender identity or having a neutral or non-binary gender identity.

Ally: Someone who is not trans but who is supportive of trans people and their well-being. This can be you!

Asexual: A person who is not sexually attracted to any gender. Asexual people may still be romantically attracted to people of a variety of genders and sexualities and have romantic, non- sexual relationships.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to both women and men.

Cisgender: Someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth, opposite of transgender.

Gay: A person who is attracted to someone of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. This word can be applied to all genders of relationships, but has primarily been used in reference to men.

Gender: A socially constructed concept of identity based on roles, behaviours, activities, and appearance such as masculine, feminine, androgynous, etc.

Genderqueer: An umbrella term covering gender identities and gender expressions that are outside the gender binary of female/male and feminine/masculine.

Gender Dysphoria: Distress resulting from a difference between a person's gender identity and the person's assigned sex, associated gender role, and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender expression: The ways a person presents their sense of gender to others (for example, through clothes, hairstyle, mannerisms, etc.).

Gender identity: A person's internal sense of being a girl/woman, a boy/man, non-binary, agender, genderqueer or another identity on the gender spectrum.

Gender diverse: A term that often refers to children and youth who express gender in ways that differs from societal expectations of the sex and gender assigned to them at birth.

Heterosexual: A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to someone of the “opposite” gender. The more commonly used word for heterosexual is “straight”.

Homophobia: The fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bisexual. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Homophobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived sexual orientation.

Intersex: A person who is born with internal/external genitalia, chromones and/or hormones that do not conform to expectations of distinctly male or female. In some cases it is not discovered until puberty.

Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to other women.

LGBT2Q+: An acronym that in this case stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two-Spirit, and queer/questioning. There is a wide range of other terms often included in this acronym, such as asexual, and this acronym tends to vary depending on the source. The plus sign (+) indicates the inclusion of all sexual and gender identities.

Non-binary: A term used by people whose gender identity is outside the binary categories of girl/woman and boy/man.

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to others regardless of their gender identity.

Pronouns: The words one uses to refer to themselves (e.g. he/him/his; she/her/hers; they/them/theirs; xe, xem, xyr, etc.)

Queer: An umbrella term (often used in place of the LGBT2Q+ acronym) used by many individuals who identify as being part of sexual and gender diverse communities (e.g. lesbian, gay, transgender). A historically hurtful term for homosexuality. Many LGBT2Q+ people have reclaimed it as positive and inclusive of all gender and sexually diverse identities.

Sex: A biological classification based on physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia. At birth, it is used to identify individuals as male or female.

Sexual Orientation: Refers to a person’s attraction towards a particular gender. Someone may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, etc. It is important to remember that sexual orientation and gender identity are separate. Although a child is not usually aware of their sexual orientation until puberty they usually have a strong sense of their gender identity before this. Terms like “sexual preference” and “lifestyle” are poor substitutes as they imply a choice which many lesbian, gay and bisexual people say is not their reality.

Trans: An abbreviated term for transgender. An umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the societal expectations of the sex they were assigned at birth. Some trans people may choose to medically transition by taking hormones, having surgery. Some trans people may choose to socially transition by changing their name, clothing, hair, etc.

Transphobia: Fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, trans or gender nonconforming. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of transgender or gender diverse people. Transphobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived gender status.

Transition: A term most commonly used to refer to someone transitioning from one gender to another. Transition often consists of a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, and a request that people use the correct pronoun when describing them. Transition may, but does not always, include medical care like hormone therapy and/or surgery.

Two-Spirit: An Indigenous term describing the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spirits. This identity is not limited to gender expression or sexuality, but encompasses them both while incorporating a spiritual element. It is a standalone identity, not an Indigenous term for gay or lesbian. The attempted erasure of Two-Spirit people from Indigenous communities was one of the many harmful impacts of colonization. Two-Spirit people were historically highly revered in Indigenous communities, and often took on the role of healers and medicine people.

Trans Care BC is a program at the Provincial Health Services Authority and supports the delivery of equitable and accessible care, surgical planning, and peer and community support for transgender and gender-diverse people across BC. For more information on existing health care resources and supports in your area, please contact Trans Care BC: www.phsa.ca/transcare

SOGI 123 provides inclusive education, resources and support for all around issues of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. For more information visit www.SOGIeducation.org

For more information on existing resources and supports within the Vancouver School District, please contact your school's SOGI Lead or the VSB's Diversity Mentor: diversity@vsb.bc.ca, 778-228-1914

OTHER READS & COMMUNITY RESOURCES

CampOUT! UBC

An annual summer camp for queer, trans and allied youth ages 14-21 from acrossBC.

<http://campout.ubc.ca/>
604-822-8298
1-877-678-CAMP(2267)

Families In Transition: a Resource Guide for Families of Transgender Youth

<http://www.ctys.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CTYS-FIT-Families-in-Transition-Guide-2nd-edition.pdf>

Gender Spectrum

A U.S. based support for families of gender diverse children and youth. Provides education, training and support to help create a gender sensitive and inclusive environment for all children and teens.

www.genderspectrum.org

Native Youth Sexual Health Network

The Native Youth Sexual Health Network is an organization by and for Indigenous youth that works across issues of sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice across Turtle Island (US and Canada)

<http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/index.html>

Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

We provide support for all family members and friends. We work to create an environment of understanding so our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered children can live with dignity and respect.

Vancouver: www.pflagvancouver.com

604-626-5667

QMUNITY - BC's Queer Resource Centre

Information and referral, education, library, peer groups, social support, and free counselling. Youth support programming and weekly drop-ins.

1170 Bute Street @ Davie, Vancouver

www.qmunity.ca

604-684-5307

VSF Question and Answers for Parents and Families of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth (website) Safe and Caring Schools for Two-Spirit Youth: A Guide for Teachers and Students:

<http://www.safeandcaring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Two-Spirited-Web-Booklet.pdf>

Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA)

Offers programming to Indigenous youth in the Vancouver area including counselling through a cultural lens, support in schools, help finding work, non-judgmental health care and sex education, Two-spirit and Queer Indigenous Sweat Lodges, connection to Two-spirit Elders, and an Indigenous LGBTQ+ Drop-in groups for ages 12-18.

www.unya.bc.ca

schoolsupport@unya.bc.ca

604-254-7732 or text/call: 604-861-8117

Pride Education Network (PEN)

Educational resources for classroom teachers to educate Kindergarten to Grade 12 students about LGBTQ+ issues, gender diversity and/or gender expression.

Practical lesson plans are online for teachers. PEN also gives bursaries and scholarships to LGBTQ+ and allied youth who want to start GSA clubs and/or pursue post-secondary education. Website www.pridenet.ca

Email: info@pridenet.ca