

Supporting A Trans Child in Your Care



Information for Practitioners

This resource is for practitioners and case workers providing child protection and support services to a child or young person who might be or is trans or gender diverse and to their family, guardians or caregivers.

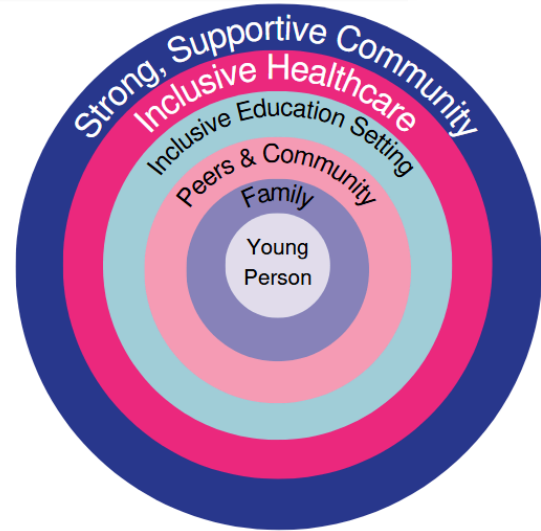
What is Gender Diversity?

Gender diversity is a term used to refer to the full spectrum of gender identities, expressions and experiences in a way that goes beyond the binary framework of male and female.

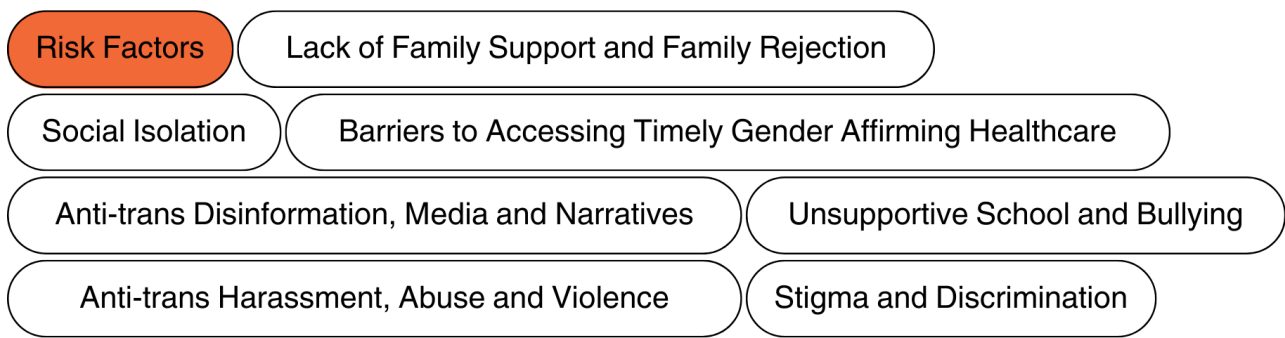
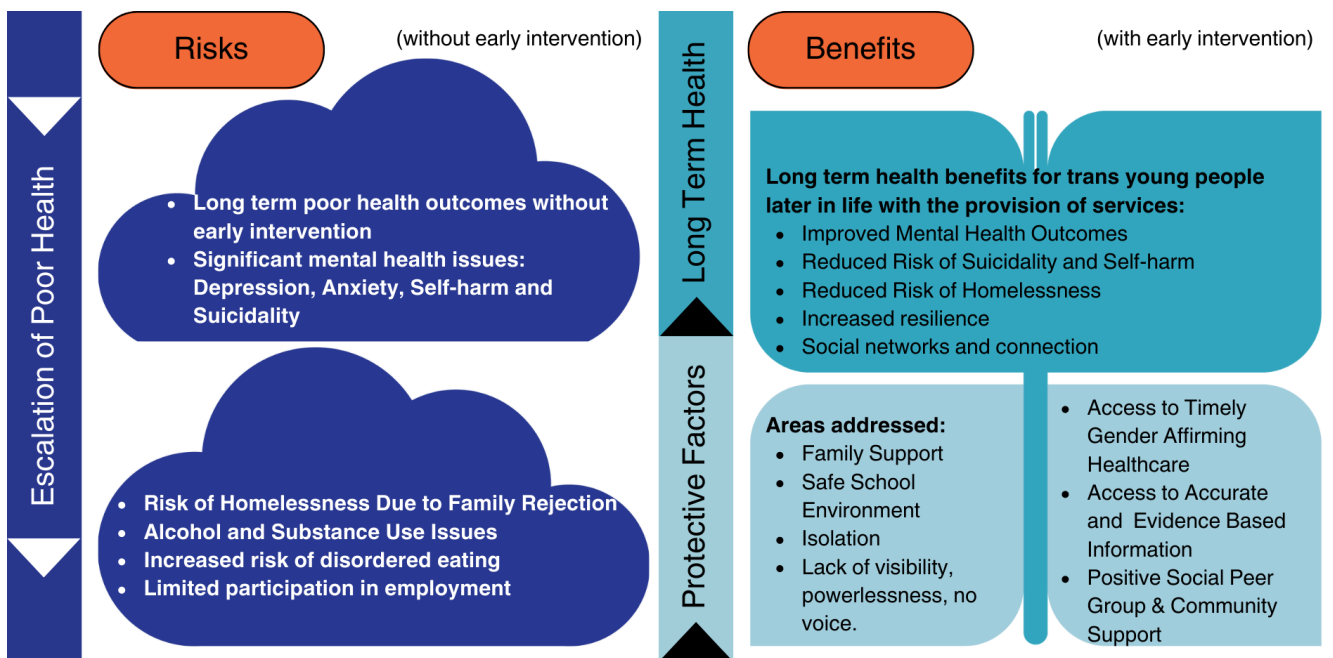
It is a normal human experience.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) around 0.9% of Australians aged 16 and over identify as trans and gender diverse (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Protective Factors



Risks and the Benefits of Early Support



What Risks and Barriers Do Gender Diverse Children and Young People Face?

Gender Diverse Children and Young People face the following risks and barriers to leading a full life:

- Mental health and suicide
- Homelessness and limited housing
- Discrimination and bullying
- Harassment and abuse
- Family violence
- Sexual assault
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Inability to access appropriate healthcare
- Inability to access an education

These risks and barriers are directly linked to lack of supportive home, school and community environments and lack of educated and inclusive services.

What Are Protective Factors for Gender Diverse Children and Young People?

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, protective factors include sources of support, skills and resources that help shield individuals from the development or worsening of risks. For example:

Families and caregivers

Research shows there is a direct link between parental support and higher self-esteem, better mental health and housing and less suicide attempts for trans and gender diverse people.

Anti-trans disinformation and media misleads families on the safety and efficacy of gender affirming care. Many families lack an understanding of the trans experience, face stigma and discrimination due to their child or experience difficulties processing their child's identity. These factors can act as a barrier to their ability to support a child in their care.

It is critical that families have access to good-quality, evidence-based information, education and resources and peer support.

Access to timely gender affirming healthcare

Gender affirmation is essential to the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse people, with access to gender-affirming medical care having profound impacts on their quality of life (Rainbow Realities, 2023). However, families and carers, or family violence can often act as barriers to gender affirming care and mental health support.

Access to peer support, social connection and community

Many trans and gender diverse young people feel socially isolated because they don't know others like them. They might experience bullying and difficulties making friends at school, they might not feel comfortable participating in sports activities, they might not know how to express themselves or how to find help. This makes them vulnerable to depression and anxiety, harassment, high risk behaviours, sexual violence or coercion.

Best Practice To Providing Care:

- Use their name and pronouns.
- Listen when they talk.
- Help them find medical and psychological care, refer to appropriate services that are culturally safe, inclusive and respectful.
- Help them change their records to align with their identity and avoid being misgendered.
- Avoid situations where the young person has to re-live their trauma, educate others or justify their feelings.
- Educate others involved in their care.
- Advocate for them and their right to access support, education and timely services.
- Work in partnership across agencies, services and providers.
- Balance the child's right to privacy with the need to share information.