

Youth Gender Health Screener Supplement

February 2020

Pilot Version



Introduction

A general bio-psycho-social-spiritual (holistic) screening tool (or set of tools) is often used by health care providers to learn more about the strengths, needs and goals of children/youth/families. Screening tools used across British Columbia vary by profession and organization. These may include H.E.A.D.S.S., GAIN-SS, intake interviews or other standardized or organization-specific tools.

It is important to gather both general and gender-specific screening information in order to fully support trans children, youth and families. Because most existing tools do not include considerations specific to trans children/youth/families, we have created this Gender Health Screener Supplement to augment existing tools.

In this document, we use *trans* to refer to individuals who are gender creative, nonbinary, transgender or have any other gender that does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth. *Children* refers to young people who have not yet reached puberty and *youth* refers to those in or beyond puberty, up to age 19. *Gender health* refers to the ability of an individual to live freely in the gender that feels more real or comfortable (Ehrensaft, 2016; Hidalgo et al., 2013).

This document was developed by a group of experienced gender health experts practicing in British Columbia, within the publicly funded healthcare system. This tool was reviewed by trans youth and parents of trans youth and was revised based on their feedback.

We offer our sincere appreciation to the clinicians, parents, and youth who have assisted in the development of this document.

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CONTENTS

Overview.....	4
Development.....	4
Purpose.....	4
Scope	4
Training.....	5
Quick Reference Guide	6
Bio-Psycho Domain Guidance Notes.....	7
A. Gender.....	7
B. Access to Services.....	10
C. Physical health.....	14
D. Mental Health	17
E. Substance Use.....	22
F. Developmental.....	24
Social Domain Guidance Notes	26
G. Home/Necessities.....	26
H. Education/Employment.....	28
I. Community.....	30
J. Relationships.....	32
K. Sexuality.....	35
L. Safety.....	37
M. Legal.....	41
Spiritual/Cultural Domain Guidance Notes.....	43
N. Religion/Spirituality.....	43
O. Culture.....	44
References.....	46

Overview

Development

- The screening areas in this tool have been developed through review of existing bio-psycho-social-spiritual (holistic) screening tools, literature on risk and protective factors impacting the wellbeing of trans children, youth, and families; consultation with experts in youth gender-affirming care; and consultation with individuals with relevant lived experience.
- Background information and sample questions have been developed across multiple screening domains (bio-psycho-social-spiritual/cultural) to support care providers to engage in holistic, gender-affirming screening practices.

Purpose

- This screener supplement has been built as a reference guide to help care providers get comfortable asking gender health questions.
- This tool outlines gender-specific issues that may emerge in the care of trans children, youth and families.
- The screener supplement is designed to support general care planning considerate of needs that may be connected to gender health.
- This supplement is intended to be used alongside existing screening and assessment tools.
- Based on the strengths, areas of need, existing supports, and needed supports identified using this tool, care providers can work with children, youth and families to develop gender-affirming goals of care.

Scope

- This tool should only be used with clients who have identified care needs related to gender diversity, gender questioning or gender affirmation/transition. This is not meant to be a prescriptive list that is covered sequentially but rather an all-in-one place tool to help highlight gender health areas of enquiry.
- Clinical judgement should be used to determine areas of focus for individual children and youth.

- This tool is intended to support identification of those youth in need of further information about, or readiness assessment for, medical interventions (e.g., hormone therapy or puberty blockers). In BC, young people who are seeking hormone therapy or puberty blockers related to their gender should be referred to a qualified gender-affirming professional for hormone readiness assessment and further care planning.
- This tool has been developed with a focus on developmentally typical youth. Some questions and areas of enquiry may need to be tailored based on the developmental needs of the child or youth.

Training

It is recommended that those new to working with trans and gender diverse young people and their families engage in training related to trans cultural safety . Ideally, care providers should be trained in the following areas:

- LGBTQ2S+ cultural safety
- Child and adolescent development
- Trauma-informed practice / healing-centred practice
- Strengths based practice / recovery-orientated practice

Care providers using this screener supplement should also have:

- Access to clinical supervision or a network of colleagues practicing gender-affirming care.
- Post-secondary training or experience equivalent to a minimum of a bachelor's degree in health/behavioural sciences. If the care provider is embedded in a program that focuses on trans populations (e.g., peer support worker, community liaisons, health navigator), those with diplomas would likely be well-suited to engage in this screening work, ideally under clinical supervision

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Quick Reference Guide
This guide can be used to support screening and assessment of gender-related strengths and needs of gender creative, transgender, and gender diverse children and youth. Please see the Trans Care BC Child & Youth Assessment Framework for detailed guidance notes.

Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual/Cultural
A. Gender
Gender communication Social dysphoria (perception/expectation) Body dysphoria (physiological/anatomical) Gender health interventions
B. Access to Services
Gender health info/resources System navigation/accessible professionals Past service experiences Financial resources Transportation resources Family support info/resources Advocacy (self, family, professional)
C. Physical Health
Unmet medical needs Sexual health, menstrual suppression Body image, relationship with food Fertility info/resources
D. Mental Health
Mental health concerns related to gender Suicidality/self-harm Supports available/appropriate
E. Substance Use
Coping with gender-related distress Non-prescribed hormone use
F. Developmental
Unmet developmental needs

Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual/Cultural
G. Home/Necessities
Housing Food security Clothing, accessories (e.g., binders)
H. Education/Employment
Engagement in school/work Gender support at school/work
I. Community
Engagement in local communities Engagement in trans communities Engagement in online communities
J. Relationships
Parents/family Friends/peers Professionals/other adults
K. Sexuality
Sexuality - relationship to gender
L. Safety
Home/family relationships School/work Communities (local, trans, online) Peer relationships, dating/intimate relationships, sex work Online relationships
M. Legal
Identity documents Guardian support, guardianship

Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual/Cultural
N. Religion/Spirituality
Source of support
O. Culture
Source of support

Bio-Psycho Domain Guidance Notes

A. Gender

We do not know with certainty why some people are trans, others are non-binary, and others are cisgender.

- Gender diversity is best understood as an interplay of biology, the environment, and cultural factors in an individual's life (Hidalgo et al., 2013; Rosenthal, 2014).
- We do know that gender diversity is not a new phenomenon and that multiple genders are documented in many cultures throughout history.
- We also know that attempts to change a person's gender are considered harmful and unethical (Coleman et al., 2012).

We can draw on gender development research to help us understand children's gender.

- Most children have a stable sense of their own gender by the age of 4 years (Olson & Gülgöz, 2017; Rafferty, 2018).
- Some children will begin to express discomfort with their assigned sex or gender-based expectations at an early age and other people do so later on (Vance et al., 2014).

Some young people are clear about their gender and others are exploring what gender means for them. Information about gender possibilities, for example non-binary genders, can help young people find the words they need to describe their experience of gender. Young people may be supported in exploration of gender and options for social and medical affirmation or transition by family, peers, and professionals.

Trans young people may or may not experience gender dysphoria. Some children and youth thrive in their environments and need no intervention. Others experience gender dysphoria that can be addressed through social or medical affirmation. Often young people are figuring out what is necessary for them to be comfortable in their bodies and in the world.

Dysphoria can be understood in two broad categories (Program in Human Sexuality, n. d.):

- **Body dysphoria (physiological and/or anatomical):** distress related to anatomical or physiological features such as breasts, genitalia, body hair, changing voice, menstruation, erections, and emotional effects of endogenous hormones.
- **Social dysphoria (gender perception/expectation):** distress stemming from being perceived or expected to take on gender roles or expressions that are incongruent with one's gender.

Recent research emphasizes the importance of gender affirmation for trans youth.

- The more settings in which youth are affirmed in their gender (i.e., people use their correct name and pronouns to refer to them at home, school, work, with friends) the lower the rates of depression and suicidality they report (Russell et al., 2018).

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Gender communication	
<p>Many young people are clearly able to name and describe their gender. Others may need support in exploring this and access to information to develop the gender vocabulary necessary to communicate about their gender experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe your gender? • Is there a label you feel fits your gender, and can I use this in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ this visit? ○ work we're doing together? ○ with others? • In the culture(s) you most identify with are there examples of gender diversity? Are you interested in exploring this? • What do you like most about your gender? • Are there things you do to communicate your gender to others?
Social dysphoria (gender perception and/or expectation)	
<p>Social experiences of gender, such as how one is perceived (e.g., as male or female) or expected to act (e.g., dress, talk, engage in activities) can cause social dysphoria for trans people. Being misgendered and called by the wrong pronouns (whether intentional or not) can result in distress, which can sometimes lead to social isolation. For some youth this can be relieved with access to social and medical affirmation/transition, while for others (e.g., non-binary youth who do not want to be perceived as either male or female), this may be an ongoing stressor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where or with whom do you feel most like yourself/most comfortable in your gender? • How do you want to be seen or treated by others with regards to your gender? • Do you change how you act to be seen by others in this way? How or what do you do? • Do others know your gender? • Do others respect your gender? When others see or treat you in this way, how does it feel?

Body dysphoria (physiological and/or anatomical)	
<p>Youth may experience distress about body features they currently have or ones that may develop with continued puberty. Some youth may dislike emotional effects of endogenous hormones. Youth may cope with their distress through binding, packing, tucking, padding, wearing clothes that hide certain features, avoiding looking at their bodies, avoiding showering, gaining or losing weight, or self-harm directed at body features that cause distress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there body parts or the way your body functions (i.e. voice) you feel (un)comfortable with? What parts do you feel most comfortable with? • What, if any, changes do you want in your body or body function? • [May use artistic expression/psychology projective assessment (e.g., Draw –a-person)]
Gender health interventions	
<p>Many youth engage in a great deal of research about trans experiences and medical interventions before interacting with health care providers (Clark et al., 2020) . It is important to learn more about their interest in and understanding of medical interventions including puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and gender-affirming surgeries. One topic for exploration is what changes or interventions a young person may need in order to feel comfortable in the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you need to feel comfortable in your body and in the world? • How do you want to express your gender? • Are there steps you’ve taken or things you’ve done to feel more comfortable with your body and gender? (i.e. ways of dressing, binders, pronoun use) • Are there any medical interventions you’ve thought about, like blockers, hormones, or surgeries? • Do you know anybody who has transitioned? What have you learned from their experience?

B. Access to Services

Services needed by trans children and youth and their families are wide -ranging. These can include health care (e.g., general physical or mental health care, puberty blockers, hormone therapy) or supports related to housing, education, relationships, and culture.

Each person and family is unique and may have challenges both related and unrelated to gender. Here we focus on gender-specific factors that impact access to needed services. We know that transgender children and youth experience barriers to needed care that are unique and significant.

- In a recent survey, Canadian trans youth said they did not get care they needed for many reasons, including cost, previous negative experiences with providers, and concerns that the doctor would be uneducated about transgender people. (Clark, Veale, Greyson, et al., 2018).
- Trans youth reported better overall physical and mental health when they felt comfortable with their family doctor (Clark, Veale, Greyson, et al., 2018).
- 85% of Canadian trans youth with a binary gender reported that hormone therapy is necessary for them and 23% experienced barriers to accessing this care. Among non-binary youth, 25% needed hormone therapy, but 37% were unable to access this care (Clark, Veale, Townsend, et al., 2018).
- Youth in Seattle have reported experiencing similar barriers, such as lack of accessible and trained providers, inconsistently applied protocols, inconsistent use of correct name/pronouns, lack of care coordination, and limited/delayed access to both puberty blockers and hormone therapy (Gridley et al., 2016).

Parents and families may need direct support from service providers, as a child's gender journey can be challenging for everyone involved. When families are unable, unwilling, or not yet ready to fully support their child's gender goals, interventions to support families may be crucial.

- Parents often benefit from having a safe space to process their reactions, coming out experiences, perceived losses, and transition experiences at home and in the community (Menvielle & Rodnan, 2011).
- Information resources such as books, websites, conferences and referrals to peer and professional supports are also helpful to parents (Greyson et al., 2017).

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Gender health info/resources	
<p>Accurate information about gender affirmation and transition, such as ways to transition socially or available medical interventions, can be difficult to access. Providing children, youth and families with appropriate resources can be an important step in supporting gender health and overall wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been able to find information about gender diversity and what affirmation can look like? • Are you aware of the kinds of health care that trans people may need? • Would you like to learn more about social transition or medical transition options? • Do you need any information about support groups or counselling?
System navigation/accessible professionals	
<p>Many trans people have difficulty figuring out what gender health services are available and how to access the care they need. You can play an important role in ensuring children, youth and families have well-coordinated care with the right providers, in the right place, at the right time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been able to connect with health care providers you feel comfortable speaking openly to about your gender and the care you need? If not, do you want help finding a supportive health care provider/counsellor? • Do you know where to go in the future or would you like help figuring that out? • Is there anyone who helps you schedule and/or get to appointments?
Past service experiences	
<p>When people have had negative experiences accessing health care or other services in the past, they may be less likely to access the care they need now. These experiences may be due to gender, race or other factors. Positive interactions and taking time to build trusting relationships can have a big impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to provide you with the best possible care/service. Have you had any positive or negative experiences in the past that you'd like to share to help me understand how I can best support you and help you feel comfortable? • Can you tell me about the best care experience you've had? What did you appreciate about what the provider did or didn't do?

Financial resources	
<p>Many health care services are covered in B.C., however there may be direct or indirect out-of-pocket costs (e.g., private pay for readiness assessments or prescriptions, lost income to attend medical appointments). If parents are not supportive of a youth obtaining gender health care services, they may not provide financial support for care or prescriptions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any services or supplies (e.g., binders) you need that you aren't able to afford right now? • Do you or your parents have any extended health benefits that might cover your care? • Would you like help applying for assistance programs that may help with your care costs and/or cost of living (e.g., Fair Pharmacare, Income Assistance, Disability Assistance)?
Transportation resources	
<p>Services are only accessible if people can get to them. Many transportation barriers exist, and children and youth are often dependent on adults to help them get to appointments. If their family lacks transportation or does not support their decisions to access gender-affirming care, travel assistance may be needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where would you be able to travel to for appointments? • Is there anyone who can help you get to your appointments? • Have you heard of the TAP program – travel assistance for certain kinds of medical appointments in B.C.?
Family support info/resources	
<p>Families, especially parents, are often seeking information and resources about topics such as gender diversity, trans experiences, supports, school transition and health care providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you need any information about parent supports, like online or peer support groups or other resources? • Who is the most supportive adult in your life? • Does your family openly talk with you about gender/gender roles/gender expression and share information/resources with you? • Does your family have moral or religious views that support your gender? Does your family advocate for your safety and well-being? • Does your family appreciate your gender

	<p>expression? Does your family use your name and pronouns?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the members in your family all agree with each other about gender expression? Who disagrees/agrees about gender? • Does your family support you in having friendships with other trans people and connection to the LGBTQ2S community/groups? • Does your family talk about you in a positive way to others? • Does your family encourage you to be open about your gender when you wish to share this with others?
<p>Advocacy (self, family, professional)</p>	
<p>When trans children and youth encounter barriers to the care and services they need, it can be helpful to have a strong advocate. This role can be filled by family, professionals, or the youth themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is anyone helping to access the care you need right now? • Does your family take you to supportive health care providers? • Would you like to be connected with someone who can help advocate for you? • It can be really helpful for a professional to speak with parents/caregivers about gender to provide some education and support- would you like me to have a talk with your parent/caregiver?

C. Physical health

Trans youth may have unmet general medical needs due to barriers to accessing care. They may also need gender-specific health care, such as puberty blockers, hormone therapy, or gender-affirming surgery. Trans youth should be supported to address any outstanding medical needs. There are some health issues that may impact access to treatment. For example, seizure disorders, severe migraines, coagulopathy, smoking, and diabetes may increase risks associated with hormone therapy. To decrease risk, efforts should be made to identify, provide necessary counselling about, and appropriately treat any such condition.

- More information is available regarding endocrine care in guidelines from the Endocrine Society (Hembree et al., 2017) and the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health at UCSF (Deutsch, 2016).

Trans youth are also at increased risk of disordered eating.

- Trans youth have been found to have higher rates of disordered eating symptoms than cisgender youth. Some trans youth restrict food intake or engage in compensatory eating behaviors to cope with gender-related distress, such as restricting food intake to minimize changes in the body due to puberty (Coelho et al., 2019).
- In a study of college students, transgender participants had higher rates of self-reported eating disorder diagnosis, as well as use of diet pills and vomiting or laxatives in the last month than cisgender participants (Diemer et al., 2015).
- Canadian trans youth who experience higher rates of harassment and discrimination reported higher rates of binge eating and fasting or vomiting to lose weight in the previous year, while those with higher rates of family connectedness, school connectedness, caring friends, and social support were less likely to report disordered eating (Watson et al., 2017).

There are other medical needs related to gender that can be addressed without referral to a gender specialist.

- Period suppression to address distress related to menstruation.
- Fertility counselling regarding possible effects of gender-affirming interventions on fertility, including referral to a fertility specialist if consultation about fertility preservation is needed.
- Contraception may be important for those taking hormone therapy (depending on sexual activities and family planning).
- Counselling about fertility and family creation options (e.g., adoption, foster parenting, surrogacy, chosen family, and biological family) can also be provided.
- Sexual health information and care that addresses the needs of trans youth (Planned Parenthood, 2016)

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Unmet medical needs	
<p>Trans youth may have unmet general health needs due to lack of access to care. Personal or family history of certain health conditions or inadequately treated chronic health conditions could potentially delay access to necessary gender-specific health care, such as hormone therapy. Some health behaviours (e.g., smoking) can elevate risks associated with hormone therapy. Some strategies that youth employ to address dysphoria, such as chest binding or genital tucking, may have health implications if done incorrectly. Where appropriate, providers can suggest relevant resources and make referrals. In general, providers should encourage, support and facilitate youth access to general health care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any worries about your health? • Do you have any health conditions, like diabetes? Have you been able to find enough information about this condition? • Do you smoke or vape? If yes, are you interested in making changes to smoking or vaping in order to reduce health risks related to hormones/surgery (only if relevant) • Do you bind your chest or use a packer or 'stand-to-pee' (STP) device (typically only for transmasculine spectrum)? Have you had any physical problems related to binding or using a packer or STP? Do you need any information about doing this as safely as possible? • Do you tuck your genitals (typically only for transfeminine spectrum)? Have you had any physical problems related to tucking? Do you need any information about doing this as safely as possible? • Do you feel concerned with or in pain from your posture/muscles (e.g., are you hunching shoulders, rounding your back so as to minimize your chest)?
Sexual health, period suppression	
<p>Sexual health education and information available to youth may not be inclusive of trans experiences. Youth with uterus may wish to suppress their period to address dysphoria and/or reduce pregnancy risk. Some youth may prefer gender neutral descriptions of periods such as 'monthly bleeding' for tips about gender-affirming sexual health practices see the Trans Care BC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any questions or concerns related to puberty or sexual health (e.g., distress surrounding periods, erections)? • Have you been able to access sexual health information that's relevant to you/your body? • If you have any questions about puberty, sexual health, or contraception, do you

website	know where to go? If not, would you like support finding a trans competent provider/clinic?
Body image, relationship with food	
<p>Some trans youth experience positive body image and healthy relationships with food. Others may have concerns about their body and restrict eating to minimize the effects of puberty or overeat to hide body features that cause distress. Unhealthy eating patterns may emerge as youth find ways to cope with gender-related distress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any concerns related to your eating, exercise patterns, or feelings about your body? • If yes, have you been able to connect with a health care provider about this or would you like support to find someone? • If yes, have you ever dieted or exercised to try to change your body shape so it fits better with your gender?
Fertility info/resources	
<p>Hormone therapy and some gender-affirming surgeries may impact fertility. Some youth will be clear that they do not wish to pursue biological parenthood with their gametes, while others may want to preserve eggs or sperm. Some who want to access fertility preservation may lack the financial resources to do so. Trans youth should be given accurate information about potential fertility implications of interventions they are considering and be supported to make informed decisions.</p>	<p>For those thinking about medical interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have information about how medical treatments might affect your options for family creation in the future? • Would you like help finding information about this? • Do you know if you or your caregiver would have the ability to financially support sperm/egg collection and banking/storage? • Would you like support finding a trans competent health care provider to speak with about this?

D. Mental Health

Trans youth, like all youth, may experience mental health challenges. However, trans youth are at greater risk for mental health challenges due to stress experienced as a result of being trans in our society. The Gender Minority Stress Theory helps us understand that the non-affirmation, discrimination, rejection, and victimization trans people experience is directly linked to mental health outcomes such as suicide ideation (Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Testa et al., 2017).

The following statistics highlight the high rates of mental health challenges reported in a 2013 survey by trans youth (ages 14-18) across Canada (Veale et al., 2015):

- 67% self-reported poor or fair mental health; 34% self-reported good or excellent mental health.
- 44% experienced extreme stress in the previous 30 days, to the point they couldn't do their work or deal with things.
- 75% engaged in self-harm in the previous 12 months.
- 65% seriously considered suicide in the previous 12 months.
- 37% had attempted suicide at least once in the previous 12 months.

According to a recent study in Minnesota (Eisenberg et al., 2017), trans youth were significantly more likely than cisgender youth to report depressive symptoms (58%), have self-harmed in the previous 12 months (55%), ever contemplated suicide (61%) or ever attempted suicide (31%).

One key protective factor for mental health among trans youth is parental support. According to a survey in Ontario (Travers et al., 2012), youth with very supportive parents (as opposed to somewhat to not at all supportive) reported significantly better mental health, higher self-esteem, and greater life satisfaction.

- Mental health very good or excellent: 70% of youth with very supportive parents; 15% of youth with parents who were somewhat to not at all supportive.
- High self-esteem: 64% of youth with very supportive parents; 13% of youth with parents who were somewhat to not at all supportive.
- Satisfied with life: 72% of youth with very supportive parents; 33% of youth with parents who were somewhat to not at all supportive.

Professionals working with trans youth should be mindful of the mental health challenges members of this population often face. However, these should not be a barrier to receiving gender-affirming care. If a youth experiences a lack of decision-making capacity due to psychosis or other mental health issue, providers should also work to develop or restore capacity to enable informed decision-making about medical intervention options whenever possible.

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Mental health concerns related to gender	
<p>Due to over-representation of mental health challenges related to minority stress and stigma, providers should screen for commonly experienced mental health challenges: depression, anxiety, self-harm, eating disorders. This tool is meant to supplement existing screening and assessment tools used in general healthcare/ mental health/wellness service settings.</p> <p>Gender minority stress associated with being transgender can be the cause of mental distress (e.g., anxiety, depression), can make existing mental health issues worse, and can make it difficult to access needed care.</p>	<p>If there is evidence of mental health concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you see any connections between your mental health and your gender or how you are treated because of your gender? • As a trans/gender diverse person, how has it gone when you've tried to access mental health support and treatment? • Do you have someone you can talk to about your mental health? Have you been held back or have worries about being held back from gender-affirming care because of what is going on with your mental health?
Depression	
<p>Providers should use general screening questions for depression.</p>	<p>If screening positive for depression symptoms, ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are any of these challenges you describe related to gender? <p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you find helps to improve your mood? (querying for gender affirmation as a helpful tactic) • Tell me more about how this connects to gender? What helps or would help make hope bigger? • What percentage of your depression is about gender? • Do you ever feel like things in your life are going/went wrong because of gender or body related issues? • Do you feel alone because of gender? Who do you turn to?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your gender get in the way of hanging out with friends, or going to school? What do you do instead? • Do you feel sad, angry, or irritated when you think about any problems related to gender? How do you cope? • What helps you get out of bed/get to school/do your life? Are there times when depression feels a bit smaller?
Anxiety	
<p>Providers should use standard screening questions. If positive for OCD or body dysmorphia additional screening should include exploration of connections to gender.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much of your time is spent worrying about gender, gender goals and gender expression? • Have you or others taken any actions that have been helpful? (querying for options like pronoun use, name used, social transition options) <p>Social Anxiety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are avoiding social situations, is this avoidance related to gender? Tell me more about that? • Are there spaces that feel safer or where you feel less anxiety? • Does your voice affect you speaking in public or participating in school? Have there been ways you've communicated instead (i.e., written presentation vs. oral presentation, or presenting just in front of the teacher vs. the class) • Do you avoid drawing attention to yourself, interacting socially, joining clubs or groups because of gender? • Where do you find enjoyment and social connection? • Do you worry others are evaluating or judging you based on gender? How do you cope with those thoughts?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you like to get connected to online or physical spaces where gender diversity is celebrated? <p>Body Dysmorphia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a body part or something about your body that you spend a lot of time focusing on? • S: Are you okay with telling me a bit more about that? What specifically bothers you? (query for connection to gender/other parts of body that are bothersome)
Trauma	
<p>Clinicians working with trans and gender diverse should be trained in trauma-informed and healing-centred practice. Questions about trauma should be explored carefully in order to ensure clients are not re-traumatized. Clinicians should enhance transparency and collaboration, and should screen for trauma only as appropriate for the setting, relationship and nature of clinical interaction. Many trans and gender diverse have experienced violence and may suffer effects of trauma; therefore, trauma-informed practices are highly recommended.</p> <p><i>See Section L: Safety for additional information relating to violence and trauma.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been bullied or teased because of your gender, online or in person? • Have you ever been excluded from activities because of your gender? • Have you lost friends or family due to your gender? • Have you ever been “outed” or have had information shared about your gender or sexuality that you did not consent to? • What do you do to feel better when you are feeling upset? What are the ways that you soothe yourself when you are feeling upset/triggered? <p><i>See Section L: Safety for sample questions relating to violence and trauma.</i></p>
Suicidality & Self-Harm	
<p>Trans youth have significantly higher rates of suicide contemplation and attempt than cisgender youth.</p>	<p>If there is evidence of suicidality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your thoughts about ending your life (or suicide attempts) related to distress about your body or gender? • Are your suicidal thoughts connected to issues with family, ability to get the health care you need, or how you are treated because of your gender?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you lost a friend or family member to suicide (query if trans)? <p>If there is evidence of self-harm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What function does self-harming play in your life? How does it work? • Do you self-harm in ways that are connected to your gender or parts of your body you are uncomfortable with (e.g., cutting on breasts or genitals)? • Where on the body do you tend to self-harm? How severe? • What triggers self-harm? • What are the self-harming thoughts connected to? Query- issues with family, ability to get the health care you need, how you are treated because of your gender? Other? • Have you found other ways to find relief? (querying for gender affirmation as a helpful tactic) • What are some less harmful practices that help you feel better? Is this something you'd like to work on?
Supports available/appropriate	
<p>Rates of suicidality are lower among youth who have the support they need from family and other care providers.</p> <p><i>See Section J: Relationships for more information on family support.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any supportive adults who you can talk to about gender? • Friends or peers? • Does anyone in your family know about your gender? Who is the most supportive person? • Would you like us to research together on some supports that might exist online or in our community?

E. Substance Use

There are many reasons youth use substances, including fun, boredom, coping with distress, or engagement with a peer or cultural group in which substance use is the norm. For trans youth, reasons may include coping specifically with gender-related distress, about bodily changes, or challenges finding acceptance, accessing care, or coping with family rejection.

- The following statistics highlight rates of substance use reported by Canadian trans youth (Veale et al., 2015): 26% smoked cigarettes (last 30 days).
- 48% drank alcohol (last 12 months) and 20% reported binge drinking (last month).
- 46% had ever used marijuana; 36% in the last year.
- 17% had ever used prescription pills without a doctor's consent.
- 14% had ever used Ecstasy/MDMA.
- 12% had ever used inhalants.

We know that trans youth in general have an elevated risk of substance use.

- A recent survey in Minnesota confirmed that trans and gender non-conforming youth were significantly more likely to have used substances (i.e., smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol, binge drinking, smoked marijuana) in the past 30 days than cisgender youth (Eisenberg et al., 2017).

Sometimes youth do not have a safer coping strategy for dealing with gender-related distress than using substances. This may be a safer alternative to higher-risk behaviours, including suicidality. When reducing substance use is a treatment goal, the need for effective coping strategies to replace substance use should be taken into account, if stressors cannot be eliminated. How reduction in substance use could impact social relationships and connection with supportive individuals, groups, and communities should also be considered.

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Coping with gender-related distress	
<p>Trans youth may use substances as a way to cope with minority stress and this may reach harmful levels. Understanding the reasons for substance use is important for addressing it.</p>	<p>If the youth is using substances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has substance use helped you cope with distress related to gender (e.g., body or social dysphoria)? • Are there connections between substance use, your gender health goals and your body? (e.g., using for weight loss)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you use substances socially? Who do you use with? • Are there ways that substance use has been harmful or is getting in the way of your gender goals? Are there ways it has been helpful? (query harm reduction, OD prevention, not using alone, etc) • Would you like support to find information or to connect with a trans competent care provider to talk about substance use?
<p>Non-prescribed hormone use</p>	
<p>Trans youth frequently experience barriers to hormone therapy and may use hormones obtained from non-medical sources. This carries health risks that can be lowered through connection with a medical provider.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you ever use hormones or other medications that were not prescribed to you by a health care provider? (If yes, explore further with a lens to harm reduction) • Would you like to be connected to a trans competent health care provider to talk about this and discuss alternatives and ways to increase your safety?

F. Developmental

Gender diversity exists among people of all backgrounds, including those who are neuro- and developmentally diverse.

- Overall there are higher rates of neurodiversity (e.g., autism spectrum) within trans communities (Coleman et al., 2012).
- There is currently no scientific explanation for why this is, but it is clear that many people who are neurodiverse and those with other developmental differences have genders that differ from their sex assigned at birth (van der Miesen et al., 2016).

Neuro- and developmental differences such as autism do not cause a child to be transgender, but neurodiverse young people may have unique ways of understanding and responding to social cues around gender expectations. These children and youth will have their own experiences of gender that are no less authentic than those of neuro- or developmentally typical young people.

- Ehrensaft (2018) gives this advice to providers: “To understand a person who is neurodiverse, a neurotypical person needs to leave the comfort of their own social position and view from the inside out, from the neurodiverse person’s perspective.”
- To better understand needs and experiences, researchers interviewed several trans youth with autism, finding (Strang, Powers, et al., 2018):
 - It was urgently important for these young people to live in their affirmed genders.
 - It can be difficult to communicate about gender in ways that others understand.
 - Gender-diverse experiences often preceded awareness of gender identity.
 - Worry about bias and harassment made youth uncomfortable exploring and expressing their genders.

Just like other trans youth, those with neuro- and developmental diversity may need access to gender-affirming care and supports. No one should be denied access to gender-affirming care or supports on the basis of their neuro or developmental status.

- However, due to the complex needs of some youth with co-occurring neuro- and gender diversity, Strang et al. (2018) have suggested clinical guidelines for working alongside trans adolescents who are also on the autism spectrum:
 - Support young person to explore their gender and increase awareness of options.
 - Collaborate with gender and autism service specialists/providers as needed.
 - Consider how both neuro- and gender diversity may affect socialization (e.g. social isolation).
 - Communicate information about medical interventions to youth in an accessible manner to facilitate informed decision-making.

- Address potential challenges related to needles (e.g., blood work, injections), remembering to take medications and refill prescriptions, and attending follow-up medical appointments.
- Work with the young person to minimize risk related to social and romantic interactions.
- Engage with caregivers and other supports as needed.

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Unmet developmental needs	
<p>Many youth who are neurodiverse or developmentally diverse are well-supported. Others may lack supports or have never received adequate evaluation of their needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have you been diagnosed with autism or other developmental condition? ● If so, are you able to access social and mental health supports which meet your gender needs? ● Would there be specific things that would help you feel more comfortable during an interview or appointment?

Social Domain Guidance Notes

G. Home/Necessities

A safe and nurturing home environment is something we want for all children and youth. Unfortunately, trans youth face high rates of homelessness, which has significant impacts on health. Gender creative children and trans youth are also overrepresented in foster care, but may have difficulty finding acceptance and support there as well.

- According to The National Youth Homelessness Survey, which surveyed over one thousand youth experiencing homelessness across Canada, 6% self-identified as transgender, Two-Spirit, or non-binary (Gaetz et al., 2016). These researchers also found that transgender and non-binary youth experiencing homelessness were more likely to report: leaving home at an early age; multiple experiences of homelessness; chronic homelessness; sexual assault; and parental conflict and various types of abuse as contributing to homelessness.
- Among youth generally, homelessness is associated with violence, trauma, substance use, poor physical health, and mental health challenges (Edidin et al., 2012).
- For trans youth specifically, lack of a permanent address may add barriers to changing legal names and gender markers on identification.
- Overall, trans youth living in foster care face also considerable systemic barriers (Government of Ontario, 2018).

Trans youth also experience concerning rates of food insecurity.

- According to the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey, 20% of 14-18 year old trans youth reported sometimes or rarely going to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food at home sometime in the last year.

Working with families to ensure children and youth are affirmed in their genders and able to thrive in their homes is one form of needed support.

- Children who are supported to live in their affirmed genders have mental health outcomes similar to cisgender children and much lower levels of mental health challenges than trans children who are not supported to socially transition (Olson et al., 2016).

Ensuring agencies that provide foster care and adoptive services are gender-affirming and support parents to understand the needs of trans children and youth is another important part of supportive home environments.

- For example, children and youth may have specific needs around accessing clothing and accessories, and trans-specific items such as chest binders, in order to live comfortably in their gender.

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Housing	
<p>Trans youth are more likely than cisgender youth to: experience homelessness; experience homelessness at a young age; or become chronically homeless. Family conflict and rejection contribute to homelessness, and while many trans youth are connected to foster care, they may also struggle to find acceptance there. Related housing insecurity places trans youth at risk for many negative health outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever run away or been kicked out of the home because of your gender or gender expression (or sexual orientation)? • Do you ever worry about losing your housing because of your gender or gender expression? If so how are you managing this? • Would you know where to go or what to do to address these concerns? I can support you to find resources or connect you to supports that other trans people have found helpful, would you be open to that?
Food security	
<p>Many trans youth face food insecurity. Identification of this issue is important, as connection with appropriate resources to increase food security can make a big difference in a young person's overall wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you ever have concerns about getting enough to eat in the day or for the week? If so, there are some resources in the community that are known to be trans inclusive, would you be open to me connecting you (if available)?
Clothing, accessories (e.g., binders)	
<p>Youth who lack financial resources may also have difficulty accessing clothing and accessories (e.g., binders) necessary for both living comfortably in their gender and moving through the world as safely as possible. There are programs that help provide free or low cost binders, breast forms and bras. Trans Care BC navigators and website can help you locate this info.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes it's hard to afford clothing in general and it may be especially hard to afford clothes and supplies, like binders or packers (as appropriate), that are important for gender expression. Do you ever struggle with any of this? • How do you access clothing and accessories now? • Would you like some support to locate resources to address these needs?

H. Education/Employment

Trans young people experience barriers to both education and employment. Connectedness to school is often a protective factor for youth, but such connections for trans youth are often lacking.

- Trans youth report low connectedness to school in general, but those with stronger school connectedness reported better mental health. In a recent survey, 7% of 14-18 year old youth reported not being in school (Veale et al., 2015).

Challenges within school include violence, bullying, harassment, discrimination, privacy, and access to gendered spaces and activities.

- In a Canadian survey published in 2011, 74% of trans students reported verbal harassment and 37% physical harassment about their gender expression, while 49% of trans youth experienced sexual harassment at school in the last year (Taylor & Peter, 2011).
- Another survey published in 2015 revealed similar findings: 36% of trans youth reported being physically threatened or injured and 64% taunted or ridiculed at school in the last year (Veale et al., 2015).

There are many steps schools can take, such as implementing policies and procedures to address the needs of trans students and supporting GSAs (Gay/Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances).

- Research shows that GSAs can not only be an important source of support within schools for trans youth, but can also create a safer school climate for all students (Li et al., 2019).
- School counsellors and other staff can play an important role in ensuring staff training and inclusive policies are created and implemented to address needs such as: use of correct name and pronouns; individual safety plans; and access to appropriate washrooms/changerooms, dress codes, sports (Coolhart & MacKnight, 2015).

Vocational challenges for trans people extend beyond school, into the workplace. A recent US survey of trans adults documented challenging employment experiences (James et al., 2016).

- Trans adults in the US reported similar forms of mistreatment in K-12 school to those shared by trans youth in Canada, with 17% having left school early and 6% having been expelled.
- Mistreatment continued in college and vocational school where 24% reported verbal, physical, or sexual harassment.
- 15% were unemployed, which was three times higher than the US unemployment rate at the time of the survey.
- Because of their gender identity or expression: 16% of those employed had lost a job;

27% had been fired, denied promotion or not hired for a job; 15% were verbally harassed, physically attacked and/or sexually assaulted; and 77% had actively avoided mistreatment at work (e.g., hiding or delaying transition, quitting their job).

There are many steps employers can take to ensure inclusive environments for trans employees.

- The Human Rights Campaign has recently documented a large increase in non-discrimination protections from major employers in the United States and published a toolkit for employers that includes best practice guidance on trans-inclusive practices and sample policies (Fidas & Bailey, 2016; Human Rights Campaign, 2016).

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Engagement in school/work	
<p>Discrimination, harassment, bullying, and violence may impact a person’s ability to engage with school or work. Individuals may benefit from support in identifying supportive educational or work settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, or in the past, have you experienced harassment, bullying, violence or discrimination at school/work that you feel is related to your gender or gender expression? If you have experienced any of these things, is this an ongoing concern for you? • Would you need more assistance to help you address these issues? If so, what specific supports would you wish to receive? Do you need immediate supports for your safety?
Gender support at school/work	
<p>Some youth may already benefit from supportive climate and inclusive policies at school and/or work. Those that do not may appreciate assistance in advocating for the support they need to succeed in these settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At work or school are your gender needs being met? Do you need assistance to ensure you have the right kind of access for your success there? • Are there specific changes you would need in your school or work place that would make that environment more gender-affirming? • Do you have a trusted, go-to person to touch-base with at school or work?

I. Community

Community belonging can be an important resilience factor for trans people.

- Community belonging, social support, family acceptance, and activism can promote resilience at the group level for trans people (Matsuno & Israel, 2018).
- In a study on exclusion from sport, experiences with changing/locker rooms and school sports as well as fear of public spaces was found to restrict trans people's access to the social and health/wellbeing benefits of sport (Hargie et al., 2017).

Not only do trans youth need to access general services and to engage fully in their local communities, they also can benefit from engaging in trans communities in-person and online.

- A review of research with youth (ages 10-24) indicates inclusive school policies GSAs, organizations with trans-friendly resources and services, trans visibility, and connections with other trans people functioned as community-level protective factors (Johns et al., 2018).
- In a study of the lived experiences of trans youth of colour (ages 15-24), youth discussed the importance of finding their place in queer and trans communities and using social media to affirm their identities (Singh, 2013).
- Some youth access online spaces to make positive connections with other trans people. This can be a part of building kinship networks or chosen families to grow their social support networks (Nicolazzo, 2016).
- Skill in using the internet and social media for information and support has been identified as an individual-level protective factor for trans youth (Johns et al., 2018).

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Engagement in local communities	
<p>Engagement in local communities can be challenging if there is a lack of affirming spaces and programs. Youth can benefit from identifying interests and ways to engage that are safer and affirming in terms of their gender. Advocacy may be needed to create inclusive spaces (e.g., washrooms/changerooms) and programming (e.g., gender-inclusive sports).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you enjoy doing with your spare time? Are these activities, people, and/or places generally safe and welcoming for trans people? (what has helped make these places safe and welcoming?) • Sometimes there are activities, people, and/or places we enjoy but there are barriers to feeling as comfortable as we need. Is that ever the experience you have? If so what are the barriers or downsides for you regarding these?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be interested in having some help to address these concerns?
Engagement in trans communities	
<p>Most trans people are not born into a family of trans people. Engagement with others who share similar experiences is often important for trans youth, as they seek to learn what it means to be trans in society and often to create chosen family of people who share similar identities and experiences. Parents and caregivers also can benefit from joining parent/caregiver communities and engaging with trans communities. This can help ease concerns about the future wellbeing of their children and create needed support systems. It's possible some community spaces may not be as accessible to non-binary youth. Confidentiality can also be a concern for youth so it's important to have some insight into to group spaces and culture when referring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people find it important to connect with other trans people, are you connected to any trans groups or communities you find meaningful? • Would you like to know more about how and where people are finding community with other trans people in your area? What would be important to know about groups or community spaces for you to feel comfortable accessing?
Engagement in online communities	
<p>Trans youth and family members of trans people may also benefit from membership in gender-affirming online communities. Some may have barriers to attending in-person gatherings (e.g., travel, child care, social anxiety) and other may prefer ease of access, possibility of anonymity, and ability to connect with a broader range of people that accompanies online communities. Online communities can be important sources of support, accurate gender health information, and referral to needed services. Like with all online spaces, there are potential positives and negatives. It is important to support youth to access safer online spaces. Please be aware that some online spaces are unwelcoming to non-binary people which can pose challenges for non-binary youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many trans and gender diverse people find a sense of community online. Are you connected to any online groups or communities? • Would you like to know more about where people are finding welcoming online community with other trans people?

J. Relationships

Support from parents, caregivers, friends, peers, professionals, and other adults can be an important protective factor for children and youth. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the links between support and wellbeing for trans children and youth.

Support from parents and caregivers is important for child and youth wellbeing.

- Many trans youth are well-supported by parents and other family members and we know this support is connected to higher life satisfaction and lower rates of depressive symptoms (Simons et al., 2013).
- With parental support for living in affirmed gender, young transgender children demonstrated positive mental health outcomes equal to those of their peers who are not transgender (Olson et al., 2016).
- Canadian trans youth with very supportive parents were more likely to report excellent or very good mental health, high self-esteem, and life satisfaction than youth whose parents were somewhat or not at all supportive (Travers et al., 2012).
- Parents may have difficulty affirming their child's gender due to a number of factors, including personal beliefs, social pressure, stigma, and fears about the safety and acceptance of their child in the broader community (Rafferty, 2018).
- Interventions that may be helpful in working with parents include: engagement and education; coaching; family therapy; and parent support groups (Malpas, 2011).

Supportive peer relationships are also very important in the lives of trans young people.

- When asked who trans youth look to for support, more identified peers (79%) than other types of people in their lives, and 84% of these youth found their peers to be helpful (Veale et al., 2015).

Children and youth typically receive support from professionals and other adults in schools, in communities, and in health and social service settings.

- 67% of trans youth report having an adult they can go to with a serious problem (Veale et al., 2015).
- Youth with supportive adults both inside and outside of their family were significantly more likely to report good or excellent mental health and significantly less likely to have considered suicide (Veale et al., 2015).
- Over half of trans youth found the following professionals to be helpful when they sought support: youth worker (68%), nurse (65%), teacher (62%), doctor (60%), school counsellor (57%), and sports coach (56%) (Veale et al., 2015).
- Trans youth who were comfortable discussing their gender and health care needs with their family doctor reported better general and mental health (Clark, Veale, Greyson,

et al., 2018).

- Trans youth avoid getting needed health care for many reasons, including previous negative experiences with care providers and concerns that doctors would not be educated about transgender people (Clark, Veale, Greyson, et al., 2018).

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Parents/family	
<p>Parent/family support significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of trans children and youth. Interventions to increase family acceptance and support may focus on the parents/caregivers or the entire family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you shared with your parents or family about your gender? If you have, how did that go? If you haven't, is that something you are considering discussing with some or all of them? • Is there something or someone that might help you communicate better with your parents or family about your gender? • Are there specific supports you would want so you feel more a part of your family and accepted for who you are?
Friends/peers	
<p>Peer connections are an important part of social-emotional wellbeing for all youth. Youth may benefit from opportunities to connect and develop affirming relationships with both cisgender and trans peers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have some friends you feel well-connected to? • Do you wish things were different with your friends/peers? For example, do you wish you could meet more trans or cisgender people? Are there things you would like changed in your relationships? • With other peers, do you feel accepted, valued and affirmed in your gender? • Would you like some help with friendships or making more connections with peers? If so, are there some specific things you would like to happen?
Professionals/other adults	

<p>When youth seek support from professionals it is very important that they are affirmed and supported so they will continue to seek care when needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there professionals or other adults in your life who accept you and are affirming of your gender?• What medical and professional supports have you been receiving around your gender needs?• Is there medical, counselling or other professional care that you require for your gender needs?• Do you avoid appointments with doctors, health care providers, counsellors or other professionals because you don't feel your gender is respected?
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K. Sexuality

As youth explore their gender they may also be exploring their sexual orientation. Attractions and orientation may or may not fluctuate as youth take steps to live more comfortably in their gender, particularly if hormone therapy is initiated.

- Children and youth may experience confusion about their sexual orientation and gender. Regardless of their identities, they may be targets of bullying, harassment, and assault based on perceived sexuality or gender (Grossman & D’augelli, 2006).
- Youth have reported that moving to inclusive schools or communities, accessing information, connecting with youth organizations, and connecting with other LGBT individuals as positive aspects of their gender journeys (Grossman & D’augelli, 2006).

Transgender youth lack access to comprehensive sexual health education.

- Youth have reported that sexual health education often lacks information relevant to trans people, as well as difficulties accessing relevant information from trustworthy sources (e.g., online, books, peers, health care providers) (Bradford et al., 2019).
- Recommendations for trans-inclusive sexual health education include both diverse content and delivery of information by diverse voices (Bradford et al., 2019).

Transgender youth sometimes engage in higher risk sexual activity.

- In a study of youth in Minnesota, researchers found that trans youth were more likely than cisgender youth to have: ever had sex; had two or more partners in the last year; not used condom at last sex; not used birth control at last sex; and been intoxicated at last sex (Eisenberg et al., 2017)

Supporting children and youth to explore both their gender and sexuality, ensuring access to trans-specific sexual health information, screening for sexual assault and abuse, and ensuring basic needs are met may have potential to help youth develop healthy relationships and protect against higher risk sexual activity.

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Sexuality – relationship to gender	
Youth may benefit from support exploring their sexuality and sexual orientation, particularly around comfort engaging in intimacy, safety in intimate relationships, and identity in terms of how their gender and sexual orientation coexist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything coming up in your intimate relationships that you want to talk about related to your gender and dating? Gender and sex? • If on hormone therapy, is hormone

<p>TIPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use neutral pronouns and terms for asking about ‘partners’ and attractions in order to create space for diverse sexual orientations. • Use visual tools, such as the genderbread person or gender unicorn, to support exploration of gender and sexuality, especially if someone is in place of curiosity or questioning. 	<p>therapy having any impact on your sexual function or libido that you would like to discuss?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people notice shifts in their sexual interests/desires after starting hormone therapy – is there anything about that you would like to discuss? • Do you have access to information about sexual health that is inclusive of your gender/your partner’s gender?
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L. Safety

All youth benefit from having healthy and positive relationships, in which they feel safe and affirmed. Relationships with family, friends, and partners can be complicated and youth may benefit from help navigating interpersonal complexities and setting healthy boundaries.

Trans people, as a group, experience challenges related to safety at home, school, work, communities, family, peers, and partners.

- For example, trans youth are overrepresented among homeless populations, likely because of a lack of safety at home, school, and in their communities (Gaetz et al., 2016).
- In a study of trans youth in Minnesota, researchers found these youth experienced high rates of bullying (e.g., physical, relational cyber) and lower rates of protective factors (e.g., family connectedness, feeling safe in community) (Eisenberg et al., 2017).

At home and with family:

- 12% of 14-18 year old trans Canadian youth rarely (9%) or never (3%) feel safe at home (Veale et al., 2015).

At school and work:

- 55% of trans youth in Canada had been bullied at school, with 36% being physically threatened or injured and 9% being threatened or injured with a weapon (Veale et al., 2015).
- 52% of trans youth reported not feeling safe in both washrooms and change rooms (Taylor & Peter, 2011).
- 44% said they were likely to miss school because they felt unsafe and 15% had skipped more than 10 days of school due to feeling unsafe there (Taylor & Peter, 2011).
- There is little research about trans youth experiences at work, however among trans adults in the US, 15% reported verbal harassment, physical assault, and/or sexual assault at work due to their gender identity or expression (James et al., 2016).

In communities:

- 26% of trans youth rarely or never felt safe in their neighbourhood at night and 22% rarely or never felt safe accessing local public transit (Veale et al., 2015).
- 41.3% homeless Canadian trans youth sexually assaulted in previous 12 months (Gaetz et al., 2016).

In peer relationships, dating/intimate relationships and sex work:

- 69% of trans youth (age 14-18) reported ever being in a romantic or dating relationship; of those, 27% had been physically hurt (e.g., shoved, slapped, hit, kicked, forced sexual activity) (Veale et al., 2015).
- Some Canadian youth also report trading sexual activities for things like money, drugs, food, shelter, or protection, with youth of colour and those who had previously been sexually abused or sexually assaulted being more likely to experience sexual exploitation (Coronel-Villalobos & Saewyc, 2019).

Online:

- 29% of trans youth reported someone they connected with online made them feel unsafe (Veale et al., 2015).

Due to the many ways and settings in which safety may be compromised for trans youth, support may be needed around past traumatic experiences, current safety risks, or reducing future risks. Youth wanting help with traumatic experiences should be referred to a care provider specializing in this area. In general, finding ways to increase physical and emotional safety in homes, schools, work, communities, and relationships can help children and youth thrive.

Youth should be informed of your duty to report abuse, neglect, and danger to self or others as exceptions to client confidentiality. Please see Section M: Legal for more information.

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Home/family relationships	
<p>Many youth live in safe and loving homes. Others face not only rejection, but also neglect and/or abuse. Screening for unhealthy family relationships can be a first step in ensuring youth and families get the help they need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel safe and able to express your gender at home? • Do you ever have concerns about your safety at home or with your family related to being trans? • Do you have any concerns about your emotional and or physical safety at home or with family as a trans person? • Outside of your home and family, are there adults who you can go to with concerns about your safety? • If the youth has disclosed violence or trauma in the home or with family, query if

	gender is linked to these experiences.
School/work	
It is difficult to learn or to do your job if you do not feel safe. Identifying when a youth is struggling at school or work due to a lack of safety is important for their short-term wellbeing and their longer term academic and vocational success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel safe at work/school? What has made you feel this way? • Do you have access to safe space to change/go to bathroom at work/school? • Do you have a close friend or support person who you can speak with about any safety concerns at work/school? Can you tell me about them? • Do you have a safe enough way to get to work/school? (make safety plan re: issues related to risk in community, if need be) • If the youth has disclosed violence or trauma related to school/work, query if gender is relevant to these experiences.
Communities (local, trans, online)	
Communities often have spaces that are welcoming and affirming of trans youth, like youth centres, libraries, and recreation centres. Many information sites and communities online provide positive spaces for connection with trans communities. Lack of access to affirming spaces is an issue that should be addressed for children, youth and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel safe and able to express your gender in your community? • Are there places in the community where you feel more or less safe? Why? • Have you found info on gender and gender diversity online? What kind of spaces/resources and information have you found? Are you aware of Trans Care BC's website? • What have been the best experiences you've had online related to gender? Worst? (screen for strengths re: online connections and risks re: bullying/peer abuse) • If the youth has disclosed violence or trauma in the community, query if gender is relevant to these experiences.
Peer relationships, dating/intimate relationships, sex work	

<p>We hope that all children and youth have positive peer relationships and experiences with dating/intimate relationships. Trans children and youth who are bullied due to their gender may have increased difficulty with these relationships. Youth involved in sex work may gain independence and access to financial resources to support their basic needs, including gender health care, but also face potential violence and exploitation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you involved in dating/intimate relationships/sexual relationships? How has this gone? • Have you disclosed information about your gender to people you have dated in person or met online? What has this been like • Would you like to discuss strategies for safer gender disclosure in your relationships? • If the youth has disclosed violence or trauma related to peer relationships, dating/intimate relationships or sex work, query if gender is relevant to these experiences.
<p>Online relationships</p>	
<p>Online relationships can be a lifeline for many trans youth as well as their parents. Connection with others who understand your experiences can be powerful and help build confidence and self-esteem. There is also potential for exploitation, bullying, and harassment online. Encouraging youth to maintain healthy boundaries and access safer online spaces (e.g., moderated) may help them to benefit from available supports while avoiding potential challenges.</p> <p>Parents and youth may encounter online sites that are transphobic but cloaked as being informational such as ROGD sites or de-transition sites. It is important for clinicians to be well-versed in gender affirmative resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you keep yourself safe online? What do you know about online safety from friends/others? • Have you ever had to deal with harassment or bullying online? Has any of this had to do with your gender? • Do you need any support to make a plan for online safety/social media safety with regards to gender?

M. Legal

Transgender children and youth may encounter unique legal issues, including discrimination based on gender identity and expression and challenges accessing: accurate identity documents; supportive guardianship; and gender-affirming health care.

Gender identity and gender expression are protected categories under human rights law in both British Columbia and Canada.

- Trans Rights BC is a website dedicated to providing information on the legal rights of trans people in British Columbia, concerning: access to public spaces/services; education; housing; employment; healthcare; harassment and violence; parenting; police and prison system; immigration and refugee issues; and sex work. This site also contains information about self-advocacy and how to take action if a person's rights have been violated (Catherine White Holman Wellness Centre & Vancouver Coastal Health, n.d.).

Lack of identity documents that match the name and gender of a trans person can lead to difficulty accessing public services and result in discrimination, harassment, and denial of services. Youth may experience extra challenges if they do not have support from family (e.g., permission, financial, transportation) to obtain and/or make changes to their documents. Depending on where someone was born and currently resides, the process of changing identity documents can be complicated, expensive, and sometimes pose a safety risk. Fortunately, in British Columbia and across Canada it has recently become easier to update identity documents.

- Please see the Trans Care BC website for information and links to provincial and federal services needed for change of name and sex or gender designation on identity documents (Trans Care BC, n.d.).

Many children and youth live in supportive families, whether biological, foster, adoptive, or chosen. Some struggle with family rejection, living in abusive or neglectful circumstances, or experiencing homelessness. If a child's or youth's needs are being neglected and/or they are experiencing abuse, this should be reported to the Ministry of Child and Family Development.

- According to the Child, Family and Community Service Act in BC, "anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, and that the parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child or youth, must report the suspected abuse or neglect to a child welfare worker" (Ministry of Children and Family Development, n.d.).

Questions sometimes arise about whether parent/guardian permission is required for a minor to receive gender affirming health care, such as puberty blockers or hormone therapy. Care providers should refer to youth health care consent laws in the jurisdiction where they practice for guidance.

- The *Infants Act* is the British Columbia law that grants minors the legal authority to

consent to their own health care when they possess the capacity to make a decision about the specific health care intervention and when their health care provider is of the opinion that the treatment is in their best interest (Infants Act, 1996).

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Identity documents	
<p>Children and youth may need identity documents to cross borders, access services, enrol in school, and obtain a driver’s license. They may also be asked to provide documentation if interacting with law enforcement officials. Having documents that accurately reflect a person’s name, gender, and appearance can facilitate easier access, reduce distress, and promote safety. There is now the possibility of an X marker for gender on some Canadian identity documents. Youth considering changing gender markers may benefit from connecting with someone knowledgeable about the pros and cons of M, F and X markers on identity documents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered a legal name and/or gender marker change? • Do you know about the process and costs involved? • Have you considered the pros/cons of the timing of this change?
Guardian support, guardianship	
<p>Most children and youth have supportive parents or guardians. Others live with varying levels of rejection, neglect, and abuse, sometimes focused on their gender. Ensuring children and youth live in environments free of abuse and neglect is essential for wellbeing. Denial of access to gender-affirming health care is a trans-specific issue that may be addressed through support, advocacy and existing laws.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your family/legal guardian: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Openly talk with you about gender? ○ Use your name and pronouns? ○ Affirm and support your gender/gender expression? ○ Get information about gender and share information with you? ○ Support connections with other trans people and community groups? ○ Advocate for your safety & wellbeing? ○ Say that your gender is just a phase? ○ Take you to supportive providers?

Spiritual/Cultural Domain Guidance Notes

N. Religion/Spirituality

Religion and spirituality are important aspects of life for many people, including trans children and youth, their families, their friends, and their communities.

Within some faith traditions, sexual and gender diverse individuals are fully welcomed and affirmed. In others, trans people may find themselves excluded or told that their experiences go against religious teachings.

In recent research, trans youth experiences with religion and spirituality have been found to vary widely.

- Both positive and negative aspects of religion have been identified for youth who are LGBTQ (Higa et al., 2014; Mountz et al., 2018).
- Some trans and gender diverse youth describe religion or spirituality as being a source of strength, while others have experienced religion as a source of rejection or non-acceptance (Mountz et al., 2018).
- Religion has been identified by LGBT youth as a barrier to support from parents, who report not being welcomed in places of worship and having religion used against them by family members or others (Roe, 2017).

There are many resources available for parents, families, and youth who are seeking to learn more about how diverse genders fit with religious teachings.

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Source of support	
<p>Children and youth may find their religious or spiritual traditions helpful on their gender journeys and look to their families or faith leaders for support.</p> <p>Others may face hostility in the name of religion and associate religion with rejection by parents, family members, and others in their lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you or your family have a connection to any specific religion or spiritual practice, how does that religion/spiritual practice regard gender diversity? • Has this been a source of support/source of struggle for you? • Is there any support I can provide about what is going on with your spiritual group/church/family about this?

O. Culture

There are many cultures that make up Canada and influence the lives of trans children, youth and families. Many cultures worldwide have strong traditions of celebrating multiple genders. However, some of these traditions have been suppressed or erased due to colonization and enforcement of a binary system of sex and gender. While some cultures currently embrace gender diversity, others may frame gender diversity as inconsistent with cultural teaching and traditions.

Challenges may emerge for children, youth, and their families, when they interact with systems of care.

Wong (2017) outlines barriers observed in practice for racialized children and their families:

- Information on child and youth gender diversity is primarily written in English and therefore inaccessible to non-English speakers.
- Many resources are written with the assumption that the audience is white and middle-class, and does not address concerns of racialized and working-class families.
- Racialized families may experience alienation from trans communities, which are perceived to be predominantly white.
- Racialized families may have had previous negative experiences with care providers as a result of their cultural beliefs or practices.

Another culture that can be a powerful force in the lives of gender diverse people is trans culture. While people often identify with cultures of their families of origin, trans people may find support and develop greater pride in their identities through involvement with trans communities.

- Sources of resilience for trans youth include connections to trans-affirming community organizations and developing pride in both one's identities and one's communities (Mountz et al., 2018).
- Trans youth of colour in the US have described finding a place in the LGBTQ youth community where they are valued in terms of both their gender and racial identities as one strategy for dealing with the racism and anti-trans bias they experience in their daily lives (Singh, 2013).
- Pride in identity and community may motivate trans youth to give back to their communities and mentor other trans youth (Mountz et al., 2018).

Gender-specific factors	Sample questions
Source of support	
<p>Pride in one's identity and culture can be important to overall wellbeing. Cultural connections can be a protective factor, and culture-based rejection can pose a challenge to wellbeing. Youth may benefit from positive cultural connections with trans culture as well as people and organizations representative of their other cultural identities who can offer affirmation and support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your family's cultural background? Where are your parents/caregivers from? • What would you say your cultural connections are? Offer examples such as ethno-cultural, artist culture, queer culture, musician culture, vegan culture... • What parts of your culture do you identify with? Are there certain activities/ways of being/foods/practices/gatherings you appreciate the most about your culture? • What do you know about gender diversity within your culture? Have you ever checked out any information about examples of gender diversity from within your culture? Would you like to find out more about this? • What are the best parts of your culture? • Are there any challenges you are facing with regards to what is going on with your gender and your culture?

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