

# AORN Position Statement on Care of the Transgender or Gender-Diverse Patient

## POSITION STATEMENT

AORN believes:

- **Transgender** and **gender-diverse** patient populations experience health care disparities. Gender, **gender identity**, and **gender expression** exist along a continuum and should not present a barrier to safe, competent, and compassionate care.
- Cultural competence for the transgender and gender-diverse patient in perioperative nursing is imperative.
- Perioperative RNs should advocate for advancement of cultural competence by
  - becoming educated about gender-diverse patients' health issues,
  - using culturally sensitive communication,
  - using **affirming language**,
  - engaging in respectful interactions with transgender and gender-diverse patients, and
  - maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information related to gender identity, especially for individuals who have not communicated this information themselves.
- Perioperative RNs should advocate for health care documentation systems that support the accurate collection and documentation of patient sex, gender identity, and chosen name.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential to effective, compassionate, **gender-inclusive** care. This interdisciplinary collaboration includes working with other nursing and health care organizations to exchange resources, share best practices, and develop strategies for creating gender-inclusive perioperative environments.
- It is imperative to promote a health care landscape that is
  - inclusive,
  - respectful, and
  - responsive to the diverse needs of all patients, including those who identify as transgender or gender diverse.

## RATIONALE

All people deserve medical care, regardless of background, ethnicity, or circumstances. AORN defines, supports, and advocates for patient and perioperative team safety through exemplary practice in each phase of perioperative nursing care and for the use of evidence-based guidelines, continuing education, and clinical practice resources.

Transgender and gender-diverse individuals face health care disparities at a staggering rate compared to **cisgender** individuals. Almost half of transgender people in the United States report having suicidal ideation,<sup>3</sup> between one in five<sup>4</sup> and as many as half<sup>5</sup> report having been refused care, one in three avoids seeking medical care due to fear of discrimination,<sup>4,5</sup> and one in two educates their medical providers about transgender health and related issues.<sup>6</sup>

A perioperative nurse committed to respecting a diversity of identities and persons (eg, culture, gender, ethnicity, generation) provides a practice environment that promotes inclusivity and **psychological safety**, enabling culturally sensitive perioperative care.<sup>7</sup> Advocating for continuous education and training for perioperative teams will enhance their awareness of health issues in the gender-diverse community. Use of **gender-affirming care** and affirming or **inclusive language** in all perioperative communications, documentation, and interactions is fundamental to affirming gender identities.

The Association of PeriOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) asserts its unwavering commitment to creating a perioperative environment that upholds the principles of patient-centered care, ensuring that all individuals receive safe, compassionate, respectful, and competent care throughout their health care journey. AORN is dedicated to fostering an inclusive health care environment that acknowledges and addresses the unique needs of all individuals. This position statement articulates our commitment to promoting gender inclusivity and recognizing the importance of equitable and respectful care for all patients.

## GLOSSARY

***Affirming language:** Language in spoken or written form or practices that affirms the person's gender, such as using the person's pronouns. **Note:** This is distinct from inclusive language, which is used before learning a person's gender identity.*

***Gender-affirming care:** Practices or interventions that reinforce gender identity.*

***Cisgender:** A person who identifies as the sex they were assigned at birth.*

***Gender expression:** How a person outwardly expresses their gender. Examples include style of clothing, hair, and make-up, but may also include gender roles and expectations.*

***Gender identity:** The internal sense of gender that a person feels. Examples include an internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or a combination.*

***Gender-inclusive:** Including all genders in the **gender spectrum**, while not defining a particular gender.*

***Gender-diverse:** A gender outside the binary male/female. Examples include non-binary, gender queer, transgender, agender. Synonyms: gender-expansive, gender non-conforming*

***Gender spectrum:** Gender identity that is inclusive of the binary male/female and any combination or lack of gender.*

***Inclusive language:** Language in spoken or written form or practices that are not inherently gendered. Examples include child versus daughter, person versus man. **Note:** After learning a person's gender, using affirming language is preferred.*

***Psychological safety:** The idea that one may express themselves without fear of retribution.*

**Transgender:** A person who identifies as a gender that does not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

## REFERENCES

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