The Child Comes First

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Parents Disagree About Their Child's Gender Identity. What Happens Next?

A practical guide for family law and dispute-resolution professionals

Attorneys | Mediators | Custody Evaluators | GALs | Parenting Consultants | Therapists

Parents present a disagreement related to their child's gender identity.

Work within your role and authority to support the child's well-being, provide accurate information, and keep the child out of adult conflict.

Start by helping parents say: "I love you. I'll always love you. Thank you for trusting me and telling me."

1 Is there an immediate safety or well-being concern?

Consider harm, coercion, threats, rejection, or other significant risks. Do not require joint negotiation or a child's participation in unsafe or hostile exchanges. Threats, humiliation, and harassment are not acceptable options.

YES → **Prioritize Safety**

- Follow appropriate legal and professional protocols.
- Determine if mediation or joint processes are appropriate.
- Consider involving the court, guardian ad litem, or other resources.

NO

2 Which areas need attention?

More than one pathway may apply.

Lack of understanding or misinformation

"We have questions about what this means."

Next Steps

- Provide accurate, evidence-based information.
- Share trusted resources (e.g., Children's Minnesota, AAP).
- Correct common misconceptions.
- Encourage consultation with qualified professionals.

Everyday support and social affirmation

"We disagree about names, pronouns, school, or activities."

Next Steps

Support daily well-being, stability, and relationships. A child's identity is not something parents vote on.

Use CLEAR:

Clarify the conflict
Look at what matters
Explore the options
Arrive at workable decisions
Roadmap the way forward

Medical or clinical decisions

"We disagree about evaluation, treatment, or healthcare."

Next Steps

- Refer to qualified medical professionals.
- Encourage a pediatric gender health specialist.
- Clarify that medical decisions are individualized and based on clinical assessment.
- Distinguish clinical expertise from political rhetoric.

Legal decision-making or parenting plan

"We need to address custody, decision-making authority, or specific orders."

Next Steps

- Review current orders and legal authority.
- Identify decisions requiring court involvement.
- Use mediation or other appropriate processes when safe and indicated.
- Keep the child's best interests at the center.

3. Evaluate Impact and Plan Next Steps

- How is the child doing in both households, school, and community?
- What additional information, evaluation, or support is needed?
- What will realistically work outside the room?

Key Professional Considerations

- Being transgender is not a mental illness.
- Pediatric gender care includes individualized assessment and support.
- Reduce adult conflict and support the child's dignity and well-being.
- Help parents make informed decisions within your role and authority.

Trusted Resources

- **Children's Minnesota Gender Health**
  childrensmn.org/genderhealth
- **AAP - HealthyChildren.org**
  Gender-diverse & transgender children
- **Family Acceptance Project**
  familyproject.sfsu.edu

Scan Children's MN

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NEUTRAL FAMILY SERVICES

Helping Families Move Forward Through Conflict

MEDIATION • PARENTING CONSULTATION • EDUCATION • PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

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Professional Guide

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Take self harm and suicide concerns seriously

Immediate danger: call 911 or seek emergency care. This includes an attempt, serious injury, or overdose. Stay with the child; secure dangerous items if safe.

Crisis support: call or text 988 (U.S.). Ask calmly, "Are you thinking about suicide?" Asking does not increase suicidal thoughts. Listen; do not promise secrecy.

Follow through: Seek prompt assessment for self-harm, even without suicidal intent. Make a safety plan with a clinician and follow up. [1]

Counseling for children and parents

- Refer child distress to a licensed clinician experienced in gender diversity for assessment and open exploration without forcing or suppressing identity. [3]
- Offer parents **separate counseling** for fear, grief, or adjustment; do not burden the child.
- Distinguish clinical expertise from legal authority.

Recognize psychological harm

- Assess humiliation, deliberate misgendering, forced disclosure, threatened abandonment, and making children carry hostile messages.
- Assess frequency, context, fear, shame, isolation, and lost trust. Disagreement alone does not establish abuse.
- Avoid unsafe joint sessions. Follow safeguarding and reporting duties.

Work thoughtfully with school

Plan with the child and school staff: bullying, names, pronouns, privacy, records, disclosure, and safe routines. Ask what is recorded or shared. **Check current law, school policy, consent, and orders;** duties vary. Get advice when privacy and safety conflict.

Use survey figures accurately

Trevor Project's **2024 U.S. online survey**: among transgender and nonbinary respondents, **46% reported seriously considering a suicide attempt; 14% reported an attempt** in the past year. These are **not death rates**. The survey included 18,663 LGBTQ+ people ages 13-24, recruited in 2023. The self-report sample was not nationally representative and cannot show cause and effect or predict a child's risk. [2]

Gender Identity & Family Support

Crisis support

988 Lifeline
Call or text 988 (U.S.).
988lifeline.org

The Trevor Project
LGBTQ+ youth crisis support.
thetrevorproject.org
Choose Reach a Counselor

Family support

Transforming Families Minnesota
Youth and family peer support.
tffmn.org

PFLAG
Family education and support.
pflag.org

Reading and perspectives

The Ripple
Ellie Krug's newsletter.
elliekrug.com/newslettersmedia/

Erin in the Morning
Reporting and commentary.
erininthemorning.com

Blogs and peer groups are not crisis care or individualized advice; listing does not imply endorsement.
Sources: [1] NIMH prevention steps and FAQ; [2] Trevor Project 2024 survey; [3] AACAP policy (2018). Checked Nov. 2, 2026.