

Indian Health Service Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

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Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in IHS

REFRESHER & REVIEW

IHS Encourages the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Electronic Health Records

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Definitions & Terminology

FROM THE FIELD





Sex & Gender Definitions

Sex Assigned at Birth/Birth Sex

- The biological sex that someone is assumed to be at birth, usually based on a visual assessment of their genitalia.
 - This is what gets recorded on someone's birth certificate.

Gender Identity

- Refers to a person's internal sense of identity and has ties to their social role.

Cisgender

- A term used to describe someone whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.
 - Cisgender girl/woman, cisgender boy/man.

Transgender (includes Gender-Diverse and Gender-Expansive)

- A person whose gender identity does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth.

Nonbinary

- A person whose gender identity does not evenly correspond with the male/female binary.

*Two Spirit, Indigiqueer**



Two Spirit & Indigiqueer

Two Spirit

- Refers to an Indigenous person who expresses their gender identity, spiritual identity, or social role in a traditional or non-Western way.
- The term came about in the early 1990s and is based on Anishinaabe conceptualizations of gender-diverse roles.
 - Hundreds or thousands of other conceptualizations have existed, and many are still used.
 - Two Spirit individuals were artists, healers, warriors, counselors, and so much more. They were often viewed as sacred beings amongst the community.

Indigiqueer

- A term used by individuals who identify as Indigenous and LGBTQ+ that do not identify as Two Spirit given its cultural significance.
 - Newer term that is gaining greater traction amongst community members.



Sexual Orientation Definitions

Sexual Orientation

- Refers to the way one describes their emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction. *
- *SO identity does not necessarily imply sexual behavior, need, or risk, etc.

2SLGBQ+

- *Two Spirit* (2S)
- Lesbian – women attracted to women.
- Gay – men attracted to men.
- Bisexual – individuals attracted to people of the same and different genders.
- *Queer* – used by individuals who do not identify as straight/heterosexual.
- *Questioning* – the process in which individuals' question or are exploring their sexual orientation.
- And many more



Sex & Gender Terminology

Sex markers:

- Female
- Male
- Intersex
- Not listed: _____.

Gender identities:

- Two Spirit
- Woman
- Man
- Transgender
- Trans Woman
- Trans Man
- Non-binary
- Agender
- Genderfluid
- Not listed: _____.





Aspects of Identity

FROM PATHS (RE)MEMBERED AT NPAIHB



Trans & Gender-diverse AI/AN

Nearly half of our AI/AN 2SLGBTQ+ community identify as trans and gender - diverse (TGD)

Of the AI/AN TGD sample, 79% identify using at least one non-binary term to describe their gender identity.

- Examples include:
 - Genderqueer
 - Gender-diverse
 - Non-binary
 - Two Spirit

Trans & Gender-diverse people were more than 5x as likely to identify as Two Spirit than their cisgender queer respondents.

Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (Re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)



Importance of Indigeneity

Percentage of respondents that regard these key aspects of identity as “extremely important” to them

- 50% of respondents reported **Sexual Orientation** to be extremely important to them
- 58% of respondents reported **Gender Identity** to be extremely important to them
- 92% of respondents report **Indigenous Identity** to be extremely important to them
- 94% of respondents report **History of one’s people** to be extremely important to them

Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (Re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)



Pronouns & Indigenous Cultures

Traditional languages and pronouns

- How might this show up in interactions with patients?

Elders and learning opportunities

Cultural relevancy – naming practices

- Seeking out a name that feels in alignment with one's identity
 - Legal Name vs. Preferred/Chosen Name

The Circle of Relatives / We are All Related

- Practicing pronoun and correct name usage shows that we care about our relatives.

Suicidality imperative

- Research has shown that correct use of chosen name and pronouns is associated with a 56% in suicide attempts.



Intersections of Clinical Care & Culture

FROM PATHS (RE)MEMBERED AT NPAIHB



Top 3 Barriers to Accessing Healthcare

From quantitative measures, Paths (Re)Membered found:

- Little provider knowledge of 2SLGBTQ+ care
- Low cultural competence/humility among providers
- Previous traumatic experiences with healthcare professionals

Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (Re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)



2SLGBTQ+ & the protective role of gender identity affirmation

True Names – Pronouns – Gender Embodiment – Cultural Tradition – Land – Spiritual Connection – Native Language

Our data suggests protective effects in:

- Physical health indicators (including dental)
- Mental health indicators
- Likelihood of self-advocacy in healthcare settings
- Visits to PCP and healthcare professionals
- Being out to healthcare professionals
- Spiritual health indicators
- Cultural / community engagement & belonging

Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (Re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)



GAC & IGAC

Gender-Affirming Care

- Gender-affirming care is a supportive form of healthcare. It consists of an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people. For transgender and nonbinary children and adolescents, early gender-affirming care is crucial to overall health and wellbeing as it allows the child or adolescent to focus on social transitions and can increase their confidence while navigating the healthcare system. (HHS 2022)

Indigenous Gender-Affirming Care

- Constitutes all of the above definition, while accounting for complex and millennia-old Indigenous gender concepts and was of being beyond Western definition. It also accounts for Indigenous concepts of wellness and health, which is not limited to the individual but may include the family and community, and is not limited to physical health, but encompasses one's mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural health. IT also means accounting for the fact that gender dysphoria is based on a Western cultural framework, and that gender embodiment can include a constellation of cultural and decolonial ideas that don't exist in the settler imagination.



Examples of Indigenous Gender-Affirming Care

- Indigenous (and Indigiqueer) representation in clinical spaces
- Indigenous herbal hormone and embodiment support
- Indigenous and Indigiqueer affirming behavioral healthcare/counseling
- Cross-I/T/U patient navigation support
- Access to safe and affirming ceremony and Traditional Indigenous practitioners
- Support for affirming and embodiment realization beyond the binary that is inclusive of ancient and new Indigenous genders
- Care plans that include family and community
- Support for envisioning de-colonial embodiment goals and restoration of tradition
- Concepts of good health that account for self-definition, community health, emotional and spiritual health, and cultural health
- Indigenous traditional cultural activities are healing



Considerations & Key Points

FROM PATHS (RE)MEMBERED AT NPAIHB



Creating Affirming Environments

Name & Pronouns

- Ask for pronouns, and honor pronoun requests.
- Ask for chosen name, and honor name requests.
- Are staff pronouns visible (name badge, buttons, stickers, etc.)?

Inclusive Intake Forms

- Opt into using white or color uniform forms for everyone regardless of assumed gender identity.
- Utilize SOGI data capture questions.

Built Space

- Are there gender-neutral or single occupancy restroom options available?
- Is gender-neutral language used in posters and advertisements?
 - Diversity of lived experiences reflected in health materials*
- Is a non-discrimination policy posted and visible to patients?

Scenario

A patient is filling out the intake forms provided upon arrival to the clinic.

- They disclose that they identify with a traditional gender identity not listed in the SOGI data capture.

What do you do?

How do you enter this?

How might you refer to the individual's gender identity?

Scenario

A minor patient comes into the clinic and fills out their intake form with their parent/guardian.

- Upon returning the paperwork, they disclose to you that they would like to use a name that differs from their legal name and would like to be referred to using she/her pronouns.

How might you respond?

What do you do to ensure their request is met?

Are there extra precautions you should take to protect this individual?



Scenario

A patient leaves the sexual orientation and gender identity fields blank.

- You mention that they left some fields blank and offer additional time to fill out the remaining questions.
- There's tension, and the individual questions why you're asking about sexual orientation and gender identity.

How might you respond to this individual?

Scenario

You're helping to train a new front desk worker.

- They disclose to you that they don't believe asking SOGI questions is important, and that they don't believe in there being more than two genders.

How might you respond to this employee?



Key Points

Trans and gender-diverse Indigiqueer patients want to be seen as uniquely Indigenous and genderqueer, and to not be “othered” from cisgender Native peers/community.

- Healthcare professionals need cultural humility that encompasses awareness of gender-expansive traditions.
- Binary-based standards are not inclusive for all gender-diverse people and limit access to care and need examination.
- Support/treatment/intervention is not always individual and can be collectivist.
- Access to culture and community is essential for health.
- Providing gender-affirming care includes being an advocate for clients within clinical systems and beyond them as well.



Resources for Continued Support

Indian Health Service

- Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (2SLGBTQ+) Health
www.ihs.gov/lgbt

Paths (Re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board

- Digital & Print Resources
 - Celebrating Our Magic Toolkit
 - Trans and Gender-Affirming Care in IHS/Tribal/Urban Facilities: Strategic Vision and Action Plan
- Training & Technical Assistance
 - Creating 2SLGBTQ+ Affirming Environments
 - Clinical and non-clinical options
- Provider Support
 - Trans & Gender-Affirming Care ECHO
 - Adult Track
 - Pediatrics Track
 - Clinician Consult Warmline

www.pathsremembered.org



Contact Information

Indian Health Service

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