

# TALKING ABOUT



## Transgender Youth Health Care



2025 EDITION

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, anti-LGBTQ politicians have enacted laws to ban essential health care for transgender young people. These health care bans irreparably harm transgender youth. **Decisions about this care, which is essential to the well-being of transgender young people, should rest with families, doctors, and the patient—not politicians.**

These bans prohibit doctors from providing vital care to transgender youth, while allowing the same care (for example, prescribed hormone therapy) to be provided to minors who are not transgender. When this essential care is banned, providers face threats of professional and sometimes criminal sanctions, including loss of their medical license and even arrest and prosecution. Parents can also be targeted for prosecution for supporting their child's care.

This guide, updated in 2025, provides layered approaches for conversations that can help conflicted audiences understand why this care is so vitally important for transgender young people—and why banning it is so harmful.

### APPROACH #1: EMPHASIZE SHARED VALUES

**Start by grounding conversations in the core values we share when it comes to young people's health, well-being, and happiness.** These health care bans deny young people and their families the care they need. And because many people are unfamiliar with health care for transgender youth, they may have questions as they're navigating the issues. We can help people recognize the larger stakes for the well-being of young people and the families who love them, even if they do not have an expert-level understanding of the care:

- *We all want kids to be happy and healthy. Many people are unfamiliar with health care for transgender youth—and when something's unfamiliar, it's natural to have questions. And just like any other family, the family of a transgender young person should have the freedom to work with doctors to ensure that their child can receive the care they need.*

It can also help to acknowledge that our audience may have difficulty understanding what it's like to have a transgender child—while emphasizing the values that connect all parents:

- *It can be hard to understand what it's like to have a transgender child. Families of transgender children, like most families, want to do what is best for their child—and that includes ensuring that their child is able to receive the health care they need.*

### APPROACH #2: EMPHASIZE THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN THE PROCESS

The role of a transgender young person's family in the health care process is vitally important. The expert medical standards of care emphasize family involvement throughout

the process. Those pushing these bans are trying to overrule families and shut them out of decisions that rightly reside with families, medical providers, and the patient—which is why emphasizing the role of families is so critical.

- *Just like any other family, the families of a transgender young person should have the freedom to ensure their child can receive the prescribed medical care they need.*
- *Politicians shouldn't be able to overrule families who need to access medically necessary care for their transgender child. This decision should rest with families, doctors, and the patient—not politicians.*

See Additional Recommendations for an example of how emphasizing family-based decision-making can help people sort through their questions about the care.

### APPROACH #3: FOCUS ON THE BENEFITS OF THE CARE AND THE HARMS OF DENYING IT

It's important to emphasize how banning essential care hurts transgender youth. But it's equally and critically important to focus on how that care protects the well-being of transgender young people and gives them the chance to thrive.

**Don't just focus on the negative; always pair discussions about the damage caused by these bans with an emphasis on how this care improves the lives of transgender youth.** Narrowly focusing on the harms of banning the care can inadvertently suggest that the lives of transgender youth are defined by those harms. **The reality is that transgender youth can thrive when they are supported by their families and receive the health care they need.**

The message elements below focus on the benefits of the care and the harms of denying it.

#### Benefits of Care

- *When transgender youth, like all youth, receive the medical care they need, they are able to thrive and have healthy, happy childhoods that set them up for success in life.*
- *Decades of peer-reviewed research show that this care is safe, effective, and essential to the health and well-being of transgender youth.*
- *Research also shows that when families support their transgender kids, those young people are much less likely to be depressed—and they show significant increases in self-esteem and general health.*

#### Harms of Denying Care

- *Politicians are putting the well-being of transgender youth at risk. Being a kid is hard enough. We don't need politicians making it even harder for young people who are transgender, denying them essential care and singling them out for increased bullying and harassment.*

- *Denying medical care and support to transgender youth puts them at increased risk of serious harms, including depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts or behavior.*

We can layer these points together so that the first and last things we talk about are the benefits of the care. For example:

- **[BENEFITS OF CARE]** *Research shows that when families are able to support their transgender kids, those young people show significant increases in self-esteem and general health.*
- **[HARMS OF DENYING CARE]** *We don't need politicians making their lives harder by denying them essential care and singling them out for increased bullying and harassment.*
- **[BENEFITS OF CARE]** *Transgender youth, like all youth, have the best chance to thrive when get the support and health care they need when they need it.*

#### APPROACH #4 (WHEN APPLICABLE): ILLUSTRATE THREATS TO PROVIDERS

The politicians behind these bans often target medical providers with sanctions and even imprisonment for providing the care that they're ethically and professionally called on to provide. **When illustrating these threats to providers, check with legal experts to ensure that the sanctions are accurate based on the specific ban or proposed ban.**

- *This health care ban punishes doctors who follow longstanding standards of care for transgender patients—standards endorsed by the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and every other leading U.S. medical professional association.*
- *Under this ban, medical providers could lose their license for fulfilling their ethical obligation to provide medically necessary care that is essential to the health and well-being of transgender youth.*
- **[If the ban includes criminal sanctions]** *Under this law, politicians also want to arrest and imprison medical providers for up to [# of] years simply for providing needed health care to transgender youth in accordance with the oath they take to care for their patients.*

#### APPROACH #5 (WHEN APPLICABLE): ILLUSTRATE THREATS TO PARENTS

Some of these healthcare bans also seek to arrest, prosecute and imprison parents for helping their transgender child get the care they need. In such cases, consider the following:

- *The state is threatening parents with arrest, prosecution, and prison if they do what's best for their child and try to*

*make sure they receive medical care prescribed by the child's doctor—care that is backed by leading medical authorities like the American Medical Association.*

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**Reinforce the medical necessity of this care.** Referring to medical care (e.g., essential medical care, prescribed medical care, the medical care they need) reinforces the vital necessity of this care for transgender youth. Once this necessity is established, we can also talk about *health care* or simply *care*.

**Leave in-depth medical conversations to physicians and providers.** Conversations about transgender youth care can quickly get into levels of detail that only medical providers are equipped to address. If this starts to happen, return to a focus on how health care bans hurt transgender youth and their families; for example: *"I'm not a doctor, but what I know is that the government should not be overruling parents who are trying to ensure their child receives the health care they need."*

**Avoid sweeping or categorical statements about complex aspects of transgender youth medical care.** Care for transgender people is individualized, and different stages of care might happen at different ages, so citing specific ages or including words like "always" and "never" in your messages makes them easy for anti-LGBTQ opponents to attack.

**When necessary, help people sort through their questions about the care.** If you need to navigate questions about health care for transgender young people, consider one or both of the following and then return to the main approaches:

- *All the leading medical associations in the U.S.—including the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics—support this care. Decades of peer-reviewed research show that it is safe, effective, and essential to the health and well-being of transgender youth.*
- *The decision to seek care is not something a transgender young person and their family are able to rush into. The expert medical standards of care for transgender adolescents involve extensive assessment and evaluation, doctor's visits, counseling sessions, and family consultation before medical care begins. Doctors and mental health professionals carefully monitor the course of care and make changes, if they're needed, to ensure the patient is always receiving the right care. These standards, and the length of time it takes to follow them, ensure that families can get their child the care and support they need while ensuring that it's the right care for the child.*