

Behaviors that Help

Some family behaviors that reduce your LGBTQ child's risk of developing health and mental health problems and which help promote his or her well-being:

- ▶ Talk with your child or foster child about their LGBTQ identity.
- ▶ Express affection when your child tells you or when you learn that your child is gay, transgender, or when you learn your child is intersex.
- ▶ Support your child's LGBTQ identity even though you may feel uncomfortable.
- ▶ Advocate for your child when he or she is mistreated because of his or her LGBTQ identity.
- ▶ Require other family members to respect your LGBTQ child.
- ▶ Bring your child to LGBTQ organizations or events. Connect your child with an LGBTQ adult role model to show them options for the future.
- ▶ Welcome your child's LGBTQ friends & partners to your home.

Behaviors to Avoid

Some family behaviors that increase your LGBTQ child's risk for health & mental health problems:

- ▶ Hitting, slapping, or physically hurting your child because of their LGBTQ identity.
- ▶ Verbal harassment or name-calling because of your child's LGBTQ identity.
- ▶ Excluding LGBTQ youth from family or family activities.
- ▶ Blocking access to LGBTQ friends, events, & resources.
- ▶ Blaming your child when they are discriminated against because of their LGBTQ identity.
- ▶ Pressuring your child to be more (or less) masculine or feminine.
- ▶ Telling your child that God will punish them because they are gay, transgender or intersex.
- ▶ Telling your child that you are ashamed of them or that how they look or act will shame the family.
- ▶ Making your child keep their LGBTQ identity a secret in the family and not letting them talk about it.

Supportive Families, Healthy Children: Helping Families with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Children by Caitlin Ryan, 2009. Family Acceptance Project, San Francisco State University. Reprinted with permission.

Parents Reconciling Network Offers:

- ▶ Printed materials including biblical and spiritual resources and suggestions for obtaining various media resources
- ▶ Individual consultation by email, phone, letter, or in person. Connection with volunteer coordinators is available in many Annual Conferences
- ▶ Our annual newsletter, *Kindred Connection*
- ▶ A PRN contact list on the RMN website
- ▶ Church-wide study courses and information to guide your church toward becoming a Reconciling Congregation
- ▶ Special sessions for parents at the national Convocation, a biannual gathering of the Reconciling Ministries Network

Some Additional Resources

- ▶ **PFLAG** (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)—www.pflag.org and many local chapters
- ▶ **The Human Rights Campaign**—www.hrc.org (click on "Religion and Faith")



We Invite Your Participation!

Parents Reconciling Network is an extension ministry of the Reconciling Ministries Network. For more information, to join, or to send support, contact us at:

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Find us on
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Supporting Our Transgender and Intersex Children



**God Made Each One.
God Loves Each One.
...No Exceptions.**

We are commanded by God to love all of God's children whether transgender or not, yours or another's, orphaned or homeless, rich or poor, neighbor or stranger
—to love them all!



On the day your child was born, you were told “You have a boy!” or “You have a girl!” You were never told that this identification could change. The first facts you told others about your new baby were your baby’s weight and sex—even before you offered information about the baby’s health, features, or personality.

A child’s sex has long been regarded as unmistakable, permanent, and distinct—male or female. Gender is intimately related to the expectations of society for behavior and appearance. Both the assumed gender and the sex declared at your child’s birth have shaped your plans and dreams for your child, your image and expectations, and your relationship with your child.

All that changes when you learn that you have a transgender or intersex child. Now, you may be feeling confused or overwhelmed. For basic information about transgender and intersex conditions, we recommend:

- ▶ **RMN’s Transgender Extension Ministry**—www.rmnetwork.org/connect/extension-ministries/trans/
- ▶ **Gay & Lesbian Task Force**—www.thetaskforce.org.
- ▶ **Intersex Society of North America**—www.isna.org.
- ▶ **Religious Institute**, a national organization working at the intersection of religion and sexuality issues—www.religiousinstitute.org.
- ▶ **National Center for Transgender Equality**, a good resource for information on the legal aspects of transgender issues—www.transequality.org.
- ▶ **Family Acceptance Project**—familyproject.sfsu.edu
- ▶ **Gay & Lesbian Medical Association** offering healthcare for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals—www.glma.org.
- ▶ **Advocates for Informed Choice**, offering legal advocacy for intersex children—www.aiclegal.org.

Our Children Are Loved by God—Just as They Are!

Beginning to Understand

Research has not yet determined exactly how many persons are transgender or intersex, but you likely have had transgender or intersex persons in your life and not known it. Some estimates are that up to 1 in 500 is transgender* and about 1 in 1500 or more is intersex**. So, what caused your child to be transgender or intersex?

What causes a person’s sexual orientation is unknown. Causes for people being transgender or intersex are also not fully understood. A huge variety of factors are at work in making each individual the person that they are, and there is no one reason that causes people to be transgender. It has nothing to do with anything you did or did not do, nor anything your child did or did not do.

Families love their children and want what is best for them. You cannot change your child; you can, however, change your response to your child. Your specific response can improve your child’s health and happiness. Your consistent parenting and unconditional love have a central and enduring influence on your child’s life. The parenting guidelines in this brochure have been shown by research to improve the physical and mental health of LGBTQ children.

*On the Calculation of the Prevalence of Transsexualism, by Femke Olyslager and Lynn Conway, September 6, 2007

**Blackless, Melanie, Anthony Charuvastra, Amanda Derryck, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Karl Lauzanne, and Ellen Lee. 2000. “How sexually dimorphic are we? Review and synthesis.” *American Journal of Human Biology* 12:151.

Common Terms

LGBTQI stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex persons.

Transgender is a general term describing people whose gender identity is different from the sex that was assigned at birth.

Intersex describes people who are born with external genitals, internal reproductive systems or chromosomes which are not typically male or female.

Advocating for Your Child

As a parent, you will need to help your child in many parts of his or her life. Specific needs will depend on the age of your child.

- ▶ Work with your child’s teachers and school personnel for appropriate bathrooms, sports teams, after school activities. Most likely you will have to educate the school staff.
- ▶ Work with your family doctor to understand your child’s special medical needs, including the option of puberty-delaying drugs.
- ▶ Teach your child how to cope with others who may try to bully or tease your child.
- ▶ Learn about your child’s legal rights around the issues of name and gender changes on official documents, applications, ID cards, passports, drivers licenses, etc.
- ▶ Educate all your friends, and parents of your child’s friends on appropriate pronouns that will be helpful and not hurtful to your child.
- ▶ Be alert for signs of deep depression or suicidal thoughts in your child; seek professional care if needed. Being transgender or intersex is not a mental illness, but children feeling rejected by their families have a much higher risk of suicide.
- ▶ Teach your child about healthy sexual behavior, seeking relationships that are non-violent, mutual, supportive, and respectful.
- ▶ Be prepared to open your home to the transgender friends of your children whose parents are unable to accept them in their own homes.

