

Take Aways: Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse College students

CU TransCare
Trinity.Bryant@colorado.edu

Barriers to success

- Harassment, bullying, & targeting at school
- *Mental health disparities*: increased rates of co-occurring mental health disorders and an increased risk of suicide
- *Academic success barriers*: unfair treatment at school, limited access to gender neutral housing and bathroom options, difficult processes for navigating name and gender changes, and exclusivity in college athletics
- *Financial instability*: being more likely to have lower income, facing more obstacles in the financial aid process, higher reliance on federal student loans, higher need for working more hours and/or holding multiple jobs, experiencing less family support, and high costs associated with gender affirming care

Protective Factors

- Social support is the biggest protective factor.
- Using correct names and pronouns for students, and students being able to easily change these in campus systems and records
- Gender neutral bathroom & housing options
- Presence of student health centers, Pride/LGBTQIA+/cultural centers, and culturally inclusive mental health services on campus
- Inclusive, anti-discrimination policies that are upheld by higher education institutions
- TGD-inclusive curriculum in courses

Motivational Interviewing Principles & Actionable Steps

Four guiding principles- RULE

- Resist the Fixing Reflex
- Understand the person's own motivations
- Listen with empathy & compassion
- Empower the individual

Actionable Steps

- Create an environment that fosters safety
- Hold expectation of mutual respect
- Offer your pronouns. Invite sharing. Mirror language
- Acknowledge mistakes and move forward
 - "I'm sorry. Thank you for correcting me."
- Omit gendered language or use it diligently
- Invite, don't force
 - "I'd like to hear your experience if you are willing to share."
- Express gratitude for being trusted
- Ask if they know what would be helpful to them
- Ask for permission to share resources
- Consider student's strengths
- Be mindful of your role

Vignette Guidelines

- Discuss thoughts & potential directions
- Roleplay (practice interactions)
- Debrief
 - What felt uncomfortable? What felt supportive?
 - Areas to improve? Suggestions?
 - Is there more you'd like to know?

Vignette 1*

A student you've had multiple interactions with over the years sends you an email and signs with a different name (Samantha) than the name on file (Samuel). The student attends an appointment with you and when retrieving them from the waiting area, you use the name on file. The student puts on a weak smile and says, "I go by Samantha." The student is there to discuss hopes of graduation the next spring semester and applying for grad school.

-Later in the appointment, Samantha says, "It's weird to see my old name on my transcript and other stuff."

Vignette 2*

Kelly is a first year student. Kelly has had low participation throughout the semester both in lecture and on graded discussion posts. Kelly emailed the professor apologizing for the low engagement and is now attending office hours. Kelly shares choosing CU because it was "supposed to be accepting," but has felt on edge since starting college. Specifically, Kelly shares some people in the residence hall have been using offensive language towards queer people, and Kelly hasn't felt comfortable leaving the dorm room. When asked what would be helpful, Kelly says "I don't know. CU isn't what I expected and now I can't even be a good student." Kelly hasn't shared pronouns or other identities.

-Kelly later shares feeling anger and discomfort after reading a discussion post from another student who expressed support for the introduction of a bill limiting gender affirming care to minors.

*Vignettes contain no PHI. These are examples for educational purposes only.

Campus Resources

- **CAPS:** provides a variety of confidential mental health services for LGBTQ+ students, including groups, letters of support and identify-affirming care.
- **OVA:** confidential advocacy and short-term trauma counseling for students, staff and faculty who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic, disturbing or life-disrupting event.
- **Pride Center:** provide a sense of belonging and community for LGBTQ+ students, staff and faculty. Offers a variety of community events and support services.
- **Medical Services:** inclusive care for students, insurance coverage for transitioning, hormone therapy, preventative care, sexual & reproductive health services.
- **OIEC:** Implements, educates and enforces [four university policies](#) to address nondiscrimination

Other Resources

- Rocky Mountain Equality
- One Colorado
- Colorado Name Change Project
- charlie amáyá scott, Ph.D. to visit CU 4/22/2026
- *Blog:* Erin in the Morning
- *Book:* He/She/They by Schuyler Bailar
- *Book:* Beyond the Gender Binary by Alok Vaid-Menon
- *Book:* Supporting Transgender Autistic Youth and Adults by Finn V. Gratton
- *Film:* Disclosure (on Netflix currently)
- *Film:* Heightened Scrutiny (local screening One Colorado 2/22, Center on Colfax 3/28)