



# ACEs LA

## Lunch and Learn

*Gender Affirming Care for Youth*  
Wednesday, June 18th, 2025

### Agenda

- *Dr. Katherine Gardner*
- *Q&A Session*
- *Closing Statements*



**Health Services**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Please remain muted

Session will be recorded

Use chat for Q&A



Katherine Gardner

Katherine Gardner is a Family Practice physician who works with transgender and gender expansive people to provide needed medical care and services. They have been doing this work since 2012 in various settings. Dr. Gardner was the medical director of the Gender Health Center in Sacramento for 8 years and worked in several health systems in the Sacramento area doing both primary and gender affirming medical care for transgender people of all ages. Dr. Gardner has been with LA County DHS since June 2021. At DHS, they are currently seeing transgender and gender expansive patients of all ages and are leading the Care with Pride initiative to improve access to services for LGBTQIA+ patients.

# Gender Affirming Care for Youth

Katherine Gardner, MD (they/them)

LA County Department of Health Services

# About me

Katherine Gardner, MD, MBA (they/them)

LA County Department of Health Services



**Health Services**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

# Outline

- Review of ACEs, PACEs as it relates to transgender people
- Define "Gender Affirming Care/Gender Affirming Services"
- Current laws/policy that drives gender affirming medical care
- How to affirm and support youth at times when access to medical care is threatened

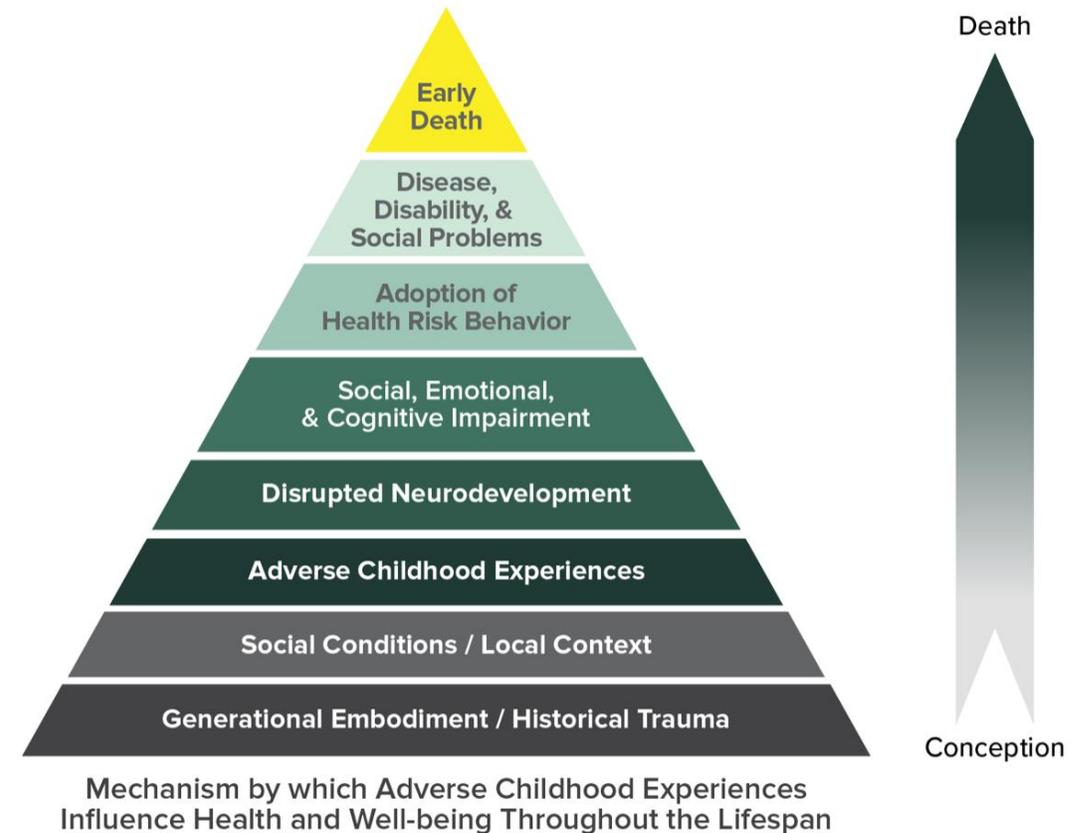


PA Photos

# Focusing on the Fundamentals: ACEs and PACEs

## ACEs (Adverse Childhood Events)

- 10 traumatic childhood experiences which, when counted together, predict wellbeing in adulthood
- Numerical score to traumatic experiences in childhood from 0-10
- Score of 4 or more conveys a meaningfully elevated risk for negative health and psychosocial outcomes in adulthood including early death



Our relationships and experiences—even those in childhood—can affect our health and well-being. Difficult childhood experiences are very common. Please tell us whether you have had any of the experiences listed below, as they may be affecting your health today or may affect your health in the future. This information will help you and your provider better understand how to work together to support your health and well-being.

<b>Instructions:</b> Below is a list of 10 categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). From the list below, please place a checkmark next to each ACE category that you experienced prior to your 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday. Then, please add up the number of categories of ACEs you experienced and put the <i>total number</i> at the bottom.	
1. Did you feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, or had no one to protect or take care of you?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Did you lose a parent through divorce, abandonment, death, or other reason?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Did you live with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill, or attempted suicide?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Did you live with anyone who had a problem with drinking or using drugs, including prescription drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Did your parents or adults in your home ever hit, punch, beat, or threaten to harm each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Did you live with anyone who went to jail or prison?	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Did a parent or adult in your home ever swear at you, insult you, or put you down?	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Did you feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were special?	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Did you experience unwanted sexual contact (such as fondling or oral/anal/vaginal intercourse/penetration)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Your ACE score is the total number of checked responses</b>	

Do you believe that these experiences have affected your health?  Not Much  Some  A Lot

Experiences in childhood are just one part of a person's life story.  
There are many ways to heal throughout one's life.

Please let us know if you have questions about privacy or confidentiality.

# Focusing on the Fundamentals: ACEs and PACEs

## 2019 Study looked at ACE scores in transgender people<sup>1</sup>

60.7% transgender respondents had a score of at least 4. Compared to 48.1% of LGB peers<sup>1</sup>

## 2023 Bulletin in MMWR, prevalence of ACEs across US States<sup>2</sup>

Looked at prevalence of score of 4 or more by state and found that it varies from 11.9% to 22.7%<sup>2</sup>

**Table 3**  
ACEs by gender-identity.

ACE Score	Total Sample (n = 477; %)	Gender Identity (%)	
		Cis-gender (n = 375)	Transgender (n = 102)
0	12.8	13.9	8.8
1	11.5	11.7	10.8
2	13.6	13.9	12.7
3	11.3	12.5	6.9
4	13.4	12.3	17.6
5	11.1	9.9	15.7
6	8.6	9.6	4.9
7	6.7	6.4	7.8
8	5.5	5.1	6.9
9	3.6	3.7	2.9
10	1.9	1.1	4.9

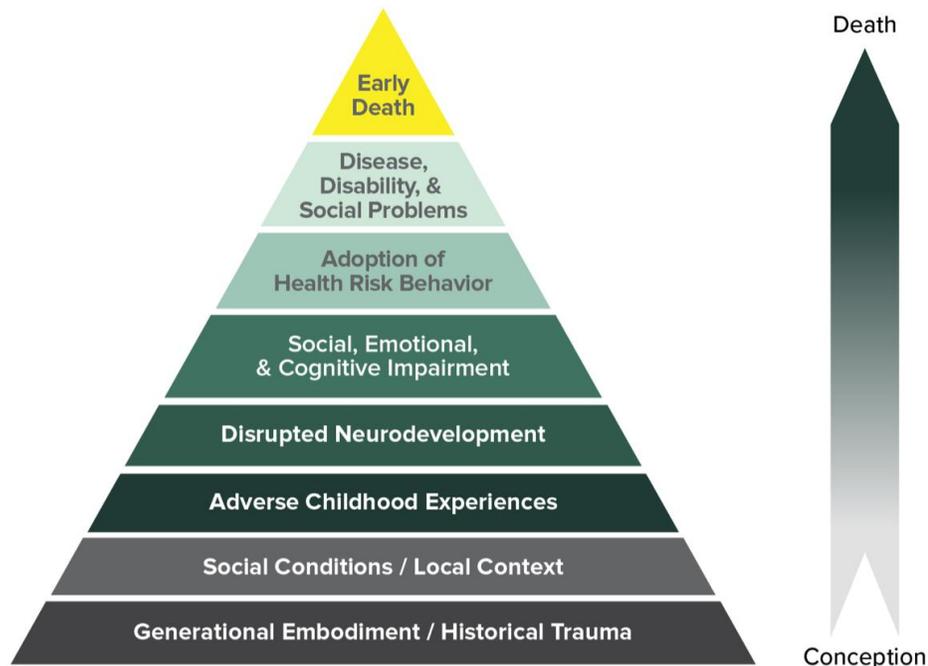
Notes. \*includes transgender, discordance between sex assigned at birth and current gender identity, and other gender minorities.

<sup>1</sup>Schnarrs, Phillip W., et al. "Differences in adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and quality of physical and mental health between transgender and cisgender sexual minorities." *Journal of psychiatric research* 119 (2019): 1-6.

<sup>2</sup>Swedo, Elizabeth A. "Prevalence of adverse childhood experiences among US adults — behavioral risk factor surveillance system, 2011–2020." *MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report* 72 (2023).

# Focusing on the Fundamentals: ACEs and PACEs

## Mental Health, Social and Health Outcomes of Transgender People Are Consistent with High ACE Scores



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

## 2015 Survey of Transgender People:

29% living in poverty, 40% trans people of color (14% US pop)

15% unemployment rate, 20% trans people of color (5% US pop)

20% without stable housing or homeless

20% work in underground economies

40% attempted suicide

39% psychological distress in previous month (5% US pop)

1.4% HIV positive, 3.4% transwomen, 19% Black transwomen (0.3% US pop)

# ACEs, PACES and Findings Specific to Transgender People

## ACEs:

Greater percentage of transgender adults have high ACE scores compared to cisgender peers

Social/mental health outcomes for transgender adults as a population are consistent with the expected consequences of high ACE scores

# Focusing on the Fundamentals: ACEs and PACEs

## PACEs (Protective and Compensatory Events)

- 7 specifically identified positive childhood experiences
- "Dose-response" in reducing risk of depression and other adverse outcomes associated with a particular ACE score



# Focusing on the Fundamentals: ACEs and PACEs

## **PACEs (Protective and Compensatory Events)**

- 1) Felt able to talk to their family about feelings
- 2) Felt their family stood by them during difficult times
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community traditions
- 4) Felt a sense of belonging in high school (not including those who did not attend school or were home schooled)
- 5) Felt supported by friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
- 7) Felt safe and protected by an adult in their home



# Focusing on the Fundamentals: ACEs and PACEs

## PACES: 2010 Study looked at "resiliency" in LGBT youth

- 1) How often did any of your parents/caregivers talk openly about your identity?
- 2) How often were your openly LGBT friends invited to join family activities?
- 3) How often did any of your parents/caregivers bring you to an LGBT youth organization or event?
- 4) How often did any of your parents/caregivers appreciate your clothing or hairstyle, even though it might not have been "typical"?

Ryan, Caitlin, et al. "Family acceptance in adolescence and the health of LGBT young adults." *Journal of child and adolescent psychiatric nursing* 23.4 (2010): 205-213.

**Table 1. Family Acceptance as Predictors of Health Outcomes**

Outcome variable	Family acceptance categories			Between-group difference
	Low acceptance	Moderate acceptance	High acceptance	F/ $\chi^2$ (df = 2)
Self-esteem	2.62	2.83	2.95	F = 17.10***
Social support	3.26	3.78	4.10	F = 19.90***
General health	3.35	3.55	3.96	F = 8.96**
Depression (CES-D)	20.10	16.48	10.37	F = 15.93***
Substance abuse (past 5 years)	1.46	1.10	.85	F = 4.81**
Sexual behavior risk (past 6 months)	35.8%	37.4%	28.4%	$\chi^2 = 1.67$
Suicidal thoughts (past 6 mos.)	38.3%	22.9%	18.5%	$\chi^2 = 8.96^*$
Suicide attempts (lifetime)	56.8%	36.1%	30.9%	$\chi^2 = 12.57^{**}$

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

# Focusing on the Fundamentals: ACEs and PACEs

## **PACEs: 2016 study regarding family support and mental health outcomes for transgender youth**

Transgender children who were supported by their families:

- 1) No more likely to have symptoms of depression than their age matched cisgender peers
- 2) Mildly elevated levels of anxiety compared to age matched cisgender peers



Olson, Kristina R., et al. "Mental health of transgender children who are supported in their identities." *Pediatrics* 137.3 (2016).

# ACEs, PACES and Findings Specific to Transgender People

## PACES:

When established PACES (protective and compensatory experiences) are re-framed with regards to gender, data we have regarding factors that predict resiliency in transgender people match

# Defining Gender Affirming Care/Services



## **Personal:**

Hair  
Smell  
Clothing  
Shoes  
Nails  
Binding  
Tucking  
Packing  
Name  
Pronouns

## **Social:**

Being "out" in different settings (home, school, friends, medical/therapy)  
Community  
Events  
Interpersonal connections

## **Medical/Health:**

Routine medical and mental health care where name, pronouns, experience with gender are embraced  
Hormones  
Vocal training  
Surgeries (adults)

## **Legal:**

Name/gender marker change

- Driver's license
- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Bank
- Medical record
- Insurance
- Work/pay stub

# Medical Gender Affirming Services for Youth

Current State of Access in California:

No changes to laws governing access to gender affirming medical services

Fear, worry, misinformation can impact access even when law and policy have not changed

# California Law/Policy: DHCS

2013

- CA implements Affordable Care Act
- Prohibition of discrimination based on gender identity with regards to coverage of "Transgender Services"

2013

- CA DHCS All Plans Letter 13-011
- Defines "Transgender Services" as hormonal care, labs, surgeries and psychotherapy

2016

- CA DHCS All Plans Letter 16-03
- Reminds health plans that "Transgender Services" are medically necessary and must be covered

2020

- CA DHCS All Plans Letter 20-018
- Defines "medically necessary" and that gender affirming surgeries are considered medically necessary

5/7/2025

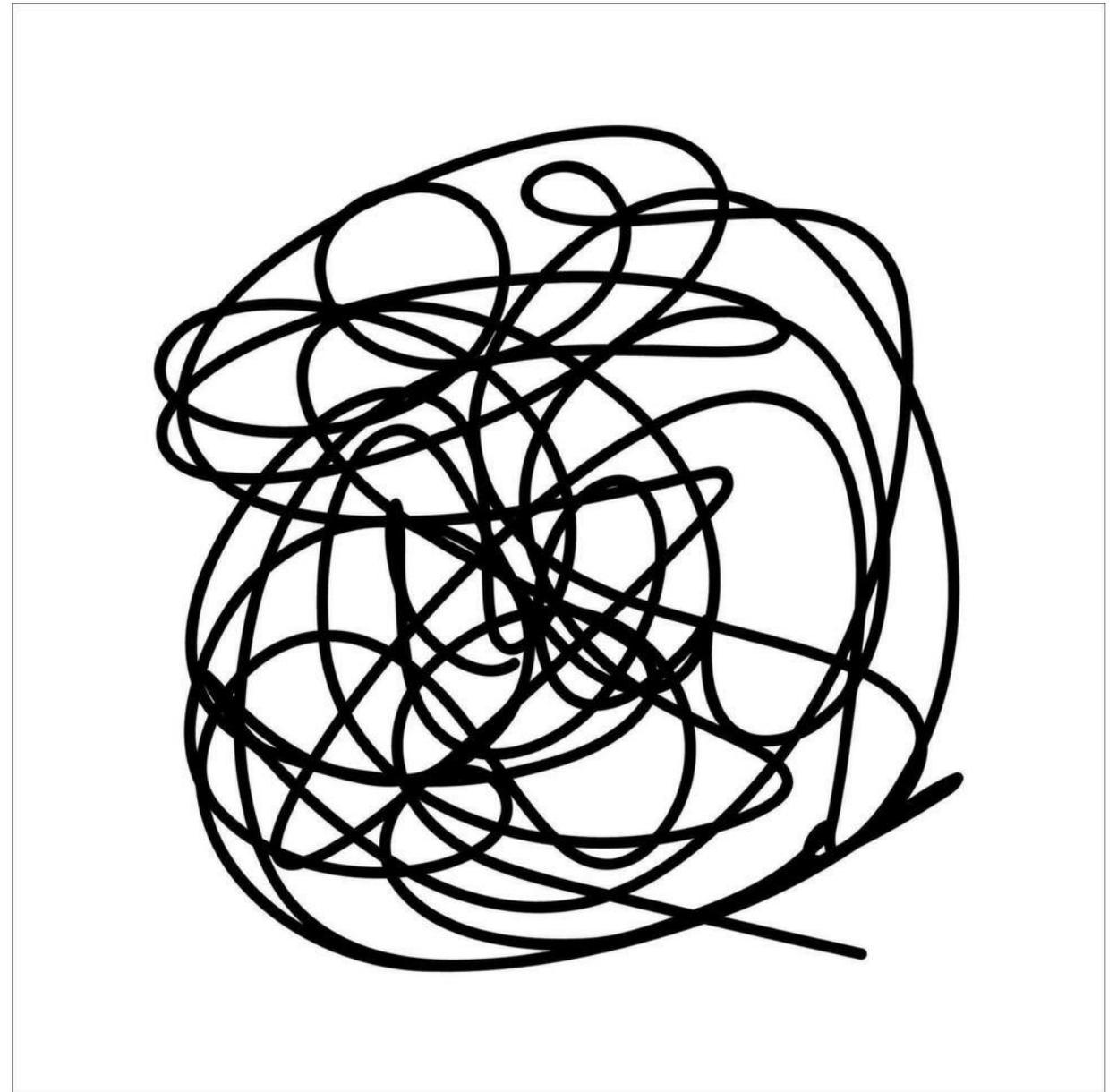
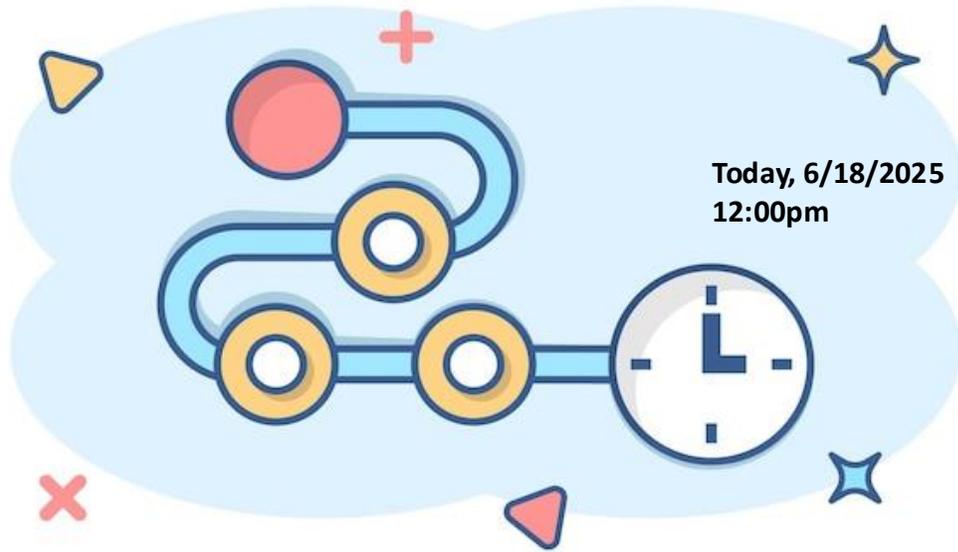
- Provider Bulletin: Directed to providers and MCPs
- Nothing has changed

# California Law: Foster Youth

2018: AB 2119 signed by Jerry Brown

Foster Youth Bill of Rights includes that CA foster youth have a right to access to gender affirming health and behavioral health care

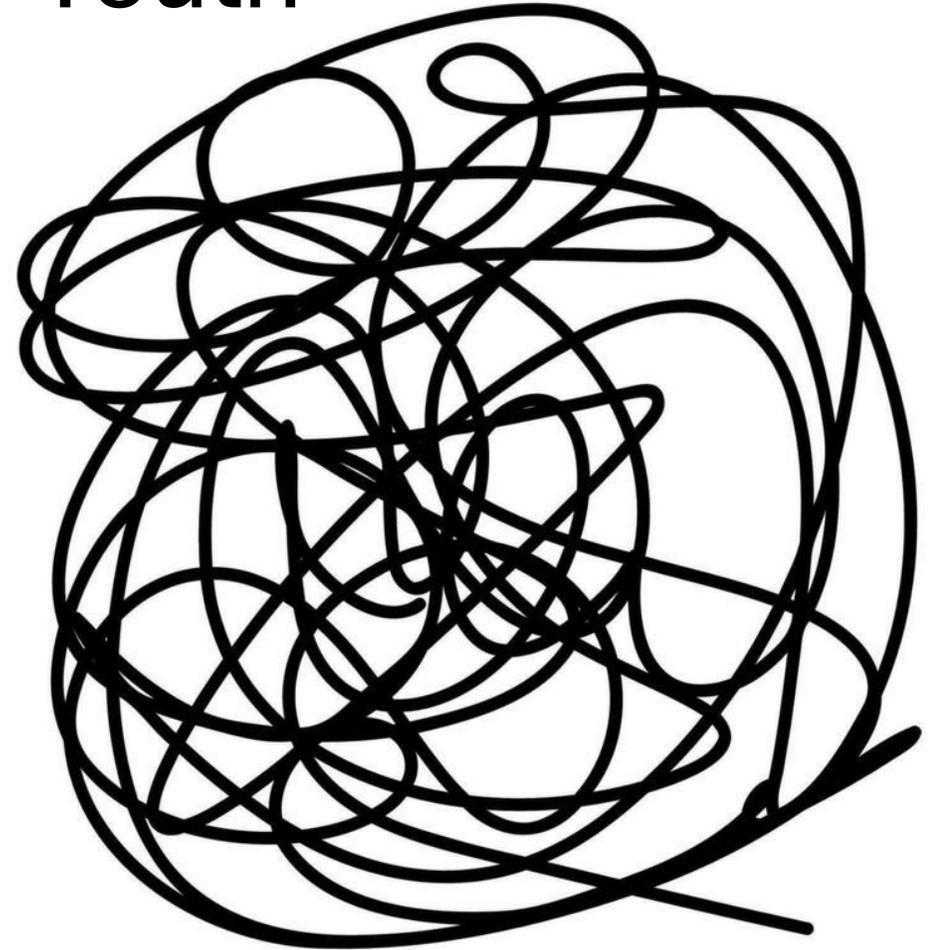
# Future Access



# Gender Affirming Care for Youth

How do we provide "Gender Affirming Care" through uncertainty, changing law and new policy?

- 1) Remember that "Gender Affirming Care" is an umbrella term
- 2) Remember PACEs



# Defining Gender Affirming Care/Services



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## **Legal:**

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# PACEs Through a Gender Affirming Lens

- 1) Felt able to talk with their family about feelings
- 2) Felt family stood by them during difficult times
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community traditions
- 4) Felt a sense of belonging in school
- 5) Felt supported by friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
- 7) Felt safe and protected by an adult at home

# PACEs Through a Gender Affirming Lens

- 1) Felt able to talk with their family about their gender; out at home
- 2) Felt family stood by them during difficult times
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community traditions
- 4) Felt a sense of belonging in school
- 5) Felt supported by friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
- 7) Felt safe and protected by an adult at home

# PACEs Through a Gender Affirming Lens

- 1) Felt able to talk with their family about their gender; out at home
- 2) Felt family helped access interventions for gender affirmation
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community traditions
- 4) Felt a sense of belonging in school
- 5) Felt supported by friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
- 7) Felt safe and protected by an adult at home

# PACEs Through a Gender Affirming Lens

- 1) Felt able to talk with their family about their gender; out at home
- 2) Felt family helped access interventions for gender affirmation
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community events, like Pride
- 4) Felt a sense of belonging in school
- 5) Felt supported by friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
- 7) Felt safe and protected by an adult at home

# PACEs Through a Gender Affirming Lens

- 1) Felt able to talk with their family about their gender; out at home
- 2) Felt family helped access interventions for gender affirmation
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community events, like Pride
- 4) Out, respected and had trans community at school
- 5) Felt supported by friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
- 7) Felt safe and protected by an adult at home

# PACEs Through a Gender Affirming Lens

- 1) Felt able to talk with their family about their gender; out at home
- 2) Felt family helped access interventions for gender affirmation
- 3) Enjoyed participating in community events, like Pride
- 4) Out, respected and had trans community at school
- 5) Out to and supported by friends, had trans friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
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- 1) Felt able to talk with their family about their gender; out at home
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- 3) Enjoyed participating in community events, like Pride
- 4) Out, respected and had trans community at school
- 5) Out to and supported by friends
- 6) Had at least 2 nonparent adults who genuinely support them
- 7) Felt an adult at home protected and advocated for them