

GENDER & SEXUALITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

2021
ACCOMPLISHMENTS



**Children's Hospital
of Philadelphia®**



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REFLECTIONS ON OUR YEAR

We experienced many challenges during 2020, and our Gender & Sexuality Development Program family hopes that you and your loved ones are all as well as possible. As we moved from 2020 into 2021, we were strengthened by our renewed commitment to health, social justice, community and collaboration. We remain grateful for all that we have as a community of health and healing.

The year of 2021 has been a major phase of growth for our team. The strains of 2020 resulted in many local and regional clinics that support transgender and gender nonbinary children, youth and families reaching capacity due to staffing limits and/or program reductions. We were grateful that many of the families then started reaching out to us for care. While we typically have averaged between 250 to 350 new families in a year — this year we have welcomed more than 800 new families to our Gender & Sexuality Development Program.

We are only able to support these wonderful families and keep our doors open due to the unending support from leadership at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. During a candid conversation with the leadership as the number of new families was reaching our support capacity limits, we asked if there would ever be a day when we might have to join other clinics or programs and say that we were closed to new families — and the answer was a clear NO. This was backed up with approval for four additional support staff to join the team.

After a rain of struggle to meet the demand of so many new families while dealing with policy challenges on the local and state level, the rainbow is more support to assure that every family receives the best care possible in the shortest amount of time. And, the double rainbow is the joy of seeing both our Philadelphia and Voorhees, N.J., clinics continuing to grow!

In the following pages, please enjoy more detail about all the areas we've been exploring, expanding and innovating throughout the year — and will carry joyously into 2022. Thank you for your support to make our work possible. Together, we make a stronger community of health and healing.

Stay healthy, stay strong, stay active and advocate!

With gratitude,



Nadia Dowshen, MD, MSHP
*Co-Director, Gender & Sexuality Development Program
Craig-Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine
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IMPROVING HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS & POLICY TO SUPPORT TRANSGENDER YOUTH



ENSURING ACCESS TO GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE FOR YOUTH

Gender-affirming medical care is crucial for the health and well-being of transgender youth, and yet more than 35 states have proposed legislation to ban clinicians from providing gender-affirming medical and/or mental health service to youth and their families. In response to this harmful legislation, our team engaged in several efforts to advocate for and with trans youth and their families. In May 2021, Dr. Nadia Dowshen (*shown top left corner above*) participated in a virtual panel discussion with the Human Rights Campaign to advocate for the importance of gender-affirming medical care for minors and dispel common myths surrounding this care. A recording of the live-stream panel is available on YouTube and has been viewed nearly 500 times!

In August, Danielle Apple, our Clinical Research Coordinator, Dr. Dowshen and their colleagues wrote an Issue Brief with PolicyLab at CHOP titled, “Ensuring a Policy Environment Supportive of Gender-affirming Care for Youth.” In the brief, they highlight recent research on parent and youth perspectives of the life-saving aspects of gender-affirming care and share key policy recommendations for making gender-affirming care accessible and affordable. The brief has been shared with various policymakers and stakeholders, and we hope to use this tool to prevent more states from introducing care-ban bills and increase awareness of gender-affirming care for minors. ■

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**EVERYONE CAN PLAY:
SPORTS PARTICIPATION FOR TRANS
AND GENDER EXPANSIVE YOUTH**

At least 27 states, including Pennsylvania, have introduced bills that ban transgender athletes from participating in school sports. In response to the introduction of this harmful legislation in Pennsylvania, Drs. Nadia Dowshen, Chris Renjilian and Alfred Atanda Jr. wrote an op-ed for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* advocating for the important role of sports in all students' lives, especially those who identify as transgender, nonbinary or are exploring their gender. They describe the lifesaving benefits sports can have for these youth and the detrimental effects of banning them from participation.

We also participated in a research study with colleagues at the University of Michigan to assess attitudes of pediatric gender-affirming care providers toward this proposed legislation. Researchers surveyed providers from all 50 states, and the most salient theme that emerged was that prohibiting trans youth from participating in sports would lead to worsening stigmatization and discrimination. Providers also reported concerns about detrimental effects on youth's mental health and well-being, politization of trans youth, and forced changes to clinical practice. ■



**THE MESSAGE IS
CLEAR: BANNING
TRANS YOUTH FROM
PLAYING SPORTS
IS UNETHICAL,
DANGEROUS AND
MUST BE PREVENTED.**

“The vast majority of transgender youth do not desire to become elite-level athletes. They just want the chance to play.”

— Nadia Dowshen, Chris Renjilian and Alfred Atanda Jr.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ADVOCACY



Collingswood Pride Event



Youth Pride Health and Wellness Fair

2021 EVENT OVERVIEW

- June 11: Community Day, Haddonfield, N.J.
- June 16: Pride Event, Collingswood, N.J.,
- Sept. 12: Jersey Gay Pride, Cherry Hill, N.J.
- Oct. 29: Youth Pride Health and Wellness Fair, Philadelphia, Pa.

TABLING AT PRIDE EVENTS

The Gender and Sexuality Development Program (GSDP) was busy attending pride events throughout New Jersey and Philadelphia in the past year. Even with changes in events due to COVID-19, we still were able to join our friends in New Jersey and Philadelphia for wonderful outreach events!

We kicked off Pride with Haddonfield, N.J., on June 11 by participating in their community day event. We laughed, sang and talked with members of the local community to provide valuable information for outreach and clinic information. A week later, we visited our neighbors in Collingswood, N.J., for their Pride event on June 16, which was paired with Drag Queen Storytime and opportunities for local organizations to share resources with the community. Our family support and education specialist Samantha King represented the during this presentation to showcase our amazing clinic and the resources that we can provide. We took a few months in the summer to cool down while we geared up for another great event in Cherry Hill, N.J., for its annual New Jersey Gay Pride Festival. This was another fabulous opportunity to connect with the community and share our program information with more of New Jersey.

Fast-forward to fall where we participated in the Adolescent Initiative: Youth Pride Health and Wellness Fair at the William Way LGBT Community Center in Philadelphia. This spooktacular event was Halloween-themed so our team members got to celebrate in costumes and with decorations. This event stood out as a great way to connect with youth in a fun and relaxed environment where we provided great information on all our clinic can offer. ■

PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL DISTRICT ADDS GENDER NEUTRAL BATHROOMS

Over the summer, the Philadelphia School District announced that every school building will have a gender-neutral bathroom starting Aug. 31, 2021! This is another positive step the district is taking to create an inclusive, welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students. We applaud the district for this important step forward and are excited to see what it does next! ■

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EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Here at the Gender Program, we strive to provide our youth with high-quality care and unyielding support. We also look for opportunities to engage youth to become advocates and leaders in their own community. Through a grant to Dr. Dowshen from the Stoneleigh Foundation, we have recruited young transwomen to serve as Youth Quality Evaluators (YQE) to assess the quality of HIV testing services in Philadelphia. YQE complete mystery shopping visits and facility audits of HIV testing sites and evaluate their experiences using survey tools that were developed and modified with their input. When our YQE complete assessments of organizations across the city they will then be part of the process to provide feedback, training and technical assistance — empowering them

as experts to improve the care that they and other youth will receive in the future. We sat down for a Q&A with Genesis Santiago, one of our YQE, to learn about her involvement in the study and advocacy efforts.

Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself.

A: My name is Genesis Santiago, I'm 21 and a Pisces. I like eating food, my favorite color is lavender or red, and I am a proud transgender woman.

Q: Why did you get involved in this project? What excites you about it?

A: Honestly, I got involved in this project because I want to be an advocate for trans youth and help trans youth become themselves; I want their insides to look like their outsides in their eyes, not the public's view. What excites me about this project is possibly expanding becoming a trans educator helping other trans youth find themselves.

Q: What do you hope to do in the future?

A: In the future, I would like to become a therapist or counselor, but for now I'm just working a 9-to-5 making ends meet day by day. I want to expand my education, further my career and actually become the person that I want to be.

Q: Do you see yourself as an advocate for trans youth? How so?

A: Yes, I see myself as a trans advocate because I once was as many would say, a little boy dressing up in females' clothes, but I didn't see it that way. Most people don't understand that in my body and my heart and my soul I was a woman until I stopped caring about what others had to say and fully started embracing who I was. I want [trans youth] to know that you don't have to be worried about what anyone would say because you have a great support system and you have many people that love and adore you. I got a lot of inspiration from Laverne Cox and Indya Moore. Above all, you have yourself and no one can take that from you. I love you guys. ■

STATE-OF-THE-ART MULTIDISCIPLINARY CARE & TRAINING



SCHOOL PERSONNEL TRAINING PROGRAM

The 2020-2021 school year continued to provide opportunities for creative outreach to support transgender youth in schools. Formal training remained completely virtual, and, as we moved into the summer months, schools started looking forward to in-person options for the upcoming school year. Many schools that could not fit virtual training into the 2020-21 school year were eager to receive training during their professional development week before the start of the 2021-22 school year. While normally a packed week for training, this year offered two full weeks of professional development. Over the course of those two

weeks, Samantha King, MSW, MEd (Gender Program education specialist), *at left*, successfully trained 835 teachers, school counselors and school administrators in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. ■

NAVIGATING GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERY REFERRALS

In last year's annual report, we shared that our clinic has been supporting many of our families in accessing gender-affirming surgical care as well as some considerations to take when starting the surgery process. The number of our families exploring gender-affirming surgeries has grown exponentially over the past year and with COVID-19 restrictions on surgery scheduling slowly lifting, our families have been faced with long wait times for consultations and surgery scheduling. Our team recommends that if you or a family member may be interested in gender-affirming surgery, research early and give ample time to plan for and have surgery.



We have also seen that insurance companies have been revising their gender-affirming care coverage to be more specific about who does and does not qualify for surgery according to the insurance policy. There are more companies that are creating gender-affirming care policies, but they often only allow coverage for surgery for those over the age of 18, even though this is in opposition to the guidance of major medical organizations such as WPATH, the Endocrine Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics. This has left several of our families in a position of having surgery denied because their child is not yet 18, so our social worker Katelyn Regan, LCSW, MEd, *at left*, has taken on the role of surgery

advocate for our team. Katelyn works to compile letters of support and to help families through the initial stages of planning surgery. They also support families when a patient's surgery has been denied to better understand the insurance policy's reasons for denying the claim and to explore whether there is an opportunity to appeal the denial. Katelyn has worked with several families to initiate appeals over the past year and in two cases has worked through the appeals process up to a third level external appeal, where the denial was subsequently overturned, and the surgery was approved. ■

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POP@CHOP



POP@CHOP handing out pronoun badges at the orientation for new resident trainees.

SUPPORTING MEDICAL TRAINEES: RESIDENT TRAINING/ POP@CHOP

A large part of what makes CHOP one of the best children’s hospitals in the world is its Pediatric Residency Program, which trains the next generation of pediatricians. In 2020, a group of pediatric residents formed the group POP(Providers of Pride)@CHOP – a physician-led group dedicated to addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ trainees and faculty. Through education and advocacy, POP@CHOP hopes to increase patient, family and provider comfort navigating medical health systems.

One of the first project initiatives was to build new, more comprehensive learning experiences for residents to provide care that is gender-affirming. Two learning experiences were created and implemented for residents. The first included a didactic session to better understand gender identity development for children and adolescence. This was paired with an opportunity for residents to role-play a clinical visit

with a transgender youth and parent. Four incredible family volunteers participated in this event and allowed residents the opportunity to practice discussing gender identity with patients and families.

The second learning experience involved a panel discussion where residents had the opportunity to hear directly from three GSDP youth and their parents. The families gave open and honest feedback on what gender-affirming care looks like and what it means to be seen and heard by their medical providers. A key takeaway from the panelists was: “They (physicians) don’t have to get it ‘right’ all the time. Kindness and showing you want to do right by people is something these kiddos can feel, even over a zoom screen.”

In total, close to 50 residents participated in the learning experiences. The Gender Program looks forward to continued collaboration with POP@CHOP to help support resident education and improve care for trans and non-binary youth across the hospital system. ■

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

PET THERAPY IN GENDER DIVERSE YOUTH

Development and pilot testing of an Animal Assisted Play Therapy® group for transgender youth is a multiphase project that will ultimately result in an eight-week group curriculum designed to support the social and emotional health of transgender youth. The initial stages of the project have included focus groups with gender diverse adults, as well as mental health clinicians specializing in trans-affirmative care and in Animal Assisted Play Therapy. Analysis of these focus groups is informing the thematic content and activities that will be included in the group curriculum. In the 2022 calendar year, the curriculum will be introduced to a group of up to 40 transgender youth in a waitlist-control trial. The pilot groups will measure the impact of the group intervention on measures of anxiety, depression and family engagement. This project is supported by the Purina Sponsorship for Human-Animal Bond Studies. The Gender Program is partnering with Katharine Wenocur, DSW, LCSW, RPT-S, who is a visiting assistant professor in Jefferson's MS in Community and Trauma Counseling program. ■



97.1% OF CAREGIVERS
WERE SATISFIED WITH
THE PUBERTY BLOCKER
IMPLANTS; 94.4%
WOULD UNDERGO THE
PROCEDURE AGAIN.

CAREGIVER EXPERIENCES WITH PUBERTY SUPPRESSION IMPLANTS

This year, our research team published a study on caregiver experiences with puberty blocker implants (i.e., histrelin) in the journal *Transgender Health*. Caregivers of 36 children who had a histrelin implant placed between January 2008 and May 2019 completed an online survey to assess their satisfaction with the procedure. Results were overwhelmingly positive: 97.1% of caregivers were satisfied with the procedure and 94.4% would undergo the procedure again. Caregivers were also asked to identify challenges associated with the procedure, and the most common challenges reported pertained to affordability (39.8%) and insurance denials (39.8%). Increasing access to and affordability of puberty blockers is crucial to ensuring that youth have access to this potentially life-saving procedure. Our next step is to interview youth who have received a puberty blocker to understand their unique experiences and how this care has impacted their quality of life. ■

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HOSPITALIZATION FOR SUICIDE ATTEMPT AND SELF-HARM AMONG YOUTH DIAGNOSED WITH GENDER DYSPHORIA

We partnered with Hannah Mitchell, MD, and Nadir Yehya, MD, from the intensive care unit at CHOP to examine rates of hospitalization for suicide attempt and self-harm among youth with a formal gender dysphoria diagnosis. We used a large, nationally representative database (2016 Kids' Inpatient Database) to compare the prevalence of suicidality and self-harm between youth with and without gender dysphoria. Prevalence of suicidal ideation and suicide attempt in the entire cohort was 2%, compared to 35.3% in young people with gender dysphoria. Using the expanded definition of self-harm and attempted suicide, prevalence increased to 44.1%.

Additionally, we found that there were fewer non-white, publicly insured and low median income youth with a gender dysphoria diagnosis compared to the entire cohort, which suggests inequities in accessing gender-affirming care among racial minority and economically disadvantaged youth. The results of this study highlight the need for structural interventions and policies to reduce discrimination and improve access to gender-affirming care in order to prevent these adverse outcomes. We also look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues in the ICU at CHOP to ensure services are gender-affirming when youth are receiving critical care. ■



THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR STRUCTURAL INTERVENTIONS AND POLICIES TO REDUCE DISCRIMINATION AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE IN ORDER TO PREVENT ADVERSE OUTCOMES.

STAFF & COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS



JEFF EUGENE, MD

Jeffrey (he/him/his), is a pediatrician and adolescent medicine specialist. His clinical expertise is in adolescent and young adult primary care, gender-affirming medical care, sexual and reproductive health, medical care for youth living with HIV, and eating disorders. He chose to specialize in adolescent medicine because adolescence and emerging adulthood are remarkable life stages in which physicians can guide and support youth in developing emotional well-being and healthy decision-making that promote wellness in adulthood. Jeff has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Hampton University. He earned his Doctor of Medicine degree at Morehouse School of Medicine. He completed pediatric residency training at UMPC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and Adolescent Medicine fellowship and Academic General Pediatrics fellowship at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

He has conducted research that focuses on the health and well-being of young Black men, including addressing racism and health disparities. His career vision is to contribute to the realization of a better world for marginalized youth through advocating for equitable policies, fostering healthy identity development, promoting emotional well-being, and empowering marginalized youth to secure optimal physical and mental health. Jeff enjoys watching TV and movies, traveling, hiking, reading, listening to music, cooking, writing, and spending time in laughter and love with his family, partner and friends. ■



RYAN LUQUET

Ryan (he/him/his) graduated from Gwynedd Mercy University in 2016 with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. He has held Office Coordinator positions in various wellness clinics and spent time volunteering with Action Wellness and Planned Parenthood to provide LGBTQ inclusive sex education for young adults and teens. Since the spring of 2021, he has been in the role of office administrator for the Gender and Sexuality Development Program. Ryan's role includes scheduling assessments for new patients for both Pennsylvania and New Jersey locations, as well as triaging various office needs for the growing clinic. Ryan enjoys being one of the first points of contact for families and steering them in the direction of support they need. He and his spouse recently bought their first house in Drexel Hill, Pa. In his free time, he enjoys spoiling his cats, knitting, painting and exploring his new neighborhood. ■

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**LIFE ... ACCORDING TO Z:
A CHILDREN'S BOOK BY NADEEN HERRING**

We sat down for a Q&A with Nadeen Herring (she/her/hers) to discuss her new children's book and message for readers:

Q: What is Life ... According to Z about?

A: Life ... According to Z is a book series that chronicles the challenges and celebrations my child, Zion (Z), has encountered since introducing himself to me as my trans son at the age of 7.

Q: What inspired your writing?

A: Writing has always been my first love. Zion and I utilized a journal to communicate when he was in elementary school, which is how he shared his truth with me. Zion and his brothers inspired me to tell our story because the "secrecy" wasn't helping our family; rather, we chose to share Z's story and use my love of "wordstry" to humanize a topic many struggle with. I am inspired by my children and truth. Those two entities alone free my voice and hope.

Q: What message do you hope readers take away from your book?

A: The message I hope readers take away from Life ... According to Z is very simple:

FOR CHILDREN: Your feelings are valid. There is no shame in exploring who you are — even if it doesn't align with what others say you are, should be or should act like. Only you have the right to define YOU. Trust that you are NOT alone.

FOR PARENTS: We don't always get it right. That's OK. But one thing where you will always be right is when you support your child by listening, asking and researching — even when you don't "get it." Experiences of loss, anger, happiness, confusion, defensiveness, etc. are normal. Trust that you are NOT alone.

FOR MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS/SCHOOL PERSONNEL: Handle our children with care. Your choice to serve children and families necessitates due diligence. Bedside manner, personal opinions and/or level of comfort can make or break a human being's life. Take our children seriously. Take trans realities seriously.

FOR BOTTOM LINE: What you don't understand doesn't make it wrong. Sex, gender, orientation, identification and presentation are not the same. But one thing remains constant; every individual has the right to live their truth in this world space. Respect that. ■

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS & PARTNERS!



Center for Experimental
Ethnography at UPENN



PARTNERS AT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PHILADELPHIA:

- Craig-Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine
- Patient and Family Services Department
- Division of Endocrinology and Diabetes
- Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
- Office of Government Affairs, Community Relations & Advocacy

Dionte Gill, 22, volunteers with CHOP's Adolescent Initiative, one of the Gender & Sexuality Development Program's partners. The new Mobile Health Unit will meet youth in their own neighborhoods, offering testing, counseling and connections to providers, including the GSDP.



HOW YOU CAN HELP US

Tell one new person about the Gender & Sexuality Development Program at CHOP. With your financial support, we can expand the program's services and research capabilities, allowing us to serve even more children and their families. To learn how you can make a difference, you can visit www.chop.edu/gender to make a donation online.



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