

**To: All Providers**  
**From: PerformCare**  
**Date: September 5, 2023**  
**Subject: Suicide Prevention #13: Considerations in Working with Transgender People**

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For September, PerformCare would like to focus our communication on a specialized population within the LGBTQ+ community, specifically those who are Transgender. One who is Transgender identifies or expresses a gender identity that is different from that which was assigned at birth. Cisgender refers to those who identify with the gender that was assigned at birth. A recent longitudinal study comparing the two populations identified marked disparities in mental health and suicide risk between the two (Kidd et. al, 2023). Sample size was significant to make these conclusions, with 274 Transgender and 1162 Cisgender adults participating. By comparison, the study found that 38.9% Transgender versus 10.6% Cisgender adults reported significant mental health distress. 44.4 % of Transgender versus 10.5% of Cisgender adults reported recent suicidal ideation. Increases were found when asked about lifetime suicidal ideation at 81.3% for Transgender versus 34.5% for Cisgender adults. Similar disparities were found for suicide attempts, with 6.9% of Transgender versus 1% of Cisgender adults reporting a recent attempt. The disparities for recent non – suicidal self – injury were 21.4% for Transgender versus 1.7% for Cisgender Adult. Lifetime disparities for this category were 56.0 % for Transgender versus 10.6% for Cisgender adults.

With these staggering numbers, it raises the questions about specialized risk factors to be addressed for the Transgender population in therapy that was researched by Kidd et. al (2023). One key risk factor that was addressed in this study was lack of access to gender affirming healthcare which is a known protective factor for suicide. Additionally, lack of access to evidenced based treatments that address specialized concerns for this population were identified. Internalized or societal stigma for diverse populations, as well as lack of social supports and connectedness were also identified. Additional risk related to stigma was identified by Virupaksha, Muralidar, and Ramakrishna et al. (2016). They included factors such as lack of abilities to secure education, housing and employment, as well being bullied, harassed, or being a victim of sexual assault or abuse.

Understanding these disparities and the specialized risk factors associated with those who are Transgender can help therapists formulate a more thorough conceptualization of risk when assessing suicide. Subsequently, working specifically on these risks in one's treatment plan can help this population feel understood and connected to therapists, and better help build protective factors into treatment based on risks identified.

### References

- Kidd, J., Tettamanti, N., Kaczmarkiewicz, R., Corbeil, T, Dworkin, J., Jackman, K., Hughes, T., & Meyer, I (2023). Prevalence of substance use and mental health problems among transgender and cisgender U.S. adults: Results from a national probability sample. *Psychiatry Research*, 323.
- Virupaksha H, Muralidhar D, Ramakrishna J. (2016). Suicide and Suicidal Behavior among Transgender Persons. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 38(6), 505-509.