



## **ASAN, NCTE, and LGBTQ Task Force Joint Statement on the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Autistic People**

Autonomy, dignity, and self-determination are basic human rights. But both transgender communities and autistic communities have had to struggle to assert those rights in the face of pervasive discrimination. Autistic people who are transgender and gender nonconforming have often faced additional barriers that put those fundamental rights out of reach.

Everyone should be able to live as the gender they know themselves to be, and autistic people are no exception. But many trans and gender nonconforming autistic people find that their caregivers, healthcare providers or family members deny the validity of their gender identity and prevent them from living according to who they are. Many people mistakenly believe that autistic people can't understand their gender or make decisions about how to express it. Some assume that if autistic person doesn't identify with their gender identity, that's just a "symptom" of their autism. Others assume that all autistic individuals are men or have "extreme male brains."

Rejecting the reality of trans autistic people's gender identities can be dangerous, even life threatening. These misperceptions have led many trans autistic people to be denied the right to determine how to express their gender in their day-to-day life, make legal changes to reflect their gender, and access affirming medical care, including transition-related care.

Like many other autistic people, trans and gender nonconforming autistic people can face significant disability-related barriers, which can limit their rights to express and live out their gender. For example, autistic people are too often placed under guardianships, warehoused in institutions, or forced to depend on coercive or abusive caregivers, which can curtail their ability to make decisions about their own lives. Many autistic people also encounter health care providers that insist on getting their caregivers' consent for medical care, including transition-related care, simply because they're autistic. Many people may also be subjected to harmful "normalization" therapies that try to suppress autistic or socially nonconforming traits—which, in the case of trans or gender non-conforming autistic people, can include suppressing traits that seem inconsistent with their assigned gender. Some autistic people delay coming out or transitioning out of fear that unsupportive family members will place them under guardianships or force them into institutions in order to prevent them from living according to their gender.

Denying transgender and gender non-conforming autistic people the respect, dignity, and equal access to services that they need can worsen the social marginalization that many of them face. And it can have serious health impacts—and, sometimes, result in tragedy.

That's not right. Trans and gender nonconforming autistic people—and all transgender and gender nonconforming people—have the right to:

- have respect and dignity for the gender they know themselves to be;
- determine their day-to-day expression of their gender, such as their gender-related behavior and appearance;
- make medical decisions and access affirming health care, including transition-related medical care and trans-competent services related to autism; and
- receive full social and legal recognition for their gender, such as the right to make decisions about legal changes to their name and identity documents, decisions about any gender-specific programs and facilities they use, and decisions about their gender-related names and pronouns.

Some people may need support—such as help scheduling medical appointments, completing legal documentation, or dressing—in order to exercise their rights. But we believe that these rights belong to all transgender and gender nonconforming autistic people, regardless of their level of support, needs, or form of communication. And we call on those who support, live with, or work with autistic transgender and gender nonconforming people—including community members, family members, support professionals, and healthcare providers—to follow these principles.

As advocates, we commit to the full inclusion of transgender and gender nonconforming autistic people in both autistic and transgender spaces, services and movements. We believe that transgender and gender nonconforming autistic self-advocates should be at the forefront of all discussions about their rights. We invite everyone in autistic and transgender communities to advocate for dignity, respect and equality for all individuals, regardless of disability, gender identity or gender expression.

**Autistic Self Advocacy Network**

**National Center for Transgender Equality**

**National LGBTQ Task Force**