

Dear DIV44,

Jack Drescher recently posted to the list serve regarding the American Psychiatric Association's release of their historical position statements regarding [access to care](#) and the [rights](#) of "transgender" and "gender variant" persons (for your convenience I have included the press release and these statements again below). Unfortunately, **these statements taken out of context may mislead activists, psychologists, and others to believe the fight against the pathologization of and discrimination against people with self-designated genders by the mental health professions is over.** These new positions need to be discussed in the context of the American Psychiatric Association's past **and present** treatment of aspects of people's genders and gender affirmation experiences as psychopathology. This includes the discriminatory diagnoses of "Gender Identity Disorder" and the new proposed "Gender Dysphoria" category for the DSM V. Diagnoses like these have been documented to increase the stigma and discrimination that the American Psychiatric Association now claims to oppose.

Nearly 40 years ago the American Psychiatric Association depathologized homosexuality and removed it from the DSM recognizing that this diagnosis perpetuated discrimination based on sexual orientation. Now is the time that there is a similar depathologization of all people's own gender designations and expressions. **Please note that people with self-designated genders constantly face barriers to accessing care due to "treatment guidelines"/ "appropriate evaluations" supported by the APA and insurance policy exclusion clauses. Therefore, keeping the diagnosis in the DSM for the reason of "medical necessity" or access to care is not a valid reason for keeping the diagnosis as a *psychiatric* diagnosis (please read the attached and linked petition for more information). We want the American Psychiatric Association to remove all psychiatric gender diagnoses from the DSM and support a transfer (with no gaps in services) to biomedical pathways as an alternative to getting medical services for gender affirmation.** We can follow the example of other countries that have had success with this. For example, France's Ministry of Health removed 'gender identity disorder' from its list of mental disorders and continues to offer medical services for gender affirmation (see a news article on this [here](#)).

I am writing this with the goal of reminding you all that in spite of their position statements, the fight is **not over**. *These statements are even evidence of their current problematizing of certain classifications of people who designate their own genders* (e.g. they only "recognize" the benefits of access to care for "appropriately evaluated" people). I am also writing this to urge you all to **help take action** to call the American Psychiatric Association out on their misguidance.

For more background, please read [Kelly Winters insightful article posted yesterday regarding the APA's position statements](#).

I also urge you to [please read and consider signing this petition that I put together with a number of colleagues](#) (including Y. Gavriel Ansara who won the 2012 DIV 44 Transgender Research Award) some weeks ago in response to the APA Task Force's recent publication regarding the "treatment" of "gender identity disorder" (and in response to the DSM V's "gender dysphoria" category). For those with less time on your hands there is an outline of our concerns at the beginning of the document and of our aims toward the end of the document. Also find the document attached to this email.

I encourage anyone on this list serve to please join me and my colleagues in this [global conversation](#) toward depathologization of people's gender designations and expressions. Read and [consider signing](#) and passing along this message. Thank you!

In solidarity,

-Erica-

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"Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible." -- Frank Zappa

American Psychiatric Association
Press Release

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APA Issues Official Positions Supporting Access to Care and the Rights of Transgender and Gender Variant Persons

ARLINGTON, Va. (August 16, 2012) — The American Psychiatric Association advocates for removal of barriers to care for gender transition treatment and for the protection of civil rights for transgender and gender variant individuals. APA has long expressed strong affirmation of lesbian and gay civil rights since the 1973 decision to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Now APA is issuing position statements in support of access to care and civil rights for transgender individuals.

Gender variant and transgender individuals must cope with multiple unique challenges, including significant discrimination, prejudice, and the potential for victimization from violent hate crimes. They often experience discrimination when accessing health care and are denied numerous basic civil rights and protections.

Long-standing medical and psychiatric literature demonstrates clear benefits of medical and surgical interventions to assist gender variant individuals seeking transition. However, transgender and gender variant people are frequently denied medical, surgical, and psychiatric care related to gender transition. Access to medical care (both medical and surgical) positively impacts the mental health of transgender and gender variant individuals.

Being transgender or gender variant implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities; however, these individuals often experience discrimination due to a lack of civil rights protections for their gender identity or expression. Transgender and gender variant persons are frequently harassed and discriminated against when seeking housing or applying to jobs or schools, are often victims of violent hate crimes, and face challenges in marriage, adoption and parenting rights.

Discrimination and lack of equal civil rights is damaging to the mental health of transgender and gender variant individuals. For example, gender-based discrimination and victimization were found to be independently associated with attempted suicide in a population of transgender individuals, 32% of whom had histories of trying to kill themselves, and in the largest survey to date of gender variant and transgender people 41% reported attempting suicide.*

The APA joins other organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association, in endorsing strong policy statements deploring the discrimination experienced by gender variant and transgender individuals and calling for laws to protect their civil rights.

APA POSITION STATEMENTS

Access to Care for Transgender and Gender Variant Individuals

The American Psychiatric Association:

1. Recognizes that appropriately evaluated transgender and gender variant individuals can benefit greatly from medical and surgical gender transition treatments.
2. Advocates for removal of barriers to care and supports both public and private health insurance coverage for

gender transition treatment.

3. Opposes categorical exclusions of coverage for such medically necessary treatment when prescribed by a physician.

Discrimination against Transgender and Gender Variant Individuals

The American Psychiatric Association:

1. Supports laws that protect the civil rights of transgender and gender variant individuals.
2. Urges the repeal of laws and policies that discriminate against transgender and gender variant people.
3. Opposes all public and private discrimination against transgender and gender variant individuals in such areas as health care, employment, housing, public accommodation, education, and licensing.
4. Declares that no burden of proof of such judgment, capacity, or reliability shall be placed upon these individuals greater than that imposed on any other persons.

See the full position statements and background information:

[Access to care for transgender and gender variant individuals](#)

[Discrimination against transgender and gender variant individuals](#)

See also a recent report from the American Psychiatric Association

[Task Force on Treatment of Gender Identity Disorder.](#)

*Clements-Nolle K, Marx R, Katz M (2006): Attempted Suicide Among Transgender Persons, Journal of Homosexuality, 51:3, 53-69 http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J082v51n03_04

Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. http://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS_Report.pdf

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders.

Visit the APA at www.psychiatry.org.