

Transgender Communities Messaging Brief



The Colorado
Health Foundation™

This brief helps you talk to people who aren't sure about supporting your cause. It offers tips on how to frame your message so it resonates with them and makes them more likely to help. Think of it as a toolbox of ideas, not a complete instruction manual. It's based on what we already know about effective communication. If you want a more in-depth look at crafting your message, check out the [“Heartwired Strategy Guide”](#).

Purpose

- Build familiarity and common ground with the transgender community
- Create a broader “we”
- Calm concerns and increase support
- Create the vision for a better future

Messaging Principles

- Lead with shared values
 - » Make a human connection with emotions and lived experience before diving into legal arguments
- Know your audience
 - » Focus messaging on those who can be moved toward your position—our supporters are already with us
 - » Not everyone is moveable and that's okay - most people are
 - » Recognize that many individuals don't have a personal relationship with someone who is transgender or nonbinary
 - » Avoid acronyms or jargon
- Cisgender allies provide a model for positive behavior
 - » Parents and families have particularly impactful stories
- Center your vision and outcomes
 - » Do not repeat false information—even to refute it. Repeating misinformation only reinforces the messages behind the false information.
 - » Focus on assets and solutions over deficits and problems. Our communities are strong, resilient and resourceful – tell that story
 - » Clearly describe the future you envision
- Meet emotions with emotions first then move on to facts and information

Current Common Narratives

- Misinformation and disinformation about transgender individuals
 - » Flawed understanding of who makes up the transgender community
 - Lack of understanding about what it truly means to be transgender
 - Perception that transgender people are predominantly white and being transgender is only a “white person’s problem”
 - » Unfamiliarity with aspects of gender-affirming care
 - Lack of knowledge about the extensive research from credible sources
 - Misinformation that the science behind gender-affirming care is “new”
 - Assumption that transitioning is solely about medical care, specifically surgeries
 - Perception that being transgender or nonbinary is a trend
 - Perception that young people are too “young” to know that they are transgender or nonbinary
- The perception that excluding trans women is necessary to protect cisgender women
 - » “Bad actors” pretending to be trans in order to exploit or take advantage of non-discrimination policies by dehumanizing trans women
 - » The false dichotomy that pits the safety of cisgender women and cisgender girls against the safety of trans women and trans girls
- Assumptions that parents’ rights are in opposition to transgender rights, ignoring the rights and experiences of parents of transgender children
- Scarcity mindset
 - » Us vs. Them thinking
 - » The misconception that when one group gains rights, another must lose
 - » Many individuals, including cisgender people, have healthcare needs. The perception that gender-affirming care for transgender people takes resources away from cisgender individuals
 - » Fear that gender-affirming care is a drain on resources

Change the Narrative: Show Don’t Tell

- Show how transgender people are part of our collective community
 - » They are our friends, neighbors, coworkers, families, etc.
- Show how individuals misunderstand the transgender community and their lived experiences
 - » Tell a story rather than list facts
 - » Name and acknowledge the complexity of transgender identities and experiences
 - » Reflect on your own journey of understanding these complexities. Discuss gender as a shared continuum that includes cisgender people
 - Make inclusive statements about “genders” or “our genders”
- Show how individuals know their authentic selves
 - » Just as cisgender people know their gender, transgender people know who they are. We should trust that transgender youth and adults know what is best for their own health and well-being

- Show how we are stronger together
 - » Take the conversation beyond partisan, polarized politics, focusing on how the inclusion of transgender people benefits both individuals and communities.
 - » Connect transgender justice to racial and economic justice
 - » Elevate that existing inclusive policies have been successfully implemented for many years
 - Connect the attacks on trans women to the legacy of discrimination against all women, underscoring how these efforts are part of a broader pattern of exclusion.
 - Emphasize that people should be respected, trusted and empowered to make decisions about our own lives and bodies, whether transgender or not
- Show concrete actionable steps for change
 - » Avoid leading with harms and discriminations
 - » Offer a spectrum of ways people can participate in change

Common Shared Values

- Family values
- Freedom from boxes
- Authentic Selves
- Self-expression
- Youth power
- Value of sports (teamwork, collaboration, relationship-building, and friendship)
- Fairness
- Respect
- Liberty and freedom

Sample Messages

- Transgender youth grow up knowing deep down that their sex at birth doesn't align who they know they are inside. With the love and support of their family, they can thrive and transition to live as the gender they know themselves to be.
- Colorado has made incredible progress in protecting healthcare, ensuring access to necessary care for transgender people and their families. When we show up for each other—whether for gender-affirming care, abortion access or other healthcare freedoms—we build a stronger, safer future for all. Together, we will keep Colorado a place where people can access the care they need without fear.
- Across our races, backgrounds and genders, we all deserve dignity, respect, and the freedom to make the best healthcare decisions for ourselves and our families. Some politicians are trying to take that freedom away by blocking access to gender-affirming care and punishing doctors for providing necessary medical support. We must stand together to ensure that every person can access the care they need to live a healthy and fulfilling life.
- Transgender kids, like other students, deserve the opportunity to learn teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership and self-discipline, and to feel a sense of belonging. When we tell transgender girls that they can't play girls' sports—or transgender boys that they can't play boys' sports— they miss out on these important childhood experience and the lessons they provide.

Acknowledgements:

- [Transgender Youth and the Freedom to Be Ourselves Messaging Guide by ASO communications, Transgender Law Center, and Lake Research Partners](#)
- [Talking About Transgender Youth Participation in Sports by the Movement Advancement Project](#)
- How to Talk About Gender-Affirming Care for Youth and Adults Messaging Guide by One Colorado

About The Colorado Health Foundation:

The Colorado Health Foundation is bringing health in reach for all Coloradans by engaging closely with communities across the state through investing, policy and advocacy, learning and capacity building. For more information, please visit www.coloradohealth.org.



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