Welcoming Trans Parents

First, let me say how much I admire you for listening to your child and for showing such unconditional love.

This path will get easier, I promise you, but it is a hard path at first. Learning about transgender people, talking with other parents and meeting other kids like yours will help you tremendously. And it will help your child too. As hard as this is on us parents, imagine how hard this is on our kids. Family support is the single most positive support these kids can have, and studies have shown that family acceptance greatly reduces the risks to which these kids are especially vulnerable. And you are providing that single most important thing: acceptance and love.

I am sure you are wondering how to begin. Reaching out to others was a great first step. We have resources we can and will share with you. Remember you have time. This will not, nor need it, happen overnight; though for some families it can happen very quickly. You, your child and your child’s other parent (if s/he is in the picture) will make this journey at different speeds. Have patience with one another.

Keep in mind, this journey will be led, for the most part, by your child. You will take your cues from your child as to timing, pace, how much transition your child wants to make, and whether or not and when your child wants to be "out" about being trans. If your child still lives in your household, it’s hard for us parents to get out of the driver’s seat. If your child no longer lives under your roof, it’s hard not to feel out of control. As difficult as it is to live in the ambiguity as our children walk this path, it is important. So for support, we have each other.

Finding Other Families Like Yours Locally

Children’s National Medical Center, Northwest D.C., offers services for trans and gender non-conforming children and teens (ages 5 – 18) and their parents, including assessments, psychiatric and psychological services, individual therapy, groups for parents and children and teens. www.ChildrensNational.org/GenderVariance

PFLAG Howard County (www.pflagmd.org) has a Transgender Coordinator (that's me), and it's my job to be here specifically for you and your family. Since I have served in this position, beginning in late 2009, we have grown from just me to more than 50 parents of trans children, who range in age from 3 (yes 3!) to 28. I will help you hook up with other parents of kids like yours in as close to the same age range as I can.

- **LGBT Parent Forum:** Every 3rd Monday, Owen Brown Interfaith Center, 7:30 – 9 p.m. Contact: Judy Gaver at judygaver@hotmail.com
- **Trans Parent Forum:** Every 4th Tuesday, Owen Brown Interfaith Center, 7:30 – 9 p.m. Contact: Catherine Hyde at cvhyde@gmail.com
- **Rainbow Youth & Allies Group:** (ages 12 - 22) Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday, Owen Brown Interfaith Center, 7:30 – 9 p.m. Contact: Stacie Dunlap at stayc171@hotmail.com

PFLAG Baltimore County (www.pflagbaltimore.org) also has a Trans Parents Forum and a Rainbow Youth Group. They meet at the Towson Unitarian Universalist Church, 1710 Dulaney Valley Road, Lutherville, MD 21093. On their website you can find information about a youth group in Harford County one coming soon to Carroll County.

- **RYA** (ages 14-19) 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7:30 – 9:30 pm, Lower Level. Contact RYABaltimoreCounty@gmail.com
- **Trans Parents Forum, Baltimore County:** Towson Unitarian Universalist Church, 2nd Tuesday, 7:30 - 9. Contact: Elizabeth McNeilly at condronea@aol.com or 410.370.6812

Baltimore City at the GLCCB in partnership with PFLAG, offers a Rainbow Youth Group at the GLCCB (www.glccb.org) at 241 W. Chase Street, Baltimore 21201.

- **RYA** 1st, 3rd and 5th Tuesday, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., first floor. Contact RYABaltimore@gmail.com, or visit facebook.com/groups/RYABaltimore
National Support

Transforming Family (www.TransformingFamily.org) is dedicated to helping parents of very young transgender and gender nonconforming children. They have a ready-made model for creating your own local support group for your young child and they offer you access to resources from leading providers in the care of our youth (medical doctors, psychologists) as well as support with nonprofit fundraising, etc. Contact Dawn Ashbrook (dawn@TransformingFamily.org) or 818.254.9654.

Trans Youth Family Allies offers a Yahoo! group for parents of trans kids (as young as 3 through high school). If you’d like to join, go to http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/TYFA_TALK/ and click on the Join this Group button. The moderator will call you to do a quick screening. She screens everyone who enters the group to be sure it is a safe place for us parents. They have a great website full of wonderful resources as well. http://www.imatyfa.org/

TransFamily of Cleveland moderates a Yahoo! group teens and one for parents. The parents in this group tend to have older kids than TYFA, adolescents, college-aged students and older. This group is also screened. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/transkidsfamily/ Parents use this as a place for practical advice or just to find an understanding ally.

Gender Spectrum (www.genderspectrum.org) offers a monthly Parent Support Conference Call on the last Wednesday of the month from 9:00 - 10:30 p.m. Eastern Time. For more information or to sign up, call them at 510.567.3977 or email info@genderspectrum.org. Gender Spectrum also has an online community called the Gender Spectrum Lounge (www.GenderSpectrum.org/lounge). In order to join, fill out a quick survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GSLoungeEntry.

Trans Kids Only! is an online forum started by a young trans kid in April 2012 and is open, as the name implies to trans kids only, under age 16. We’ll see if this takes off as a meeting place for our young children: http://transkidsonly.saveboard.com/login

Camps for our Kids

Trans Youth Equality Foundation’s North Woods Camp is an overnight camp for trans and gender non-conforming kids ages 7-17. It usually runs 3 days, in August and October, and costs $175. Scholarships are available. Kids come from all over and just spend time playing and bonding. www.transyouthequality.org

Camp Aranu’tiq is a weeklong, overnight summer camp for trans and gender non-conforming youth, located in New England and California. http://www.camparanutiq.org/

Facilitated local support groups for parents and caregivers of trans children:

- **Howard County, MD:** Owen Brown Interfaith Center, 3rd Monday and 4th Tuesday, 7:30 - 9. Contact: Catherine Hyde at cvhyde@gmail.com
- **Baltimore County, MD:** Towson Unitarian Universalist Church, 4th Tuesday, 7:30 - 9. Contact: Elizabeth McNeilly at condronea@aol.com or 410.370.6812
- **Baltimore City, MD:** At the GLCCB, 241 W. Chase St. 3rd Tuesday, 7:00 - 9. Contact: Catherine Hyde at cvhyde@gmail.com.
- **Fairfax, VA:** Fairfax City Library, 4th Sunday, 3:30 – 5 p.m. Contact: Libby McKnight at libbymck@me.com
- **Bethesda, MD:** Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, 3rd Sunday, 2 – 4 p.m. Contact: Deborah Strauss at strauss123@verizon.net

Spiritual Support

Family Spirit is an online spiritual support group for the families, friends, loved ones and allies of gender gifted individuals. To join type this URL into your browser address bar: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Family-Spirit/. You will land on the group home page and it will say "You are not a member of this group." Click on the "Join this group" button on the right side near the top and your request will be processed. Or if you prefer email, reach us through
Learning & Networking

There are three GREAT conferences that I have been to that serve the trans community and their families. (I am sure there are more out there as well.) I heartily recommend you and your family attend at least one of these. In all of these I recommend you stay at the conference hotel. It makes it easy for the kids and teens to hang together.

1. **June: Philadelphia Trans Health Conference.** This is FREE. You only need cover your food and lodging. They offer adult, teen and children's programming, and it is wonderful. You and other family members can go and learn while your child meets others the same age and on the same journey. [www.trans-health.org](http://www.trans-health.org)

2. **July: Berkley, CA: Gender Spectrum Family Conference.** This one is my personal favorite, but they are all good. Registration is $175 (early bird) for individuals; $25 for your teen (and their teen programming is off-the-charts excellent!) or $325 early bird rate for a family. They also offer SCHOLARSHIPS on a sliding scale. Then of course there is hotel, food and plane expense. It can be pricey, but the location is perfect. It’s at a hotel on a quiet marina, so the kids can hang out in the evenings and the teens even into the night in a relatively secluded place with one another and just be teens hanging out together. [www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)

3. **August: Seattle, WA: Gender Odyssey Conference and Gender Odyssey Family Conference.** This family conference is great because it runs concurrently with a conference for trans adults. So parents and older teen children can cross over and attend a few of the Gender Odyssey workshops if they want to check out some of the more sophisticated workshops on the transition process. And this family conference, like the others, also offers great children’s and teen programs, along with help for the siblings of trans kids, who often feel overlooked and left out! Their prices are available on a sliding scale and are slightly less than the Gender Spectrum conference but in that range. They also offer SCHOLARSHIPS. Again flight, hotel and food are additional expenses. [www.genderodysseyfamily.org](http://www.genderodysseyfamily.org)

If you are looking for information, articles and other information you might want to check out [http://www.welcomingschools.org/gender-identity-resources/](http://www.welcomingschools.org/gender-identity-resources/)

Safety Issues

Trans Youth Family Allies, mentioned above, describes a set of documents to keep in a Safe Folder (such as letters from your therapist and medical provider, etc.), in the event that your family comes under the scrutiny of a government agency or emergency health care provider who might be uninformed about raising a trans child. We highly recommend every family of a minor child have such a folder. Go to [www.imatyfa.org](http://www.imatyfa.org) and look under Resources > Resources for Parents.

School Training

At school, our kids are more likely to be bullied, and often the school system does not have the training to feel confident they can keep our kids safe. PFLAG Howard County has done trainings in schools for all staff as well as key-staff only to support our trans children, be they “out” or “stealth” to their schools. Two national organizations offer excellent school training: Gender Spectrum and Trans Youth Family Allies (TYFA). I have been trained by TYFA to do their training in schools, and it has worked well. I highly recommend Gender Spectrum’s training as well.

Medical Providers

I recommend Chase Brexton Medical Center, based in Baltimore City, with branches in Baltimore County (Easton, Columbia and Randallstown), because they specialize in LGBT medical care. They are GREAT. Physician's Assistant Debra Dunn, based in the Columbia office, is getting up to speed on the treatment of our children. [www.chasebrexton.org](http://www.chasebrexton.org)

In the D.C. area, Whitman Walker Clinic for the same reasons. Everyone on staff is trained to understand and respect transgender. They take insurance if you have it and if you don't they charge on a sliding scale. You can think
about moving your child’s medical (even pediatric) care to them at any time; you do not need to wait until your child formally transitions. In fact, I would suggest you not wait. Give yourself plenty of time to understand the process of transition before you begin it. or [www.wwc.org](http://www.wwc.org)

At the University of Maryland, a pediatric endocrinologist, Dr. Elyse Pine will treat our children and will consult with your pediatrician. Contact her assistant, Angela, at 410.328.1997 to make an appointment for a consultation.

For counselling services, Mary Ann Niclas, LSCW-C, is getting up to speed treating our children. She can be reached at 410.935.5389. In addition, Cathy Wackford and Kate Oliver (both MSW, LCSW-C), of Columbia, Md.-based A Healing Place are seeing a growing number of trans children in their counselling practice and are happily learning more about their specific needs. Contact them at 443.325.0360.

**You Are Amazing!**

I have come to the conclusion that our children are magical and rare, like four-leaf clovers. But that conclusion took me some time to get to. Give yourself time. I am sure this feels overwhelming. If I can recommend a first few steps, they would be, if you can, register to attend one of the conferences above. Then order the books "The Transgender Child" by Stephanie Brill and “Gender Born Gender Made” by Diane Ehrensaft. You are doing the right thing. And PFLAG is here for you. Don't hesitate to call or reach out to us.

Catherine Hyde | Transgender Coordinator | PFLAG Columbia-Howard County, MD
pflagmd.org | cvhyde@gmail.com | 410.493.3443

Updated July 6, 2013