

## **Ban Real “Conversion Therapy”**

“Conversion therapy” originally referred to the abusive methods once used to try to change a person’s sexual orientation. These unethical and harmful practices were egregious and rightfully banned. Today, there is another form of “conversion therapy” that is performed on children: the hormonal and surgical conversion of their bodies on the basis of their identities as transgender or non-binary.

Many underlying factors are contributing to the rapid increase in the number of young people with these identities: mental health issues, autism, ADHD, trauma, and sexual confusion, as well as peer and media influences. Despite evidence of psychosocial influences, most major professional psychological and medical associations promote an “affirmative care” model. Not only does “affirmative care” discourage therapists from considering underlying issues, but its practice often leads to drastic medical interventions.

The hormonal treatments and surgeries performed on transgender-identifying children are experimental and risky. The consequences, which include infertility, may be irreversible. Yet children’s identities are being quickly and irreversibly medicalized at increasingly younger ages. Puberty-blocking drugs and cross-sex hormones are routinely administered to prepubescent children and teens. Surgeons perform risky and irreversible surgeries:

- Girls as young as 13 have had their breasts surgically removed and their chests reconstructed
- Girls as young as 16 have had their uteruses removed
- Boys as young as 16 have had their testicles removed, and have received vaginoplasties and surgically-created pseudo-clitorises
- Reality show star Jazz Jennings’ penis was removed at the age of 17, at which time a pseudo-vagina was surgically created with Jazz’s stomach lining

Children should not receive body-altering interventions on the basis of feelings, self-diagnosis, and unprovable identities. Medically transforming their bodies to comport with their feelings is the ultimate “conversion therapy.”

Yet state and local conversion therapy bans legally mandate therapists to “affirm” the gender identities of minors. Ironically, these bans that purport to prevent harm to children actually promote it by leading them to irreversible body-altering treatments.

We are calling for a Real Conversion Therapy Ban to end this identity-based medical experiment. Drastic and irreversible medical interventions that harm children must be outlawed.



The [Kelsey Coalition](http://www.KelseyCoalition.org) is comprised of ~300 parents throughout the US whose transgender-identifying children have been medically and/or psychologically harmed by physicians, therapists, schools, colleges, and clinics. We provide factual information to the media, legislators, policymakers, therapists, schools, colleges, and physicians to increase awareness; and most importantly, to effect real, and urgently needed, change.

Some of our children are autistic, or have ADHD, and struggle to fit in with their peers. Many are intellectually gifted. Some appear same-sex attracted. Others have serious mental health issues. When our children suddenly and unexpectedly announced that they were transgender, we were shocked; it seemed clear that something else was going on. Evidence of peer and online influences was abundant.

Influences are often right in our communities. In an attempt to foster acceptance of differences, some schools teach young students about being transgender. But this can and does lead vulnerable children to conclude that they were born in the "wrong body." Many of our sons and daughters learned about this for the first time at school, where transgender identities are common. When our children "came out" and requested name changes at school, we parents were not notified.

Therapy that explores possible causes of our children's distress is nearly impossible to find. When we tried to get help for our children, therapists told us that kids know who they are, and that our job as parents is to simply accept and "affirm" our children's new identities. Some of us have been aggressively pushed to consent to hormonal treatments. We were not informed that these treatments cause serious side effects and that there are no long-term studies to support their efficacy.

Those of us with young adult children have watched helplessly as they received cross-sex hormones -- prescribed for lifetime usage -- at "informed consent" clinics. Some of our daughters have had mastectomies soon after deciding they were transgender. Many colleges encourage medical transitioning, and even offer these services as part of their health plans. Some of our children, within their first semester of college, became convinced they were transgender and needed to transition immediately. We have been blindsided.

And when we do voice concerns, we are labeled hateful, bigoted, and transphobic. Many compare us to parents who do not support their gay children, ignoring the obvious difference: being gay does not lead to surgeries or taking dangerous hormones for life. We refuse to be silenced any longer. We are sharing our stories and concerns to help change the systems that have failed our kids.