

# Indian Health Service Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

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# SO/GI Data Capture

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- Circular 23-02, titled “Data Capture of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Electronic Health Record” was signed June 16, 2023 and can be found at: <https://www.ihs.gov/ihm/circulars/2023/data-capture-of-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-information/>
- In RPMS, there are optional data fields that may be used to capture a patient’s pronouns, legal sex, sexual orientation and gender identity. There is also an optional field for preferred name, if different from the Patient’s legal name.
- Staff should be trained on implementation and can find training materials on the RPMS Training Repository: <https://www.ihs.gov/rpms/training/recording-and-material-library/>

SO/GI
Pronouns
Legal Sex
Sexual Orientation
Gender Identity

# Aspects of Identity

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# Gender & Terminology

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Refers to a person's internal sense of identity (could identify as a man, woman, both, neither, or another identity) and their social role.

It is often assumed that sex is clear, limited, and binary, while gender is expansive. This is not the case. In reality, sex is as complex and broad as gender.

Cis: A person whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.

Trans (Gender-Diverse, Gender-Expansive): A person whose gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth.

Nonbinary: A person whose gender identity does not evenly correspond with the male/female binary

Two Spirit, Indigiqueer\*

# Trans & Gender-Diverse AI/AN

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Nearly half of our AI/AN 2SLGBTQ+ community identify as trans and gender diverse (TGD)

Of the AI/AN TGD sample, 79% identify using at least one nonbinary term to describe their gender.

Trans & Gender-Diverse people were more than 5x as likely to identify as Two Spirit than cisgender queer respondents (significant at  $p < .0001$  in chi-squared test).

*Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)*

# Sexual Orientation

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Refers to the way one describes their emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction.\*

\*SO identity does not necessarily imply sexual behavior, need, or risk, etc.

Top 5 reported sexual orientations in our survey were:

- Queer
- Bisexual
- Two Spirit
- Gay
- Pansexual



# Two Spirit

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Refers to an Indigenous person who expresses their gender identity, spiritual identity, or social role in a traditional or non-Western way.

Originates in the early 1990s, based on Anishinaabe conceptualizations of gender-diverse roles. Hundreds or thousands of other conceptualizations have existed, and many are still used. Two Spirit is thought of an used in many diverse ways today, and Indigiqueer is gaining in popularity.

Two Spirit individuals were artists, healers, warriors, counselors, and so much more. They were often viewed as sacred beings amongst the community.

# Importance of Indigeneity

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Percentage of respondents that regard these key aspects of identity as “extremely important” to them

- 50% of respondents reported **Sexual Orientation** to be extremely important to them
- 58% of respondents reported **Gender Identity** to be extremely important to them
- 92% of respondents report **Indigenous Identity** to be extremely important to them
- 94% of respondents report **History of one’s people** to be extremely important to them

*Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)*



# Pronouns & Indigenous Cultures

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Traditional languages and pronouns

Elders and learning

Cultural relevancy – naming practices

The Circle of Relatives / We are All Related

Suicidality imperative

# Intersections of Care and Culture

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# Top 3 Barriers to Accessing Healthcare

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From quantitative measures, we found:

- Little Provider knowledge of 2SLGBTQ+ care
- Low cultural competence/humility among providers
- Previous/past. Traumatic experiences with healthcare

*Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)*

# 2SLGBTQ+ and the Protective Role of Gender Identity Affirmation

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True Names – Pronouns – Gender Embodiment – **Cultural Tradition – Land – Spiritual Connection – Native Language**

Our data suggests protective effects in:

- Physical health indicators (including dental)
- Mental health indicators
- Likelihood of self-advocacy in healthcare settings
- Visits to PCP and healthcare professionals
- Being out to healthcare professionals
- Spiritual health indicators
- Cultural / community engagement & belonging

*Quantitative data from the 2020 2SLGBTQ+ Pride and Connectedness Survey conducted by the Paths (re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (N=223)*

# GAC & IGAC

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## Gender-Affirming Care

- Gender-affirming care is a supportive form of healthcare. It consists of an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people. For transgender and nonbinary children and adolescents, early gender-affirming care is crucial to overall health and wellbeing as it allows the child or adolescent to focus on social transitions and can increase their confidence while navigating the healthcare system. (HHS 2022)

## Indigenous Gender-Affirming Care

- Constitutes all of the above definition, while accounting for complex and millennia-old Indigenous gender concepts and was of being beyond Western definition. It also accounts for Indigenous concepts of wellness and health, which is not limited to the individual but may include the family and community, and is not limited to physical health, but encompasses one's mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural health. It also means accounting for the fact that gender dysphoria is based on a Western cultural framework, and that gender embodiment can include a constellation of cultural and decolonial ideas that don't exist in the settler imagination.

# Examples of Indigenous Gender-Affirming Care

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- Indigenous (and Indigiqueer) representation in clinical spaces
- Indigenous herbal hormone and embodiment support
- Indigenous and Indigiqueer affirming behavioral healthcare/counseling
- Cross-I/T/U patient navigation support
- Access to safe and affirming ceremony and Traditional Indigenous practitioners
- Support for affirming and embodiment realization beyond the binary and inclusive of ancient and new Indigenous genders
- Care plans that include family and community
- Support for envisioning de-colonial embodiment goals and restoration of tradition
- Concepts of good health that account for self-definition, community health, emotional and spiritual health, and cultural health
- Indigenous traditional cultural activities are healing

# Implications

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Trans and gender-diverse Indigenous patients want to be seen as uniquely Indigenous and genderqueer, and to not be “othered” from cisgender Native peers/community

- Healthcare professionals need cultural humility that encompasses awareness of gender-expansive traditions
- Binary-based standards are not inclusive for all gender-diverse people and limit access to care, and need examination
- Support/treatment/intervention is not always individualistic and can be collectivist
- Access to culture and community is essential for health
- Providing gender-affirming care includes being an advocate for clients within clinical systems and beyond them as well

# Resources

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Paths (Re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board

- Celebrating Our Magic Toolkit
- Trans and Gender-Affirming Care in IHS/Tribal/Urban Facilities: 2020 Strategic Vision and Action Plan
  - [www.pathsremembered.org](http://www.pathsremembered.org)

Indian Health Service

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, (LGBTQ) and Two-Spirit Health
  - [www.ihs.gov/lgbt](http://www.ihs.gov/lgbt)



# Contact Information

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## Paths (Re)Membered Project at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board

- Project Director: Itai Jeffries ([ijeffries@npaihb.org](mailto:ijeffries@npaihb.org)) – *they/them*
- Training & Community Engagement Specialist: Jerico Cummings ([jcumplings@npaihb.org](mailto:jcumplings@npaihb.org)) – *they/them*

## Indian Health Service

- National HIV/HCV/STI Consultant, POC for Two Spirit & LGBTQ+ Matters: Rick Haverkate ([richard.haverkate@ihs.gov](mailto:richard.haverkate@ihs.gov)) – *he/him*

