

Study to focus on HIV prevention and care for transgender and gender nonconforming youth

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The University of Michigan is leading a national study to learn more about how transgender and gender nonconforming youth navigate the health care system for HIV prevention services and care.

The U-M School of Public Health Center for Sexuality and Health Disparities study, Affirming Voices for Action, will help identify optimal HIV services to teens and young adults ages 16-24 who have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

"Upon completion of our study, we expect to have a much more accurate assessment of just how engaged transgender and gender nonconforming youth are in seeking HIV prevention services," said principal investigator Gary Harper, professor of [health](#) behavior and health education at the School of Public Health. "And once we have this information, we will be better equipped to go the next step and design HIV programs and services and train clinicians to meet the needs of transgender and gender nonconforming youth."

Harper and colleagues will survey youth and providers in order to identify barriers and facilitators that influence transgender and gender nonconforming youths' full engagement across the continuum of HIV care services. The U-M-led study is part of the Adolescent Medicine Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions involving 14 clinics and hospitals across the country. Conducting the study in 14 cities allows for a large-scale national study of this traditionally hard-to-reach population.

"Most of the HIV research that we have about transgender youth is geographically restricted," said Dr. Sari Reisner, co-investigator and assistant professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. "This study represents an exciting opportunity to

work with transgender and other gender minority youth across 14 national sites and to engage local trans communities in these regions. It's a terrific opportunity to work with both local and national partners to render visible the unique issues facing transgender and other minority youth in the U.S."

Data collected will be used to create resources on best practices for working with this population, which will be made available free to health care and social service providers.

"We are excited that this study will give transgender and gender nonconforming youth the opportunity to let us know what they need and want related to HIV prevention and treatment services," Harper said. "Then we will be able to respond quickly by working to improve the services the youth receive."

In addition to Harper and Reisner, study investigators include Miguel Martinez, Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine, Children's Hospital Los Angeles; and Liz Salomon, Fenway Institute, Fenway Health, Boston. U-M staff researcher Laura Jadwin-Cakmak is coordinating the project across all 14 sites.

Provided by University of Michigan

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