

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT FEDERAL ATTACKS ON TRANSGENDER HEALTH CARE

President Donald Trump and his administration have advanced several executive orders in an effort to federally institute the criminalization of gender-affirming health care for some transgender patients, a policy long pursued at state and local levels across the country.

While the situation is rapidly evolving and legal challenges to Trump's orders are in the works, here's what nurses should know right now.



What Trump Is Doing

A number of executive orders are having impacts on trans people, solidifying the reality that this small group of people have become a primary target for demonization by conservatives and the Trump administration, as they have been increasingly for at least the last decade.

In particular, several recent executive orders from the Trump administration are cause for alarm, despite their unclear legal standing:

- » Attempting to bar institutions receiving federal funding from providing gender-affirming care to those under age 19.
- » Attempting to criminalize education workers who support trans students at schools that receive federal funding.
- » Attempting to erase transgender and nonbinary people from recognition in federal policy.
- » Effectively halting the ability to update federal identity documents with gender marker changes.
- » Forcing trans people into sex-segregated federal prisons and detention facilities based on sex assigned at birth and reportedly denying them gender-affirming care.
- » Expelling transgender service members from the U.S. military.
- » Removing protections against discrimination on the basis of sex in educational environments.
- » Delegitimizing long-standing standards and guidance regarding trans health care from the World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH), considered an authoritative source on gender-affirming care, both for health care workers like nurses and, significantly, for insurance companies in deciding their coverage policies.

continued on back »»

OUR PATIENTS. OUR UNION. OUR VOICE.



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT FEDERAL ATTACKS ON TRANSGENDER HEALTH CARE

Nurses can see these attacks for what they are: attempts by the federal government to intervene in workplaces to dictate who is afforded legal recognition, access to necessary services, and basic human respect and decency. In addition to impacting thousands of workers and their livelihoods directly, these policies are already hurting health outcomes for trans patients and come amid a broader push to re-ostracize trans people from public spaces like hospitals and schools.

What It Means for Nurses and Our Patients

News reporting indicates that several hospital systems across the country are complying with the order to block gender-affirming care for any one under age 19. There are serious concerns about what this will mean for trans children, who benefit immensely from access to treatments like puberty blocking medicine. In many cases, these policies have significant impacts on not just the patients, but their families.

If your patients receive gender-affirming care, whether it's from your hospital or not, this may be an incredibly difficult time for them. Being forced off of medical care can have substantial physical and mental health impacts. Significantly, patients may also be experiencing heightened distress due to the increasingly hostile atmosphere for trans people, especially as legal rights such as correct identity documents are also under political attack.

Depending on where you live, some gender-affirming care may already be criminalized. Legislation limiting access to gender-affirming care for youth has become increasingly common, following a pattern of similar legislation like so-called "bathroom bills" and youth sports bans.

How Nurses Can Take Action

If there are trans people among your colleagues, patients, or broader community, they may be experiencing a variety of reactions to the current climate. For some, it may feel like a crisis situation. Taking action to support trans people right now can be as simple as emotional support or material mutual aid.

In terms of your day-to-day work as a nurse, a significant thing you can do is respect the gender of your patients. You don't need to provide gender-affirming medical services or treatment to still honor someone's name, pronouns, or identity.

Whether or not your unit or your facility does provide gender-affirming care, if you hear about any changes in policies related to gender-affirming practices please contact your labor representative. We need your help tracking how this situation develops, whether it's impacting patient care, employee health care, or other personnel or facility policies.

If your patients have questions about their care or the legal situation around it, organizations such as the ACLU or Lambda Legal may have useful information.

