

The Obstacles of Being a Transgender Youth

Transgender youth often face enormous hardships when they acknowledge and express their gender identity.

- They may be thrown out of the house when their family discovers that they are transgender, often forcing them to live on the streets.
- They typically face harassment and abuse in school to such an extent that they quit, which makes it hard for them to get a decent paying job (for example, a survey of more than 250 transgender people in Washington, D.C. found that forty percent had not finished high school and another 40 percent were unemployed).
- Even if they are able to get an education, they have difficulty finding and keeping almost any kind of job because of discrimination, forcing many to become sex workers.
- If they live on the streets or are a sex worker, they are at a greater risk for abusing drugs, becoming infected with HIV, and being subjected to anti-transgender violence.
- In the last decade, an average of one person per month is known to have been killed because of their gender identity or expression.
- Many lack access to health care, including proper counseling and medical supervision for those who are in the process of transitioning. And when they do get medical treatment, they frequently face discrimination and hostility from health-care workers. Consequently, some transsexuals decide to treat themselves by buying underground hormones, which can contain dangerous if not deadly chemicals.
- Because gender reassignment surgery can cost more than \$50,000 and is not covered by most health insurance policies, even most middle-class transsexuals cannot afford the procedures.
- The ultimate result is often high rates of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and thoughts of suicide among transgender people (thirty-five percent of the respondents to the D.C. survey reported that they had seriously considered suicide).
- Transgender people who can "pass," usually middle-class whites, often seek to remain closeted, so trans youth often do not have visible role models and mentors.