



## **Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities' Position Statement on Gender-Affirming Healthcare Bans**

Over 115 pieces of legislation have been introduced in state legislatures in 2023 that focus on banning aspects of gender-affirming medical care for transgender and gender expansive Americans<sup>1</sup>. Transgender and gender expansive individuals experience significant mental health disparities, including increased depression, anxiety, and suicidality, not because of their identity but because of the way that people respond to their authenticity<sup>2</sup>. Restricting access to gender affirming care is discrimination. These bills and laws seeking to ban or restrict access to care further perpetuate discriminatory attitudes towards transgender and gender expansive individuals<sup>3</sup>. Similar legislative efforts that invoke “conscientious objection” to providing these important medical interventions are no better than the bans and still have the same harmful impact on clients seeking care. In the face of these bills and laws, the Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities (SAIGE) upholds the American Counseling Association’s commitment to the prevention of harassment in all forms - verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological - including standing up for the basic human rights of transgender, gender expansive, and LGBTQ+ individuals<sup>4</sup>.

Gender-affirming interventions are not new or novel and have a well-established use for both cisgender and transgender youth<sup>5</sup>. Gender-affirming medical procedures and mental health care are essential and endorsed by American Academy of Pediatrics, the Endocrine Society, the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Medical Association, the United States Association for Transgender Health, and the World Professional Association of Transgender Health. SAIGE’s own *Competencies for Counseling Transgender Clients*<sup>6</sup>, which have been endorsed by the American Counseling Association<sup>7</sup>, call for counselors to embrace the full spectrum of gender identity and expression, affirm transgender mental and medical care, and serve as advocates for transgender individuals. Provision of affirming medical care is evidence-based best practice when working with transgender individuals.

SAIGE recognizes these bills and laws have a damaging psychological effect on an already marginalized group and therefore stands in solidarity with transgender and gender expansive individuals targeted by these acts of legislated hate, in addition to their medical and mental health care providers, their families, and their support systems. SAIGE strongly opposes any prejudicial bills and laws that are in opposition to the ACA’s *Code of Ethics* and/or SAIGE’s *Competencies for Counseling with Transgender Clients*.



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#### References

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