

gender spectrum

Finding a Welcoming Pediatric Practice for Your Child

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A *pediatrician is your child's medical "home base" for check-ups, vaccines, sports forms, and the everyday health needs of childhood. There is a tremendous amount of trust you place in the pediatrician who cares for your child. You may have a long relationship with that doctor. It can be an agonizing decision to switch pediatricians.

While your pediatrician doesn't need to be a specialist in gender-related care, they should create a respectful environment for all children and families, regardless of where you are in your family's journey around your child's gender identity and expression. What follows are talking points to evaluate potential practices or assess your current provider as you seek to strike a balance between the long-term trust you may have forged with your pediatrician over many years and your child's needs and your child's gender-related needs.



*We recognize some readers receive primary care for their child from a nurse practitioner or other provider. The information included in this document is as relevant to the evaluation of fit these practices may have for you and your child as it is to the evaluation of any pediatric practice.

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Office Culture & First Impressions

Start with a phone call or brief office visit. Ask how the practice ensures all children and families, including those with gender-diverse children, feel comfortable and respected. Look for mentions of staff trainings, respectful communication practices, and practical accommodations, such as private or single-occupancy restrooms.

Inquire about registration forms and whether they allow flexibility in how families provide information about their child. Ask how this information is handled in the electronic health record to ensure consistency across all staff interactions. Also ask about their approach when mistakes happen with the names or pronouns a child uses—a professional response typically involves a brief apology, immediate correction, and staff coaching to prevent future issues.

But remember, office staff does not always reflect a provider's knowledge or understanding, so it is always helpful to meet directly with the provider!



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Pediatrician's Knowledge & Approach

During your first visit or consultation, explore the doctor's experience and comfort level with children who may be questioning or exploring their gender identity. If they have limited experience, listen for openness to learning and evidence of relevant professional development.

Ask about their understanding of child development, particularly around identity formation. An informed provider will acknowledge that children develop their sense of self at different ages and that this process can evolve over time. They should be comfortable discussing these topics in age-appropriate ways when questions arise. If you want to be direct you can ask, "At what age do children usually know their gender?" An evidence-based reply will demonstrate the provider knows that many kids understand their gender identity in early childhood, while also acknowledging that identity can evolve.

Ask about the pediatrician's approach to referrals and care coordination if specialized gender care becomes relevant for your family. A well-prepared provider will have established relationships with gender specialists and be willing to collaborate on your child's overall health plan. Some will even manage hormones in-house with specialist guidance.

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Whole-Child, Whole-Family Care

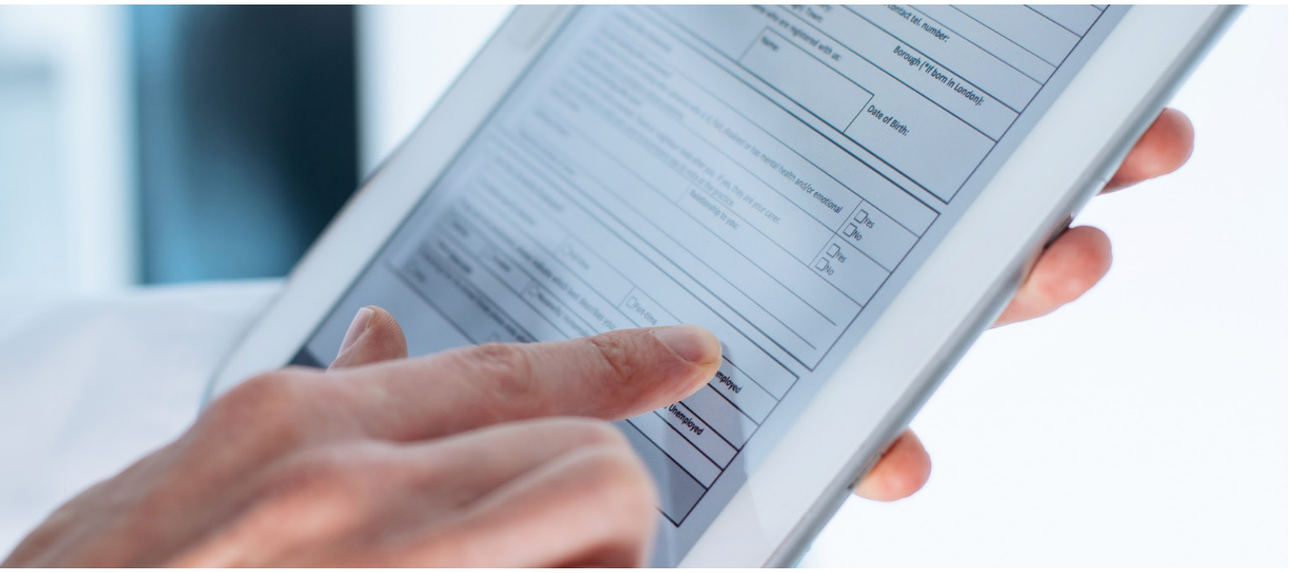
Ask how mental health screening fits into routine visits. Strong practices use evidence-based tools recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics to identify anxiety, depression, or other concerns early, and maintain referral networks with qualified mental health professionals, including trusted, gender-affirming therapists when needed.

Ask about educational resources available to families. Quality practices often provide information about support organizations, educational materials, and local community resources that can help families navigate various challenges.

Explore how the pediatrician approaches common childhood and adolescent issues like bullying, sleep problems, nutrition concerns, and school-related challenges. You want a provider who takes a comprehensive view of your child's wellbeing rather than focusing narrowly on any single aspect, including gender. It may be difficult to remember in the early moments of your child's and your family's gender journey, but your child is more than just their gender.



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Office Systems & Privacy

Insurance coverage and privacy protections are important considerations. Ask how the practice handles coding for routine visits and their understanding of insurance requirements. Competent offices are familiar with standard medical coding practices that support comprehensive care. Ask if well-child visits are coded in ways that won't trigger an insurance denial for "gender services." Competent offices understand routine ICD-10 codes and how to minimize sensitive details on statements.

For families with teenagers, inquire about confidentiality policies. Does the practice follow state guidelines for adolescent privacy? How do they balance family communication with developmentally appropriate privacy for teens during medical visits? Note that minor consent and confidentiality laws can vary widely by state.

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Ongoing Professional Development

Medicine and best practices evolve continuously. Ask how the pediatrician stays current on children's health topics, including LGBTQ/gender-diverse youth health, through things such as:

- Participation in professional organizations (such as the World Professional Association for Transgender Health and the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on LGBTQ Health and Wellness)
- Attendance at specialized training workshops and conferences
- Regular review of current research and clinical guidelines
- Consultation with gender specialists and multidisciplinary teams as needed

Inquire about the practice's approach to cultural competency training and whether staff receive ongoing education about working respectfully with gender-diverse youth and families.

Discuss how the practice adapts to legislative changes in healthcare policy or access issues. A prepared provider will have:

- Clear protocols for navigating insurance coverage changes
- Established referral networks across state lines if needed
- Advocacy resources and legal support contacts
- Contingency plans for maintaining care continuity during policy shifts
- Knowledge of telemedicine options and interstate licensing requirements

Ask about if/how the pediatrician stays informed about local and state-level advocacy efforts that may impact patient care.

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Potential Concerns—When to Consider Other Options

Watch for responses that suggest the practice may not be the right fit:

- Dismissive attitudes toward your family's concerns or your child's experiences
- Rigid adherence to outdated information rather than current medical evidence
- Unwillingness to accommodate reasonable requests for respectful treatment
- Inflexibility in documentation or communication practices
- Recommendations for approaches that don't align with established professional guidelines

To assess if a pediatrician is the right fit for your child, it will help first to be up to date on the established professional guidelines for pediatricians, as published by the American Academy of Pediatrics (or other governing body). You don't need to be an expert, but it does help to be familiar enough that you can sense when your pediatrician may be deviating from them.

If you receive concerning responses to your inquiries, it's appropriate to thank the provider and continue your search for a better match.

What to Look For

An excellent pediatrician:

- Provides comprehensive medical care while respecting each family's unique circumstances
- Knows when to address concerns directly and when to refer to specialists
- Partners with you through every developmental stage—from toddlerhood to college.
- Creates an environment where both children and parents feel heard and respected



Moving Forward

Trust your instincts about how comfortable your family feels with a practice. The right pediatrician will work with you as partners in your child's health and development, providing medical expertise while respecting your family's values and needs. The right practice leaves everyone feeling heard, respected, and supported—today and for the years ahead.

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