

## How Transgender and Nonbinary People Navigate and Advocate for Themselves in Medical Systems and the Response of Medical Providers



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### Community Partner



Since 1975, The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland has been serving the needs of the LGBT+ community in Northeastern Ohio. This organization was a natural fit to partner with for this study.

### Study Overview

Transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) individuals face a number of health disparities, many of which can be tied to a lack of access to or use of primary care. Stigma and misunderstanding make simple doctors' visits into ordeals only worth enduring for the most serious of problems. This project addressed those issues by enlisting TGNC people as experts on their own experience.



# Study Goals

The overall goal of the TRANSLATE Study was to work towards improving quality of life outcomes by reducing health disparities suffered by transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) individuals and by increasing their access to and use of primary health care. The TRANSLATE Study had three research aims:

- First, we wanted to understand the barriers that add to health disparities suffered by TGNC individuals in Cleveland by collecting data directly from the TGNC cohort.
- Next, we provided tailored trainings to the cohort to increased their knowledge base in order to promote confidence in interacting with medical providers (including staff), regardless of setting.
- Then, our trained cohort of TGNC individuals worked with healthcare providers and clinical staff to increase cultural competence when interacting with TGNC clients.

## IMPLICATIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

The TRANSLATE Study showed that sometimes the best people to teach cultural competency are those who are being affected. The TRANSLATE cohort demonstrated that empowering the TGNC community to have a voice in research could be effective for the study and for taking a more active role in their health care.

This project placed TGNC community members and The LGBT Center in position to lead the direction of research, to gain research and health advocacy skills themselves, and to form an advocacy group beyond the pilot study. This population is rarely asked what issues to prioritize and are often research subjects and not recognized as experts themselves.

In the facilitated dialogue sessions, the TRANSLATE Study's TGNC cohort directed the healthcare participants to recognize the TGNC cohort members as experts of their own experiences and to reconsider their approach to both learning about and engaging with the TGNC population.

The cohort has evolved into an ongoing program, with the support of the LGBT Community Center, that continues to address health disparities and other pressing issues facing the TGNC community.

Members of the cohort began sharing their knowledge within their own social circles about how being TGNC can affect people's access to healthcare and other rights, whether that was at church, at work, or with friends.

In addition, while many efforts are also being made to increase opportunity, quality, and accessibility for all TGNC identified patients, professional staff often lack the opportunities to learn how to provide appropriate care for these patients.

Interviewed medical providers spoke to an absence of formal or continuing educational opportunities centered on providing gender affirming care or even cultural competency around treating TGNC patients, pointing to institutional and structural barriers that must be addressed.

