

About this leaflet

This publication is distributed free of charge as a public service by the authors. It is not authored nor published by any government entity or political organization, and it is intended to provide tips to parents concerned with protecting their children by giving them truthful and accurate information about gender identification.

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What Every Florida Parent Should Know



How to Talk to Your Children About Gender Identity

Your children can no longer ask their teachers about gender identity, so it's up to you to tell them the truth and set their minds at ease about what they may not understand.

Families are Different

As kids enter school, they begin learning about families that are different than their own.

Families have different cultural traditions, religions, values, and family structures.

Some kids have one parent, some have two or more, or are being raised by their grandparents, in foster care, a group home, or other environment. Some kids have two moms or two dads or parents or caregivers who use different titles.

Even though a family looks different than one's own family, they are all similar in that they love each other just like we love each other. All families deserve respect.

Gender Identity Isn't About "Sex"

Gender identity, which is different from sexuality or sexual preference, is firmly established in preschool or early in elementary school.

Gender is different from a person's biological sex. It is

actually something constructed by society as we learn "rules" about how to be "boys and girls" from our culture and community.

Kids get a lot of messages about gender from the world around them. What does being a girl or being a boy mean? For some kids, they will feel more comfortable sticking with "traditionally held" gender roles like blue is a boy color or dolls are for girls. Other kids prefer to play with or defy those gender roles.

Defying or playing with gender stereotypes is not the same as being transgender, however. Kids know their gender early on and often will let parents or caregivers know if they feel that their sex assigned at birth does not match their gender.

Most important for children's health and development is a family willing to listen, learn, and accept children for just who they are without question or judgment.

Family is Important

Gender and sexuality can be difficult, and often uncomfortable, topics for many

adults (and some kids, too, though kids are generally much more flexible in their thinking). It is OK to be confused, concerned, or have feelings about these topics. Take the time to talk about it, read about it, and sit with your feelings about it and do your very best to approach it with an open heart and mind.

How to Explain Gender to Your Kids

As soon as kids begin to talk, you can teach them parts of the body. When they start being around other kids, you can teach them about respecting others and talking about their feelings.

Keep the conversation age-appropriate. Keep your answers to their questions simple and direct. Don't give more detail than your child asks for or can understand.

Everyday life provides opportunities to talk about gender and relationships. For example: a pregnant relative, a TV show about LGBTQ+ issues, an ad pushing gender

stereotypes, a game show with a gay contestant talking about his husband or her wife.

Jump in and start a conversation. "How do you feel about this ad for dolls showing only girls," for example.

Be open, and listen to their answers. Don't judge or criticize their feelings. Reassure them that it's OK to be embarrassed, but there's nothing to be ashamed of.

Tips for Talking to Tots

- Don't jump to conclusions about what they're asking.
- Keep your answers short and simple. Don't try to explain everything — just answer their questions.
- Keep the conversation going after your answer. Ask about other questions, or about what made the child ask.
- Check their understanding — ask if they understand, or what they think about the subject.
- Always be open to their questions.