



## Position Statement regarding the closure of

### CAMH's Child Youth and Family Gender Identity Clinic

Rainbow Health Ontario would like to express our support for the closure of CAMH's Child Youth and Family Gender Identity Clinic based on evidence and current best practice in the field.

Rainbow Health Ontario (RHO) is a program of Sherbourne Health Centre. RHO is funded by the research unit of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. RHO is a knowledge translation unit – our mandate is to ensure that high quality evidence is used to inform clinical practice with LGBTQ communities in Ontario. RHO does not provide direct care, but has strong ties to clinicians and researchers working in the field of LGBTQ health across the province. We also have strong links to LGBTQ communities.

Since our founding in 2008, RHO has heard many concerns about the services offered at CAMH's Child Youth and Family Gender Identity Clinic, from both parents of Gender Independent Children, and clinicians working in other settings. To respond to these concerns and to what we saw as a gap in services provincially, in 2011 we began a process of gathering evidence about the current best practices for working with Gender Independent Children<sup>1</sup>.

RHO has developed extensive expertise in the field of Gender Independent Children. This is a summary of the work we have done:

1. Conducted an extensive literature review about current best practices for working with Gender Independent Children, available on our website:  
[http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce\\_uploads/2012/10/RHO\\_FactSheet\\_GIC\\_E1.pdf](http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2012/10/RHO_FactSheet_GIC_E1.pdf)
2. Established a provincial Gender Independent Children Advisory Committee (GICAC). The 40 member GICAC includes physicians, specialists, psychotherapists, teachers, mental health professionals and parents of Gender Independent Children.
3. Hosted a national meeting of researchers from across Canada to develop a research strategy for identifying the needs of Gender Independent Children and their families. This meeting was funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). As a result of this meeting, we are currently members of two research teams that are submitting funding proposals to CIHR.
4. Developed and now deliver an evidence-based training for clinicians across Ontario about how to work with Gender Independent Children and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender independent children are those whose gender expression and/or gender identity differs from what others expect of their assigned birth sex.

5. Developed brochures, based on our literature review, to support parents and families with Gender Independent Children, available on our website:  
<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/gender-independent-kids-series-2/>

RHO and SHC base our work in this field on four simple principles:

- Being gender independent is a natural variation of human experience.
- Gender Independent Children can live happy healthy lives with the support of their families and communities.
- Training children to avoid activities that are perceived as inconsistent with their assigned gender instills shame and does not support the development of self-esteem or good mental health.
- Suggesting that parents of Gender Independent Children are to blame for their child's gender identity is false, instills feelings of guilt and shame in parents, and undermines the bond between parent and child.

None of the clinicians, parents or community members that we have worked with over the years advocate pushing children into a path of transition. There is clear and resounding agreement among those who support an affirming approach that no one knows what the adult gender identity of Gender Independent Children will be. The affirming approach encourages parents and families to follow the direction of the child in regard to their gender identity. It supports children to explore gender without judgement and with clear and unequivocal support.

In September of 2014 and January of 2015 we met with CAMH to discuss our concerns about the practices in the Child Youth and Family Gender Identity Clinic. We shared with them the concerns that we were hearing from parents and clinicians from across the province, and the literature review that we conducted that highlighted current best practices in the field.

**We support CAMH's decision to close this clinic.** Their decision is consistent with current best practices in the field and responsive to community feedback.

Gender Independent Children and their families need support to navigate social, educational, health and other bureaucratic systems that do not recognize gender diversity. That support is best located in the communities where they live.

RHO will be conducting an Ontario-wide environmental scan of services that currently exist, and a needs assessment focused on Gender Independent Children and their families.