

# Gender Equity: From the Boardroom to the Front Lines

Dr. Kayden Vargas,  
PhD



# HELLO!

Dr. Kayden Vargas, PhD  
[Vargas.kmv@gmail.com](mailto:Vargas.kmv@gmail.com)  
509-201-2092

**01.** **Who I Am**  
Counseling Psychologist  
Non-Binary, They/Them  
Parent, Partner, Scholar,  
Poet, Trainer, & Activist

**02.** **Teaching**  
Assistant Professor of  
Psychology at Heritage  
University

**03.** **VCC**  
Owner of VCC  
Clinical Specialties: Spanish  
speaking folks, Queer folks,  
Eating disorder pathology

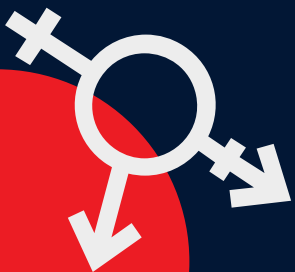


My Roots:  
Brewster &  
The Columbia.



## 3 H's & my why

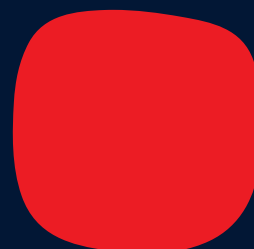
- **Home.** My first love was the **Columbia River**. **Queer people exist all over Washington.**
- **Healing.** Medical contexts have often been **traumatizing** for many LGBTQIA+ communities.
- **Hope.** I believe in Washington State Hospitals' capacity to provide **nurturing, loving, patient-centered care** for our shared **patients** and our **communities.**
- **This work is not possible without informed board members and mutual collaboration between stakeholders.**



# The Big Picture Plan

## Pt. 1: The Rural Trans Context

Setting the stage

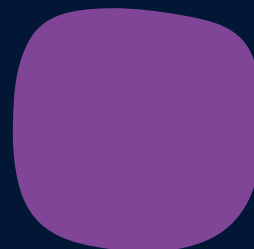


## Pt. 3: Board Member Shenanigans

Brainstorming together

## Pt. 2: Pronouns as a Tool

A powerful starting  
place



## Pt. 4: Moving Forward

As individuals,  
boards, and  
communities.  
Q&A

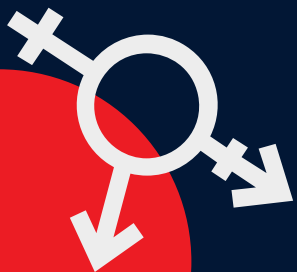




# Pt. 1: The Rural Context

The Number of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the U.S. is “growing”, researchers believe, because more people are finding language to describe their identity experiences.

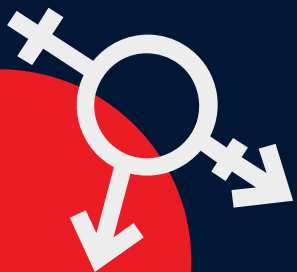
**As such, more and more people openly identify as queer in some way in terms of sexuality and/or gender identity.**





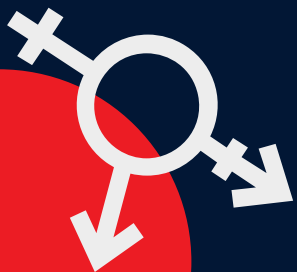
The Number of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the U.S. is “growing”, researchers believe, because more people are finding language to describe their identity experiences.

Hospitals & Clinics today are finding that they need to be able to meet the unique needs of LGBTQIA+ patients and employees now more than ever.



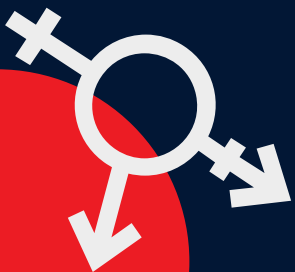
The Number of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the U.S. is “growing”, researchers believe, because more people are finding language to describe their identity experiences.

If this does not feel pressing to your hospital right now, trends indicate it certainly will be soon.



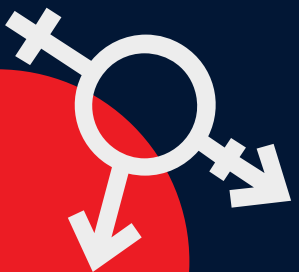
# Check-In Question

- What percentage of the U.S. do you think identifies as trans?



# Check-In Question

- What percentage of the trans people in U.S. do you think live in rural areas?



## But what about rural America specifically?

- Because the U.S. **Census does not ask about gender identity**, it is difficult to definitively state how many transgender people live in rural communities in general.
- **Transgender people are just as likely as cisgender (i.e., non-transgender) people to live in rural communities.**
- **Roughly 16%** of both transgender people and cisgender, heterosexual people live in rural areas

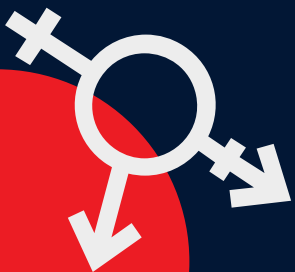
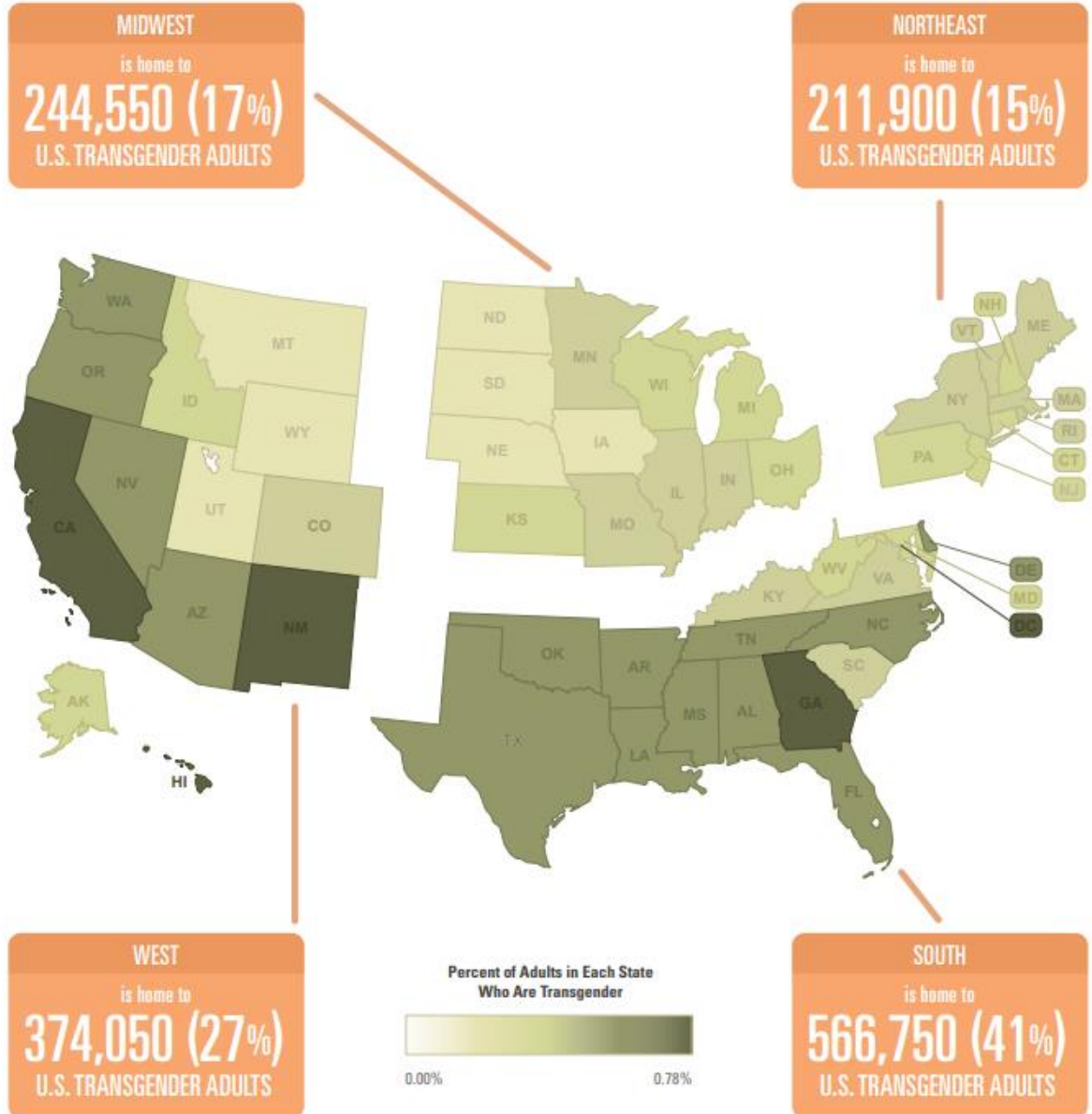


Figure 1: Transgender People Live in Every U.S. State, With the Highest Concentrations in the South

# 1.4 MILLION TRANSGENDER ADULTS LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES

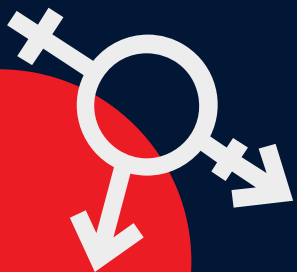


SECTION 1: A SNAPSHOT OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN RURAL AMERICA



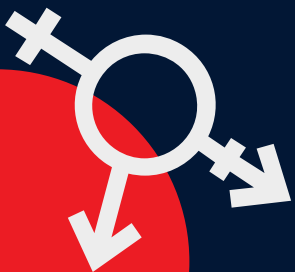
# What about Washington?

- Looking at the previous map, we can see that WA state leans closer to **.75% of the population identifying as transgender**, with **16%** of trans folks living in **rural areas**.
- If we do some math, that means even if the trans population in WA state is only .75% of the total population, that is still around **52,500 Trans people in WA state**.



# What about Washington?

- That means there are likely **thousands** of transgender people in WA state living in rural areas.
- This is also likely under-represented, due to lack of available data and surveying tools nationwide.

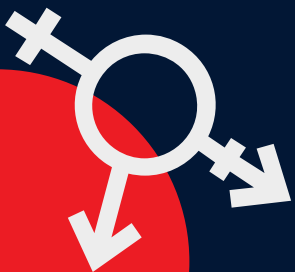




# LGBTQIA+ Folks & Medicine

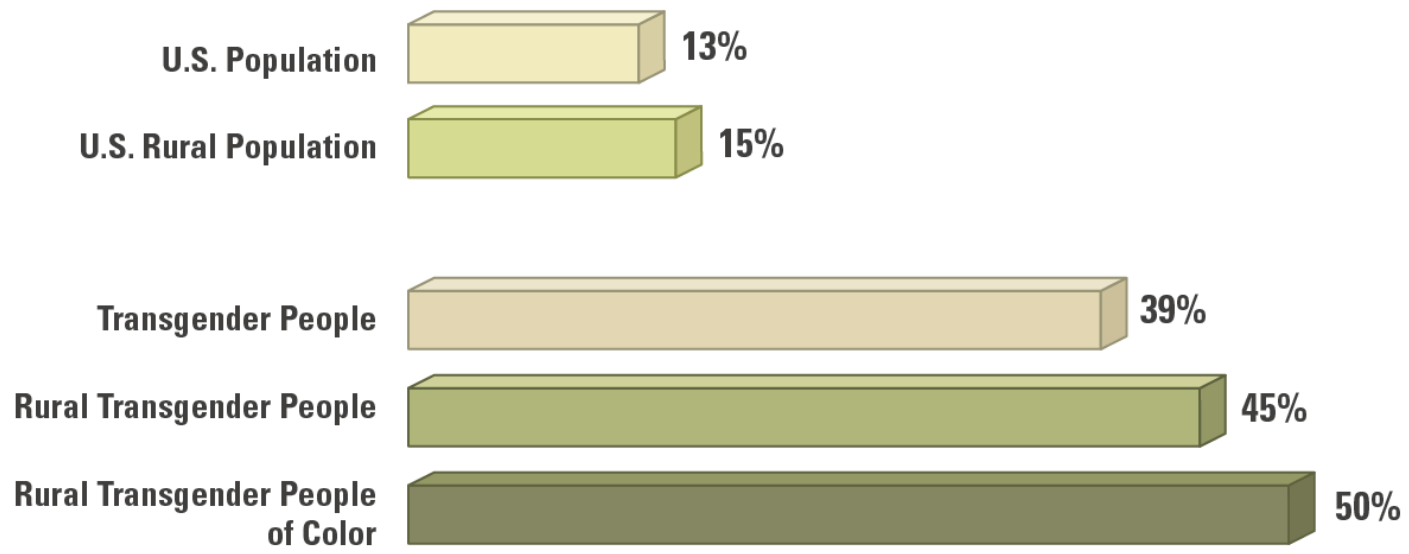
- The medical (and psychological) establishment has been **traditionally harmful** towards LGBTQIA+, Trans, and Non-binary individuals:
  - HIV/AIDS Epidemic
  - Pathologizing sexuality and gender identity
  - Refusing medical care
  - Victim-blaming
  - Ignoring LGBTQIA concerns entirely

**This legacy lives on for LGBTQ+ individuals, resulting in less frequent care, increased stigmatized stress, and poorer health outcomes.**



# Transgender People, Including in Rural Areas, Are More Likely to Have a Disability

% of Each Group That Has One or More Disabilities



Rural transgender people are **3x** as likely to have a disability as their rural neighbors

**Half** of rural transgender people of color have at least one disability

Note: Disabilities are those as described in the American Community Survey (ACS).  
 Source: MAP original analysis of USTS 2015. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table GCT1810, "Percent of People With a Disability—United States—Urban/Rural and Inside/Outside Metropolitan and Micropolitan Area." Accessed October 2019.



[www.LGBTMAP.org](http://www.LGBTMAP.org)

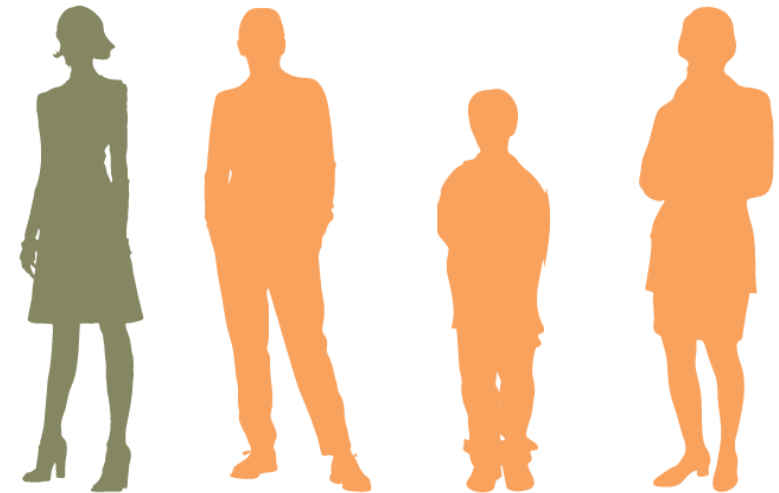


## Transgender People In Rural Areas Are Significantly More Likely to be Uninsured

Transgender people are **2x** more likely to be uninsured



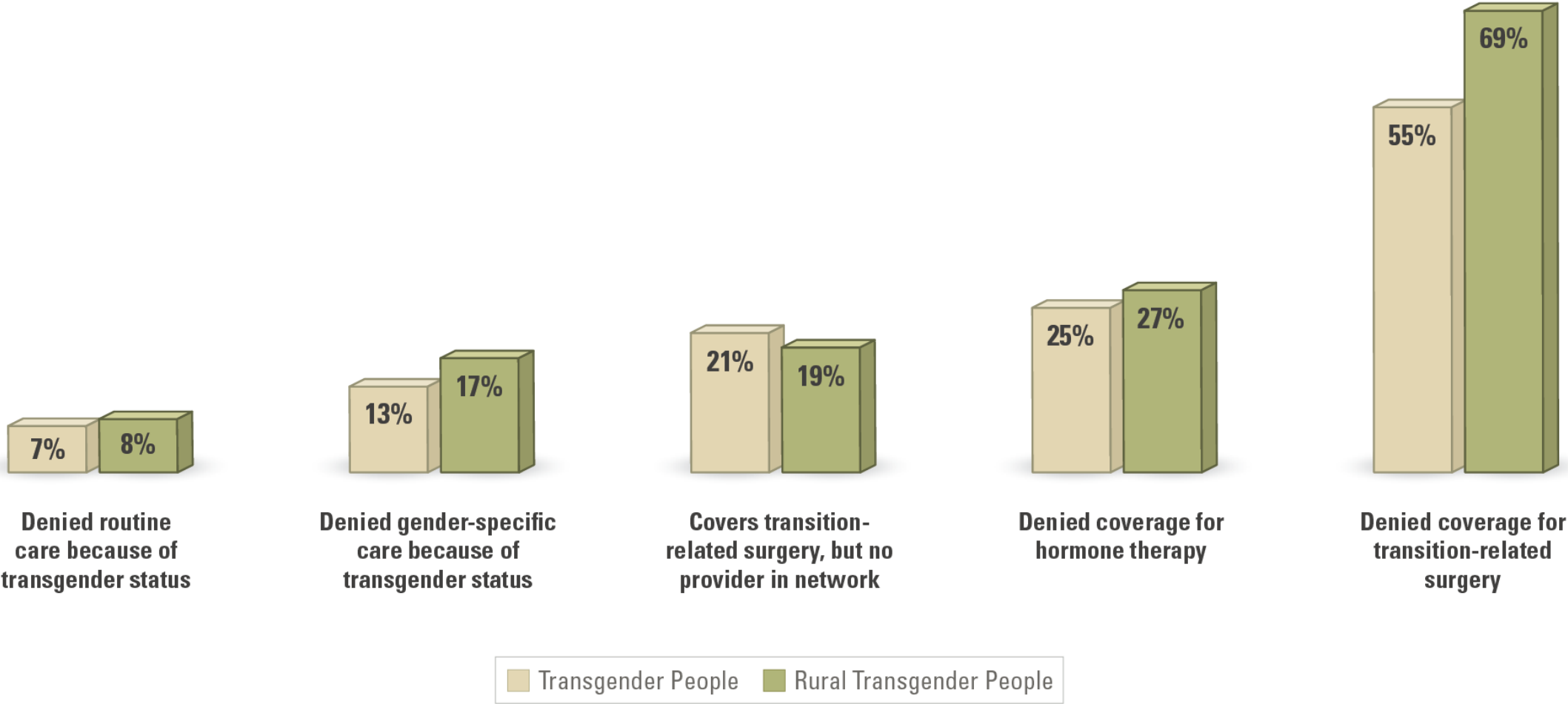
Transgender people of color are more than **3x** likely to be uninsured



...than their rural neighbors.

Source: MAP original analysis of USTS 2015. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table GCT2701, "Percent Without Health Insurance Coverage—United States—Urban/Rural and Inside/Outside Metropolitan and Micropolitan Area." Accessed October 2019.

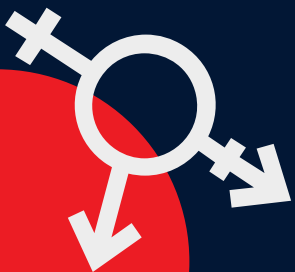
# Transgender People Are Routinely Denied Health Care By Their Insurers, and Rural Transgender People Are Especially Likely to Be Denied Coverage for Transition-Related Surgery



Source: MAP original analysis of USTS 2015.

## More Washington Stats

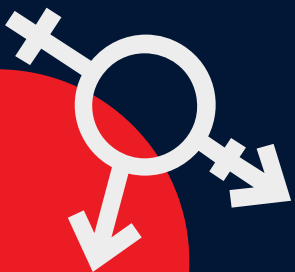
- The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) is the largest survey examining the experiences of transgender people in the United States, with 27,715 respondents nationwide.
- The USTS was conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality in the summer of 2015.
- **Of respondents in the USTS, 1,667 were Washington residents.**



## More Washington Stats

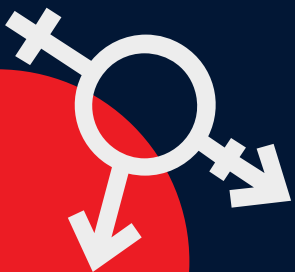
**Of respondents in the USTS, 1,667 were Washington residents.**

- **14% were unemployed**
- **28% were living in poverty**
- **17% reported verbal harassment**
- **23% reported other mistreatment**
- **29% reported problems with insurance coverage**
- **38% reported at least one negative experience with healthcare systems related to being transgender**
- **22% reported not seeing a doctor when they needed to because of fear of being mistreated**



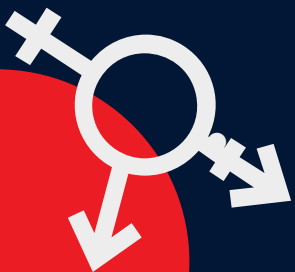
# Unique Considerations in Rural WA

- Trans rights (and existence?) is a hot political topic, but really this is about **making our communities healthier**.
- Folks may feel nervous discussing outcomes of LGBTQIA+ patients, or engaging in **LGBTQIA+ advocacy** publicly.
- And yet, **a growing number** of folks are beginning to be more open about their gender/sexuality and how that influences their health.
- We know that LGBTQIA+ folks are **less likely** to access healthcare, **more likely** to experience certain medical conditions, and likely **need support** from Primary Care Providers in accessing specialized care.



# Personal Medical Examples in WA State

- Frequent misgendering, even after screening and advocating for myself.
- Lack of knowledge about how T interacts with other medical conditions and refusal to consult with specialists.
- Ignoring my gender identity.
- Hyper-focusing on my gender identity.
- Being bumped back and forth between “men’s health” and “women’s health”.
- Insurance denials.







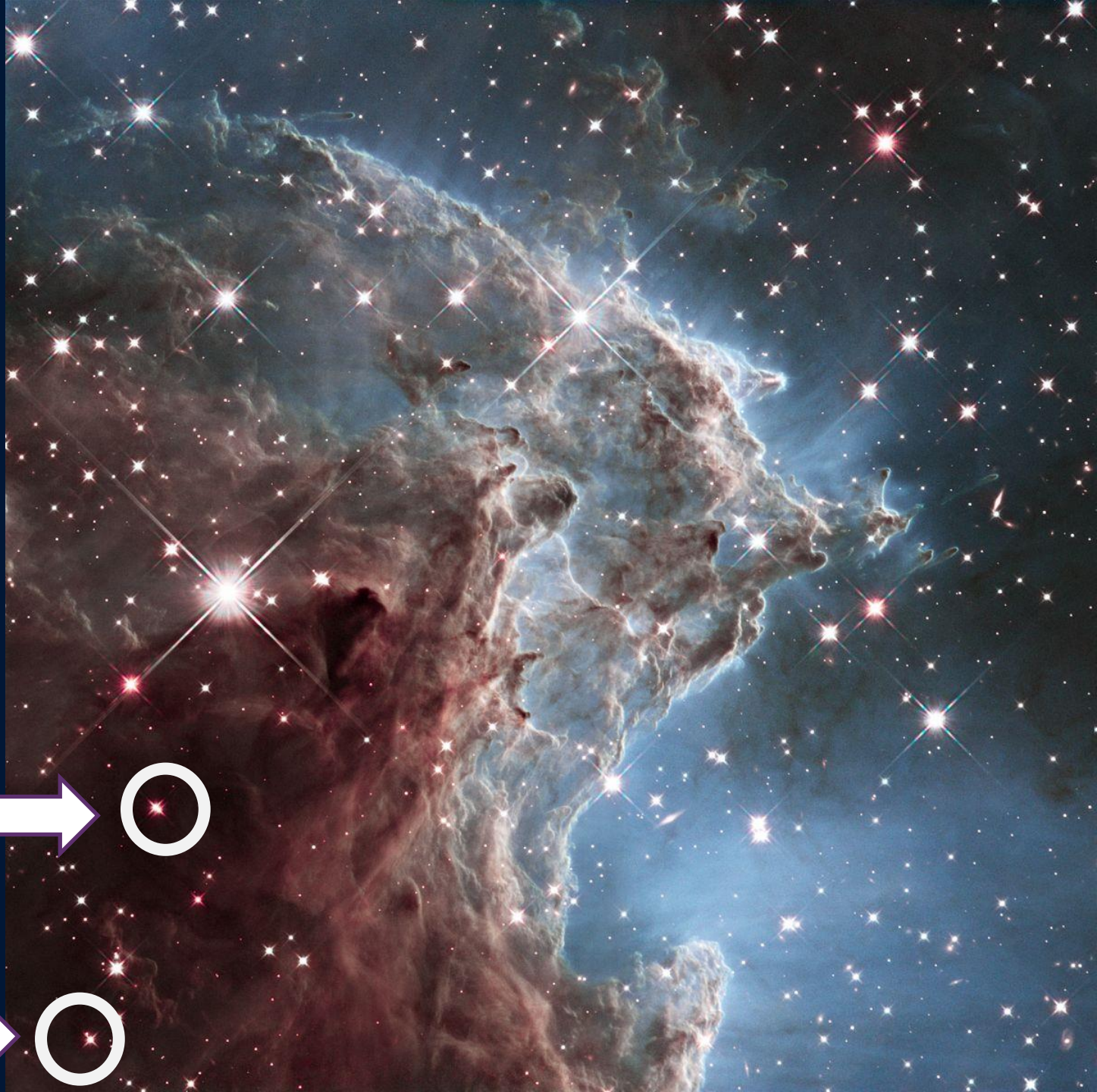
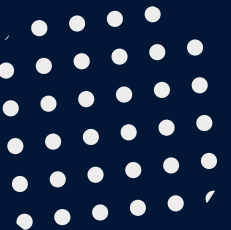
# Pt. 2: The Power of Pronouns


Gender is a universe in which pronouns are one small part.

Pronouns



Sexuality





We all have  
pronouns.

# What are Pronouns?

## Pronoun

pro·noun

/'prō ,noun/

A pronoun is **a type of word that replaces a noun** (reminder, a noun is a person, place, or thing). Pronouns are words like she, you, him, them, this, and who, to name a few.

For example, in the sentence “Carol likes apples,” the specific proper noun Carol can be replaced with the pronoun she: “She likes apples.”



● Common Pronoun Usage



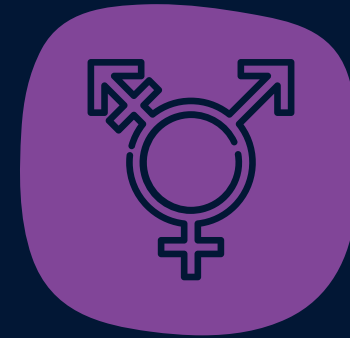
He/Him

He went to the grocery store.



She/Her

She went to the meeting.



They/Them

They went to the store.

# Common Pronouns?

## Pronoun

pro·noun  
/'prōˌnʌn/

She/Her  
They/Them  
He/Him/His

← Single set of pronouns

She/They  
He/They  
They/She  
They/He

← Multiple set of pronouns



## A quick note on the singular “they”.

Singular *they* has become the pronoun of choice to replace *he* and *she* in cases where the gender of the antecedent – the word the pronoun refers to – is unknown, irrelevant, or nonbinary, or where gender needs to be concealed.

The Oxford English Dictionary traces the use of the singular “they” pronoun back to 1375 in literature, where “they” was used to refer to a single person, not just as a plural pronoun.

Many folks choose to use “they” exclusively for many reasons, or as one of many chosen pronouns.



<https://public.oed.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-singular-they/>





## ● Common Pronoun Usage

Practice using they/them pronouns to describe what I am wearing and other basic attributes (with a friend)! Go!



Now who wants to demonstrate how to use the singular they to the large group?


She/He/They are not the only pronouns that folks use, but it's a start.




### They/Them

They went to the store.






Hi, My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my  
pronouns are \_\_\_\_\_.



Hi, My name is Kayden and  
my pronouns are  
They/Them.

Let's Practice!

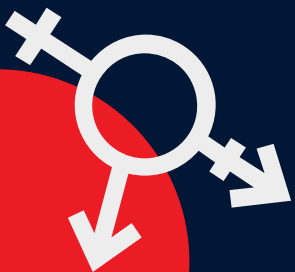


Hi, My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my  
pronouns are \_\_\_\_\_. What  
are yours?

Let's Practice!

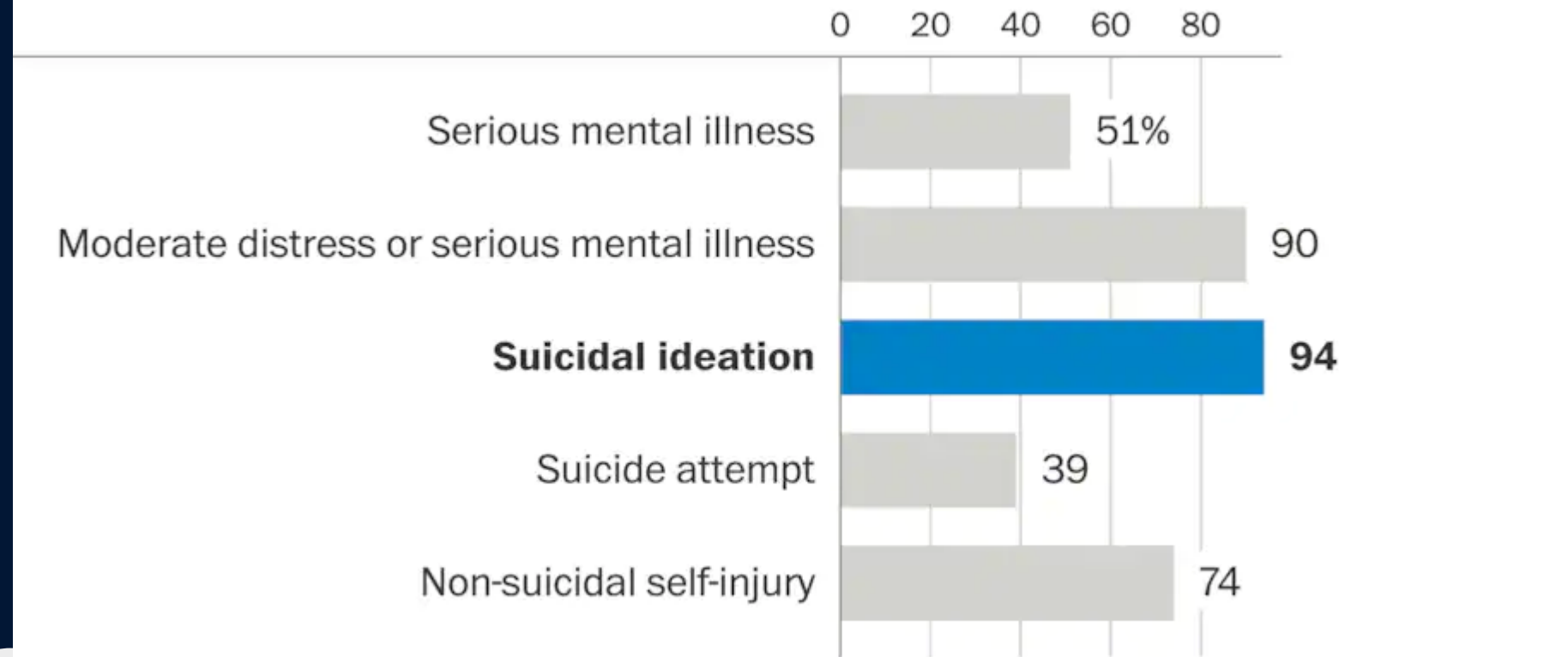
# Why Do We Care About Pronouns?

- First, and foremost, using the correct pronouns a person ascribes to (regardless of whether that matches how they are “read” or “perceived”) is **suicide prevention**.
- This is true of **patients and employees** of all ages.
- **This is especially true for trans and gender non-conforming patients and employees.**



# Why Do We Care About Pronouns?

Share of nonbinary LGBTQ adults in the U.S. who reported having each of the following



Source: The Williams Institute

THE WASHINGTON POST

## ● PERCENTAGES OF RISK REDUCTION IN TGNC YOUTH

29%



Usage of the correct name(s) and pronouns resulted in a 29% decrease in **suicidal ideation**.


56%



Usage of the correct the name(s) and pronouns resulted in a 56% decrease in **suicidal behavior**.

# Cascade Medical: The Power of Pronouns in the Workplace





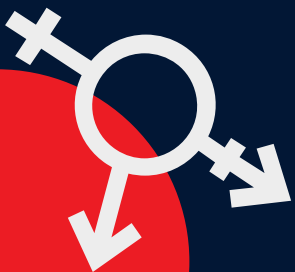
# Pt. 3: Board Members & Hospitals– On the Front Lines

Unique considerations for board  
members in supporting  
LGBTQ Health



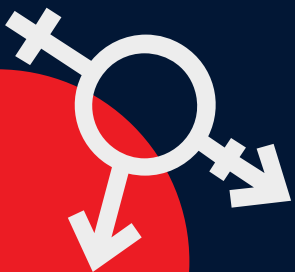
# Case 1: Re-evaluating the Mission Statement

- WSHA recently adopted **Equity** as one of its core values.
- You notice that a discussion of your hospital's values is on the next Board Meeting agenda and you realize that equity for LGBTQ+ patients has **rarely been discussed** as a policy area of attention.
- What do you say in the Board Meeting to your fellow board members to begin a conversation about **LGBTQ+ equity** in your hospital and community, without getting into the weeds of day-to-day operations?



## Case 2: LGBTQ+ Centered Policies - Brainstorming

- What are examples of **LGBTQ+ affirming policies in healthcare** that you are familiar with?
- Does **your hospital** have LGBTQ+-affirming policies already in place? If so, how has that been going from a big picture perspective?



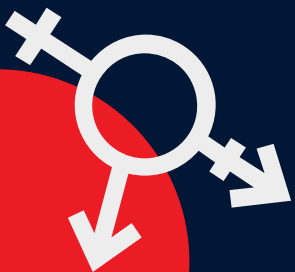


# Pt. 4: Continuing the Work

Q&A

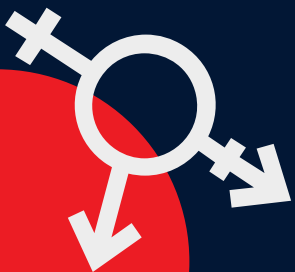
# To Do – As a Human

- Do explore your own **personal learning** as it relates to LGBTQIA+ issues:
  - **Supporting queer people** you know.
  - **Educating yourself** on historical and current anti queer & trans legislation (Texas, Florida, Arkansas, Alabama).
  - Consume **LGBTQ+ educational content** (see toolkit).
  - **Support LGBTQ+ foundations** and charities as well as artists and creators.



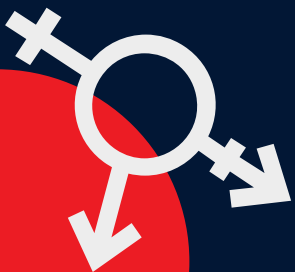
## To Do – As a Board Member

- Do examine your **Hospital Mission Statement** and brainstorm how supporting LGBTQIA+ patients supports this mission.
- Collaborate with stake holders & constituents to create larger scale policy that make LGBTQIA+ patients feel **represented** and **welcome**.
  - Supporting efforts to hear from LGBTQ+ community members about their experiences and needs.
  - Gender-inclusive facilities (staff representation, bathrooms).
  - Supporting equity task force/initiatives.
  - Requesting analytics of TGNC outcomes in reporting procedures to the Board.



# Why I Care: Home, Healing, & Hope

- **Home.** My first love was the **Columbia River**. **Queer people exist all over Washington.**
- **Healing.** Medical contexts have often been **traumatizing** for many communities.
- **Hope.** I believe in Washington State Hospitals' capacity to provide **nurturing, loving, patient-centered care** for our shared **patients** and our **communities**.



# Q & A Time



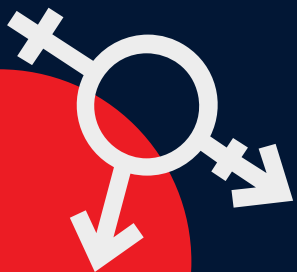
You really are  
life changing  
for LGBTQIA+  
folks, on the  
front lines.





# Ways to contact me!

- **Website:** [www.vccdrkmv.com](http://www.vccdrkmv.com)
- **Instagram:** @vccdrkmv
- **Phone:** 509-201-2092
- **Email:** Vargas.kmv@gmail.com





Thank you!

