

# Improving the Care of Young Children with Gender Nonconforming Behaviors and Preferences

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## BACKGROUND

- There is growing awareness of the characteristics and complex needs of individuals who believe that their gender identity does not match their birth sex
- Despite research and lay publications about teens with gender dysphoria and those who identify as transgender, little guidance is available regarding young (prepubertal) children with questions about their gender identity
- Although many terms are used to describe these children, we have chosen to describe them as “gender nonconforming” (GNC)

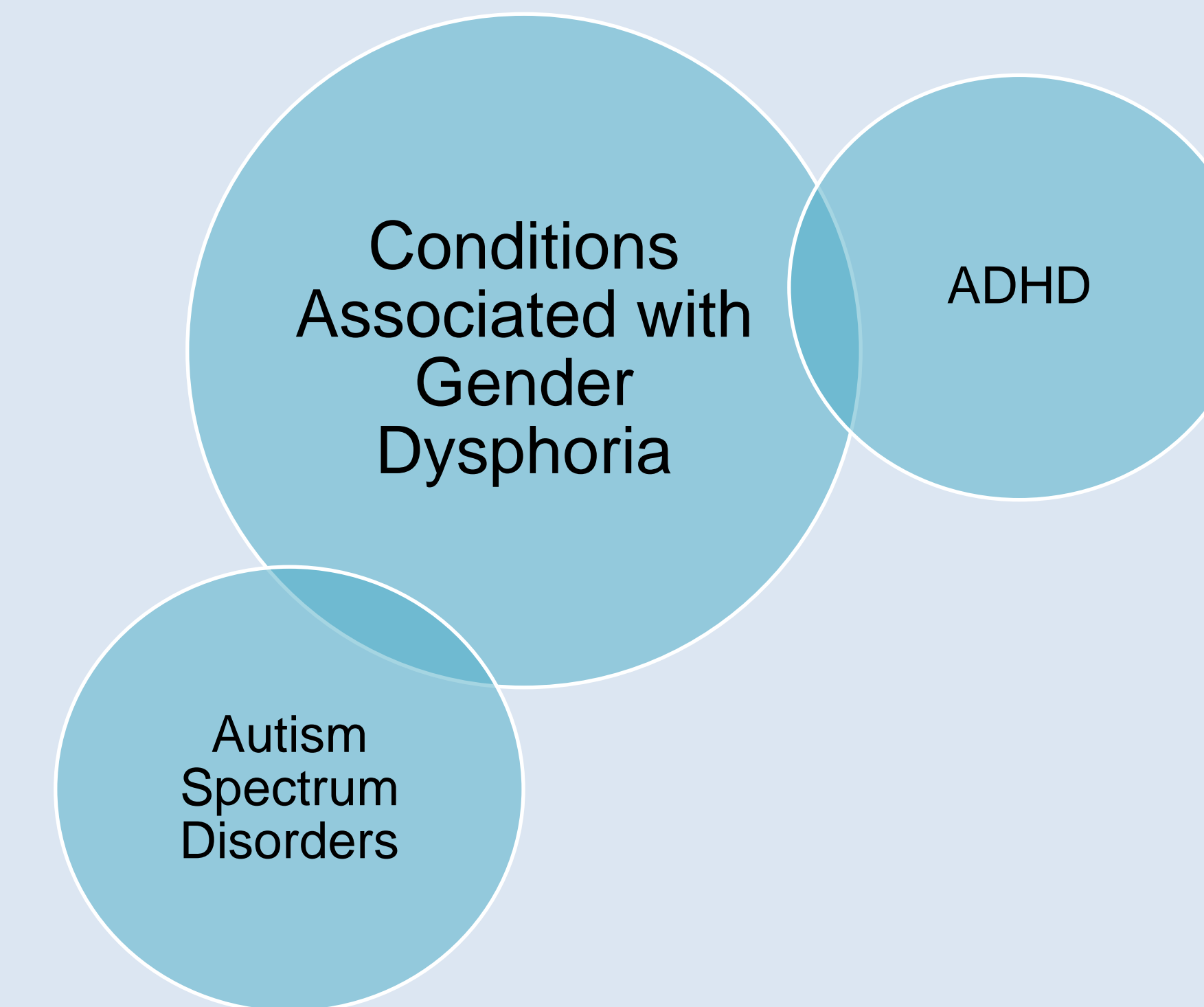
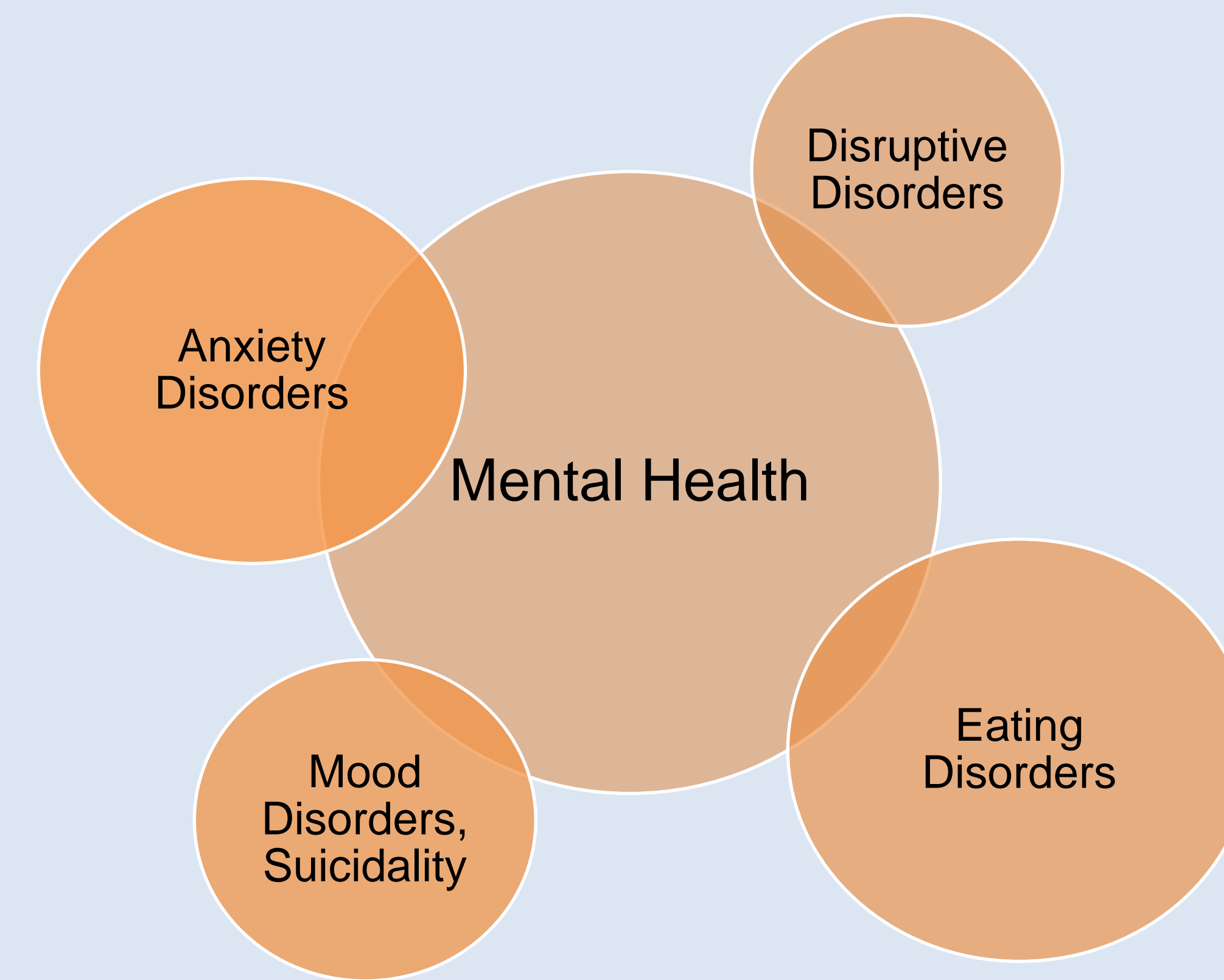
## OBJECTIVE

- Primary care and developmental behavioral pediatric providers are often the first professionals with whom young gender nonconforming children and their families discuss their concerns about their emerging gender identity
- It is important that pediatric providers be knowledgeable about the dilemmas, conflicts, and choices that are typical of these children and their families

## OVERVIEW

- In this poster, we present a developmental behavioral pediatric framework of the complex needs of prepubertal GNC children and their families as well as an approach to care

## EFFECTIVE SCREENING OF GNC CHILDREN



## FURTHER INTERVENTIONS

- Within the scope of the clinic, providers can make their offices a welcoming experience for GNC children and their families. The availability of posters, resource listings, and books about gender diversity in waiting rooms will signal to children and families that their gender concerns can be discussed freely in this setting
- Appropriately adjusting names and pronouns in the child's medical record to match the child's expressed identity is essential. All providers (including receptionists, nurses, and professional staff) should be mindful of using a child's changed name and pronouns
- Providers should familiarize themselves with local educational laws regarding the status of GNC children and should also assist families of children who are GNC in tolerating uncertainty and supporting diversity
- There is a clear need for continued research about prepubertal children who are GNC to gain a better understanding of their developmental needs and how best to care for them and their families

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILIES

- Be a team; keep home a safe place
- Advocate with family and friends
- Talk about stigma, teasing, and bullying and prepare the child to cope
- Encourage the child's interests, especially less gender-defined ones
- Do not use “boy” or “girl” to label activities, colors, or toys
- Read and discuss books and watch movies/TV programs that include LGBT adults and teens
- Advocate with school staff (de-gender the classroom and stimulate open discussions about gender diversity)
- Prepare the child to transition socially to her/his preferred gender, with support and guidance from school staff and parents
- Find peer support, counseling (for both parents and children)
- Initiate or join antibullying programs
- Keep open dialogue and support among members of the extended family and friends

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- Schools should discuss with the student how the school should refer to the student (i.e., name and pronouns)
- Information about a student's birth sex, name change, gender transition, or mental health should be kept confidential
- The documented gender marker on school records should reflect the student's gender identity
- All students are entitled to have access to restrooms, locker rooms, and changing facilities that are sanitary, safe, and adequate
- All students should be allowed to participate in athletic activities in a manner consistent with their gender identity
- Schools should evaluate all gender-based policies, rules, and practices (e.g., lining up by gender and gender-based dress codes) and maintain only those that have a clear and sound purpose
- Schools should incorporate education and training about gender nonconformity and sexual orientation into their antibullying curriculum, student leadership trainings, and staff professional development
- School libraries should have available books, videos, and other materials about sexual orientation, gender identity, and family diversity
- Schools should communicate to all staff and families in the school community that they are committed to providing a supportive, inclusive environment for all students

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDERS

(Compiled by Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth)

- Remember that sexuality and gender are not equivalent concepts
- Acknowledge that talking about gender identity and puberty can be awkward in the clinical setting. Try to create a comfortable atmosphere
- Recognize that some individuals identify as nonbinary and will therefore choose alternative pronouns
- Names, pronouns, and gender markers matter
- Do not ask about genitalia unless medically necessary
- Genital and breast examinations may be particularly uncomfortable for transgender or gender nonconforming individuals
- Puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones can be lifesaving
- All staff should use preferred names, use date of birth (and not name) to confirm identity, and ask about preferred pronouns
- Keep in mind that mental health can be significantly impacted by the reactions of others
- “Let me know that you are on my team”

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