



# GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY:

Gender Spectrum Annual Report 2017







# Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

We, like the rest of the country, have been dealing with the challenges and turbulence that has defined much of this past year. The highs and lows have been greater than they have been in a long while. Fear and frustration is palpable with the families and professionals we work with. Yet, the past year is not only a story of setbacks: we are making progress, even now.

This hasn't been a year to give up. It's been a year to dig in. And fortunately, thanks to your support, it's been a year of tremendous growth and opportunity for Gender Spectrum. With your support, our training programs for educators and other professionals are reaching leaders who are taking our critical framework on gender to schools, healthcare organizations, and other institutions that serve millions of children and youth nationwide. Your support is helping us grow our family education and youth programming, effectively providing a lifeline of support for families and young people who often have no other place to go. With your help, we are forging partnerships that enable us to spread our work to new constituencies, and give us opportunities to augment the work of many amazing organizations around the country who are providing vital services in their local communities.

We hope you are as proud as we are to see the positive changes YOU helped create for youth and families. Your past support has been critical to helping us all "dig in" and make a difference. This year, you helped Gender Spectrum

- **Provide direct support to parents and children from all 50 states and more than 40 countries**
- **Train teachers and educators at schools serving more than 33 million children**
- **Join with and provide guidance and direction to other leading groups to increase their understandings of gender and change the practices of organizations nationwide and beyond**
- **Build a national network of educators working to establish gender inclusive schools**

- **Demonstrate to parents, grandparents and other family members how critical their love—and support—is to their gender-expansive children and you gave countless families hope!**

We all want every child to reach their full potential, but practically from birth, gender stereotypes limit and harm all children. Rather than empowering children and youth to bring their full creativity and passion as they engage in school and their communities, we place obstacles in their way and limit their possibilities. Young people who are perceived to look or act outside of rigid gender stereotypes are particularly harmed by these narrow definitions of gender. Strict gender roles lead to real social inequities and entrenched social injustices that affect us all.

It doesn't have to be this way. Gender Spectrum believes that together, we can create a world free from gender limitations, where all children can learn, grow, and play to their fullest capacity regardless of their gender.

With your ongoing support, we will continue to grow our vital work. [Your donation today](#) will help us continue to create safe, caring environments for all children.

Thank you for all of your support for Gender Spectrum.

Lisa Kenney  
Executive Director

Stephanie Brill  
Founder, Board Chair

# Training for Educators and Professionals Nationwide

Gender Spectrum trainings provide professionals, including teachers and other educators, physicians, mental health providers and other child-serving professionals, with foundational knowledge on gender and gender diversity. We also provide the tools and resources they need to make a real impact in the lives of all of the youth they serve. Our professional trainings underscore that restrictive notions of gender limit all children's growth and development. In addition to our work with school districts and state departments of education across the country, we also train leading national organizations to be more gender inclusive in all of their messaging—helping create broad changes that impact millions of children nationwide.

## EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS

Through 2017's trainings for The National Association of Elementary School Principals, The National Association of School Psychologists, the American School Counselors Association, The National School Superintendent's Association, the National Association of Independent Schools, and the National School Business Officers Association we reached:

**33 MILLION** CHILDREN

**58,000** SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

**16,000** SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS

In addition to those noted above, this year we provided trainings to dozens of other professional and educational organizations, including, among others:

- National School Public Relations Association
- The Western Association of Independent Camps
- Teach for America (national)
- Children's Hospital Colorado
- Michigan Department of Education
- Equality Virginia
- Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada
- Rustic Pathways, Ohio
- Duval County Public Schools, Jacksonville, Florida
- Saint Anselm College (NH) Nursing Education
- Stanford Medical School
- Oregon School Public Relations Association
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

We also continue to host a one-day Professionals' Symposium. This year we significantly expanded the Symposium, with more workshop facilitators and presenters who focused on intersectionality, particularly with respect to gender, race, and faith.

Gender Spectrum was recently awarded a highly competitive, five year \$1.2 million grant from the California Department of Public Health. The grant will support our school trainings and provide resources to help monitor and measure the impact of our work on school climates generally and on transgender and other gender-expansive youth in particular. At completion, we will have evaluation data to strengthen our focus, create a base of knowledge on which further projects can build, and validate our work with foundations, government agencies and other funders.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDIES

Shirley: Elementary School Teacher

Our work with major national school leadership organizations, including school principals and counselors, has the potential to make significant changes in the way that gender is talked about-and taught- in schools nationwide.

Shirley, an elementary school teacher from Northern California who attended our Professionals' Symposium, is one teacher who exemplifies the value of our work. Shirley learned of Gender Spectrum shortly before the Symposium, and she was eager to work on creating a gender-inclusive classroom and school environment, noting "I want to work at the school level, looking at systems and how we can train teachers and talk to parents about this work." She also expressed how influential teachers are in creating safe spaces at school where students can be free "from stereotypes and rules that limit them."

After the Symposium, Shirley felt empowered to take our work back to her school. "This work is not something I have to do alone," she said. "Gender Spectrum meets people where they are, and they have a conversation....That feels really good to me, because I've been bumping up against some resistance."

See a [brief video](#) with clips of Shirley and other educators.

***"With Gender Spectrum's guidance, school leaders—regardless of their personal feelings or prior knowledge about gender—can see the importance of implementing policies and practices that enable every child to flourish"***

Sasha Pudelski,  
Assistant Director for Policy and Advocacy, AASA/The  
School Superintendents Association

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## THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK

Our Inclusive Schools Network is a first-of-its-kind nationwide learning community of educational professionals committed to creating school settings where every child is seen, understood and honored. By the end of 2017, we will have six Institutes held in California, Massachusetts and North Carolina. For 2018, we plan to add Institutes in Texas, Missouri and Nevada, and through the National Association of Independent Schools.





## Providing Safe Spaces for Youth and Families Nationwide

A September 2017 World Health Organization/Johns Hopkins study of children ages 10-14 from fifteen countries confirmed the need for our work for all children. The study found that, from a young age, children were already entrenched in stereotypical gender assumptions. As the study's author noted, children "quickly internalise the myth that girls are vulnerable and boys are strong and independent." Gender Spectrum's Family Education program engages with parents, primary caregivers, and family members, to help them better understand gender and support young people in their lives. Working with youth and families, we help create safe spaces where all children can grow to be who they are.

While gender constructs impact the lives of all children and youth, we know that those who fall outside society's restrictive ideas about gender experience the greatest harm. Gender Spectrum provides support nationwide to young people and families who need resources and safe spaces to connect. While many assume that gender-expansive young people can find local support, through LGBTQ centers or other services, too often this is simply not the case. Many areas have no services, and even in areas with local centers, gender-expansive young people often do not seek nor know where to find supportive adults. Many of these kids are concerned about maintaining their privacy around gender, leading to greater isolation and risk.



We know the dire consequences from social isolation and family rejection—and the power of support from parents or other adults. Recent data show that 41% of transgender or gender-expansive youth surveyed have attempted suicide (9 times higher than average). Of those who attempted suicide, 57% indicated their family chose not to speak or spend time with them. But parental support makes an enormous difference: **teens who perceive that their parents strongly support their gender are 93% less likely to attempt suicide than teens who feel unsupported.** Another study found that any positive adult interaction can have a tremendous impact: transgender and gender-expansive teens who have an adult to go to were 2.3 times less likely to attempt suicide. Unfortunately, these youth were also 1.5 times less likely to know an adult they felt they could go to for help.

For many youth, our online community and programs provide a lifeline of support, accurate information and up-to-date resources. Our approach in youth programming is based on research indicating that a supportive community and family, connection with other gender-expansive youth, and access to quality and empowering resources are all essential for healthier outcomes for gender-expansive young people.

*“I am a completely different person from when we first began this journey. I was crippled by fear of the unknown. Thanks to the knowledge, education, the message, and all the love from Gender Spectrum, we are all here together, celebrating new beginnings and embracing bright futures. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”*

## GENDER SPECTRUM YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS: BY THE NUMBERS

**1.1 MILLION** CHILDREN IN THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, WHERE WE HAVE DONE SYSTEM-WIDE PARENT TRAINING.

**27,000** VIEWS OF OUR ONLINE YOUTH PROGRAMS

ONLINE YOUTH VISITORS ARE FROM **33 STATES, 7 COUNTRIES**

OUR ONLINE PRE-TEEN GROUP MEMBERS ARE FROM **15 STATES**





***“[One thing I hope that never changes about the group is] The kindness of the people who participate.”***

Tyler

***“It’s been fantastic for Tyler! He feels alone sometimes in this, and it’s so important for him to see and connect with other kids who are struggling with the same issues. I know this group has really meant a lot to him.”***

Tyler’s Mom

\*The name has been changed to protect privacy.

## YOUTH SERVICES CASE STUDY

### Gender Spectrum’s Online Pre-Teen Group

We all know that puberty can be a very vulnerable time, and for gender-expansive young people the pre-teen years are especially challenging. Our online Pre-Teen Group is the only online national group for transgender, non-binary and gender-expansive kids ages 10-12, and is often the only space where these kids can be open and feel safe. Gender Spectrum staff provide the expertise and guidance to ensure the group serves each child’s needs. Discussions in the group often start casually, with talk about families, pets, favorite books and movies and the like. But quickly, many truly vital conversations take place.

One recent participant exemplifies this pattern. Tyler\* joined the group this fall, but for three weeks he never spoke or let anybody see him via his web camera. In the fourth session, Tyler found the comfort and confidence needed and became an active participant, joining the chat by video and talking throughout the conversation. His Mom later told us that she was amazed to see this progress, and that Tyler told her how excited he was to meet other transgender kids.

The power of peer relationships is clear in the pre-teen group. These kids often have no one to talk with about going on overnight school trips, using bathrooms, or simply navigating the many unpredictable situations that come up in their lives. In one recent group, one participant expressed concerns about how to tell extended family members about their use of they/them pronouns, and was excited to hear from another group member who had just navigated the same problem.

When the group needs guidance, our staff and volunteers are ready to suggest ways that the youth can explore their gender, and navigate the often inaccurate information they find online. Our High School Youth Council members also often join the pre-teen discussions and provide valuable insights as older peers who have been through many of the same challenges.





THIS WORLD  
IS FULL OF HOPE  
LET'S BEGIN TO  
PROCEED WITH  
HOPE



MEMBERS OF THE GENDER SPECTRUM LOUNGE ARE FROM

**50 STATES/  
46 COUNTRIES**

Argentina	Italy
Antilles	Japan
Australia	Kuwait
Bahamas	Lebanon
Bahrain	Madagascar
Bangladesh	Mauritius
Canada	Mexico
Chile	Nepal
China	New Zealand
Colombia	Nigeria
Costa Rica	Norway
Croatia	Peru
Czech Republic	Philippines
Dominican Republic	Portugal
Egypt	Qatar
Germany	Spain
Ghana	Sweden
Guatemala	Tasmania
India	The Netherlands
Indonesia	Tunisia
Iran	Turkey
Ireland	United Kingdom
Israel	Uruguay

## 2017 Program Highlights

- The Gender Spectrum Conference
- National Online Parents Support Group
- National Online Dads Group and Grandparents Group
- National Spanish-speaking Parents Support Group
- Suicidal Warning Signs: A Presentation and Discussion with the Trevor Project

## The Gender Spectrum Conference

Our annual conference continues to be the nation's preeminent gathering for transgender, non-binary and other gender-expansive youth and their families. The 2017 Conference was significantly more diverse, with a wider variety of workshops and presentations.

### FAMILY EDUCATION CASE STUDY

#### Helping a Mom in Need

In addition to our support groups and other education and support services for parents and families, every year Gender Spectrum staff respond to hundreds of calls and emails from parents and family members who are seeking help. Often these families have nowhere else to turn, and cannot find the resources they desperately need. In one case, we heard from Ellen,\* a mom with a problem. Ellen was having a hard time understanding her child, Tracy's, transgender gender identity, and she was not supporting Tracy's gender alignment process. But, when Tracy developed severe depression and attempted suicide, Ellen knew that something had to change, or she would lose her child. Ellen contacted us, and our staff lent her support and advice. We provided mental health referrals, shared tools for engaging with schools, connected her with legal support, and provided other needed assistance to help Ellen find the courage she needed to fully support her child—regardless of gender. Ellen is now a regular participant in our online National Parents Support Group and has become Tracy's greatest advocate, as well as a vital resource to other parents who are just starting in their journeys.

\*The names have been changed to protect privacy.



# Expanding Our Reach Through Partnerships Nationwide, and Beyond

We are reaching more families than ever, but we know that many families have not found us, and we are aiming to serve families with a more diverse range of backgrounds. Our focus in the coming year has turned to better meeting the needs of African American families, Latinx families, and families with strong faith ties. One way we plan to reach new families is through strengthening and initiating new partnerships with leading national and regional organizations. Among other current collaborations, we have recently partnered with the national nonprofit Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS), which includes more than 300 affiliates across the country, serving millions of children. Gender Spectrum Executive Director Lisa Kenney has been invited to serve on a BBBS Advisory Board and we look forward to supporting their tremendous work regarding gender and youth across the country. We are also pleased to expand our partnership with PFLAG. In 2018 we will continue to support PFLAG National, as well as regional chapters, through parent trainings, facilitator trainings and support, and presenting at their national convention.





***“Thank you! Latino parents have a desperate need to be heard and to be seen as supportive of their children. Hope that more spaces are created to hear and visibilize POC (people of color) experience. Culturally and financially it is very different than most of the non-POC counterparts and that includes their children’s journey.”***

## CASE STUDIES:

### Partnering for National and International Impact

Our work across the country, and even internationally, shows the importance of developing strong partnerships with other regional and national groups working on educational, anti-discrimination, LGBTQ and other related issues. There are many groups doing amazing work, and our goal is to support their progress and provide our expertise to make their work even stronger.

Our partnership with Mexico City’s Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination (COPRED), an autonomous agency charged with preventing and eliminating discrimination in the city, is a compelling example of how we help elevate other groups’ work. Gender Spectrum has been collaborating with COPRED for more than six years, starting from an introduction by a current Gender Spectrum Board member. Early on, our presentation in Mexico City at a COPRED meeting with a wide range of city government leaders, health professionals and others helped assure the passage of a city ordinance to protect the rights of minors seeking gender related name changes on legal documents. COPRED members have attended our annual Conference, and we have streamed programming in Spanish for COPRED members online. Our Conference inspired COPRED to develop their own two-day Gender Conference in Mexico City, with one day for professionals and one day for families. Our staff attended their conference and presented plenary sessions on both days. Our partnership with COPRED provides a context to help build content that is culturally relevant among diverse cultures, with many benefits, including an increase in both written and sub-titled video content in Spanish. Overall, our work is strengthening this leading city institution’s ability to understand and support gender-expansive children and families.

In our work towards creating more gender inclusive health education, our partnerships will also dramatically increase the impact of our work. We are currently developing a major report on gender inclusive health and puberty education (“sex ed”) that will be co-released with Planned Parenthood and several other groups. Also in 2017, we joined a coalition of national organizations, including Advocates for Youth, the National Association of City and County Health Officials and several others working with the Centers for Disease Control on approaches to gender and gender diversity in school-based health programs. While this is a new partnership, it has already led to joint workshop presentations at major national conferences, Planned Parenthood and other groups presenting at the Gender Spectrum Conference, and plans for joint webinars. Working together, we will create heightened awareness of the benefits of gender-inclusive health education, and also bring our central messages of gender-inclusion to larger audiences.



## Collaborations with Corporations, Government and Other Institutions

Major corporations, government agencies and other institutions are recognizing that society's evolving understandings around gender have significant implications for their work. Gender Spectrum offers individualized trainings tailored to each company, agency, or institution's needs, working on developing gender-inclusive workplaces and policies, recruiting and retaining employees, identifying best-practices for gender-related marketing, and other issues to make their work more effective. We always respect the wishes of any group that needs to remain private in this work. Some recent clients who we can identify include:

- Apple Inc.
- Blue Shield, Inc.
- The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service
- Palo Alto Medical Foundation (a major regional physicians group that serves more than 1 million patients with more than 5,300 employees, including nearly 1,200 doctors).



# Gender and the Road Ahead

As you can see, our work is making tremendous strides in moving the national and global conversation on evolving understandings of gender, and is changing the way that major institutions engage around children, youth and gender. We are proud of our track-record showing the impact we can make with a small staff and extremely modest resources.

We know there is much more that needs to be done—we need staff and resources to work on educating doctors, mental health practitioners, and other health care workers; to put more focus on early childhood education; to advance policies and support legal challenges to discriminatory laws.

And in these challenging political times, our already strained resources are stretched even further by the urgent demands that arise when we are called to respond to the current administration's policies, to join legal challenges to discriminatory laws, or heed countless requests for urgent assistance. Your investment in Gender Spectrum in these trying times is especially critical for our ongoing work and for building the capacity we need to meet the ever-growing need.

Every child needs healthy, loving and supportive environments to reach their full potential. When we work to ensure that every child can reach their potential and fully contribute to our communities, we all benefit. Your support truly helps give each child a chance to grow to be who they are. Please consider [making your donation](#) today!

***“I am taking a moment of quiet contemplation before the afternoon sessions begin to reflect on the past three days and past three years since I first attended a Gender Spectrum conference. Thank you. Thank you and your whole team for the incredibly important civil rights work you are doing. Thank you for opening the eyes of this cisgender white female school administrator to the very real experiences many of our students (and staff) are having. Thank you for giving me a forum to bring members of my administrative team to inspire and inform them. Thank you for letting us attend the family conference since the parents and children are definitely our most powerful teachers and muses. Lastly thank you for including me in this work. I am a better person and far better administrator now than three years ago. Can't wait to see how my District and I as an individual continue to evolve moving forward!”***

Dr. Kelly King,  
Assistant Superintendent, Glendale Unified School District (Glendale, California)





