Interview guide

This interview guide is provided as supplementary material *It was developed and used the context of the project Stories of Gender Affirming Care // Transgender children and youth in clinical care: A qualitative investigation of trans youth and family well-being*CIHR 2016-2020 - PJT-148607

1. Semi-Structured Interview Guide: Children & Youth

Questions in bold are the main questions to ask; they should help the participant to discuss many aspects we are aiming to discuss during the interview. The first level of indented questions are sub-questions you can ask if you feel it would be helpful or appropriate to dig a bit deeper to get more content on a particular question or topic. The questions that are indented more heavily are probe questions that can be helpful if you're having trouble getting the participant to provide more descriptive answers. Both the sub-questions and the probe questions are optional. You may or may not need to ask them, depending on the response to the main question. Text in italics is to give you information on what do to / to say, other than the questions.

Introduction and assent / consent

Begin by introducing yourself and discuss confidentiality (cf. assen	nd explaining to the child/youth what the goals are of this interview and
in participating in this study of Before I start the interview with you so you can understand a bit participant. By helping us und	. We're meeting today because you said you'd be interested in the experiences of trans kids/youth accessing care and their families in you, I'm going to go over the information and consent/assent form with the better what the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you, it might also help doctors, nurses, which is the work is the project in the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you, it might also help doctors, nurses, which is the work is the project in the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you, it might also help doctors, nurses, which is the project in the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you, it might also help doctors, nurses, which is the project in the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you, it might also help doctors, nurses, which is the project in the project in the project in the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you, it might also help doctors, nurses, which is the project in the project in the project in the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you, it might also help doctors, nurses, which is the project in the project in the project in the project is about and what we'll be asking from you as a derstand what it is like to be you.

**Go over the Consent/Assent form with the participant and if they agree to participate, sign the form with them. **Now that we've signed the consent/assent form, we can start the interview. I'm turning on the audio recorder. I'm going to ask you a bunch of questions and you can answer them however you want and, if you don't want to answer any question, that's okay too. Are you OK with doing this interview? Do you have any questions before we start?

Just so you know, if at any moment you don't feel like answering a question, you can pass on it and we'll go to the next one.

Okay, let's get started.

Questions about the child and their environment

This section is about knowing the child and their environment a little bit more and making them at ease.

To begin with, what pronouns -- e.g. "he," "she," "they" or something else—would you like me use today?

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

(Give the child ample time to respond. If the child is not providing information without prompts you may ask the following probe questions, but we are not seeking only factual information, but rather more information that will help us understand the child):

How old are you?

Where do you live? Would you say you live far or close to downtown?

Who is in your family?

Whom do you live with?
Can you tell me about your parents?
Do you have any sisters or brothers? Do you have any pets?
Can you tell me about other important people in your life?

Do you attend any sport, art, faith or other groups?

(These questions will help us find out with whom the child lives (parents, grandparents, foster care etc.) and whether there are other important people in the child's life such as siblings, a grandparent or caregivers.

Gender identity and family

You're coming to this clinic because you express your gender in a certain way. There are lots of different ways of expressing our gender and different words to talk about gender. Can you tell me a bit about how you define your gender? How would you describe it?

Do you ever describe yourself with words like "transgender", "transsexual", "gender independent", "gender creative", "non-binary", "genderqueer", "genderfluid," "gender questioning," "trans girl," "trans boy" or "two-spirit", for instance?

Earlier, you told me that you like to use the pronouns _____. Do you get to use your preferred name and pronouns all the time or some of the time?

How do you decide?

(Give the child lots of opportunity to answer; if they have trouble articulating their feelings about their own gender identity, give some examples. Provide lots of validation for their openness, creativity and strength.)

How did you understand your gender identity growing up? How has it changed over time?

Do you remember what your gender identity was like for you when you were younger? What age did you start to wonder about your gender?

Do you remember when you first started talking to your parents/guardians about your gender? Can you tell me more about it?

How long did it take before you told your parents?

How did you think your parents would react?

How did you let them know about your gender feelings?

How did it go?

Do you wish that you had told them earlier? Later?

What were your fears?

Now, I'd like to talk about what it's like for you to be you in your family.

How close are you with your family?

Can you tell me what it has been like for you since you told them about your gender identity?

(Again, here, use their language for how they express their gender (ex: trans, fluid) or if they say that they are a girl or boy, ask them what it's like for them in their family to be a boy)

(If they do not spontaneously discuss what this is like for them you can ask some follow up questions such as):

What's it like to be [use the term they used: trans, trans, fluid, or if they say that they are a girl or boy etc] in your family?

Did your parents accept your gender immediately? If not, how long did it take?

How do they show whether they accept it? Can you give me some examples?

Do they call you by the name you want them to use? Do they use the gender pronouns for you that you want them to use? (eg. He/she/they or something else?)

Do you feel that the family atmosphere/dynamic has changed since you came out?

Is there anything that you wish you had done differently about talking to your parents about your gender?

What are the good parts about being [use term they used eg: a boy, a girl, trans, gender - nonconforming] in your family? What are the hard parts?

Apart from telling your parent/guardian about your gender identity, have you talked to any other member of your family about your gender? Your siblings?

Do you talk to other people in your family about your gender? Who do you talk to? How do these talks go?

Is your family OK with the way you want to live and express your gender? How does your family help?

(If the child suggests that there are some challenges in the family related to their gender identity, you can ask some follow-up questions such as):

What do you feel is hard about expressing your gender in your family?

Do you ever get in trouble at home for expressing your gender?

Do you and your family ever argue about your gender?

Have you ever experienced problems from others for expressing your gender?

Are there any other things that you would like to tell us about what it is like for you to be in your family and to express your gender?

School

Now, I would like to chat about your experience at school. Do you like school?

If you're not in school right now, can you tell me why?

What do you like and dislike at school?

Do you know what you'd like to do when you're done with school or what job or profession you might want to have?

Can you tell me a bit about what it is like at school for you?

What do you like best about school?

Least?

Who are your friends?

Do you feel accepted at school?

Do you like your teacher? What do you like about them?

What doesn't work so well?

Some children want to be 'stealth' at school, meaning that they live according to their gender identity, but they keep the fact that they are trans private; other children are 'out', meaning that they live according to their gender identity but they talk about the fact that they are trans to others. Are you stealth or out at school? Why?

Are you comfortable being stealth or out? Why? If you aren't out at school, would you like to be? Is there anything that worries you at school?

What was the hardest thing about being trans in your school before you told other people about your gender?

Or if the participant has not revealed their gender identity at school: What is the hardest thing about being trans in your school with other people not knowing your gender?

Did/do you avoid using bathrooms?

Did/do you drink less so you would not have to pee?

Did/do you have problems with activities where kids were/are separated by gender?

Was/is it hard when you had to fill out forms asking about your gender?

Can you tell me if you feel your school is accepting or not of your gender or of trans people in general?

Have there ever been any problems at school because of how you expressed your gender?

Did anything get better?

Was anything done about it?

Did you have to change schools?

Have you had any positive or negative experiences with using bathrooms or change rooms?

Can you give me an example?

Have you ever done anything so that you would not have to use the bathroom?

Have you asked kids to use preferred name and pronouns?

If not what do you fear/expect? If yes, what has it been like?

Sometimes, when kids start using a new name or new pronouns, other people keep using their old name and pronouns. Has this happened to you?

How does it make you feel when people don't use the right name/pronouns, either by accident or on purpose?

(If they have had some of these experiences, you could follow-up with:)

How did you react? Did you do anything about it?

(Only ask these questions if you have the impression the child/youth is feeling fairly secure in the interview and with you or if they seem comfortable discussing difficult experiences and their emotions:)

When you were treated badly at school because of your gender, how did it feel inside?

Have you had any bad experiences at school that seemed to be connected to your gender identity or expression (ex: people being mean to you)?

Can you give me some examples of times that this might have happened to you? Do you think this had to do with the way you express you gender or with being [use term they use to describe themselves]? Or was it caused by something else?

(This question is to get at issues of bullying, refusal to use name/pronouns, difficulties with bathrooms and shaming or humiliating behaviour by teachers. Following their lead, explore these areas of potential challenge for the child while providing lots of empathy, validation and demonstrating interest. Start with the following questions, adapted for developmental age).

Follow-up question if bullying occurred:

Was the teacher/ principal aware of what happened? Were they helpful to you?

Do you feel safe in your school?

Are there any other things that you would like us to know about your gender experience at school?

Outside school - activities, what makes you happy?

What do you do for fun?

Do you do any group activities such as sports, music or dance? (wait) Do you use your preferred gender, birth gender or both when you participate in these groups?

Can you tell me a bit about what it is like for you in these activities?

Allow the child to spontaneously tell you about their activities and what it is like for them.

What do you like about [activity X]?

Do you feel free to express your gender identity in this group? Why is that?

How do you / did you know you could express / not express your gender identity in (this group / activity)?

Do you feel accepted and included in (group, activity)?

(Depending on the activity, explore the positive experiences of being accepted and engaging in the activity (sports, music, dance etc.) and explore the challenges that the child might face socially and in terms of the circumstances around bathrooms and change rooms or even things like which team the child is on (boys vs. girls))

Are there other activities that you like to do by yourself like video games, making art or bike riding? (wait)

Can you tell me what you like about these activities?

Are there places you feel uncomfortable or unsafe because of your gender identity or expression?

Are there places you try to avoid or stay away from because of your gender expression?

What are some of the things that make you feel really good or really happy? (Explore: physical and leisure activities, art/music/dance, friendships, other relationships including pets/animals, nature, spiritual dimensions, ethno-cultural dimensions)

Are there days or situations when you feel really good about yourself?

Are there also days when you feel sad? Mad? Afraid?

What are some of the things that make you feel this way?

Are there more happy days or sad days?

When you feel bad or unhappy, what helps you feel better?

What do you like to do for fun? Did you do anything this week for fun?

(For each of the examples given by the child, you should ask for details, for example, what it feels like to them, and why: Can you give me an example of why that was so much fun? What did it feel like for you? You can also ask about how people around them contributed to their feelings)

Are there things you do to you express your gender that make you feel really good or happy?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about what it is like for you to be you at home, at school and in your activities?

Body and well-being

Ok, thank you. I'd like to ask you some more personal questions such as how you feel about your physical self and about your body. Would this be ok with you?

(The questions in this section are highly dependent upon the developmental stage of the child. For prepubertal children, they may be anticipating puberty and wanting to suppress secondary sex characteristics. Post-pubertal children may have different concerns about concealing and "passing". Young children may be more concerned about their haircuts or clothing. Questions should be tailored to fit with these concerns and targeted to the developmental stage.)

(Wait for the child to respond to the first question. If they seem reluctant, say:)

It can be hard to answer these questions, so if there are questions you prefer not to answer that's totally fine. If that's the case, we'll skip these questions. If you decide later on that you'd like to hear some of these questions about how you feel about your body, you can tell me.

(If the child opens up a bit and seems to be interested in talking more, you could try this question:)

If you'd rather not talk about how you feel about the way your body is now, would you like to tell me some about how you would like it to become? Things you would like to happen or change?

(If they say they are comfortable answering questions about their body, go on and ask them these questions):

Can you start by just telling me how you feel about your body?

What you like best, what you like the least, what would you like to stay the same, what you might want to change?

(Give the child as much time as they need to answer. Follow up on responses by asking questions like:)

Can you tell me more about that?
Can you give me an example of a time you felt that way?

(Take as much time as required to explore each area fully. Explore based on developmental age—younger child, pre-pubertal, post-pubertal.)

(If the child indicates that there are things that they would like to change, explore the reasons, feelings and thoughts behind this and then follow with):

Have you ever done anything to make your body look more like your identified gender?

Some children who are uncomfortable with their bodies will try to hide the parts of their bodies they don't like. For instance, they might bind their chest, use a packer, wear loose sweaters, put on makeup, shave unwanted hair, try to change their body shape by some form of dieting, etc. Have you ever done anything like that so that your body would change or so that your body would not change?

(Only if the child seems very comfortable discussing their emotions and body:)

How do you feel about doing that?

Some children have told us that they have done things that might not be good for them, like not eating, or drinking less to avoid needing to go to the bathroom. Has that happened to you? Have you felt the urge to do something like that?

(If they indicate that they have, follow up with:

Do you want to tell me more about that?
Can you give me an example of (how, when, where) that happened?
Can you explain to me why you do/did this?
Was this related to your gender or to how you feel about your body? How so?
How do you feel about doing this?

Have there been times when feeling the way you do about your gender has led to your feeling really down about things?

(If the child expresses being really down, you may ask follow up question.)

Tell me about what made you feel so unhappy?

Has there ever been a moment in your life when you felt so bad you needed to seek help?

What kind of help did you get? Can you tell me if and how it was linked or not to your gender identity?

Ask this question if you feel you haven't gotten enough material from the previous questions:

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about what it is like for you to be in your body?

** ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK ALL YOUTH/CHILDREN **

Part 1: Self-harm

Sometimes	when	kids	(youth)	are	feeling	really	down,	they	have	thoughts	about	hurting
themselves.												

Have you ever had thoughts like that?

Have you ever wanted to hurt yourself in any way?

If the answer is 'Yes',

Use a general prompt such as: Can you tell me about that?

Did you ever act on those thoughts?

Part 2: Suicidality

Sometimes when kids (youth) are feeling really badly, they have thoughts about death or dying.

- 1. Have you ever wished you were dead?
- 2. Sometimes kids (youth) have thoughts about killing themselves. Have you ever had thoughts like that?

If the answer is 'Yes':

3. Have you had thoughts about killing yourself in the past few weeks?

*** If the child/youth answers 'Yes' to this question, go to the Safety Protocol for further assessment. ***

Experience of coming to the clinic

Whose idea was it that you speak with a professional about your gender?

Who was the first professional that you spoke to about your gender?

Were they helpful? Were they knowledgeable?

Can you tell me a bit about how and why you first came to this clinic?

Which doctors or professionals did you see here?

Do you feel that the doctors/professionals you saw understood your gender? Did they call you by the name and pronoun you wanted?

Did they understand and respond to your needs? Was it a safe place to share all of your thoughts, feelings and concerns?

Did you feel you could ask questions?

Do you feel you can easily talk to your doctor about any changes that might happen in your gender identity?

Are there thoughts or feelings that you may have but that you would not discuss at this clinic?

What did you like best and what was the hardest part of coming to this clinic?

Would you recommend this clinic to other kids like you who might be gender-nonconforming or trans or non-binary, or [also use the term they use]?

Thinking of all the important people in your life, who are the most important supports for you as you go through this journey?

Body modification & puberty-suppression medication

The following section is about body modifications and hormones. For children who have not yet started puberty suppression or cross sex hormones, go to the section 'Concluding questions for all young people'.

Have you been prescribed puberty suppression medication?

- if yes, go to section 1 below. After asking the first main question, make sure to ask the specific question according to their assigned sex at birth.
- if no, go to section 'Concluding section for all young people'

1) For children/youth who have been prescribed puberty suppressing medication.

You have been taking medication (or injections) to stop puberty from starting (or to slow down puberty if it has already started). Many people call them blockers. We'd like to understand more about what that's like for you. Can we talk a bit about that?

If the child says yes, move on to sex-specific questions A or B.

If the child says no, say something like this:

I understand that it could make you feel uncomfortable to talk about the medication you're taking. The most important thing is for this interview to be a positive experience for you. You've already shared so much that is going to be really helpful for the study. So it's totally fine if you don't want to answer these questions or any other questions.

I understand that you'd rather not talk about the medication, right? So we'll skip these questions for now. If you decide later on that you'd like to hear these questions, I'll let you tell me.

(If the child opens up a bit and seems to be interested in talking more, bridge into the gender-specific questions. If not, move on to the next question.)

A- Questions for children/youth assigned female at birth

Can you tell me what it's like being on the medication/blockers?

What were you hoping for when you decided to take the blockers?

Did they work?

What changed with the blockers (periods, chest development, bottom development, etc.)? How did that feel for you?

Did you have any fears or concerns about taking the blockers?

Did you ever think about stopping them?

Were your parents/guardians supportive of your using the blockers?

Did your family or anyone else ever express concerns about the cost of the drugs?

Have you ever worried that you might not be able to take them because of how much they cost? How does that make you feel?

**Only ask the following questions if it seems like the participant is comfortable answering questions about the gendered aspects of their body:

Had you started having periods before starting this medication? At what age?

What was it like for you to have periods?

Have your periods stopped since starting the medication?

If so, how long after you started this medication?

How do you feel about this?

Have there been any side effects? (i.e. consequences of the medication that you did not expect and do not like)

Some people talk about the medication causing them to sweat or feel hot, or a bit yucky in different ways. Has that happened to you?

Can you tell me more about these?

How do you handle this at school or when you are out with your friends (tailor this question to the response—i.e. if they are having sweats everywhere)

Do they bother you a lot?

How do they affect you?

Did you ask your doctor if they could help you with these side effects?

How has taking this medication changed how you feel about yourself?

How has taking this medication changed how you feel about your body?

How has it changed how you feel about your gender?

(*Try to make these last questions seem natural and explore each in terms of the response*)

Are you currently waiting for or have you started cross-sex hormones? (if yes, go to section 2 below, otherwise, go to "Concluding questions for all young people")

B- Questions for children/youth assigned male at birth

What medication are you taking?

Can you tell me what it is like being on the medication/blocker?

What were you hoping for in taking the blockers?

Did they work?

What changed with the blockers (voice, body hair, erections, etc.)? How did that feel for you?

Do you think you were given enough information about blockers?

Did you have any fears or concerns about taking them?

Did you ever think about stopping them?

Were your parents/guardians supportive of your using the blockers?

Did your family or anyone else ever express concerns about the cost of the drugs?

Have you ever worried that you might not be able to take them because of how much they cost? How does that make you feel?

**Only ask these questions if it seems like the participant is comfortable answering questions about the gendered aspects of their body:

Had you noticed puberty changes before starting this medication?

At what age? What was it like for you to have puberty changes?

Have there been any side effects? (i.e. consequences of the medication that you did not expect and do not like)

Some people talk about the medication causing them to sweat or feel hot, or a bit yucky in different ways. Has that happened to you?

Can you tell me more about these?

How do you handle this at school or when you are out with your friends (tailor this question to the response—i.e. if they are having sweats everywhere)

Do they bother you a lot?

How do they affect you?

Did you ask your doctor if they could help you with these side effects?

How has taking these medications changed how you feel about yourself?

How has taking these medications changed how you feel about your body? How has it changed how you feel about your gender?

(*Try to make these last questions seem natural and explore each in terms of the response*)

Are you currently waiting or have you started cross-sex hormones? (if yes, go to section 2 below, otherwise, go "Concluding questions for all young people")

2) For those prescribed or waiting to start cross-sex hormones:

What was involved in starting cross-sex hormones and what was that like for you?

Was the process too long/too short?

When you talked about wanting hormones, did you feel understood by your parents/guardians? By your doctor?

Did you feel that you were being judged?

Did you feel that you could be totally open and truthful about your thoughts and feelings?

Do you think you were given enough information about hormones/the medication you're taking?

If you had any questions, do you feel they were answered adequately?

Was your family involved in the process of getting hormones?

Were they supportive?

How do you feel about that?

Did your family or anyone else ever express concerns about the cost of the drugs?

Have you ever worried that you might not be able to take them because of how much they cost? How does that make you feel?

Optional questions:

Is there anything that might have been done differently to improve the experience? What do you think will be involved in starting cross-sex hormones and how do you feel about this?

Did you start puberty suppressing hormones before cross-sex hormones?

Why or why not?

How do you feel about starting or not starting puberty suppressing hormones first (ie. Are you glad you did it this way, and if not, why?)

What changes have you noticed since you started the hormones?

How do you feel about these changes and how quickly or slowly they have occurred?

Have some things changed that you were not expecting or wanting to change? Have some things not changed that you thought or hoped would change?

Have there been any side effects from the hormones?

How do you feel about these?

Do you ever have second thoughts or doubts about the path that you're on?

Have you ever considered stopping the transition process?

If you did have some second thoughts, would you be comfortable speaking to your family or your doctor about them?

Who is supporting you through the transition process?

Do you feel that you have enough support moving through this journey?

Concluding questions for all young people

Thank you for sharing so much about yourself. I just have a couple of last questions.

If other parents, doctors, and kids like you wanted to hear your advice, what would you tell them?

What advice would you give to parents of kids like you?

What advice would you give to doctors who work with kids like you?

What advice would you give to other gender non-conforming kids [or use the term they use]?

What would you like cisgender (non-trans) kids to know about kids like you?

Thank you!

*** Turn off the audio recorder now. ***

*** Give the 35\$ and get the child/youth to sign the receipt. Keep the receipt for the study files. ***

*** Give a copy of the signed assent/consent form to the child/youth (keep the original for the study files). ***