

TYFA Media Manual for Parents

Introduction to TYFA:

Our Mission Statement: TYFA empowers children and families by partnering with educators, service providers and communities, to develop supportive environments in which gender may be expressed and respected.

Our Vision Statement: We work to create a society free of suicide and violence in which ALL children are respected and celebrated.

TYFA acts as a consultant to both families and media outlets to ensure that respectful and educational work is produced when sharing stories about gender variant children. We are a national 501(c)3 organization that never charges parents or families for our services.

Why do Media?:

TYFA believes that media can be a very effective and powerful tool to use for educating the public. When done properly and respectfully, there is no more efficient way to educate the masses. As gender variance is a frequently misunderstood condition, it is easy for our families and/or children to be misrepresented or exploited, sometimes without intent. The following was designed to help protect the interests of the child and their family who selflessly share their story to help others.

Section I: Media outlet experience/track record on reporting sensitive issues

Families who agree to share their story for the purpose of educating the public should be assured that their story is going to be portrayed in a positive manner. They should feel confident that they are not sharing their story for the sole purpose of boosting ratings.

Families feel more comfortable when they are provided with the opportunity to view prior work the media outlet has done on this topic or other work where sensitive issues were covered. Ideally the family needs to have assurances that every member of the production team has the experience and sensitivity to portray them in a positive manner. This would include the Producer, the interviewer, the editors, etc. Families also need to know if the interviewer has ever worked with another family like there"s.

Whenever possible Families and a TYFA representative should have the opportunity to view the finished piece and provide their input for changes/corrections.

Section II: Respectful language and communication

GLAAD has produced a Media Reference Guide, 8th Edition that outlines the proper way to portray/address a transgender person in any media setting. This includes proper pronoun usage, offensive terms to avoid and other guidelines.

Those guidelines may be found at <http://www.glaad.org/Document.Doc?id=99>

Another helpful document is “Learning the Lingo” which can be found at http://www.imatyfa.org/permanent_files/learning-the-lingo-06-08.pdf . This document helps clarify terminology specific to gender variant children.

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) is considered to be a medical condition, rather than a mental condition according to the American Medical Association Resolution 122 that can be found here http://www.imatyfa.org/permanent_files/ama_resolution_122.pdf . References to gender variant children as having a mental illness are never appreciated.

For reasons of personal safety, it is inappropriate to ask a young child about their genitals during the taping of a show and it should never be included in a print article. There are medical interventions available to children should a parent and the child’s healthcare team feel they are appropriate. Whether or not a parent/child wants to discuss their intentions in regards to medical treatments should be discussed prior to taping or writing the story. Individual wishes should be respected.

Use of before and after pictures to sensationalize the story should be avoided. Using pictures in a respectful manner to enhance the educational value of the story may be acceptable to some families. Each case should be considered on an individual basis and the family’s wishes respected.

Asking or revealing a child’s birth name is typically not something the children are comfortable with. If the birth name is not known, it isn’t possible for others to use the wrong name or envision the child as someone else. Some families may feel that providing this information enhances the educational value of the story and may divulge the name for that reason. Each case should be considered on an individual basis and the wishes of the child respected.

Section III: Special considerations for film/television appearances

A family's decision to share their child's story is a selfless act to promote education and understanding in the community. There is no real benefit to the family other than the satisfaction of knowing that they may be promoting understanding and tolerance of diversity. Sometimes when a family shares their story, it can actually cause problems for them in their jobs, extended families, churches, schools, etc. Film/television appearances can be especially problematic for families if not done properly.

The family's privacy and security should be top priority. Families should have the ability to remain anonymous or use pseudonyms to protect their identity if they choose. Their geographical location should never be revealed. When filming on location at their home, school or city, special precautions need to be taken to obscure any landmarks, signage, license plates or other identifying objects, places or items. Special precautions should also be taken to protect siblings or other family members who don't want their identity to be revealed.

Families volunteering to do media often do not have the financial means to cover any of their expenses. They are usually using their vacation time or losing income to take the day off and should not be expected to incur any expenses. Families are more willing to participate if their expenses are covered from the moment the family leaves their home until the moment they arrive back home at the end of the process. All transportation costs, lodging and meals need to be covered. This would include transportation to and from their home to the airport, baggage charges, tips, parking and taxes, etc. Covering these expenses may necessitate „travel cash“ to be delivered prior to travel to ensure that the family can cover expenses prior to arriving at a studio or facility.

Special consideration should be given to the school and sleep schedules of the children. Children should not be taken out of school unless absolutely necessary. For their safety and well being, young children should not be on late night or early morning flights.

It isn't advisable to discuss with parents how „difficult“ this journey may have been for them or for others in the presence of the child. Any topics that may upset or disturb the child should be discussed with the parent(s) separately and monitors should be turned off in the presence of the children.

Parents may be very wary of strangers interacting with their children. If parents and children are going to be separated during the interview process, the parents should be allowed to screen prospective child care providers or to supply their own.

Children in general need to feel physically comfortable in order to effectively participate in an interview. Their clothing and hairstyle should be their decision. These children are extraordinarily private and should never be expected to change in front of others or to have „strangers“ adjust their clothing; that needs be the responsibility of the parent.

Families always need be informed and agree to going before a live audience. Families should never be expected to interact with the audience or be present for audience interaction without notice/agreement. Families should be informed of any opposition spokesperson that will be present and have the option of withdrawing their appearance to avoid confrontation with people who have opposing views and may not be respectful.

Section IV: Working with experts

Families need to know who will take part in the interview process. Families should have the benefit of investigating the background of all experts scheduled to appear in the piece prior to taping or publication. If a family feels uncomfortable with the views or practices of any participant in the process, they have the right to either withdraw from the process or request another expert. There should never be any „surprise“ guests.

There are many well qualified and respected professionals in this country who have made media appearances regarding gender variant children. A list of those experts who have proven to be well qualified, had direct contact with gender variant children, as well as, participate in the treatment of children with GID is included with this packet.

Section V: Summary

The brave families who agree to work on media projects are doing so with great personal sacrifice and possible risk to their child and family. They choose to take this chance, to trust others with their story, in the hope that the information presented will help another family like them and create greater understanding and acceptance in our society. It is our goal that everyone involved in the process will treat these children and their families with the respect dignity they deserve.

Suggested Experts:

Dr. Robert Garofalo, MD
Howard Brown Health Center
Chicago, IL 60613
773.388.1600

Dr. Norman Spack, MD
Children's Hospital Boston
Division of Endocrinology
Boston, MA
617.335.7476

**Dr. Johanna Olson, MD
Los Angeles Children's Hospital
Teenage Health Center
323.361.2153**

**Michele Angello, PhD.
Clinical Sexologist
Philadelphia, PA
610.917.8561**

**Moonhawk River Stone, M.S. LMHC
Psychotherapist
Albany, NY
518.506.1261**