

# Transgender Youth Losing Access to Healthcare:

## What Educators Need to Know

**The Supreme Court’s ruling in *U.S. v. Skrmetti* is a significant roadblock and setback for children in the United States; it will now be even harder for many transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive kids to access the safe and necessary healthcare they need to thrive.** School staff do not have a material role to play in the healthcare their gender-expansive students receive. However, there are still several impacts of this ruling that educators and youth-serving professionals need to understand before the 2025–2026 school year begins.

### Families Are Making Difficult Choices

The decision in *U.S. v. Skrmetti* allowed Tennessee to ban specific medications for transgender children while still permitting those same medications for cisgender children. Twenty-five states in the U.S. have similar bans in place—some even more restrictive than Tennessee’s. These bans prevent the evidence-based practice of allowing trans kids, their families, and their doctors to make life-saving medical decisions as a team.

Many families have been living with these bans in place for some time and have already taken steps to ensure their children can access gender-affirming healthcare. Other families are newly experiencing these bans as their children mature and require care for the first time. For school staff, it’s important to understand the following:

- ✳ Families may have moved to your school from out of state to access the healthcare they need. Significant numbers of children and families have uprooted their lives for their children’s health and safety. A majority of families fleeing to more inclusive locations are arriving in Washington, D.C., and the 14 states with “Shield Laws” protecting gender-affirming care.
- ✳ Students and families may be traveling great distances for healthcare appointments and prescription refills. It is not uncommon for families to drive or fly considerable distances to obtain appropriate, evidence-based care. Your students may arrive at school tired or may miss class entirely in order to see their doctors.
- ✳ Many young people will not be able to access care at all. Individual family circumstances and socioeconomic barriers may prevent them from relocating or traveling. This will impact both the transgender youth—who may endure permanent setbacks in living authentically—and their parents, who may feel powerless to prevent their children’s suffering. Increased mental health support will likely be needed as families navigate these challenges.



## Gender-Expansive Students Are On Edge

The sheer volume of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation across the United States weighs heavily on school communities. School staff should expect to see continued expansion of laws targeting transgender students' rights and be prepared to support the well-being of impacted students. There will be moments in the upcoming school year when local, state, and federal decisions impact transgender students' freedoms, either directly or indirectly. **Even in states with affirming healthcare protections, federal officials are already threatening to remove Medicare and Medicaid funding from clinics providing care to trans youth.** School staff should respond with extra care and understanding during these circumstances. Teachers and administrators should also ensure that current events impacting students' identities do not become topics for classroom debate or “both-sides” conversations regarding any student population's human rights.

## Your Inclusive Classroom Practices Matter Now More Than Ever

While healthcare access may be outside your control at school, your daily inclusive practices as an educator are still powerful and impactful. One affirming adult in the life of a transgender child can reduce negative mental health outcomes by 40%. Positive mental health outcomes also increase based on the number of settings where a gender-expansive child's correct name and pronouns are used.

During these moments of fear and uncertainty, it's time to double down on our visible support for transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive students. All of our students need to see their educators modeling the values of respect and inclusion.

If you're looking for a place to begin, explore the many excellent support plans and checklists available from Welcoming Schools. If possible in your school community, we also recommend scheduling targeted guidance for your staff on supporting transgender and nonbinary students through our in-person and online professional development options.

**It's difficult to predict all the challenges our students will face in the 2025–2026 school year, but one thing is certain: educators can—and will—continue to celebrate and support our gender-expansive students.**