

Transgender youth treatment under fire in Florida again

June 4 2022, by Anthony Izaguirre



Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo, front left, gestures as speaks to supporters and members of the media before a bill signing by Gov. Ron DeSantis, front right, Nov. 18, 2021, in Brandon, Fla. This week, Ladapo asked the state medical board to draft new policies that would likely restrict gender dysphoria treatments for transgender youth. Credit: AP Photo/Chris O'Meara, File

Florida health officials have asked the state medical board to draft new policies that would likely restrict gender dysphoria treatments for transgender youth as the state amps up its ongoing attacks on the treatments amid the country's culture wars.

The officials are also arguing that such treatments should not be covered by Medicaid. In a lengthy report dated Thursday, the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration said puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and sex reassignment surgery have not been proven safe or effective in treating [gender dysphoria](#). Tom Wallace, the state's deputy director of Medicaid, signed off on the report.

In response, Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo wrote a letter to the state Board of Medicine asking it to review the findings and establish new standards for [children](#) seeking "these complex and irreversible procedures."

"Florida must do more to protect children from politics-based medicine," Ladapo wrote. "Otherwise, children and adolescents in our state will continue to face a substantial risk of long-term harm."

Transgender [medical treatment](#) for children and teens is increasingly under attack in many states where it has been labeled a form of child abuse or subject to various bans.

Many doctors and mental health specialists argue that medical treatment for [transgender](#) children is safe and beneficial and can improve their well-being, although rigorous long-term research on benefits and risks is lacking. Federal guidelines say gender-affirming care is crucial to the health and well-being of transgender and nonbinary children.

Last year, the American Medical Association issued a letter urging governors to block any legislation prohibiting the treatment, calling such action "a dangerous intrusion into the practice of medicine." The letter noted that medical treatments are among several "supportive interventions" promoted for transgender minors.

This is not the first time Florida officials have opposed such treatments. Similar steps have already been taken by the administration of Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has embraced clashes in the country's culture war as he runs for reelection and eyes a run for president in 2024.

Last month, the administration issued [guidance](#) that pushed back against the federal guidelines by opposing "social gender transition" or gender reassignment surgery for children and adolescents, and puberty blockers for anyone under 18.

Last year, DeSantis signed a law barring transgender girls and women from playing on public school teams intended for [student athletes](#) identified as girls at birth.

The actions have drawn condemnation from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, an international group of doctors and others involved in treating transgender people.

"Florida's assault on transgender communities has been relentless," Dr. Walter Bouman, the group's president, said in a statement Friday. He noted that the association's U.S. affiliate previously attacked Florida's ongoing efforts, saying they "lack scientific merit, and in some cases misinterpret or distort available data."

"Florida's health agencies have an obligation to support the health and well-being of its residents, including those who are transgender,"

Bouman said. "The state has instead chosen to issue misleading and dangerous reports designed to harm [transgender people](#)."

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