

Advancing Equitable Healthcare for Trans and Gender-Diverse Students: A Community-Based Participatory Action Project

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Abstract : This project presents the outcomes of a community-based participatory action initiative aimed at advocating for equitable healthcare and human rights for trans, two-spirit, and gender-diverse individuals, building upon the University of British Columbia (UBC) Trans Coalition's ongoing efforts. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was chosen as the research method with the goal of improving trans rights on the UBC campus, particularly regarding equitable access to healthcare. PAR involves active community contribution throughout the research process, which in this case was done by way of liaising with student resource groups and advocacy leaders. The goals of this project were as follows: a) identify gaps in gender-affirming healthcare for UBC students by consulting the community and collaborating with UBC services, b) develop an information package outlining provincial and university-based health insurance for gender-affirming care (including hormone therapy and surgeries), FAQs, and resources for UBC's trans students, c) make this package available to UBC students and other national transgender advocacy organizations. The initiative successfully expanded the UBC AMS Student Health and Dental Plan to include gender-affirming procedural coverage, developed a care access guide for students, and advocated for improved health records inclusivity, mechanisms for trans students to report negative care experiences, and increased access to gender-affirming primary care through the on-campus health clinic. Collaboration with other universities' pride organizations and Trans Care BC yielded positive outcomes through broader coalition building and resource sharing. Ongoing efforts are underway to update provincial policies, particularly through expanding coverage under fair pharma care and addressing the compounding effects of the primary care crisis for trans individuals. The project's tangible results include improved trans rights on campus, especially in terms of healthcare access. Expanding healthcare coverage through student care benefits thousands of students, making the ability to undergo important affirming procedures more affordable. Providing students with information on extended coverage options and communication with their doctors further removes barriers to care and positively impacts student wellbeing. This initiative demonstrates the effectiveness of community-based participatory action in advancing equitable healthcare for trans and gender-diverse individuals and serves as a model for other institutions and organizations striving to promote inclusivity and advocate for marginalized populations' rights.

Keywords : equitable healthcare, trans and gender-diverse individuals, inclusivity, participatory action research project

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