The Rural Transgender Wellness Project: Exploring transgender Mental in rural areas – Adina Smith, PI

The purpose of this project is to examine the social determinants of transgender persons’ mental health in rural Montana using an ecological theoretical framework and a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach. Social determinants describe, “where we live, learn, work and play and they can have a great[er] impact on how long and well we live.” Social determinants include education, poverty, income, race/ethnicity, public policies, and housing. CBPR has been a successful approach to working with underserved, marginalized, and hidden populations on health disparities. Although Montana is the sixth least populated state in the United States, it has been estimated that approximately 3,000 transgender persons reside in Montana. In transcending cultural gender norms, transgender persons demonstrate great strength and resiliency in the face of adversity. However, a significant proportion of this population has experienced psychological distress primarily due to discrimination and 55-63% of this population has experienced suicidality. In adherence with CBPR, this study will engage transgender persons and their allies in partnership to examine the social determinants that impact rural transgender persons’ mental health. In order to conduct the final efforts needed to launch this project, we will engage in these specific aims.