



Providing Services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth in Care



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Why Are We Talking about This?

- * While there are no accurate numbers of LGBTQ youth in care, there is a need to provide affirming care and services to those youth who are in out of home care.
- * LGBTQ youth may experience traumatic events that are linked to their LGBTQ status.
- * Cultural and Linguistic Competency
- * Being able to appropriately discuss and address the needs of LGBTQ youth



Guidelines

- * Treat one another with respect
- * Permission to pass
- * Confidentiality
- * Ouch/Oops
 - * Hurtful comment, apology
- * Snaps
 - * Indicating agreement
- * Others?
 - * Giving everyone a chance to participate

Purpose

This training provides you with:

- * Information on how to appropriately discuss sexual orientation and gender identity.
- * Insight and understanding regarding the experiences of LGBTQ youth in general and in foster care.
- * Ideas on how to address the needs of LGBTQ youth in care.



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Before We Begin – References

- * The 2009 National School Climate Survey, A Report from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, www.glsen.org
- * Out of the Margins, A Report on Regional Listening Forums Highlighting the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Care, 2006
- * CWLA Best Practice Guidelines, Serving LGBT Youth in Out of Home Care, 2006





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Stages of the Coming Out Process

- * Stage One: Awareness
- * Stage Two: Acknowledgment
- * Stage Three: Tolerance
- * Stage Four: Acceptance
- * Stage Five: Pride
- * Stage Six: Synthesis

Eli Coleman PhD (1982) Developmental Stages of the Coming Out Process, Journal of Homosexuality, 7:2-3, 31-43, DOI: [10.1300/J082v07n02_06](https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v07n02_06)





Stages One: Awareness

- * A person experiences feelings of emotional attraction toward others of the same sex
- * First “crush”
- * May have no language for describing their feelings
- * May experience some confusion about these feelings
- * Feelings of “differentness” may develop



Stages Two: Acknowledgement

- * A person acknowledges their feelings of attraction as such to themselves
- * They may begin to think about “Coming Out” to someone else
- * If they have received negative messages about LGBTQ people, they may repress these feelings and go into denial
- * If they have received neutral or positive messages they may move easily through this stage

Stages Three: Tolerance

- * A person seeks out information about homosexuality or bisexuality
- * Attempt to determine what this means about who they are
- * Contemplate how relationships with friends and family members may be affected
- * They struggle with the question: “Will I be rejected?”
- * Attempts to accept it
 - * May be very vulnerable during this stage
 - * Risk for trauma



Stages Four: Acceptance

- * A person comes to a place accepting his/her attraction to others of the same gender
- * They determine that this is just a part of who they are
- * May begin to explore dating possibilities
- * Poorly considered coming out experiences may occur
- * Overall affect may brighten as compared to previous stage



Stages Five: Pride

- * A person overcomes internalized homophobia
- * Characterized by healthy self-esteem
- * Pride experience is often described in very physical terms
- * Sense of liberation or freedom from shame



Stages Six: Synthesis

- * A person's LGBTQ status is synthesized into their overall sense of self
- * No longer experience a sense of duality or a sense of hiding a part of themselves
- * Various degrees of being out to others
 - * Depends on specific circumstances

Cultural Factors

- ✱ Ethnicity and/or Race – many cultures have strong beliefs about LGBTQ people
- ✱ Religion – many religions teach that homosexuality is a sin or goes against God
- ✱ Socio-economic status may influence attitudes toward LGBTQ people
- ✱ Community Factors (urban/rural, etc.) – geography may influence attitudes about LGBTQ people



Cultural Factors

- * Social condemnation of LGBTQ people
- * Cultural “machismo” in Hispanic cultures
- * Expectations of carrying on the family name
- * Values regarding shaming the family in Asian cultures
- * Church influence in African American communities
- * Church influence in the south “Bible Belt”
- * “Good ol’ boy” attitudes in some areas



Organizational Culture

- * Policies of your organization
 - * Formal – Are they in writing?
 - * Informal – Are there negative attitudes or behaviors that are not addressed?
- * Practices of your organization
 - * Forms
 - * Intake procedures
 - * Language

Personal Beliefs

- * What are your thoughts, beliefs, attitudes toward LGBTQ people?
- * What are your thoughts, beliefs, attitudes about homosexual behavior?
- * How comfortable are you confronting anti-LGBTQ attitudes or behavior?
- * How might you respond to hearing someone say, “That’s so gay”?



Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

1. Create and maintain an inclusive organizational culture respecting the worth and dignity of every person and treat every person fairly.
 - * Adopt and implement policies
 - * Provide training
 - * Display indicators of inclusivity
 - * Dialogue
 - * Intervene when anyone behaves disrespectfully
 - * Treat everyone equally
 - * CWLA Best Practice Guidelines
 - * Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care, 2006



Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

2. Work with LGBTQ youth and caregivers to promote permanent healthy adult connections.
 - * Provide information to families.
 - * Reunify LGBTQ youth with families when possible and safe to do so.
 - * Find permanent connections for youth who cannot go home.

Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

3. Promote positive adolescent development for LGBTQ youth.
 - * Allow LGBTQ youth to be “out” in their placements where they are accepted and receive affirming support.
 - * Allow them to express their gender identity.
 - * Prevent double standards.
 - * Rules that limit romantic relationships should be applied equally.
 - * Validate transgender youth.
 - * Prohibit attempts to change youth in their orientation or gender expression.



Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

4. Protect the confidentiality of LGBTQ youth.
 - * Educate staff on confidentiality laws and policies.
 - * Do not disclose information about the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity without their permission (don't "out" them).
 - * Disclosure of any information should be limited to specific benefit to the youth.



Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

5. Place LGBTQ youth in supportive settings.
 - * Involve the youth in decision making process.
 - * Find the most family-like setting.
 - * Ensure the caregivers are accepting.
 - * Reach out to the community for resources for LGBTQ youth.
 - * Support caregivers with training and resources.
 - * Respond promptly when problems arise.
 - * Work with caregivers who may initially reject a youth when they come out to them.



Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

6. Ensure that LGBTQ youth in group settings are safe and treated equally.
 - * Do not segregate them as a form of “protection”.
 - * Do not prohibit them from having a roommate, but also do not place them with a roommate who is openly homophobic.
 - * Respond to incidents quickly and appropriately.
 - * Staff should model respectful behavior toward all people.



Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

7. For transgender youth specifically:

- * Make housing decisions ensuring emotional and physical safety of the youth.
- * Provide additional privacy for the youth if necessary to ensure their safety in their room, bathroom or shower.



Best Practices in Serving LGBTQ Youth

8. Ensure LGBTQ youth receive quality health and education services.
 - * Ensure health and mental health services are competent to serve LGBTQ youth.
 - * Provide comprehensive sexuality education that addresses health risks and provides relevant information.
 - * Notify schools immediately if a youth is harassed.
 - * Advocate for youth to be safe at school.

References

- * The 2009 National School Climate Survey, A Report from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, www.glsen.org
- * Out of the Margins, A Report on Regional Listening Forums Highlighting the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Care, 2006
- * CWLA Best Practice Guidelines, Serving LGBT Youth in Out of Home Care, 2006
- * “Providing Services and Supports for Youth who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex or Two-Spirit, Practice Brief,” The National Center for Cultural Competence, Center for Mental Health Services, Child, Adolescent and Family Branch; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services



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Websites

- * www.glsen.org
- * www.hatchyouth.org
- * www.plaghouston.org
- * www.tolerance.org
- * www.thinkb4youspeak.com
- * familyproject.sfsu.edu/
- * www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection/foster_care/rights.asp





Thank you!



Questions and Answers

- * Let us know what we can do to help. Thank you for attending!

