



**Providing Services to Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
Youth in Care**



Why are we talking about this?

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

This training provides you with:

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



Before we begin – a few 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



Definitions

- LGBT – an umbrella term referring to people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (also GLBT)
- Sexuality – refers to how one experiences oneself with regard to sexual feelings and behaviors, inclusive of sexual orientation
- Sexual Orientation – The inner feelings of who we are attracted to emotionally and sexually



Definitions

- Heterosexual – A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to some members of another sex
- Homosexual – A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some people of the same sex
- Bisexual - A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some males and some females



Definitions

- Gay - Homosexual
- Lesbian - A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is female-identified and who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some other females
- Straight - Heterosexual
- Coming Out – Declaring one's identity, specifically as being LGBT, whether to a person or a group of people



Definitions

- Gender - Emotional, behavioral and cultural characteristics attached to a person's assigned biological sex
- Gender Role - The social expectations of how an individual should act, think, and/or feel based upon one's assigned biological sex
- Androgynous – Having the characteristics or nature of both maleness and femaleness; neither specifically feminine nor masculine



Definitions

- Gender Expression - An individual's physical characteristics, behaviors and presentation linked to either masculinity or femininity: appearance, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interaction
- Gender Identity - How we identify ourselves in terms of our gender
- Transgender - An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming



Definitions

- Heterosexism - Applies to attitudes, bias and discrimination in favor of heterosexual sexuality and relationships. It is the belief that everyone is or should be heterosexual
 - Assuming everyone is heterosexual
 - Belief that heterosexuality is the only normal form of sexual orientation
 - Prejudice
 - Discrimination



Definitions

- Homophobia - An irrational fear of or aversion to homosexuality or lesbian, gay or bisexual people
- May be expressed as:
 - Verbal assault
 - Vandalism
 - Physical assault



Definitions

- Internalized Homophobia
 - Internalized homophobia results when a LGBT youth internalizes negative attitudes and beliefs that society has about homosexuals
 - Shameful feelings about one's sexual orientation



Definitions

- Internalized Homophobia
 - Internalized homophobia results when a LGBT youth internalizes negative attitudes and beliefs that society has about homosexuals
 - Shameful feelings about one's sexual orientation



Definitions

- Internalized Homophobia can result in:
 - Depression
 - Poor academic performance/school drop out
 - Substance Abuse/Addiction
 - Becoming socially withdrawn
 - Behaviors that can lead to health risks, STI's, and pregnancy
 - Suicidal thoughts and attempts
 - May increase the risk for trauma or reduce resilience



Stages of the Coming Out Process

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



Stage 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



Stage Two: Acknowledgment

- 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 LGBT 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



Stage 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



Stage 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



Stage 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



Stage Six: Synthesis

- A person's LGBT 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 LGBT people
- Religion – many religions teach that homosexuality is a sin or goes against God
- Socio-economic status may influence attitudes toward LGBT people
- Community Factors (urban/rural, etc.) – geography may influence attitudes about LGBT people



Cultural Factors

- Social condemnation of LGBT 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



Snowflake Activity

- Participants stand in a circle
- Each participant receives a piece of paper
- Trainer reads the instructions
- Discuss



Remember when...

- Was there a time in your life when you were made fun of or harassed because you were different?
- Imagine feeling that way all day every day



School Climate Survey

The 2009 National School Climate Survey conducted by the Lesbian, Gay, Straight Education Network, a national nonprofit organization, encourages the creation of school environments that are safe for all students

Surveyed LGBT students across the country, these are some of the findings



School Climate Survey

While not foster care specific provides insight into experience of all LGBT youth

Consider these statistics within the context of serving children with trauma histories.

The 2009 National School Climates Survey,
Executive Summary, GLSEN



School Climate Survey

- Harassment and assault due to sexual orientation:
 - 84.6% of LGBT students reported verbal harassment
 - 40.1% reported physical harassment
 - 18.8% reported physical assault



School Climate Survey

- Harassment and assault due to gender expression
 - 63.7% reported verbal harassment
 - 27.2% reported physical harassment
 - 12.5% reported physical assault



School Climate Survey

- 72.4% heard homophobic remarks frequently or often
- 61.1% feel unsafe due to sexual orientation
- 39.9% feel unsafe due to gender expression
- 29.1% reported missing class and 30% missed at least one day during the past month due to safety concerns
- High levels of victimization were related to high depression and anxiety levels and low self esteem



“Out of the Margins”

- “Out of the Margins” is a report on findings from Regional Listening Forums where LGBT youth in care, former youth in care, and adults who work with them talked about their experiences.
- Published by the Child Welfare League of America and Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund
- Following are actual quotes from LGBT youth in foster care.



“Out of the Margins”

“I got jumped by a bunch of guys in my group home, and when I told the Director he said, ‘Well if you weren’t a f____, they wouldn’t beat you up.’”

- Youth Participant



“Out of the Margins”

“It became real clear to me that my caseworker wouldn’t be able to handle it if I came out (to her). A couple of times I tried to hint around...but she just wasn’t hearing any of it. And she was always asking me about my ‘girlfriends.’ So, when she found me a foster home, I knew I couldn’t count on her to have made sure they’d be cool with my being gay. I was afraid to tell my foster family too. So, more time in the closet for me.”

- Youth participant



“Out of the Margins”

“It wasn’t just the other kids who called me ‘f_____.’ It was the staff too. I had nowhere to go for help.”

- Youth participant



Terminology Match-Up

- Hand out game cards
- Find matches
- Discuss



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

website: [ThinkB4YouSpeak](http://ThinkB4YouSpeak.com)



Best Practices in Serving LGBT 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

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



Best Practices

3. Promote positive adolescent development for LGBT youth
 - Allow LGBT 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

4. Protect the confidentiality of LGBT 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

5. Place LGBT 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 LGBT 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

6. Ensure that LGBT 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 room mate but also do not place them with a room mate who is openly homophobic
 - Respond to incidents quickly and appropriately
 - Staff should model respectful behavior toward all people



Best Practices

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

8. Ensure LGBT youth receive quality health and education services
 - Ensure health and mental health services are competent to serve LGBT 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

CWLA Best Practice Guidelines,
Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care, 2006



Rights of Children and Youth in Texas Foster Care

- “4. To be free from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- 5. To fair treatment, whatever my gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, disability, medical problems, or sexual orientation
- 6. I will not receive remarks that make fun of me or my family or any threats of losing my placement or shelter”

Extracted from: “Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care,” Texas Department of Family and Protective Services



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



References

- “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



Websites

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



Thank You!

Service Management Teams are available for
you for additional assistance and resource
information

866-218-8263