

LGBTQ Youth In Out-of-Home Care



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Moving the Margins: Training Curriculum for Child Welfare Services with LGBTQ Youth in Out-of-Home Care

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Welcome!

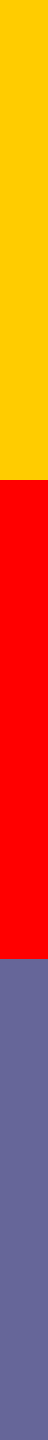
- Introductions:
 - Your name
 - What do you do?
 - Experience in working with LGBTQ youth?
 - What would you like to learn from today's training?

Workshop Goals: LGBTQ

- Identify issues of risk, challenge, and strengths specific to GLBTQ youths and young adults, and the people and agencies serving them
- Develop participants' professional cultural competency, and that of their agencies
 - Assist in creating welcoming and inclusive environment and services

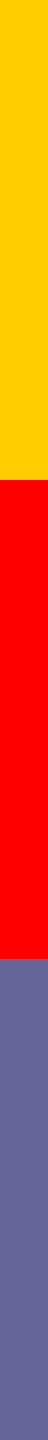
Ground Rules

- Confidentiality
- Respect differences of belief, opinion & values
- Use 'I' statements
- Step up/Step Back
- Right to pass
- Expressing feelings, questions & concerns is accepted & encouraged
- Others?



Activity

- Half of you have a word
- Half of you have a definition
- Your task:
 - Find the word and its matching definition.



Definitions

□ LGBTQ/GLBTQ

- L
- G
- B
- T
- Q

Definitions

- **LGBT/GLBT**
 - Lesbian
 - Gay
 - Bisexual
 - Transgender
 - Questioning/Queer

Definitions

□ LGBT/GLBT

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Questioning
- Queer
- Asexual
- Intersex
- 2S – Two Spirit

Definitions

□ Sexual Orientation

- Refers to the gender(s) to whom a person feels attracted

□ Gender Identity

- An individual's self-identification as a man, woman, transgender, gender variant or other identity category

□ The issues are very different

Definitions

Sexual Orientation

- Heterosexual
 - Erotic and romantic orientations primarily to individuals of the *other* gender
- Homosexual (Lesbian, Gay)
 - Erotic and romantic orientations primarily to individuals of the *same* gender
- Bisexual
 - Erotic and romantic orientations primarily to individuals of *both* genders
- Pansexual
 - Erotic and romantic orientations primarily to individuals of *all* genders

All are influenced by affectional orientation

Definitions

□ Gender Identity

■ Gender

Refers to that which a society deems masculine or feminine

■ Gender Variant / Gender Queer

Individuals who stray from socially accepted gender roles in a given culture

Definitions

□ Gender Identity

■ Transgender

An umbrella term that describes any of a variety of cross-gender identities. A range of behaviors, expressions and identifications that challenge the binary gender system in a given culture

Definitions

□ Gender Identity

■ Transgender/Transsexual

A person who is dissociated with his/her birth gender and wishes to correct his/her body to the gender she/he recognizes as his/her own

- hormones, sex/gender reassignment surgery
- FTM, MTF

■ Intersex

- Born with some combination of ambiguous genitalia

Definitions

- Gender Identity &
 - Cross Dressing
 - Drag
 - Transvestite – no longer used

Definitions

□ Homophobia

- Originally defined as “the irrational dread and loathing of homosexuals and homosexuality”
 - Coined in 1972 by Dr. George Weinberg

□ Biphobia

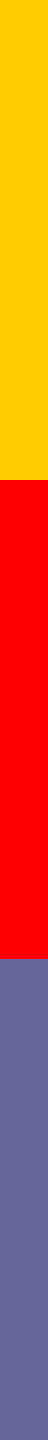
□ Transphobia

- Refers to discrimination against transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity - gender-based discrimination
- Being motivated by hatred or fear of people who are transgendered

Definitions

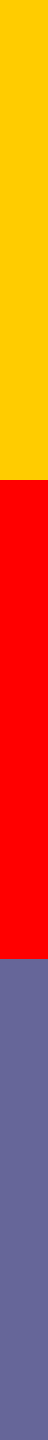
□ Heterosexism/Heterocentrism

Consists of assumptions and processes embedded in mainstream society and its institutions that imply human beings are naturally heterosexual and that heterosexual lifestyles are the normal standard against which those of lesbian, gay and transgender people should be compared in order to be understood and evaluated (Herek, 1998)



Activity

- Name the 3 most important people or relationships in your life.
- Name 3 places that have special meaning to you.
- List 3 topics of conversations that you and your friends usually discuss.
- List 3 leisure time activities/hobbies that you enjoy



Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Stigma
 - Harassment &
 - Social Isolation
- Lead to high-risk factors – not the fact that they are LGBTQ

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Severe social, emotional and cognitive isolation result in a higher incidence of mental health issues
 - Depression
 - Lower self-esteem
 - Anxiety

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Significant substance abuse problems
 - Using drugs & alcohol as a coping strategy
 - More likely to start using tobacco, marijuana & cocaine before 13

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Higher incidence of homelessness, dropping out, running away and sexual acting out
 - At the same time, few external resources are in place to support safe, culturally competent, identity-affirming out-of-home care, such as foster homes & group homes.

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Homeless LGBTQ youths are at higher risk for negative outcomes, such as depression and substance abuse than non-LGBTQ homeless youth.

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Significantly higher risk of HIV/AIDS transmission
 - Survival sex
 - CDC – 50% of all new infections are among people under age 24
 - Highest rates: young, gay, Black men

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Higher risk of unplanned pregnancy.
 - 15% non-straight-identified young women have an unwanted pregnancy

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Higher incidence of multiple suicide attempts & plans
 - Gay and bi youths report more suicidal thoughts & attempts than straight youth
 - 48-76% of sexual minority youths have thought about suicide; Rates of attempts range from 8% to 15%
 - Highly-rejecting families are linked to dramatically higher rates of attempted suicide & suicidal ideation

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Youth in out of home placements
 - Youth placed in care due to maltreatment have increased risk of suicidality
 - Rates of foster youth-reported suicidal ideation range from 7% to 27%
 - These rates are 3 to 9 times higher than those in the general population

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Vulnerability to involvement with the juvenile justice system
 - Where they face discrimination, harassment & violence.

Higher areas of risk associated with LGBTQ status in our culture

- Not all LGBTQ youth experience
- Not irreversible:
 - When youths receive support in one or more areas of their lives, these risk factors can be ameliorated
 - Most are caused, in large part, by social isolation and stigma - remove those and much of the emotional distress is relieved
 - LGBTQ youth who receive support not only survive – they thrive!

Emerging research

- Caitlyn Ryan & her team at San Francisco State University “Family Acceptance Project”
 - Single most significant factor in predicting outcomes for youths is the response of their families when children come out
 - Family reactions have profound impact on children’s health, mental health & well being.

Emerging research

- Highly-rejecting families – children at far higher risk for:
 - Suicidal ideation and attempts
 - Depression
 - Substance Abuse
 - Increased risk for STDs including HIV

Emerging research

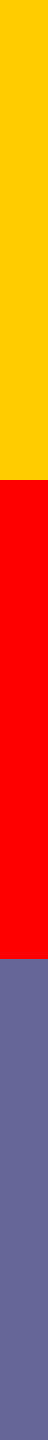
- Family acceptance has positive impact on young person's health & mental health
- Outcomes for youths with ambivalent families are significantly less severe
- Parents/caregivers typically become *more* accepting over time
- Families do not need to transform themselves to make room for their LGBTQ youths

Homeless/Out-of-Home-Care & Runaway Youth

- US Department of Health and Human Services, estimates homeless and runaway youth at 575,000 to 1.6 million.
 - 20-45% of all homeless youth identify as GLBT
- Being GLBT is a significant factor that leads to homelessness or out-of-home care

Homeless/Out-of-Home Care & Runaway Youth

- Family conflict is the largest factor for both GLBT and straight youth
 - One study showed that 50% of LGBTQ teens experienced negative reaction from parents when they came out and 26% were kicked out of their homes (thrown away)
- Another study found that more than 1/3 of homeless or in out-of-home care youth experienced violent physical assault when they came out
 - They left home/shelter or foster care because it is safer for them on the streets



LGBTQ Issues for Youth in Out-of-Home Care

- Victimization
- Confidentiality Violations
- Differential Treatment
- Lack of Cultural Competence Among Providers
- Disclosure Dilemmas
- Lack of Family-Centered Services

Victimization

- ❑ Many LGBTQ youth experience rejection and abuse when they come out to their caretakers, peers, or teachers at school.
- ❑ They may be thrown out of their homes or experience violence resulting from adult response to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Confidentiality Violations

- ❑ Staff persons disclose a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity to foster, biological and adoptive parents and/or the youth's peers without the youth's consent.
- ❑ Lack of policies that address confidentiality around sexual orientation and gender identity, including policies on written documentation.

Disclosure Dilemmas

- ❑ Decision-making around disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- ❑ Unsupportive and negative responses to youths' disclosures by professionals, peers and caregivers.
- ❑ Lack of skill in handling youths' disclosures in group settings.

What can you do?

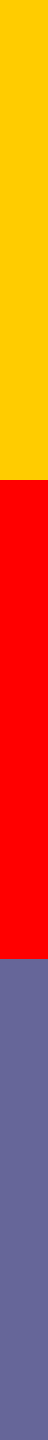
- In your office
- Policies & procedures
- Your values
- Others?

Thought...

One of the best ways to prepare for working with GLBTQ youth is to examine one's own personal issues regarding GLBTQ persons. Knowing the issues that trigger a personal, emotional reaction is crucial to good practice – your big red button.

Although it is not always possible to avoid the issues that upset us when dealing with clients, it is both feasible and imperative to master one's reactions to the feelings triggered by sensitive issues. Openly acknowledging and addressing these issues personally, or with a supervisor or colleague, is a professional challenge. It is critical, however, to be *self-reflective* and work to develop a *professional sense of self*, including *heightened sense of self-awareness*. *As a practitioner working with a client, it is both unethical and ineffective to allow personal issues to cloud one's judgment.*

Lesbian & Gay Youth Issues, A Practical Guide for Youth,
Gerald P. Mallon, 2001, CWLA Press



GLBTQ Youth in Foster Care

National Foster Parent Association Position Statement

- Whereas, it is crucial that child welfare agencies develop plans to assure safe and proper care consistent with the child's best interest and special needs, it is also crucial that child welfare agencies establish standards, policies, and training programs to protect all foster children and youth including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth, and
- Be it resolved that the National Foster Parent Association acknowledges gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth are present in the foster care system and encourages and supports establishment of standards, policies, and training programs for foster care providers and professionals based on non-discrimination principles and sensitivity to the sexual orientation of all foster children and youth.

OUT of the Margins

**A report on Regional Listening
Forums Highlighting the Experiences
of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender, and Questioning Youth
in Care**

**Child Welfare League of America
Lambda Legal Defense & Education
Fund**

What are the Needs of LGBTQ Youth in Care?

- Child Welfare systems that acknowledge their existence
 - *There is an institutional desire that LGBTQ youth remain invisible and silent. That way the system can go on ignoring them.*
 - Adult participant, Jacksonville

What are the Needs of LGBTQ Youth in Care?

- Acknowledgement that Anti-LGTO attitudes and beliefs have no place in Child Welfare practice
 - *Prospective caseworkers and foster and adoptive parents should be screened for anti-LGBTQ bias.*
 - Adult participant, Minneapolis

What are the Needs of LGBTQ Youth in Care?

- Freedom from Anti-LGBTQ harassment

- *It wasn't just the other kids at my group home who were calling me "faggot." It was the staff too. I had nowhere to turn for help.*

– Youth participant

What are the Needs of LGBTQ Youth in Care?

- Informed adults who relate to LGBTQ Youth based on facts, not myths
 - *I got a call from a teenage boy on my caseload. He had told his foster parents he thought he was gay. They wanted him to go to a pastor who would make him "straight."*
 - Adult participant, New York City

What are the Needs of LGBTQ Youth in Care?

- Child Welfare professionals who are sensitive and welcoming.
 - *My old caseworker changed the subject the one time I tried to let on I was a lesbian. After that he treated me differently, too – like there was cold wind blowing in the room. Then I got transferred to my new caseworker. The minute I walked in to her office I knew things were going to be better. She had this poster about gay people over her desk and some rainbow beads hanging on her lamp. It was okay to tell her who I am.*

– Youth participant
 - *I only had one lady to talk to, but the rest of them weren't even trying to help me out.*

– Youth participant

What are the Needs of LGBTQ Youth in Care?

□ Respect and support

- *I live at an independent living program and the staff will say things like, "Do you like boys now?" And I'll say, "No, what are you talking about?" That's the kind of thing that really bothers me.*

– Youth participant
- *I told everyone that I am a lesbian, and I'm sorry if you have a problem with it. I lost a lot of friends, and the staff was really conscious of me. I was isolated a lot, in many different ways. I would ask to do things, and even if I was being respectful, or if I was doing what I was supposed to, I'd still get a "no."*

– Youth participant

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in foster care have rights:



- to feel safe
- to be free from anti-LGBT harassment
- to have people accept you for who you are, not try to change you
- to have adults stick up for you

LGBT youth in foster care have the same rights as everybody else. If you or someone you know needs help, call toll free:

1-866-LGBTTeen
(1-866-542-8336)



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