

# Creating Inclusive Systems of Care for LGBT Youth



OHYAC TRAINING

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Trainers should

- Introduce themselves and welcome participants
- Get a sense of who is in the audience
- Describe the purpose of the training
- Provide participants with a specific agenda including time allocations and breaks
- Describe resources and handouts.
- Take care of “housekeeping details”
- Distribute a pre-training survey to use as evaluation tool (optional)

## Training Overview

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- Purpose of training
- Establish discussion guidelines
- Review common terms
- Discuss LGBT youth development
- Learn about the experiences of LGBT youth in care
- Review legal and professional responsibilities
- Highlight best practices for working with LGBT youth
- Discuss next steps, ongoing support & needs

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The trainer should

- Review the sections of the training and go over the agenda

## Why Are We Here?



- 4-10% of youth in foster care are LGBT
- LGBT youth often experience:
  - Harassment and violence at home or in school
  - Rejection by family/caregivers and community
  - Emotional distress or thoughts of suicide
- LGBT youth often experience disapproval and rejection in foster care
- LGBT youth often lack support and feel isolated

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The purpose of this slide is to provide a context for the training.

This is a good opportunity to explain that LGBT youth do NOT have unique needs. They need the same basic supports that all youth need. However, they do face unique challenges and threats to their safety, well-being and healthy development. As adults working with these youth, we need to understand and address these unique challenges, and ensure that the attitudes that fuel familial and societal rejection are not perpetuated in our systems of care.

The trainer should also explain that these experiences apply to youth who identify as LGBT, as well as youth who are PERCEIVED to be LGBT. In fact, harassment, rejection and discrimination directed at LGBT youth negatively affects ALL youth by making it unsafe for them to explore their own emerging identities.

## We are here because...

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- ❑ Harassment and violence against LGBT youth are preventable
- ❑ Child welfare agencies, providers and caregivers have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of *all* foster youth, including LGBT youth
- ❑ LGBT youth have a legal right to receive equal and nondiscriminatory treatment in foster care
- ❑ Support and acceptance promotes the healthy development of LGBT youth

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The trainer should explain that it is not the purpose of this training to change people's religious, political or moral beliefs. Rather, we are here to describe the experiences of LGBT youth (in general and in foster care), to summarize the legal and ethical provisions governing services to LGBT youth in foster care, and to discuss best practices developed from these sources, as well as practical experience.

## Discussion Guidelines



- ❑ I will share only if I wish... no pressure.
- ❑ I will speak from my own experience, whenever possible
- ❑ I will value confidentiality: personal sharing will stay in the group when I leave
- ❑ I will avoid cross talk. I will share comments with the general group.
- ❑ I will be open to others' thoughts and feelings even when they differ from my own.

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- The trainer should explain that the purpose of the guidelines is to create a safe learning environment in which to discuss these issues. **THE TRAINER MUST BE COMFORTABLE FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS IN WHICH PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW.**

- The trainer should guide the group in developing discussion guidelines

- The listed guidelines are only suggestions. The group may want to change, and, delete, etc.

Other guidelines to consider are:

- There is no such thing as a stupid question

- I will not dominate the discussion.

- I will be fully present – no cell phones, PDA's, side discussions, etc.

# Module 1:

## Building Awareness & Knowledge



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### Learning objectives

Participants will:

- Understand and distinguish the concepts of “sexual orientation” and “gender identity”
- Become familiar with terms related to sexual orientation and gender identity
- Understand the impact of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexual privilege on the development and well-being of LGBT youth
- Gain insight into their own attitudes and beliefs related to sexual orientation and gender identity
- Assess the attitudes conveyed by their agencies and organizations
- Understand the “coming out” process, and the impact of acceptance or rejection on outcomes for LGBT youth

# THE BINGO GAME



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The purpose of the BINGO game is to familiarize participants with terminology related to SO and GI that may be used throughout the training or in other settings. The exercise is also designed to be fun and interactive, and to help create a safe, relaxed atmosphere. (Tip: Have a youth trainer lead this exercise, if possible)

## **Handouts:**

- BINGO boards (there are 4 different boards, use a mixture)
- Common LGBT Terms and Definitions

## **The trainer should:**

- Distribute BINGO cards and explain purpose of the activity.
- Explain the rules of BINGO game. (The trainer will read a definition and participants should mark the appropriate square on their BINGO board.)
- Read the definition for any of the terms off of the BINGO term list provided for the trainer. Read the same definition again.
- Keep reading new definitions until someone gets a BINGO.
- Have that person read out the term as well as what they think the term means for each of the boxes that makes up their BINGO.
- This person wins the game if all of the terms in their BINGO have been called and they define each one correctly.
- If they are wrong, continue with the game until someone is correct.
- Give BINGO winner a small prize.

## Terms & Definitions Discussion



- ❑ Different terms in different communities
- ❑ Terms are always changing
- ❑ Self definition
- ❑ In group/out group words
- ❑ Language to watch out for

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Distribute “Common LGBT Terms” handout. (Found in Section one of the Breaking the Silence Resource CD)

Have participants review the handout

- Were any of these terms new for you?
- Are any of these terms confusing?

Explain to participants that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities, like other communities fighting discrimination, have developed different words to refer to themselves over time and also have words that are okay to use if you’re in the community but can sound offensive if someone outside the community uses them. Terms such as “fag”, “dyke”, and “queer” are examples of terms that members of LGBT communities (and allies) may use, while those outside of these communities should avoid using these terms. Also, different LGBT communities may use different words to describe themselves. One example is the term “stud” which is often used by urban LGBT youth. Many older LGBT people may have never heard this term. The glossary provided gives an overview of common terms that LGBT people use and is meant to be a general guide. It would be impossible to create a glossary that included every potential word people might use to describe themselves, especially since these terms are still emerging. For that reason, people should refer to LGBT people using the terms and pronouns they prefer.

Review last page of handout “Key Concepts for Understanding Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation.”



## Line Up Game



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### SELECT TWO AUDIENCES MEMBERS

Explain the activity to them without letting the rest of the group hear. They are to work together and line everyone according to the person's gender expression. They should place the most masculine person on one end of the line and the most feminine at the other end with people who are more androgynous in the middle. Men and women can be anywhere on the line. They should not tell anyone what they are doing. This should only take about 3 minutes.

-When the volunteers are done, have everyone LOOK UP AND DOWN THE LINE and MAKE SOME OBSERVATIONS TO themselves about how they think they have been organized.

-Ask participants if they know how they are lined up.

-If no one guesses, have the volunteers explain that they organized everyone by gender.

Ask participants:

1. How do you feel about where you are placed in line?
2. Why do you think you were placed as you were?
3. How did you feel during this activity?

**-After some discussion, allow participants to line up ACCORDING TO their GENDER IDENTITY.**

1. Does this feel different?
2. ANY COMMENTS AS WE LOOK AT THE BEFORE AND AFTER?
3. Why do you think we did this activity (tie back to training)

-Ask participants to return to their seats.

## Digital Story

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Captain



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Trainer should review the “Introduction and User’s Guide” & the “Viewing Discussion Guide” on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD to provide background on the DVD and on the individual digital stories.

**If possible, a youth trainer should present and discuss the digital stories during the training.**

Before showing Captain’s story, the trainer should introduce the Breaking the Silence DVD and explain how the digital stories are made.

**After**, the trainer should:

Discuss Captain’s story using some of the following questions:

1. What does Captain mean when he says there is no word to describe him in the English language? How can labels be restrictive or divisive—and how is this sometimes harmful?
2. How does Captain understand the relationship of the “three sisters” that comprise him? How do these identities contradict one another? And yet how are they all integral parts of who Captain is?
3. Why did Captain’s aunt and foster mother consider it necessary for Captain to define himself as a girl or a boy?

## Respect for Youth's Gender Identity



- Use correct name, form of address, and pronoun
- It's about self identification
- Ask about name and pronoun if not sure
- Allow youth to dress, style their hair, and groom in accordance with preferred gender

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The trainer should read and review:

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 2-3, 29-31, 49-50
- “If You Are Concerned About Your Child’s Gender Behavior: A Guide for Parents” on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD
- Chapter 7 of the Out of the Margins report (on the Breaking the Silence resource CD)

## Homophobia and Transphobia

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- Homophobia is fear or hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against:
  - Homosexuality
  - LGB people
  - Individuals perceived as LGB
  - People associated with LGB people
- Transphobia is fear or hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against:
  - Transgender people
  - People who are gender nonconforming

## Personal Homophobia



- ***Intra-personal/Internalized:*** Internalized fear of or aversion to one's own same sex attractions
  - *How may this manifest?*
  
- ***Inter-personal:*** Fear or hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against people who are LGB
  - *How may this kind of homophobia manifest?*
  - *What examples have you seen in your work?*

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Participants should provide examples along with facilitator

### Intrapersonal

- Depression/self-hatred
- Internal denial
- Outright lying (e.g., Rev. Ted Haggard)

### Interpersonal

- Slurs and jokes
- Teasing
- Exaggerated fear ("As long as he doesn't come near me . . .")
- Threats of violence
- Vandalism
- Harassment
- Assault and battery
- Sexual assault
- Murder

## Societal Homophobia



- **Institutionalized:** Homophobia that has become institutionalized through practice, policy or law—may be conscious or unconscious.
  - *Where have you observed this type of homophobia?*
  - *Where have you seen this type of homophobia in your work?*
  
- **Cultural:** Homophobia that leads to the cultural norm or assumption that all people are heterosexual.
  - *How does this manifest in our society?*
  - *In the child welfare system?*

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### Institutional

- Military “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy
- Boy scouts- policies that exclude LGBT leaders
- Religious denominations that won’t ordain LGBT people and won’t perform LGBT commitment ceremonies
- Health care benefits not given to same sex couples
- Inheritance laws
- Forms and paperwork that do not consider LGBT people or their families
- Gender segregated restrooms

### Cultural

- Expectation of heterosexuality
- Reinforcement of heterosexuality in popular culture
- Lack of portrayal, or stereotypical portrayal, of LGBT people in media
- Standards of beauty that reinforce gender expectations
- Traditional gender roles
- Lack of recognition of LGBT people’s contribution in textbooks

**NOTE:** Trainer should address the myth that people of color are more homophobic than white people.

## Defining Heterosexual Privilege



- ❑ The privileges that heterosexual people have because of a societal assumption that all people are heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is the only legitimate way to live one's life.
- ❑ Being heterosexual in society carries with it power and privileges many of which are not always apparent.

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Introduce and discuss heterosexual privilege.

Heterosexual privilege interacts with other characteristics such as race, culture, religion, and age.

**NOTE:** You should anticipate the word/concept “privilege” to be a “charged” one for some participants.

## Heterosexual Privilege



- Heterosexual people are able to:
  - kiss or show affection to partner in public
  - talk about romantic relationships
  - marry

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Ask participants for additional examples. Some common examples that may come up include:

- not question whether they are “normal”
- express sadness when their relationships ends
- be open when renting a hotel room with your significant other
- dress without worry about what it represents
- not have to hide friends or involvement with social community
- relationship recognition by family and friends
- share holidays with family and partners
- bring partner to family or work events
- have their partner appear in family photographs
- ability to visit life partner in hospital



## Personal Attitude Assessment



1. I would be comfortable knowing that my child's third grade teacher is gay.
2. If I found out that my daughter or son was lesbian or gay, I would have difficulty telling other people.
3. I would feel comfortable dating a bisexual person.
4. I should be informed if a co-worker is transgender.
5. It would not bother me at all if someone thought I were gay.
6. I would feel uncomfortable if my young son wanted to wear dresses.

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This is an activity to help participants to better understand their personal attitudes about LGBT people - to clarify their attitudes and beliefs in order to help them to become more conscious of what they feel and how these feelings may come up in their work or daily lives.

The purpose of responding to these items is not to try to change your attitudes or values. There are no right or wrong answers. The important thing is that participants understand what they actually feel, not what they think they should feel.

Ask participants to share their reactions to the statements.

If you get no or few responses, consider (1) having participants break up into dyads and discuss and then come back to the larger group

## Agency Attitude Assessment



**Intolerance**  
**Indifference**  
**Tolerance**  
**Acceptance**  
**Affirmation**  
**Advocacy**

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Explain that the purpose of the activity is to explore the “attitude” of the agencies or organizations in which we work. Present the range from intolerance to advocacy, and ask participants to provide an example of each. How does an agency communicate its “attitude” on these issues? Possible examples:

- Intolerance:** “There is no such thing as a gay or transgender youth.”
- Indifference:** “We don’t have any LGBT youth” or “It’s none of our business.”
- Tolerance:** “It’s OK that we have LGBT youth here, but we don’t want to do anything that will encourage them.”
- Acceptance:** “We want to support our LGBT youth, but we don’t have any appropriate placements.”
- Affirmation:** “We know that LGBT youth need our support to be healthy and successful, so we provide agency wide training and recruit LGBT affirming providers and families.”
- Advocacy:** “We support our LGBT youth at all stages of their involvement with our agency and ensure that all staff and peers treat LGBT youth respectfully.”

-Ask participants to reflect on where they believe their agency or organization falls on this continuum. Note that the agency may be at different places on different issues.

-Encourage them to take an historical perspective.

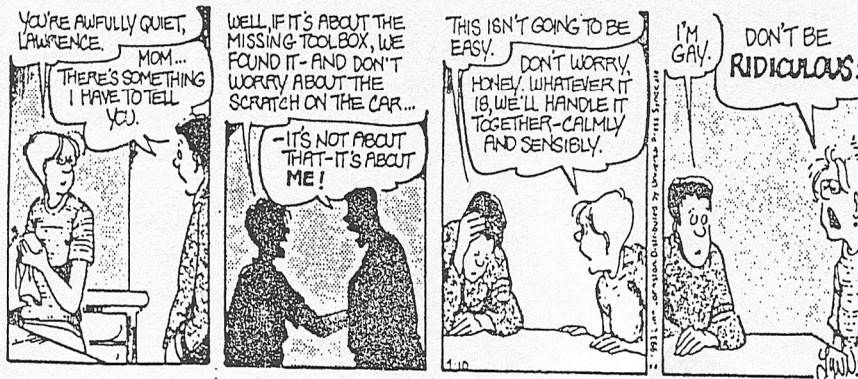
-Ask “What are we doing that’s working?” and then “What do still need to

# Coming Out Process



## FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

By Lynn Johnston



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The purpose of this section is:

- to describe and discuss the process of coming-out
- to help participants build on and develop the strengths of LGBT youth and their families.

## Definition

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- ▣ “Coming Out” (of the closet) refers to the life-long process of the development of a positive LGBT identity. It involves sharing LGBT identity with others.

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Coming out: the process of disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others. Because most people in our society are presumed to be heterosexual, coming out is not a discrete life event but a lifelong process. Coming out may also be experienced by heterosexual family members or allies of LGBT persons, who may decide to disclose to others that they have friends or relatives who are LGBT.

*Why “come out”?*

Coming out (particularly during adolescence) allows the person to develop as a whole individual, empowers him or her, promotes self-esteem and helps decrease negative health outcomes.

The trainers should review:

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 27-33

## Digital Story

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Darryn



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If possible, a youth trainer should present and discuss the digital story.

Some discussion questions might include:

- What fears does Darryn describe during his story?
- How did images of gay men from popular culture make it difficult at first for Darryn to identify as gay?
- What types of support mechanisms could Darryn benefit from?
- What made Betty a good foster parent? Even though Darryn felt supported by her, why do you think he did not feel comfortable coming out to Betty while he was living with her?
- What might have helped Darryn during his coming out experience?

## Coming Out: Youth Experience



- ▣ Stigma & discrimination
- ▣ Concealment
- ▣ Stress—fear of rejection, physical harm, or abandonment
- ▣ Fear of being “found out”

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Discuss what youth might be afraid of during the coming out process. Reference Darryn’s experience. For example, rejection, gossip, violence, loss of relationships and friendships, and being kicked out of the house. How might a youth feel when coming out? For example, scared, vulnerable, relieved.

Stigma & discrimination significantly impact positive identity development. Stigma has significant social, behavioral, and health related consequences that can increase risk behaviors, such as unprotected sex and substance abuse, and intensify psychological distress and risk for suicide. LGBT youth often try to conceal their sexual identities to maintain relationships.

**NOTE:** Trainer should anticipate questions regarding (1) HOW youth know they’re gay (“How do youth know they’re *straight*?”); (2) WHY youth are gay (“That’s not our focus. We take each young person where s/he is.”) and (3) whether youth are able to change their sexual orientation (“No. It is well-established in the medical and mental health fields that sexual orientation cannot—and need not—be changed.”).

Trainer should review:

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 27-33

## Reactions to Coming out



- How might a person feel after someone comes out to them?
  - Scared
  - Shocked
  - Disbelieving
  - Uncomfortable

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Ask participants to add to the list:

- Not sure what to say
- Not sure what to do next
- Wondering why the person “came out”
- Supportive
- Flattered
- Honored
- Angry
- Disgusted

## Coming out

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- What do you think LGBT youth want from the people they come out to?
  - Acceptance
  - Support
  - Understanding

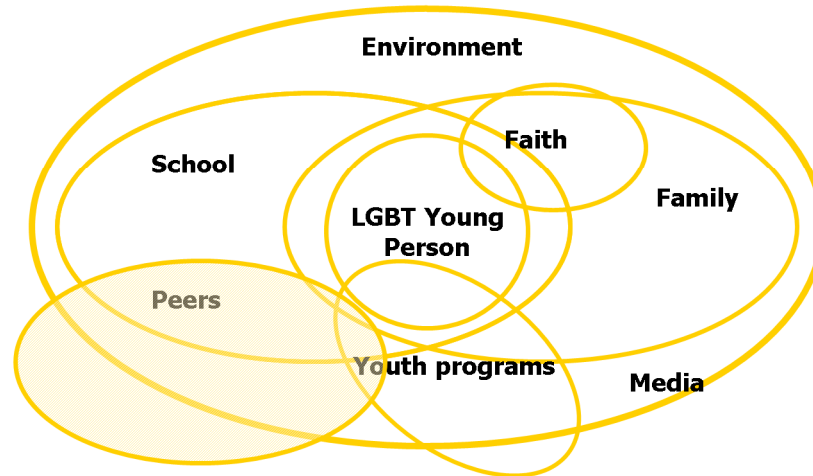
24

Ask participants why they think youth may want to come out to friends and relatives.

- End the “hiding game”
- Feel closer to family and friends
- To get support and services
- To start dating relationships
- Be able to be “whole” around them
- Stop wasting energy by hiding all the time
- Feel like they have integrity
- To make a statement that “gay is ok”
- To be true to themselves



## LGBT Youth in Context



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Describe the model as a Series of overlapping, mutually influencing systems that shape the daily lives and opportunities of young people. Most LGBT youth are deprived of support in all of these settings. The teachers, parents, ministers, and health care providers that work with teens today had NO experience as teens with these issues – and usually have little context for understanding these issues.

## Strengths of LGBT Youth

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- ❑ Resiliency
- ❑ Emotional and physical “survival skills”
- ❑ Greater sense of personal insight/understanding
- ❑ Increased appreciation for family/community
- ❑ Courage

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Although it is important for us to understand the challenges and obstacles in the lives of our LGBT clients, we must also be mindful of their strengths. Many of them have survived in a climate of rejection and hostility, and have developed skills that are important to recognize. This recognition is consistent with a strengths based model in which service providers and caregivers avoid focusing exclusively on a young person’s needs or deficits.

If there is time, ask participants to add to this list of strengths.

# BREAK



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## LGBT Youth in State Care



- LGBT youth overrepresented in populations likely to be involved in state systems
  - High rates of violence & rejection after coming out
  - 25-40% of homeless youth are LGBT
- Estimated that more than 4-10% of youth in state care are LGBT identified

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The Trainer should review:

- Best Practice Guidelines: pp. 3-5
- Fact Sheets on LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care & LGBTQ Youth in Juvenile Justice on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD
- “Out of the Margins” Report on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD
- the Entering the System chapter of the “Justice For All?” report on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD

The trainer should hand out copies of the Fact Sheet on LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care to training participants.

## Digital Story

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Nicky



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A youth trainer should present the digital story, if possible.

Ask some of the following questions and discuss:

- Why did Nicky enter foster care? How is Nicky's entrance to foster care similar to or different from youth who are not LGBT?
- What specific needs did Nicky have once in foster care because of these differences?
- When Nicky was removed from her family, her family was not provided help to address their homophobia. What services or programs could have been offered to Nicky's family that might have been able to help them understand and accept their child?
- How could the teasing and harassment Nicky experienced in foster care have been handled differently? What sorts of programs could have been offered to Nicky or to the other foster youth in her placement?
- As a service provider, how would you respond to Nicky's experience? What resources and/or support services are available for Nicky in your community?

## Entrance to State Care: Relevance of Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

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- ❑ Violence in family after coming out
- ❑ Runaway/throwaway
- ❑ Status crimes (truancy, incorrigible)
- ❑ Non-violent survival crimes due to homelessness
- ❑ Substance abuse due to stigmatization
- ❑ Inappropriate sex offense charges
- ❑ Fighting back

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The trainer should review:

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 3-5

## Digital Story

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Remy



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A youth trainer should present the digital story, if possible.

Ask some of the following questions and discuss:

- Why did Jeremy tell his social worker rather than his foster mother about being gay? How could these adults have made it safer for him to come out?
- Why didn't Jeremy know he was committing a crime?
- Why would a young gay couple be treated differently than a young heterosexual couple in the same situation Jeremy found himself in?
- What could have been done to help Jeremy before he got into trouble with the law?

**NOTE:** Mandated reporters must report “any lewd and lascivious touching of a child under 14 years old, if the other person is 14 years old or older, irrespective of consent.”

## Experiences of LGBT Youth in State Care



- VICTIMIZED
  - 70% LGBT youth in group homes reported violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity
  - 100% reported verbal harassment
- DISPLACED
  - 78% removed or ran away from placement because of hostility to sexual orientation or gender identity
  - do not find permanency
- SEGREGATED
  - Segregated from other youth of same sex
- PUNISHED
  - Punished for expressing sexual orientation or gender identity
  - Not allowed to participate in programming

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All statistics on this slide are from a study of youth in foster care in New York City in the mid 1990's.

The trainer should review:

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 6-8
- “Out of the Margins” Report on the Breaking the Silence resource CD



## Experiences of LGBT Youth in State Care

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- ❑ CRIMINALIZED
  - Classified as sex offenders
  - Arrested for age appropriate same-sex exploration
- ❑ PATHOLOGIZED
  - Subjected to reparative therapy
  - “you are going to hell”
- ❑ ISOLATED
  - Not allowed access to LGBT supportive programs
- ❑ NOT RESPECTED
  - Not allowed to dress or groom as they prefer
  - Gender identity not respected

## Module 2: Putting It Into Practice

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## Legal & Professional Responsibilities



- ▣ **Professional Organization Policies**
- ▣ **State Law:** AB 458 California Foster Care Nondiscrimination Act
- ▣ **Federal Law**
- ▣ **Best Practices Guidelines**

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The trainer should explain that there are several sources from which we can define professionally competent services to LGBT youth in out-of-home care.

Several relevant professional organizations have issued policies related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

In California, we have a statute (or law) that explicitly protects LGBT children, youth and adults involved in the foster care system from discriminatory or unequal treatment.

The federal constitution also provides protection to LGBT youth in out-of-home care and requires public agencies to ensure their safety and well-being.

Finally, we have talked about the Best Practice Guidelines, which have incorporated these sources into professional standards specifically governing services to LGBT youth in out-of-home care.

## LGBTQ Youth Rights



- ▣ Required by Law, Violation of the Law, or Best Practice?

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Have participants answer the questions on the handout and then discuss as a large group.

1. A group home says they will not take in a youth after they hear the youth is LGBT or a group home asks that a youth be removed after the youth comes out [This could be a **violation** of the law, even if the group home is religiously affiliated.]
2. A group home allows youth to have LGBT supportive magazines, newspapers and books. [This could be **required** by the law unless the group home does not allow magazines, newspapers, or books.]
3. A group home provides LGBT supportive magazine subscriptions, videos, or books in group home library. [This is a **best practice**. What materials a group home has is up to them.]
4. A foster parent or group home does not allow a youth to attend a local gay prom. [This could be a **violation** of the law if other youth are allowed to attend a prom, transportation is possible, and it is age-appropriate.]
5. A group home will not allow an LGBTQ youth to have a roommate. [This could be a **violation** of the law. Requiring segregation either because of fear that the youth will perpetuate harm or will be a victim could be a violation.]
6. A group home wants to remove an LGBTQ youth from the home because other youth are threatening and assaulting him or her. [It could be a **violation** for a group home to kick out an LGBTQ youth because of harassment. The home needs to address the assault, and should not punish the victim by removing them. The group home is required to protect youth from assault. If a social worker becomes aware that a home is not responding to threats or assault, the worker should work with the home and if they still refuse, should have the youth removed.]

## Professional Organization Policies

- American Psychiatric Association
- American Psychological Association
- Child Welfare League of America
- National Association of Social Workers

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-American Psychiatric Association: “The potential risks of ‘reparative-therapy’ are great including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapists alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the patient.”

-American Psychological Association: “...opposes portrayals of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and adults as mentally ill due to their sexual orientation and supports the dissemination of accurate information about sexual orientation, and mental health, and appropriate interventions in order to counteract bias that is based in ignorance or unfounded beliefs about sexual orientation.”

-Child Welfare League of America: “calling on child welfare agencies to provide competent, nonjudgmental services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth.”

-National Association of Social Workers

### •1.05 (c) Cultural Competence and Social Diversity:

Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.

### •4.02 Discrimination:

Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability;

### •6.04 (d) Social and Political Action:

Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability.

## AB 458



### Mandates:

- ❑ Fair & equal access to services placement, care, treatment & benefits
- ❑ No discrimination or harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity
- ❑ Training for group home administrators, foster parents & department licensing personnel

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The trainer should review:

- AB 458 Fact Sheet on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD
- “Queer and trans Youth in CA Foster Care Have Rights” pamphlet on “Breaking the Silence” resource CD.
- Question and Answer Guide to AB 458 on “Breaking the Silence” resource CD

The trainer should hand out copies of the three resources above to all training participants.

#### • Adds to rights of foster children

“It is the policy of the state that all children in foster care shall have the right to have **fair and equal access** to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to **not be subjected to discrimination or harassment** on the **basis of actual or perceived** race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, **sexual orientation, gender identity**, physical or mental disability, or HIV status.” Cal. Welfare & Inst. Code § 16001.9(a)(22)

#### • Adds to the rights of providers

“It is the policy of the state that all persons engaged in providing care and services to foster children shall have **fair and equal access** to all available programs, benefits

## Federal Law

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- ❑ ALL foster youth have a Constitutional right to **safety** while in foster care:
  - Physical and emotional safety
  - Adequate food, shelter, and clothing; and
  - Appropriate medical care
- ❑ LGBT foster youth have the same rights in foster care as non-LGBT youth
- ❑ ALL youth in foster care have freedom of speech and expression.

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The trainer should review:

- The Legal Rights of LGBT Youth in the Foster Care System fact sheet on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD

Depending on the audience, the trainer may want to hand out copies of the above resource to all training participants.

# BREAK



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## Best Practices: Creating an Inclusive Culture



- A child welfare agency has acquired LGBT-affirming posters to be displayed throughout the building. The supervisor of the Teen Unit has requested that social workers display them prominently in their workspaces. One of the workers adamantly refuses, telling her supervisor the poster's message goes against her religious beliefs. What should the supervisor say/do?

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Some ideas for the trainer to consider:

-Religion: Remind the worker s/he is not being required to give up her personal religious beliefs. What she is required by law to do is provide non-discriminatory services to all her clients, including her LGBTQ clients. The poster is affirming this commitment.

-Inclusiveness: Point out that the poster is inclusive of many different types of identities (not just LGBTQ) and that the point is to communicate that ALL people are respected in the particular environment.

-Training: Consider handing the posters out in the context of training on best practices for serving LGBT youth.

-Supervision: Remember the issue is larger than whether the poster gets displayed. On-going training and supervision will be necessary to ensure the *principles* (respect, nondiscrimination, etc.) are put into practice.

## Creating an Inclusive Culture

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### **AGENCIES**

Provide comprehensive ongoing training  
Enact non-discrimination policies  
Prohibit slurs and jokes  
Provide appropriate supervision  
Encourage dialogue

### **INDIVIDUALS**

Use respectful and inclusive terminology  
Display inclusive symbols  
Make LGBT resources available  
Promptly intervene  
Be fair and avoid double standards

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Trainers should review:

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 9-13
- Chapter 1 from the “Out of the Margins” report on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD

## Best Practices: Promoting Positive Development & Expression of *Sexual Orientation*



Marta has lived with the Stevenson foster family since infancy. She has recently come out and wants to have her girlfriend come to the house to visit. Ms. Stevenson opposes this. Marta calls to complain to her social worker. What should the social worker do?

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-Some ideas for the trainer to consider:

-Marta

- Acknowledge to Marta her courage in coming out to her foster mother.
- Listen to Marta's concerns and ask her what she would like to see happen.

-Ms. Stevenson

- Listen to Ms. Stevenson's concerns.
- Empathize around the difficulty Ms. Stevenson is having with assimilating the new information regarding Marta.
- Acknowledge the strength of the connection between Ms. Stevenson and Marta. Marta has trusted Ms. Stevenson enough to come out to her.
- Give Ms. Stevenson a mini-refresher course on adolescent sexual development and the appropriateness of Marta's desires and behaviors.
- Remind Ms. Stevenson that she must not discriminate against Marta and thus must allow Marta to have her girlfriend visit the home if she allows other children in the home to bring their girlfriends or boyfriends to visit.
- Provide Ms. Stevenson with resources (books, articles, support groups, etc.) that will better equip her to support Marta.

## Promoting Positive Development & Expression of *Sexual Orientation*



### **Permit** youth to

- ❑ Discuss same-sex attraction without being penalized or shamed
- ❑ Participate in appropriate inclusive social activities
- ❑ Express their sexual orientation through their clothing, jewelry, hairstyle
- ❑ Have access to LGB affirming books, posters and materials

### **Prohibit** practices or policies that

- ❑ Shame or humiliate youth for normative exploration
- ❑ Subject LGB youth to different rules than heterosexual youth
- ❑ Subject youth to attempts to change their sexual orientation
- ❑ Blame youth when others harass them

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Trainers should review Best Practice Guidelines pp. 27-33

## Best Practices: Promoting Positive Development & Expression of *Gender Identity*



- Jackie is a transgender MTF (age 15) who lives with a supportive, loving foster family. Jackie wants to go to school dressed like a girl. The foster family approves, but the social worker vetoes them, expressing fear for Jackie's safety. Is the social worker's decision appropriate?

45

Some ideas for the trainer to consider:

-Jackie has the right to express her gender identity through the way she dresses, styles her hair, etc.

-The social worker should examine her/his reason(s) for her/his decision. Is s/he motivated by homophobia? By a genuine fear that Jackie's life will be in danger?

-Discuss with Jackie how she thinks the other students and staff will respond to her dressing in female clothing, and whether she feels prepared to deal with those responses. Help her devise a safety plan.

## Promoting Positive Development & Expression of *Gender Identity*



### **Permit** youth to

- ❑ Explore and discuss their gender identity
- ❑ Wear clothing consistent with their gender identity
- ❑ Identify the name and pronoun by which they wish to be referred
- ❑ Participate in activities that interest them
- ❑ Have access to information and support

### **Prohibit** practices and policies that

- ❑ Require youth to dress, behave or act according to gender stereotypes
- ❑ Demean or penalize gender nonconforming youth
- ❑ Pathologize or attempt to “cure” transgender youth

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Trainers should review Best Practice Guidelines pp. 27-33 and Chapter 7 of the “Out of the Margins” report on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD.

## Best Practices: Managing Sensitive Client Information Appropriately



- Grant has been in a relative placement since the age of 5 years. He is now 12 and has recently come out to his caregiver/maternal aunt, Lynn. Lynn wants Grant removed from her home for fear that he will hurt her children. Grant does not want his parents to know of his sexual orientation and tells his social worker not to mention this in the TDM meeting. Lynn is adamant about bringing up Grant's sexual orientation in the meeting in the presence of Grant's mother. What should the social worker do?

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Ideas for the trainer to consider:

- Does the social worker have to invite Grant's mother to the TDM?
  - Acknowledge Grant's courage in coming out to Lynn. Make sure he is connected with resources for LGBT youth.
  - Ask Grant whether he would like to continue living with Lynn.
  - Talk with Lynn about what she may be fearing related to having Grant in her home. Remind her Grant is the same person now he was before he came out to Lynn. Has Grant ever hurt her children? What makes her think there would be a sudden change now? Acknowledge the deep connection Lynn and Grant share. Grant is Lynn's nephew and Lynn has been caring for him for 7 years. That's a long time! Ask Lynn to take some time to consider her decision. Urge her to talk with a counselor about her feelings and provide her with resources (books, articles, support group, etc.) to help her understand what Grant is experiencing and how to support him.
  - Talk with Lynn about why she feels so strongly about bringing up Grant's sexual orientation at the TDM. Is she wanting to communicate that it is Grant's fault that she is having him leave her home and that her decision is not arbitrary?
  - Talk with Grant about the likelihood that Lynn will mention his sexual orientation. Help him come up with a plan regarding what to do if she does.

## Managing Sensitive Client Information Appropriately



- ❑ Create a safe environment for youth to come out
- ❑ Maintain confidentiality
- ❑ Consider purpose, nature and consequences of disclosure
- ❑ Discuss any disclosure with youth
- ❑ Develop written policies and practices governing information management

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Trainers should review Best Practice Guidelines pp. 35-39



## Best Practices: Understanding Contemporary LGBT Youth & Their Families



- ▣ Rafael, who is 15 years old and bisexual, is being physically and emotionally abused by his father, who will not accept his son's sexual orientation and wants him out of the home. Rafael's mother does not agree with her husband and wants Rafael to stay in the home. What should the social worker do?

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Ideas for the trainer to consider:

- What does Rafael want? Does he want to continue living with his parents?
- How severe is the abuse?
- What resources are there in the community for families with LGBT youth? Is the family willing to engage services?
- What do Rafael's parents--his father, in particular—understand about being LGBT? What do they know about the possible long-term effects on Rafael as a result of being rejected? About how their loving support can help him avoid those negative effects?
- Is there a TDM process in the social worker's county? Another mechanism for bringing the family together to discuss how to support Rafael and his parents?
- Does Rafael know where to go for support?

## Understanding Contemporary LGBT Youth & Their Families

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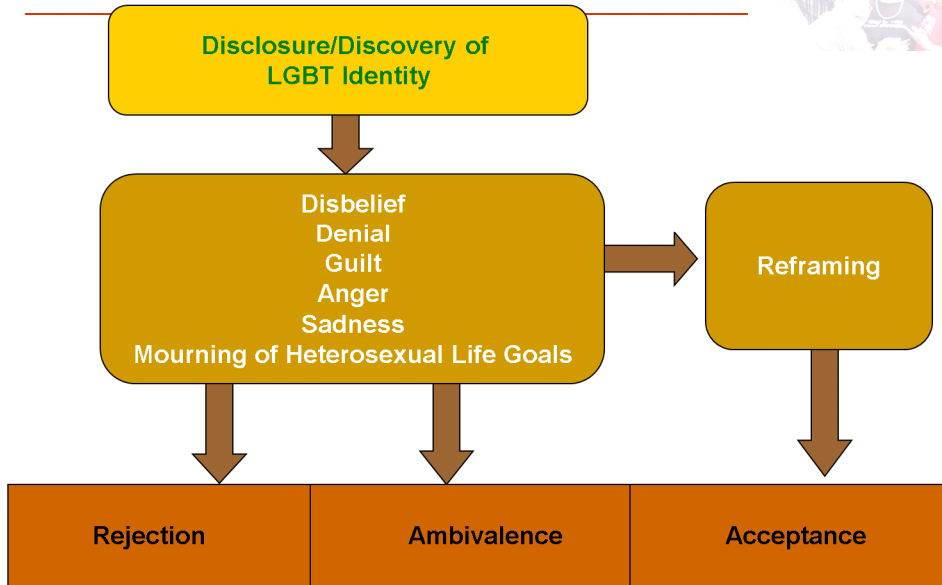
- ❑ Children coming out at younger ages
- ❑ Families struggle and need support and information
- ❑ Intervention can decrease family rejection
- ❑ Need to serve children and youth in the context of their families

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Trainers should review

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 15-21
- Findings of the Family Acceptance Project at [familyproject.sfsu.edu](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu)

# Coming Out: Parental/Family Reactions



## Family Acceptance Project

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>



- A research, intervention & education initiative that has studied how family acceptance and rejection affects the health, mental health and well-being of LGBT young people
- Developing evidence-based:
  - Family education materials
  - Provider assessment materials
  - Family interventions & approaches to care
  - Publications

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# Family Acceptance Project

## Key Findings

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- ❑ Family rejection has serious negative health and mental health outcomes for LGBT young people
- ❑ Family acceptance is an important protective factor for LGBT young people
- ❑ Family acceptance promotes well-being (self-esteem, life satisfaction, social support)

# Family Acceptance Project

## Reframing Our Approach to Care



- Family education/guidance is essential to help support LGBT youth in their homes, to strengthen families & to improve health & mental health for LGBT youth
- Families and caregivers must understand the physical & emotional impact of their **words, actions & behaviors** on their LGBT children
- A little change in how families respond to their LGBT children can make an important difference in their child's health, mental health & well-being
- A paradigm shift is required in systems of care that serve children, youth & families – need to *expand* our frame of reference to include the family & caregivers

*Ryan & Diaz, Family Acceptance Project, San Francisco State University*

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>    [fap@sfsu.edu](mailto:fap@sfsu.edu)

## Best Practices: Permanency for LGBT Youth



- ❑ A worker needs to recommend a placement for an openly gay foster youth. He has a choice between a foster family that has never dealt with an LGBT youth but seems open, or a group home specifically for LGBT youth. What should the social worker consider in this case?

55

The trainer should facilitate a discussion of this case study.

Considerations:

- The foster family (FF) “seems open.” Explore what this means. Are they able to provide adequate, non-discriminatory care to the youth? What services/support would they need in order to do this?
- What type of placement does the youth want? Do NOT make assumptions. Does the youth prefer a family setting? A group care setting? Does the youth want to live with exclusively LGBT youth? In a more diverse setting?
- Remember that LGBT youth need the same things that ALL youth need, including FAMILY. Placement in a specialized group home should not be automatic.

## Permanency for LGBT Youth

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- ❑ LGBT youth have same need for permanency as non-LGBT youth
- ❑ Develop strong agency focus on permanence
- ❑ Work closely with youth to identify permanent connections
- ❑ Reduce reliance on group care for LGBT youth
- ❑ Provide training and ongoing support to permanent families

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Trainers should review

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 23-25
- “Achieving Permanency for LGBTQ Youth” article on “Breaking the Silence” resource CD.
- Chapter 6 of “Out of the Margins” report on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD.



## Best Practices: Ensuring Appropriate Homes for LGBT Youth

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- Jake is a 16 year old transgender FTM who has just entered foster care. Although he was born female he now identifies as a male and lives his life as a male. He hopes to medically transition soon. What should his social worker be considering when finding him a placement? Can Jake be placed in an all-girls group home?

57

The trainer should facilitate a discussion of this case study.

Considerations:

- Most important consideration is Jake's physical and emotional safety. Where does he think he will be most safe? Does he want to live with a foster family?
- Staff should also consider Jake's privacy concerns, the different types of available housing options, and any recommendations from his mental health providers regarding appropriate housing for him.
- Can he be placed in a girls group home? If Jake prefers this placement and he will be safe. Also, the facility should respect his gender identity.

# Ensuring Appropriate Homes for LGBT Youth



## Agencies should

- ❑ Make individualized placement decisions
  - Least restrictive appropriate placement
    - ❑ Relatives and chosen family
    - ❑ Foster parents
    - ❑ Group home
  - Will the youth be safe in this placement?
  - Where will the youth feel most comfortable?
- ❑ Increase and diversify LGBT affirming placement options
- ❑ Train and support caregivers

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Trainers should review

- Best Practice Guidelines pp. 41-45
- Chapter 2 of “Out of the Margins” report on the “Breaking the Silence” CD

## Placement: Transgender Youth



- ❑ Look for placements that are not segregated by gender, including foster homes
- ❑ If a placement is gender segregated, house transgender youth according to their gender identity, not their birth gender
- ❑ Not all transgender youth feel comfortable being housed with youth who have the same gender identity
  - Where will the youth feel safe and respected?
- ❑ If a transgender youth is placed in a facility according to their birth sex, the facility should still respect the youth's gender identity

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The trainer should review the Best Practice Guidelines pp. 49-51.

## Best Practices: Supporting LGBT Youth After Placement



- Joy is 14 years old and is questioning her sexual orientation. She is housed in a group home where the other youth constantly taunt her for being a “dyke.” Joy contacts her social worker. How should her social worker respond?

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The trainer should facilitate a discussion of this case study.

Ideas for trainer to consider:

- Believe Joy and take her concerns seriously.
- Remember that Joy is entitled to be kept safe while in state care. Remind Joy of this.
- Do NOT single Joy out. Address this issue as a more global one. Homophobia and harassment are larger, systemic problems that didn't start with Joy.
- Provide psycho-educational training to residents re. homophobia.
- Provide training to staff on LGBT youth issues.
- Develop and post an anti-discrimination policy and grievance procedures.
- Assign meaningful consequences to the youth who taunted Joy.
- Talk with Joy about what she would like to see happen.
- Remember to keep confidential what Joy asks you not to share with others (unless you are mandated by law to report).

## Supporting LGBT Youth After Placement



- ❑ Are the youth's personal rights respected? Is he/she treated with dignity and respect?
- ❑ Is the youth placed in the community or adjacent to the community where s/he normally lives?
- ❑ Is the youth allowed to dress and groom as desired?
- ❑ Is the youth able to access school without discrimination?
- ❑ Does the youth have the opportunity to participate in LGBT supportive extracurricular activities or enrichment programs?
- ❑ Are the youth's friends allowed to visit?

## Best Practices: Provide Inclusive & Appropriate Support Services



- ❑ Denea tells her social worker that she has romantic feelings for other girls, but that she does not want to be a lesbian. She wants help to “become straight.” What should the social worker do?

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Ideas for the trainer to consider:

- Denea has a right to self-determination. She is clearly expressing her wishes.
- Strengths-based social work practice stresses “starting where the client is.” Acknowledge and empathize with Denea’s feelings.
- Explore with Denea her motivation for not wanting “to be a lesbian” and wanting to “become straight.”
- Talk with Denea about adolescent sexual development and provide her other resources regarding this.
- Share with Denea what the medical and mental health communities have to say about changing one’s sexual orientation—that it’s not possible and not necessary.
- Suggest she meet with a counselor to discuss her feelings and offer to refer her to someone who is highly-skilled in working with young people around issues of sexuality.
- Provide Denea other resources, such as support groups, websites, books, etc.

## Provide Inclusive & Appropriate Support Services



- ❑ Understand the health and mental health consequences of stigma
- ❑ Be familiar with resources and information for transgender youth
- ❑ Ensure health and mental health assessments and services are inclusive and sensitive
- ❑ Assess the safety and culture in a school and community
- ❑ Address any discrimination or harassment an LGBT youth faces in school or community
- ❑ Provide healthy social and recreational outlets

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The trainer should review the Best Practice Guidelines pp. 53-61 and Chapters 4 and 5 of the “Out of the Margins” report on the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD.

# Module 3: Taking it With You— Moving Toward Understanding & Support



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Training objectives for this module:

To develop an understanding of reasons to become a supportive person for LGBT youth.

To develop strategies to use knowledge gained during trainings in work with LGBT youth.



## Digital Story

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Kevin



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Some discussion to assist trainer in facilitating a discussion after Kevin's digital story:

- What did Kevin's social worker do to help him realize his potential?
- How did Kevin come to a new understanding of what it means to be "normal"?
- What are some specific examples of how Kevin's social worker and group home workers demonstrated to him that they were understanding and supportive?

## Becoming a Supportive Person for LGBT Youth



- Four Stages of Development:
  - Awareness
  - Knowledge/Education
  - Skills
  - Action
- Your support really matters

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Provide examples of the four stages of development:

Ask participants how they think others may respond to them when they support LGBT youth.

What are some possible negative responses?

Examples of possible discouraging results:

- Being labeled as lesbian or gay and getting mistreated
- Mocked
- Friends and colleagues may distance themselves
- May become victims of the same oppression and discrimination
- LGBT individuals may not accept their support
- Learning the culture and language of LGBT community may be difficult

## Action Steps to Show Support



- ❑ 1. Realize that you have LGBT youth clients.
- ❑ 2. Educate yourself and co-workers.
- ❑ 3. Use gender neutral language when discussing dating.
- ❑ 4. Develop comfort in using LGBT terms.
- ❑ 5. Have visible LGBT resources in your office or agency.
- ❑ 6. Acknowledge and address coming out issues with your client.
- ❑ 7. Be non-judgmental.
- ❑ 8. Respond to LGBT peer harassment and violence.
- ❑ 9. Don't make assumptions.
- ❑ 10. Listen and ask questions.

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Have participants add additional action steps. Share steps that they have taken to show support.

# County Readiness Survey



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Trainer should hand out “County Readiness Survey” from the “Breaking the Silence” resource CD to all training participants to complete during training or on their own time.

## Ideas to Take Home

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- ❑ One next step I plan to take to provide better services for LGBT youth under my supervision is:  
*(something you can do when interacting with youth)*
- ❑ One next step I plan to take to increase my co-workers knowledge of LGBT youth issues:  
*(something you can do to educate other social workers or foster parents)*
- ❑ One next step I plan to take to create systemic change for LGBT youth in my agency:  
*(something you can do to change the organizational culture)*

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Have training participants write down ideas on paper to take home with them. Ask people to share next steps with the group.

## Final Reflections

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You have just finished this workshop.  
Imagine someone asks you about it.

- ▣ How would you describe this workshop to them?
- ▣ What would you tell them you learned that you think will be most useful in meeting the needs of LGBT youth in your care?

## Presenters

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