all children all families

Achieving Safety, Permanency and Well-Being by Improving Practice with LGBT Youth and Families

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

HRC's All Children – All Families project promotes LGBT cultural competency among child welfare agencies through innovative resources, including an online agency self-assessment tool, comprehensive staff training, free technical assistance and more.

WHAT IS ALL CHILDREN – ALL FAMILIES?

All Children – All Families, a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, provides a framework for agencies to achieve safety, permanency and well-being by improving their practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth and families. Participating agencies work to meet ten key Benchmarks of LGBT Cultural Competency – from client non-discrimination policies and inclusive agency paperwork, to staff training and creating an LGBT-inclusive agency environment. Once these benchmarks are met, the agency is designated a "Leader in Supporting and Serving LGBT Youth and Families" and awarded the All Children – All Families Seal of Recognition. This seal can be used to enhance an agency's outreach and recruitment within the LGBT community.

WHY ALL CHILDREN – ALL FAMILIES?

A disproportionately high number of LGBT youth are in foster care, many having been abandoned by their families due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. These youth continue to struggle as they enter the child welfare system, where agency staff members often lack the skills and knowledge to provide them with the services they need and deserve.

An estimated 2 million LGBT adults are interested in adoption in the U.S. But, the LGBT community is often an untapped resource when it comes to finding families for children and youth in foster care. Agencies can significantly increase their pool of prospective foster and adoptive parents by ensuring they have the policies and practices in place to welcome and support LGBT resource families and recruit effectively for these families.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL CHILDREN – ALL FAMILIES

Child welfare agencies that recruit, license, support and place with adoption/foster families and/or provide direct services to youth in out-of-home care are eligible to participate. Here's how:

1 Complete Your Agency Self-Assessment.
The first step to participating is completing an online Agency Self-Assessment. Upon submitting the assessment, your agency will be added to the list of participating agencies.

2 Make Improvements in Policies & Practice.
Your agency will also receive free, individualized technical assistance from All Children – All Families staff members. This consultation will involve an in-depth review of your self-assessment and cover those ten Benchmarks of LGBT Cultural Competency which your agency has met, and others which may need more work before they are fully in place. For a list of benchmarks, visit **www.hrc.org/acaf-benchmarks.**

3 Be a Recognized Leader.
When your agency achieves the ten benchmarks, it will earn the status of "Leader in Supporting and Serving LGBT Youth and Families" and be awarded the All Children – All Families Seal of Recognition.

4 Renew Your Agency's Leader Status Every Two Years.
Recognizing that maintaining an agency's LGBT cultural competency requires an ongoing commitment, every two years All Children – All Families Leaders are asked to confirm that the ten benchmarks are still in place and to complete a short Leader Renewal Survey.
Visit www.hrc.org/acaf to get started today.

> "Working with All Children – All Families, we were able to find areas where we needed to make some improvements and provide excellent training to our entire Foster Care and Adoption services staff. The whole process has made our agency more effective at attracting LGBT parents which means we are doing a better job protecting the children we serve."
> – Nancy Ronquillo, President & Chief Executive Officer, Children's Home + Aid, Chicago, IL

Read more testimonials at www.hrc.org/acaf.

All Children – All Families Training Curriculum

All Children – All Families has developed a three-part training program that can be customized for the needs of individual agencies. Learn more at **www.hrc.org/acaf**.

> "HRC's All Children – All Families training provides child welfare systems with the support and guidance they need to add LGBT-headed families to their pool of prospective permanent homes. And this work is the right thing to do at the right time."
> – Bryan Samuels, former U.S. Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families

CARING FOR
LGBTQ
CHILDREN
& YOUTH

A GUIDE FOR CHILD WELFARE PROVIDERS

all children all families

HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN
FOUNDATION

Achieving Safety, Permanency and Well-Being by Improving Practice with LGBT Youth and Families

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This booklet was developed to provide you with information about the care and support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning children and youth. Chances are you picked up this guide because you believe, just as Bryan Samuels, the former commissioner of the U.S. Administration on Children, Youth and Families said, "every child and youth who is unable to live with his or her parents is entitled to a safe, loving and affirming foster care placement, irrespective of the young person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression." Unfortunately, we know LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and often face discrimination and mistreatment in out-of-home care.

This guide includes information on terminology and several basic, but key, tips on how to best support and care for LGBTQ children and youth. We've also provided some data from the Human Rights Campaign's study of more than 10,000 LGBTQ youth as a glimpse into their experiences. Also, you will find resources and helpful websites for more information to competently serve *all* children and youth in your care, including those who may identify as or be perceived as LGBTQ.

About All Children – All Families

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's All Children – All Families project engages child welfare agencies across the United States, providing resources, technical assistance and training on best practices for supporting and serving LGBTQ youth and LGBT families.

Through All Children – All Families' unique online Agency Self-Assessment tool, agencies can score themselves using 10 key benchmarks in LGBT cultural competency. These benchmarks are proven, evidence-based practices gathered from agencies and child welfare experts leading the way in ensuring all youth and families, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, receive competent, supportive care. Agencies that demonstrate they have met these benchmarks are designated "Leaders in Supporting and Serving LGBT Youth and Families," and are awarded a Seal of Recognition from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. These benchmarks are outlined later in this guide.

Hundreds of agencies across the country are using All Children – All Families resources, and there are more than 40 Leaders in Supporting and Serving LGBT Youth and Families.

Help your agency stand out and make a strong statement welcoming LGBTQ youth and LGBT families today! Learn more at *www.hrc.org/acaf*, or email *acaf@hrc.org*.

> "Once a young person who is LGBTQ enters the foster care system, his or her caseworker is an important link to support and safety. It is therefore critical that a young person's caseworker has the capacity, understanding and willingness to support the child's social and emotional development while in foster care."
>
> – Bryan Samuels, former Commissioner, U.S. Administration on Children, Youth and Families

Got SOGIE?

What is SOGIE?

The new acronym "SOGIE" stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression.

As part of our work to improve the care and services to LGBTQ children and youth, it is important to ensure the healthy development of SOGIE. A shift of focus from LGBTQ children and youth to a focus on SOGIE of all children is useful for several reasons. Many gender-variant and non-heterosexual youth do not use the terms "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual" or "transgender" to identify themselves. By contrast, every child and youth has a sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (or SOGIE). Development of SOGIE is universal and normative. Healthy development of SOGIE is essential to a child and youth's well-being. SOGIE is one of many domains of human development that is supported or undermined by the behavior and attitudes of key adults and institutions in a child's life.

THE
LANGUAGE
LGBTQ
TERMINOLOGY
& DEFINITIONS

There are two things to keep in mind about terminology:
1) Language matters, and
2) Language is constantly evolving.

Language matters because being mindful and choosing your words carefully is one of the simplest ways to create a safe space for all children and youth. Understanding and increasing your comfort level in using (or in some cases not using) the terms below helps not only LGBTQ children and youth whom you may be caring for, but can also help all youth know you are a safe person they can talk with about their feelings and go to for support and guidance.

Many children and youth may be experimenting with language to help describe their identities and experiences. Their language will be in flux much like the language and terms used by the larger LGBTQ community are constantly evolving. Some words, like "homosexual," are now seen as outdated and should be generally avoided. Other words, like "faggot" or "dyke," are widely used and understood as slang and derogatory and, as such, should not be used by care providers. Like other forms of bullying, the use of these words in a derogatory, hurtful manner should be addressed and stopped regardless of their target.

Of course, the importance of language extends beyond one-on-one or group interactions. Service providers should also inspect the language used on paper work, resources, brochures and forms to ensure it is welcoming and inclusive.

As you review these terms, keep in mind that this list is not comprehensive given the evolving nature of language. If you come across a word you don't know, look it up! A little bit of research can go a long way in demonstrating your support and understanding of LGBTQ children and youth.

A

Advocate: A person who actively works to end intolerance, educates others and supports LGBTQ issues, concerns, equal rights legislation, etc.

Ally: A term used to describe people who advocate and support members of a community other than their own. In the context of the LGBTQ community, "ally" is often used to refer to non-LGBTQ people who advocate for and support LGBTQ people.

B

Biological Sex: Biological sex refers to the classification of people as male or female. Biological sex is determined by our chromosomes (XX for females, XY for males), our hormones (estrogen/progesterone for females, testosterone for males) and our internal and external genitalia (vulva, clitoris, vagina for females, penis and testicles for males).

Bisexual: A bisexual person is physically, romantically, emotionally and/or relationally attracted to both men and women, though not necessarily simultaneously; a bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes.

C

Closeted: A phrase used to describe people who have not disclosed their LGBTQ identity, or who have only told a few people. The person is "closeted" and has not "come out of the closet."

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates his or her sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share it with others. Coming out happens many times over the course of a lifetime.

Cross-Dressing: The act of occasionally wearing clothes and/or makeup and accessories traditionally associated with people of a different gender. People who cross-dress (cross-dressers) are usually comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and do not wish to change it.

D

Drag: The act of cross-dressing as part of a performance. Drag queens often perform in highly feminine attire. Drag kings often perform in highly masculine attire. Drag may be performed as a political comment on gender, as parody or simply as entertainment. Drag performance does not define a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Dyke: Dyke is a derogatory term for a lesbian. Some lesbians have reclaimed this word and use it as a positive term, but it is still considered offensive when used by the general population.

F

Faggot: Faggot (or "fag") is a derogatory term for a gay man. Some gay men have reclaimed this word and use it as a positive term, but it is still considered offensive when used by the general population.

G

Gay: Gay is an adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or relational attractions are to people of the same sex.

Gender Binary: The idea that there are only two distinct and very different genders: female/male.

Gender Expression: All of a person's external characteristics and behaviors – such as dress, grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions – that are socially identified with a particular gender. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than their sex assigned at birth. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation.

Gender Identity: A person's innate, deeply felt psychological sense of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's assigned sex at birth. Gender identity is distinct and separate from sexual orientation.

Genderqueer: A term people use to describe their own gender identity, often used by those who do not want to be labeled by fixed definitions of male/female.

Gender Pronouns: Examples of gender pronouns include "she/her" and "he/him." It is important to use the gender pronouns that someone prefers when referring to that person. If you're unsure which pronoun an individual youth prefers, ask sensitively rather than simply assuming.

Gender Roles: The set of socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to females and males. Gender roles vary from culture to culture, and over time.

Gender Transition: The experience by which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another. Gender transition is a very individual process. To affirm their gender identity people may go through different types of transitions: social (can include name changes, changes in pronouns and changes in appearance – clothes or hairstyle), medical (includes use of hormone

blockers or cross-hormones to promote gender-based body changes) and surgical (modifies the body to remove or add gender-related physical traits).

H

Heterosexual: An adjective that describes people whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attractions are to people of a different sex. Also: straight.

Heterosexual Privilege: Advantages that come with heterosexuality in this society and culture (i.e., the ability to have one's relationship legally recognized through marriage and the many benefits that come along with marriage).

Heterosexism: The belief that all people are heterosexual, the assumption and/or belief that heterosexual relationships and behavior are superior, and the actions based on this assumption.

Homosexual: This term is an outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay people. "Gay" and "lesbian" are more commonly accepted terms to describe people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

Homophobia/Transphobia/ Biphobia: Fear, hatred, anger, discomfort, intolerance or lack of acceptance toward LGBTQ people.

I

Internalized Homophobia/ Transphobia/Biphobia: Refers to the self-identification of societal stereotypes by LGBTQ people, causing them to dislike and resent their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

L

Lesbian: A woman who has emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual attractions to other women.

LGBT: An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender."

Lifestyle: A term that is inaccurately used to refer to the sexual orientation of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Avoid using this term. As there is no one heterosexual or straight lifestyle, there is no one lesbian, gay or bisexual lifestyle.

Living Openly: A state in which LGBT people are out about their sexual orientation or gender identity in their personal, public and/or professional lives.

O

Outing: The act of publicly declaring someone's sexual orientation or gender identity, sometimes based on rumor or speculation, without that person's consent.

Q

Queer: Queer describes people who are not heterosexual and/or who do not conform to rigid notions of gender and sexuality. For many LGBT people this word has a negative connotation since it was historically used as a derogatory slang term when referencing LGBT people; however, some are comfortable using it.

Questioning: The process of exploring one's own sexual identity, including but not limited to one's upbringing, expectations from others (family, friends, church, etc.) and inner motivation.

S

Same-Gender Loving: A term some prefer to use instead of "gay" or "lesbian" to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

Sexual Orientation: Enduring emotional, romantic or sexual feelings for other people. Sexual orientations include "heterosexual/straight," "gay," "lesbian" and "bisexual." Everyone has a sexual orientation that goes through a multistage developmental process and may evolve over time.

Sexual Preference: A term sometimes used to mean the same thing as "sexual orientation." Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people find this term to be offensive because it implies that their sexual orientation is a choice.
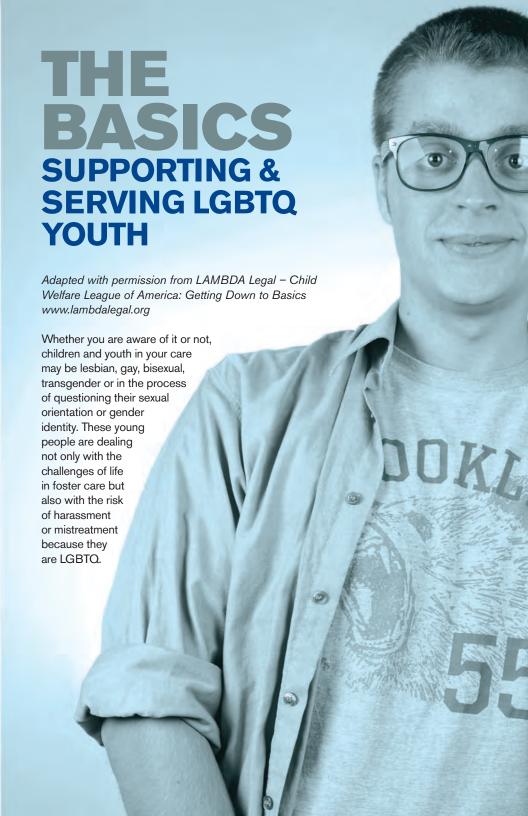
Straight Supporter: A heterosexual person who supports and honors sexual diversity, acts accordingly to challenge homophobic remarks and behaviors, and explores and understands his or her own bias. See also: Ally.

T

Transgender: Transgender is used as an umbrella term for people who experience or express their gender differently from what others might expect based on the sex they were assigned at birth. This includes people who are transsexual, cross-dressers or otherwise gender non-conforming. Transgender people may identify as trans man or female-to-male (FTM), trans woman or male-to-female (MTF), genderqueer, bi-gender, androgynous or gender variant.

Transsexual: People who seek to live in a gender different from the one assigned at birth. They may seek medical intervention (through hormones and/or surgery) to live comfortably in the gender with which they identify. They usually live full time as a different gender from the one they were assigned at birth.

Transvestite: This is an outdated term that is offensive to many and not commonly used. Historically this term refers to a person (typically a male) who adopts the dress and behavior typical of the opposite sex for purposes of emotional or sexual gratification.

THE BASICS

SUPPORTING & SERVING LGBTQ YOUTH

Adapted with permission from LAMBDA Legal − Child Welfare League of America: Getting Down to Basics www.lambdalegal.org

Whether you are aware of it or not, children and youth in your care may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or in the process of questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. These young people are dealing not only with the challenges of life in foster care but also with the risk of harassment or mistreatment because they are LGBTQ.

- **Acknowledge that foster children and youth in your care may be LGBTQ.**

Don't assume that all young people in your care are heterosexual or comfortable in their assigned gender. Many LGBTQ young people fear the negative reactions that may come from revealing this aspect of their identity and carefully hide that they are LGBTQ. Indeed, some may have been abused by their families of origin or thrown out after coming out and are reluctant to risk harassment and rejection from the child welfare system charged with protecting them.

> **"Living with [my foster family] made me kind of miserable. Coming out to them was a problem. Eventually, I just stopped caring cuz they kept assuming I wanted to be with their son and stuff and I was like 'No, I just need a brother.' … Foster care was one of the hardest things I've ever had to go through."**
>
> – Anwar, "Families Like Ours," from *Foster Care's Invisible Youth, 2012*

- **Examine your beliefs and attitudes that might impact your ability to support LGBTQ children and youth in your care.**

Be aware of your own beliefs, prejudices and gaps in knowledge surrounding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Regardless of your personal beliefs, remember that above all it's your responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing and non-judgmental environment for the LGBTQ children and youth in your care.

- **Understand that being LGBTQ isn't a "choice" or something a young person can change.**

The leading mental health and child welfare associations have long recognized that a lesbian or gay sexual orientation is a normal variation on human sexuality and no more susceptible to change than is a heterosexual sexual orientation. A child or youth should never be subjected to "conversion" or "reparative" therapies for the purpose of changing sexual orientation or gender identity. Such "therapies" have been shunned by all leading professional organizations as unethical and potentially dangerous.

- **Educate yourself on LGBTQ issues.**

You don't have to be an expert or LGBTQ yourself in order to support an LGBTQ child or youth. There are plenty of resources available to help you better understand

these issues. Some resources are listed in this brochure. Seek out the support and information you need to feel comfortable engaging young people in frank and age-appropriate discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

● **Know that your acceptance or rejection affects the health and well-being of the LGBTQ youth in your care.**

Research shows that family acceptance is an important predictor of how well an LGBTQ youth will fare as an adult. As a caregiver, don't compound the rejection an LGBTQ child or youth may have

The National Foster Parent Association has adopted a formal policy urging sensitivity and support for LGBTQ youth in foster care. The Family Acceptance Project™ offers resources for families of LGBTQ young people.

suffered from his or her family of origin by exhibiting the same rejecting behaviors.

● **Respect the privacy and confidentiality of LGBTQ youth.**

Most LGBTQ young people are aware of this aspect of their identity long before they disclose it to others. Some LGBTQ people report having been aware of their sexual orientation as young as at five years old, long before they were sexually active, while others were much older before they realized it. Research shows that children as young as two may begin expressing their gender in ways that do not fit societal expectations based on their sex assigned at birth. Understand that coming out is often a lifelong process and that LGBTQ children and youth may not be out in every context of their lives. Keep in mind that there are many factors LGBTQ people consider before disclosing their sexual orientation and gender identity, including that they may be exposing themselves to discrimination and harassment by revealing this information to others. Respect the confidentiality of the foster children and youth in your care, while helping them to decide whether or not to come out and to whom.

● **Apply the same standards to LGBTQ youth that you apply to others for age-appropriate adolescent romantic behavior.**

It's important for LGBTQ youth to be able to engage in developmentally appropriate romantic behavior and to feel as validated and respected in this area as other young people. LGBTQ youth in your care should be held to the same standards you apply to non-LGBTQ youth regarding age-appropriate dating, displays of affection and romantic relationships. LGBTQ youth in care, like all young people, need developmentally appropriate information and resources about sexuality and sexual health, including about the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

● Know the dangers and risks for LGBTQ youth.

Research reveals that LGBTQ youth may be at a higher risk for substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, running away and suicidal ideation and behavior because of the social stigma and harassment they face from their peers and adults. As a caregiver, it's critical that you be aware of the warning signs and behaviors that may mean someone is struggling. If you provide a safe, supportive and bias-free environment where young people can be themselves, they will be less likely to engage in these risky behaviors.

● Be an advocate for LGBTQ children and youth.

LGBTQ children and youth often face verbal and physical abuse from their peers, families and the adults in their lives. Make sure the young people in your care know that you're there for them and will be their ally. Ensure that your foster child or youth is safe at school and in the community. Advocate for them and demand that they receive respectful treatment.

● Acknowledge that there's more to an individual than sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

Sexual orientation and gender identity and expression are only part of what makes an individual a whole person. Avoid making assumptions about a young person based entirely upon these particular characteristics. In fact, you may find that some LGBTQ children and youth are very outspoken about their identities and feel that this is a defining part of who they are, while others may not give it much thought at all. Don't assume that every struggle faced by an LGBTQ young person is the result of this aspect of their identity. Understand that many of their struggles are, in fact, a result of the lack of support they have received from their caretakers and peers.

> **LGBTQ children and teens have the same needs for acceptance and support from their family, their peers and other important adults in their lives as all young people do. LGBTQ children and youth also have to cope with the challenges of social stigma and discrimination. All children and youth need and deserve families to nurture them and help them as they transition into adulthood.**

LGBTQ youth need to be safe and not be condemned, pathologized or criminalized if they explore and express their sexual orientation and gender identity through means of expression that are expected of and appropriate for all youth. These expressions include romantic attachments and discussion of romantic attachments, dress, recreational and social activities, hobbies and expressions of affection such as kissing or holding hands.

● Take advantage of community resources for you and your LGBTQ foster child or youth.

Know where to look for LGBTQ resources in your community. At the back of this pamphlet, you will find a list of national and web-based resources for LGBTQ youth, their caregivers and families.

● Know what it means to be "transgender" and use the term appropriately.

"Transgender" is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender self-image differs from the norms traditionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth based upon their physiological anatomy. For example, a transgender woman is a person who identifies as a female but was assigned "male" at birth. Conversely, a transgender man is a person who identifies as a male but was assigned "female" at birth. The term is also used to describe people who may be gender non-conforming – that is, whose behaviors, mannerisms or clothing are perceived by others to be inappropriate for their birth sex based on societal beliefs or standards. The terms "trans" and "genderqueer" are two additional terms frequently used by transgender and gender nonconforming youth.

● Educate yourself on gender dysphoria.

The incongruity between a person's internal sense of self as either male or female and the person's anatomical or birth sex can lead to depression and severe emotional distress. When these feelings rise to clinically significant levels, a person may be suffering from gender dysphoria, a diagnosable medical condition found in the

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). Treatment of gender dysphoria is focused on providing support, not changing a person's gender identity. It may include services like individual and family counseling and such medical care as hormone therapy and surgery to align the physical body with the internal sense of self as male or female. Some people oppose the classification of transgender identity as a disorder, while others recognize advantages of having explicit standards of health care for transgender individuals. All concur, however, that transgender youth need to be supported, affirmed and safe and free to express their identities.

● Allow transgender youth to express their gender identity.

Allow transgender youth to express their gender identity through their chosen attire, names, pronouns and mannerisms without punishment or ridicule. Don't assume that transgender youth are "acting out" when they express their gender identity. The clothing and personal style that an individual chooses are important aspects of self-expression. Support transgender youth in these choices and challenge restrictive policies that may not allow such freedom.

● Make room assignments and housing decisions based on the well-being of individual youth.

In sex-segregated facilities, don't assign transgender youth to the girls' or boys' units strictly based on their anatomical sex. Instead, make individualized decisions based on the physical and emotional well-being of each youth, taking into account their level of comfort and safety, the degree of privacy afforded, the types of housing available and the recommendations of qualified mental health professionals. The safety of transgender youth should be protected without resorting to isolating or segregating them from the general population. However, single occupancy rooms, if available, may be an acceptable alternative for transgender youth in sex-segregated facilities.

● Use young people's preferred names and pronouns.

Respect a transgender young person's choice of name and gender pronouns that best reflects their sense of self as female, male or a different gender. By doing so, you validate their identity and sense of self-worth. If you're unsure which pronoun an individual youth prefers, ask sensitively rather than simply assuming what that person would prefer. Some youth may be fluid in their gender identity and expression and alternate use of gender pronouns and names.

● Avoid assumptions about transgender young people's sexual orientation.

Transgender youth may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, heterosexual or differently. It's important to keep in mind that sexual orientation is separate from, and not determined by, one's gender identity and expression.

THE DATA
GROWING UP LGBTQ IN AMERICA

The report *Growing Up LGBTQ in America*, outlines the results of the Human Rights Campaign's groundbreaking survey of more than 10,000 LGBTQ-identified youth ages 13-17. It provides a stark picture of the difficulties they face; the impact on their well-being is profound, however these youth are quite resilient. The report outlines experiences in four major areas: Personal Well-Being, Family, School and Community. The findings are a call to action for all adults who want ensure that young people can thrive. Read the full report at *www.hrc.org/youth*.

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

LGBT   **NON**

1/3
NEED AN ADULT

TO TALK TO

2X

Non-LGBTQ youth are nearly twice as likely as LGBTQ youth to say they are happy (**37% vs. 67%**).

LGBTQ youth are more likely than non-LGBTQ youth to report that they do not have an adult they can talk to about personal problems (**29% vs. 17%**).

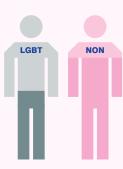LGBTQ youth are more than twice as likely as non-LGBTQ youth to experiment with alcohol and drugs (**52% vs. 22%**).

FAMILY

YOUTH

Out to immediate family

More than half (**56%**) of LGBTQ youth say they are out to their immediate family.

Positive Messages

Less than a third of LGBTQ youth (**32%**) chose their family among a list of places where they most often hear positive messages about being LGBTQ.

Families Not Accepting

A third (**33%**) of LGBTQ youth say their family is not accepting of LGBTQ people.

LGBT   **NON**

About half (**49%**) of LGBTQ youth say they have an adult in their family they could turn to for help if they felt worried or sad, compared to **79%** of non-LGBTQ youth.

SCHOOL

2X

LGBTQ youth are more than twice as likely as non-LGBTQ youth to be verbally harassed/called names at school (**51% vs. 25%**).

2X

LGBTQ youth are twice as likely as their peers to say they have been physically assaulted, kicked or shoved at school (**17% vs. 10%**).

2X

LGBTQ youth are about twice as likely as non-LGBTQ youth to say they have been excluded by their peers because they are different (**48% vs. 26%**).
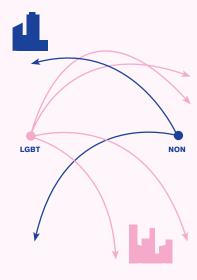
COMMUNITY

Nearly half (**47%**) of LGBTQ youth say they do not "fit in" in their community.

42%

4 in 10 (**42%**) LGBTQ youth say the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBTQ people.

LGBT   NON

63% of LGBTQ youth say they will need to move to another part of the country to feel accepted.

DATA THROUGH THE CHILD WELFARE LENS:
SAFETY, PERMANENCY AND WELL-BEING

SAFETY

- Many LGBTQ youth face neglect or abuse from their families of origin because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression. One study found that more than 30% of LGBTQ youth reported suffering physical violence at the hands of a family member after coming out.

- As a result of lack of acceptance and abuse in the home and at school, a disproportionate number of youth living on the streets are LGBTQ. The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services estimates that between 20 and 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ.
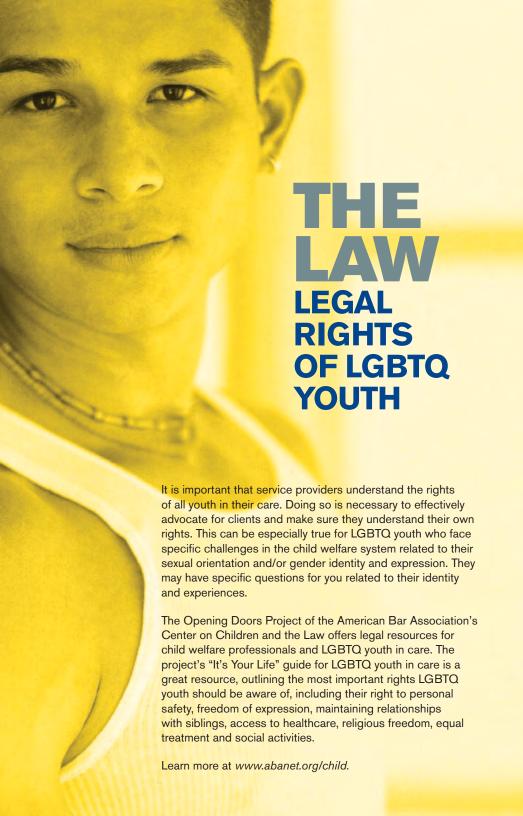
PERMANENCY

- Many LGBTQ youth (26%) are forced to leave their families of origin as a result of conflicts with their parents regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- 78% of LGBTQ youth were removed or ran away from their foster placements as a result of hostility toward their sexual orientation or gender identity.

WELL-BEING

- LGB young adults who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs and 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse compared with peers from families that reported no or low levels of family rejection.

- 33.2% of transgender youth have attempted suicide.

- Research suggests that LGBTQ youth in foster care need a range of physical and mental health services as well as educational supports and services, but that they confront barriers in accessing these services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Adapted from *LGBTQ Youth In Care: Information & Resources* by the National Resource Center for Youth Development. For citations and more information, visit *www.nrcyd.ou.edu/lgbtq-youth.*

CARING FOR **LGBTQ CHILDREN & YOUTH**

THE LAW

LEGAL RIGHTS OF LGBTQ YOUTH

It is important that service providers understand the rights of all youth in their care. Doing so is necessary to effectively advocate for clients and make sure they understand their own rights. This can be especially true for LGBTQ youth who face specific challenges in the child welfare system related to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression. They may have specific questions for you related to their identity and experiences.

The Opening Doors Project of the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law offers legal resources for child welfare professionals and LGBTQ youth in care. The project's "It's Your Life" guide for LGBTQ youth in care is a great resource, outlining the most important rights LGBTQ youth should be aware of, including their right to personal safety, freedom of expression, maintaining relationships with siblings, access to healthcare, religious freedom, equal treatment and social activities.

Learn more at *www.abanet.org/child.*

RESOURCES

All Children – All Families Benchmarks of LGBT Cultural Competency

Agencies that demonstrate they have achieved each of the All Children – All Families Benchmarks of LGBT Cultural Competency, as they apply to their specific services, are designated as "Leaders in Supporting and Serving LGBT Youth and Families" and are awarded the Seal of Recognition. The benchmarks focus on LGBT-inclusion within the following 10 key areas of policy and practice.

1   **Client Non-Discrimination**

2   **Employment Non-Discrimination**

3   **Organizational Partnerships & Non-Discrimination**

4   **Agency Forms**

5   **Staff Training**

6   **Staff Advocates**

7   **Client Advisory Boards & Community Expertise**

8   **Agency Environment & External Communications**

9   **Training & Support for Resource Families**

10 **Client Services & Referrals**

Learn more at *www.hrc.org/acaf-benchmarks*.

LGBTQ Children and Youth and the Child Welfare System

All Children – All Families has compiled a comprehensive list of resources on LGBTQ children and youth and the child welfare system. These resources come from leading child welfare organizations and LGBTQ experts across the country, including the American Bar Association, American Civil Liberties Union, Child Welfare League of America, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

For more information and to access these resources, visit *www.hrc.org/acaf-resources.*

National LGBTQ Organizations & Resources

> **"Creating safe spaces at school is essential to ensuring the highest performance of all students. In creating safe spaces for transgender and other gender non-conforming students, we not only improve the conditions for them but the environment for all students attending the school."**
>
> – Joel Baum, director of Education and Training at Gender Spectrum

Family Acceptance Project™
familyproject.sfsu.edu

This community research, intervention and education initiative studies the impact of family acceptance and rejection on the health, mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth. Family support services available free of charge in English, Spanish and Cantonese.

Advocates for Youth
www.advocatesforyouth.org

Advocates for Youth champions efforts that help young people, typically ages 14-25, make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. Advocates believes it can best serve the field by boldly advocating for a more positive and realistic approach to adolescent sexual health.

CenterLink - The Community of LGBT Centers
www.lgbtcenters.org

CenterLink serves as a member-based coalition to support the development of strong, sustainable LGBT community centers.

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
www.glsen.org

GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. The organization works to ensure that every student, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, is treated with respect and provided with a safe learning environment.

Gender Spectrum
www.genderspectrum.org

Gender Spectrum provides education, training and support to help create a gender-sensitive and inclusive environment for all children and teens. Through consultation, training and events, Gender Spectrum helps families, educators, professionals and organizations understand and address the concepts of gender identity and expression.

Human Rights Campaign
www.hrc.org

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

Lambda Legal
www.lambdalegal.org

Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.

National Black Justice Coalition
www.nbjc.org

The National Black Justice Coalition is a civil rights organization dedicated to empowering Black LGBT people. NBJC's mission is to end racism and homophobia.

National Center for Lesbian Rights
www.nclrights.org

The National Center for Lesbian Rights is a national legal organization committed to advancing the civil and human rights of LGBT people and their families through litigation, public policy advocacy and public education.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
www.thetaskforce.org

The mission of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is to build the grassroots power of the LGBT community. The Task Force does this by training activists, equipping state and local organizations with the skills needed to organize broad-based campaigns to defeat anti-LGBT referenda and advance pro-LGBT legislation, and building the organizational capacity of our movement. It works to create a nation that respects the diversity of human expression and identity and creates opportunity for all.

PFLAG: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
www.pflag.org

PFLAG is a large, national organization with many local chapters. PFLAG provides support for LGBTQ people and their families. Local chapter information can be found on its website.

Transgender Law Center
www.transgenderlawcenter.org

The Transgender Law Center works to change law, policy and attitudes so that all people can live safely, authentically and free from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression. Services include advice, guidance and referrals so that transgender people and their families can better understand how to navigate legal processes.

The Trevor Project
www.thetrevorproject.com

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ young people ages 13-24. It provides the only national 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention lifeline for LGBTQ young people.

Youth Resource
www.youthresource.com

Youth Resource, a website by and for LGBTQ young people, takes a holistic approach to sexual health and exploring issues of concern.

Hot Lines

The Trevor Helpline
866-4-U-TREVOR (488-7386)

National Gay and Lesbian Youth Hotline
800-347-TEEN (8336)

GLBT National Youth Talkline
800-246-PRIDE (7743)

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline
888-843-GLNH (4564)

CDC Information Line
800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

Coming Out Resources from the HRC Foundation

The HRC Foundation provides many free resources on the coming out process, focusing on all aspects of one's life – from families to the workplace and faith communities. Some of our most popular resources are featured below. For more information visit *www.hrc.org/comingout*.

"Every child and youth who is unable to live with his or her parents is entitled to a safe, loving and affirming foster care placement, irrespective of the young person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression."

Bryan Samuels, former Commissioner,
U.S. Administration on Children, Youth and Families