

Sensitivity Training Exercise

Using a flipchart, ask the small group assembled:

List #1: How do you identify yourself? What makes you who you are?

Examples: As a teacher, mother, Christian, daughter, wife, student, African-American, woman, man, lesbian, artist

List #2: How do you express these identities? How do people know these things about you?

Examples: I go to church, I study, I paint.

Discussion:

What are the three identities or expressions of identity that are the most “core” to who you are?

Now, what if I said that you couldn’t express these three core things as a CASA volunteer? Or if your boss said that you couldn’t express these identities in the workplace?

List #3: How do you feel? What would you do?

List #4: What if you were a teen or a child? How would you feel? How would you react? What would you do? (Risk factors should come out through this discussion.)

Discussion:

After group has had its say, summarize the exercise along the following lines:

LGBTQ youth in the system are often forced to deny or hide their identities to protect themselves from violence or from being ejected from the placement. As a result, many react the same way many of you said you would react (or you as a teen would have reacted); for example, drinking, self-medicating (drugging), withdrawing, cutting, engaging in risky sexual behaviors, getting pregnant, committing suicide, conforming (hiding) and bullying other LGBTQ youth.

Adapted by Kelly Franks, program coordinator for CASA of Prince George’s County in Hyattsville, MD, from a training presented by Colby Berger of the Home for Little Wanderers in Boston, MA.