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Promoting Equity and Inclusion for LGBTQ Youth

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

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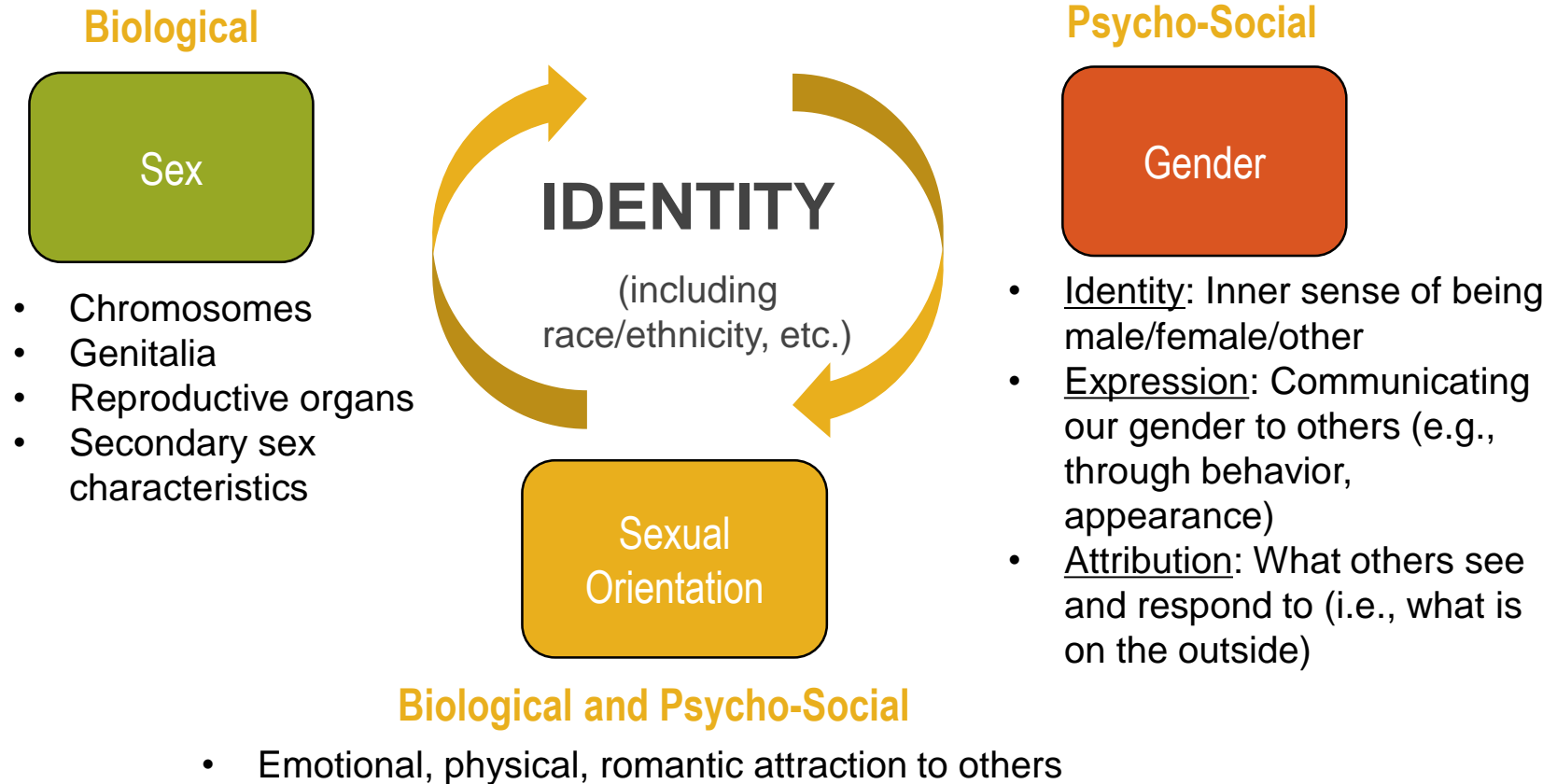
Research, Evaluation, Evidence and Data

Webinar Results

1. Understand key concepts related to LGBTQ identity and experience.

2. Be able to describe a framework for improving policy and practice for LGBTQ youth and young adults.

3. Be able to identify at least three practices that foster safer, more supportive settings and experiences for LGBTQ youth and young adults.

FOUNDATIONS FOR TODAY

Separate but Intersecting :
Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Biological

Sex

- Chromosomes
- Genitalia
- Reproductive organs
- Secondary sex characteristics

IDENTITY

(including race/ethnicity, etc.)

Sexual Orientation

Psycho-Social

Gender

- <u>Identity</u>: Inner sense of being male/female/other
- <u>Expression</u>: Communicating our gender to others (e.g., through behavior, appearance)
- <u>Attribution</u>: What others see and respond to (i.e., what is on the outside)

Biological and Psycho-Social

- Emotional, physical, romantic attraction to others

Reflection

1. What factors were most important or most influenced the development of your gender identity? Sexual identity?
2. How do your assumptions about gender and sexual identity influence how you or your systems and programs interact with and provide services to youth?

Some Key Terms

- **Coming out:** Is the process of accepting one's own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersex person — and the process of disclosing this to others

- **Heterosexism**: Bias and discrimination that stigmatizes non-heterosexual identity

- **Heteronormativity**: The assumption — in individuals, systems or organizations — that everyone is heterosexual

- **Cisnormativity**: The assumption that a person's gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth

- **Ally**: Person with a genuine, strong concern for the well-being of LGBT people

Language to Avoid

- Lifestyle

- Choice

- Sexual preference

- Homosexual

- Queer in a negative context (NOTE: increasingly used by youth in an affirming way)

- Transgender*ed*

- Transvestite

- Transsexual (although some older adults may use this, it is not an umbrella term for transgender individuals)

Influences on LGBTQ Youth Well-Being

Negative experiences and associated stress..

Racism

Bias and stigma

Disparities in quality of services

Violence, including abuse and assault

Loss of connection to culture/community

Rejection from (or loss of) peers, family and other adults

can influence behaviors and negative outcomes such as…

Substance use

Unemployment

Risky sexual behavior

Running away and homelessness

Self-harm as well as suicide attempts/completion

Contact with child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems

School failure or poor school outcomes (e.g., absenteeism)

Poorer psychological well-being (e.g., anxiety, depression)

2015 National School Climate Survey

GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) survey of 10,528 students in grades 6 to 12:

- Students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation **(58%)** and gender expression **(43%)**

- Students reported being physically harassed because of their sexual orientation **(27%)** and gender expression **(20%)**

- Students experiencing victimization had poorer attendance, lower grade-point averages, higher levels of depression, and lower self-esteem.

- Almost **1 in 3** missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable; **1 in 10** missed four or more days in the past month

Source: http://glsen.org/nscs

Family Acceptance Project Findings

Compared to youth experiencing no family rejection or only a little rejection because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, youth experiencing high levels of family rejection are more likely to:

- Have attempted suicide? **8 times**
- Report high levels of depression? **6 times**
- Use illegal drugs? **3 times**
- Be at risk for STDs? **3 times**

Source: https://familyproject.sfsu.edu

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Findings

- About the Jim Casey Initiative

- Added data on sexual orientation and gender identity items to Opportunity Passport program survey data collection in 2017

- When comparing LGBTQ youth to cisgender/straight youth, found various disparities in various areas:

  – Foster care placements

  – Supportive adults

  – Stable housing

  – Physical and mental health

Improving LGBTQ Youth Well-Being So That ALL Are Ready for School, Work and Life

Better Outcomes

Increased resilience

Reductions in bias and stigma

Improved permanency with families

Improved connection with other adults

Peer support and healthy connections

Improved school attendance and outcomes

Lower recidivism (or no system involvement)

Decreased homelessness and likelihood of running away

Fewer health, mental health and substance use challenges
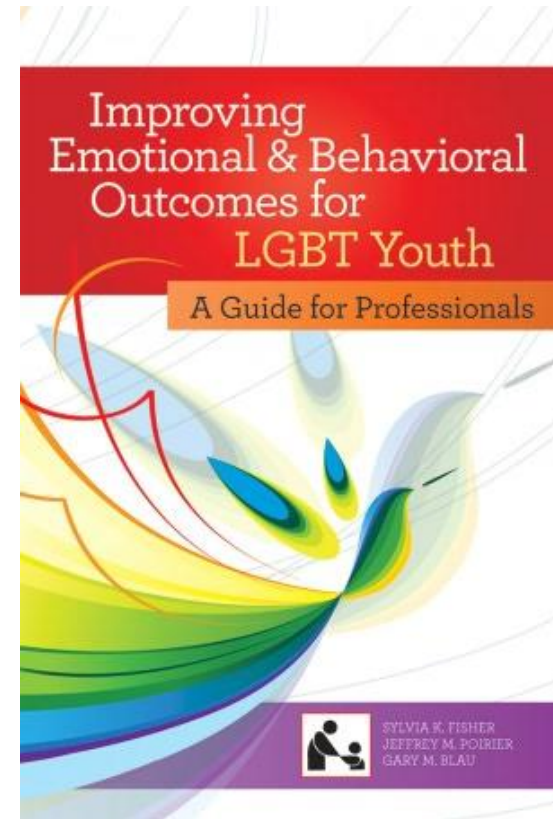
Improving Systems and Services
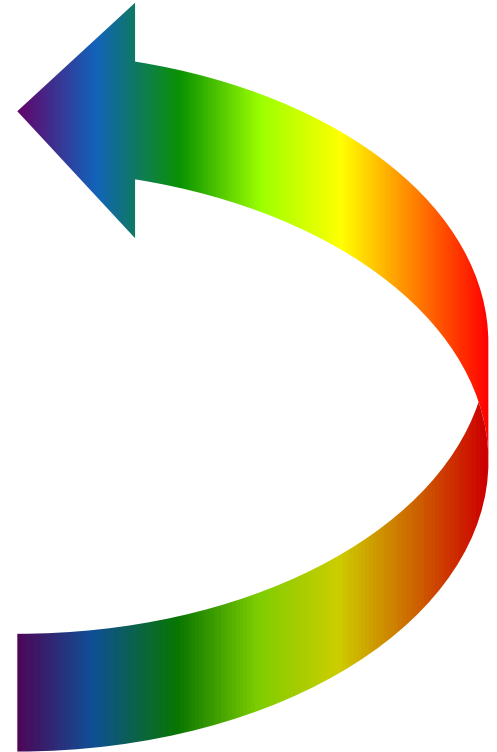
A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

About the Standards

- Based on recommended or best practices

- Are applicable to child-, youth- and family-serving systems, programs, and services (e.g., schools, child welfare, juvenile justice)

- Source: *Improving Emotional & Behavioral Outcomes for LGBT Youth: A Guide for Professionals*

1   Assessment and Improvement

- Conduct a needs or readiness assessment to understand capacity to provide inclusive, affirming services and supports to LGBTQ youth and their families

- Develop an action plan

| Standards	Priority	Goals	Strategies/Action Steps	Who should be involved?	Measures of Success
EXAMPLE *Standard 1: Self-Assessment and Ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement Efforts*	*High*	• *Understand agency's strengths, needs, and areas of improvement for providing supportive services for LGBT youth and their families*	• *Develop or find an evaluation tool* • *Implement survey/tool with staff and children/youth accessing agency services*	Planning: *Executive Director, Program Director* *Survey:* *All staff and children/youth receiving agency services*	• *Data on organizational capacity and needs are available leading to implementation of new practices.*
Standard 1: Self-Assessment and Ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement Efforts					
Standard 2: Nondiscrimination Policies					

2   Nondiscrimination Policies

- Enumerate sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

- Inform youth, families and staff about formal grievance procedures

- Align process for addressing concerns with other procedures (e.g., disciplinary)

- Require contractors/external service providers to have inclusive policy protections and practices

DISCUSSION

Workforce Development

Understand:

- Differences between sex, sexual orientation and gender; also, sexual and gender identity terms

- Myths, bias and stereotypes — and how to address them

- How to create safe, supportive environments, including safe spaces
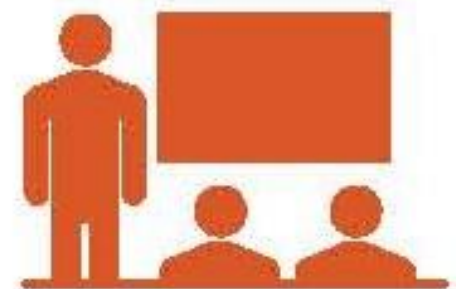
Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills

Professionals should:

- Be aware of the oppression and challenges that LGBTQ youth may experience

- Engage in self-exploration to examine their beliefs about varying expressions of sexual and gender identity

- Explore their assumptions about sexual orientation and gender identity

- Be able to access organizational and community resources

- Understand significance of allies and learn how to be an ally

Reflect on and Respond to Your Attitudes/Behaviors About Sexual Orientation (L/G, Bi) AND Gender Identity

Nurturance: LGBTQ people are an indispensable part of society.

Appreciation: There is value in diversity. Anti-LGBTQ attitudes should be confronted.

Admiration: Being LGBTQ in our society takes strength.

Support: The rights of LGBTQ people should be protected and safeguarded.

Acceptance: LGBT identity is a fact of life that should neither be punished nor celebrated.

Tolerance: Life for LGBTQ people is hard; anti-LGBT attitudes just make things worse.

Pity: LGBT people are somehow born that way and it is pitiful.

Repulsion: LGBTQ people are strange and aversive.

Sample Group Reflection and Discussion: Explore Heterosexual and Gender Privilege

1. How has your involvement in heterosexual relationships been encouraged, rewarded, acknowledged and supported by family, friends and society?

2. Have you ever had to defend your heterosexuality to gain acceptance among your peers or colleagues? Your gender identity?

3. Have you ever worried that you might be "outed" as heterosexual?

* Adapted from Garner and Emano (2013); image source: freedigitalphotos.com

Access and Share Resources to Support Workforce Development and Practice

- [Building Support for Schools that Openly Affirm the Diversity of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](): A Communications and Community Organizing Guide (Groundspark, 2014)

- [A Guide for Understanding, Supporting, and Affirming LGBTQI2-S Children, Youth, and Families]()(American Institutes for Research [AIR] & SAMHSA National Workgroup, 2014; available in Spanish, too)

- [An Introduction to Welcoming Schools: An Inclusive Approach for Addressing Family Diversity, Gender Stereotyping and Name-Calling in K-5 Learning Environments]()(HRC, 2009)

- [Youth.gov LGBT Youth webpage]()

Forms, Data Collection and Data Sharing

- Forms and screening procedures
  - Gender neutral language
  - Ask for pronouns and name used
- Confidentiality in data collection and information sharing
  - Never intentionally "out" a young person unless required by law (e.g., safety or health risk to self or others)

- Create safe spaces…

  – Affirm all forms of diversity — and do not tolerate anti-LGBT bias/harassment

  – Ensure all staff can talk about sexual orientation and gender identity and address LGBTQ bias in a respectful way

  – Do not confuse sexual orientation with sexual behaviors

  – Display symbols and materials that positively represent the LGBTQ community

  – Do not refer to sexual orientation or gender identity/expression as "just a phase"

Safe Space Signs
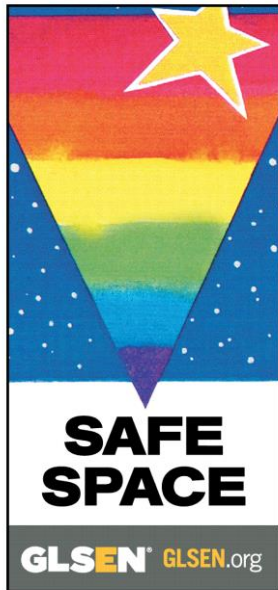
DISCUSSION

6 Practices to Affirm Identity and Expression

Creating inclusive environments should be a community-wide effort:

- Effectively address stigma and bias

- Allow youth to express their gender identity openly

- Refer to youth using their identified pronouns and names (rather than legal names)

- Never "out" someone unless required by law (e.g., threatening harm to themselves)

- Importantly…build on youth strengths!

Ensure Safe Bathrooms for Youth Who Are Gender Diverse

7 Peer Connections

- Foster:
  - Opportunities for LGBTQ youth to meet and support one another
  - Personal development
  - Provide opportunities to access affirming recreational activities (e.g., afterschool services)
  - Participate in or sponsor gay-straight alliances and similar clubs in schools
- RESOURCES:
  - GLSEN Jump-Start Guide; GSA Advisor Handbook

8 Family Connections

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- Work with families to improve youth permanency with their families

- Build professional and family understanding about behaviors that negatively affect youth well-being — and behaviors that can build youth resilience and prevent issues

- RESOURCES:
  - Family Acceptance Project: familyproject.sfsu.edu
  - A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children (2014)
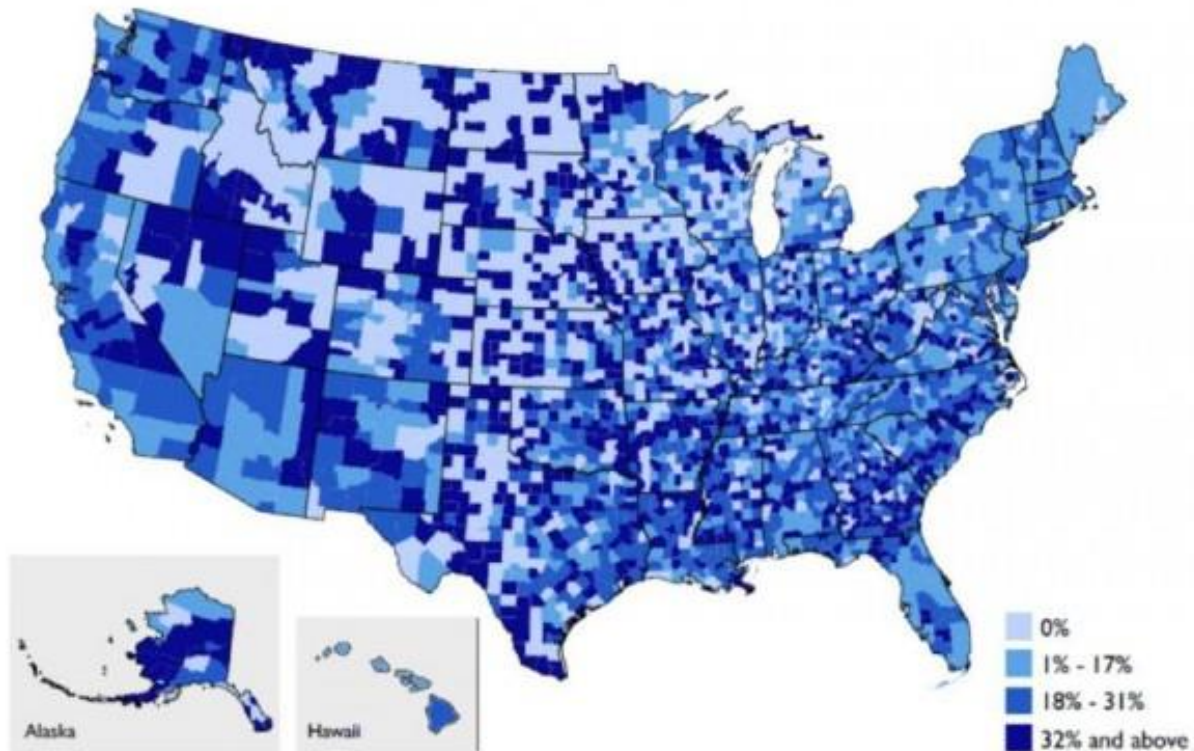
Family Behaviors That Help

- Talk with their child or foster child about their LGBT identity

- Advocate for their child if they are mistreated because of their LGBT identity

- Require that other family members respect their child

- Talk with clergy and help their faith community to support LGBT people

- Welcome their child's LGBT friends and partners to their home

- Believe their child can have a happy future as an LGBT adult

Source: SAMHSA, https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/PEP14-LGBTKIDS/PEP14-LGBTKIDS.pdf

Remember Youth with LGBT Parents/Caregivers

Figure 6. %Same-sex couples with biological, adopted, or foster children under age 18 in the home
Census 2010

0%
1% - 17%
18% - 31%
32% and above

Source: https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Parenting.pdf

DISCUSSION

9   Community Services

- Identify LGBTQ-affirming partners and collaborate to coordinate supports, increasing the array of and access to services needed to meet youth needs

- Identify and distribute resource lists and community contacts for LGBTQ-affirming services and information

- Broaden local net: access national resources, such as the Trevor Project

10 Community Outreach

- Consider learning events focused on these topics (e.g., how to talk about gender for younger grades; importance of supporting LGBTQ young people)

- Facilitate dialogue with service providers, young people, and families

Moving Forward

1	Assessment and Improvement
2	Nondiscrimination Policies
3	Professional Development
4	Forms and Data Collection/Sharing
5	Safe, Supportive Environments

6	Practices to Affirm Identity
7	Peer Connections
8	Family Connections
9	Community Services
10	Community Outreach

Thank you!

Thank you for joining today!

My contact information: jpoirier@aecf.org

"Our horizon is as distant as our mind's eye wishes it to be." Jim Casey

DISCUSSION

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Developing solutions to build a brighter future for children, families and communities

www.aecf.org