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Advocating for LGBTQ Youth

Webinar Series for National CASA/GAL for Children
September 23, 2020

Today's Presenter

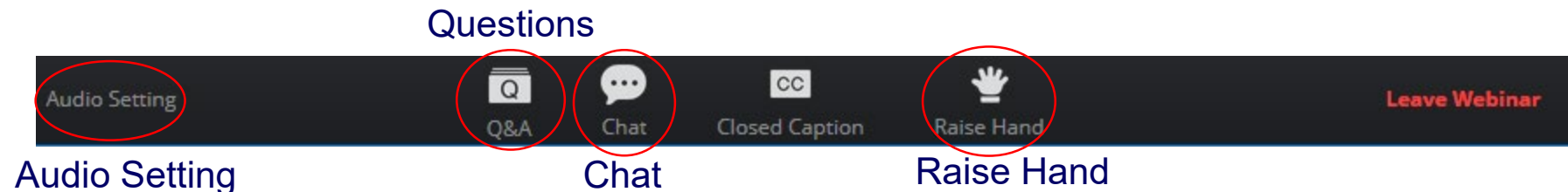


Karey Scheyd
(pronouns: she/her)

ACAF Master Trainer & Consultant

Housekeeping...

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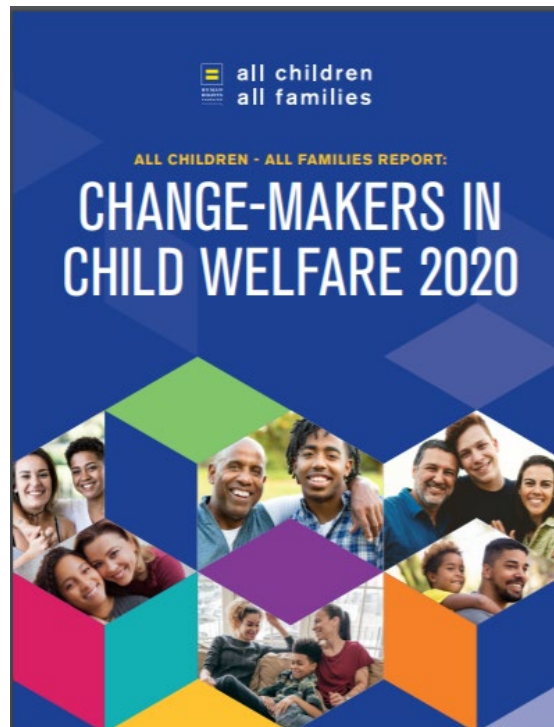
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**Achieving Safety, Permanency and Well-Being by
Improving Practice with LGBTQ Youth and Families**



Email acaf@hrc.org to enroll
in the 2020-2021 participation process!



Four-Part Series

Setting the
Foundation
9/8

LGBTQ
Volunteer
Engagement
9/10

Advocating for
LGBTQ Youth
9/23

Advocating in
Education
System
10/6

Today's Agenda

Youth Voice:
Safety,
Permanency &
Well-Being

Dimensions of
Identity &
Intersectionality

Identities &
Experiences of
LGBTQ Youth

Advocacy, Support
& Affirming
Placements

Participation is Encouraged!

Don't forget...

- Ask questions
- Chat throughout





■ Part 1:

Safety, Permanency & Well-Being



Safety, Permanency, & Well-Being

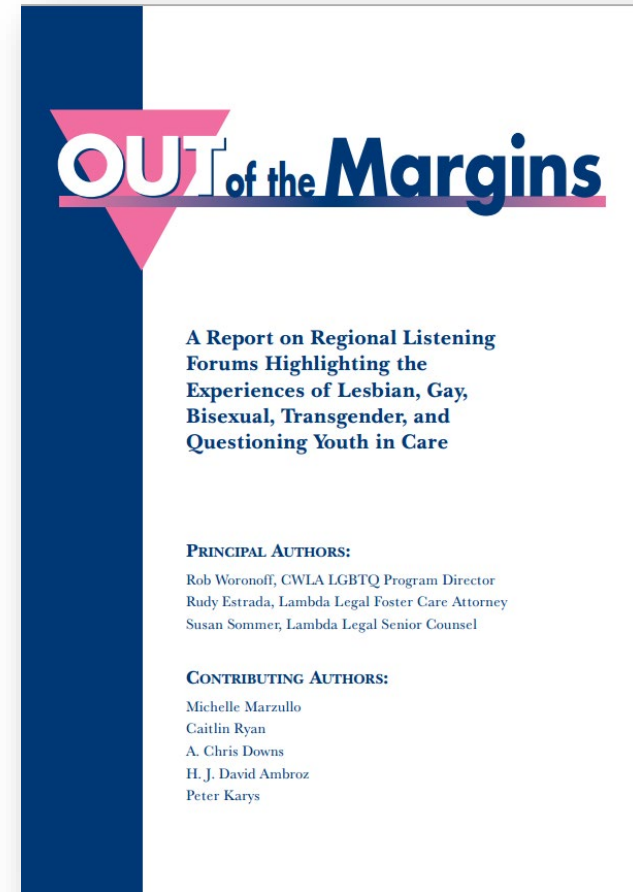
How do you define...

- Safety?
- Permanency?
- Well-being?



Mini Case-Studies Exercise

- We will post quotes from Out of the Margins on the screen.
- Consider which of the following the quote is about (select all that apply):
 - Safety
 - Permanency
 - Well-being



Safety, Permanency, & Well-Being

Chat - Does this quote relate to safety, permanency and/or well-being?

“My brother was put into a home, and I still have trouble seeing my brother because I’m gay. When I did have visitation rights, they would watch. I would have to be a certain way around them, just because they found out that I was a lesbian. Even though it’s court-ordered that I have the right to see my brother.”

Safety, Permanency, & Well-Being

Chat - Does this quote relate to safety, permanency and/or well-being?

“In my high school, when I came out, I didn't know who to go to so I searched online. They had every site blocked that had the words, gay, lesbian, or transgender, etc. I could go to a site and find out how to kill myself, but I couldn't find out anything about myself. I found thousands of sites about how to kill myself and the best way to do it, but I couldn't find one site to explain who I could go to for getting help.”

Safety, Permanency, & Well-Being

Chat - Does this quote relate to safety, permanency and/or well-being?

“I got jumped by a bunch of guys in my group home, and when I told the director he said, ‘well, if you weren’t a f*gg@t they wouldn’t beat you up.’ It’s not fair.”

Safety, Permanency, & Well-Being

Chat - Does this quote relate to safety, permanency and/or well-being?

“It’s about an open mind. We [LGBTQ foster youth] want parents who are going to teach them in a family environment and treat them like their kids. They’re [LGBTQ foster youth] normal. Just because they labeled themselves as something else doesn’t mean anything. They just want somebody to accept that, ‘I am Mary. This is me. This is how I am.’”

Safety, Permanency, & Well-Being

- When it comes to your work, consider;
 - What is your agency/system doing well?
 - What can your agency/system improve upon or start doing?
 - What knowledge and skills related to LGBTQ youth do you need to improve?



■ Part 2:

Dimensions of Identity & Intersectionality



Let's review LGBTQ and SOGIE.

LGBTQ

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer
- Questioning

SOGIE

- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Gender Expression

Here's how “LGBTQ” relates to “SOGIE.”

LGBT

sexual orientation



Here's how “LGBTQ” relates to “SOGIE.”

LGBT
gender identity



Here's how “LGBTQ” relates to “SOGIE.”

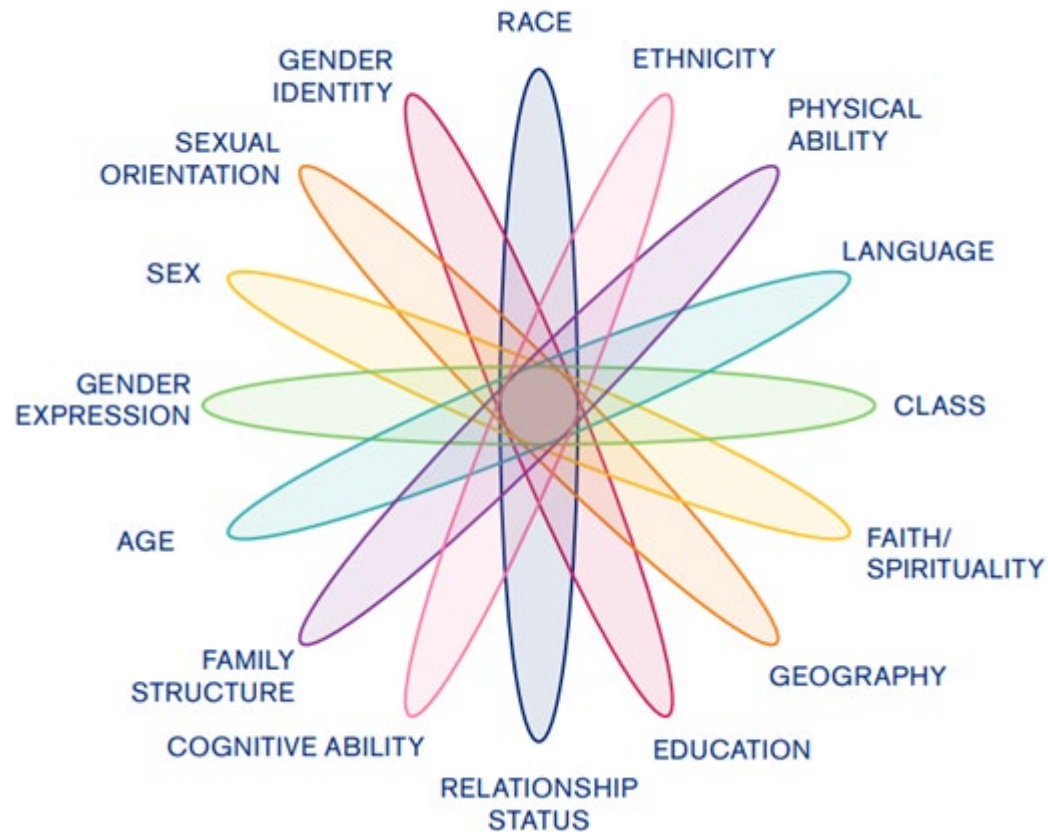
Q?

Stands for: Queer and/or Questioning

Can relate to: Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity

Intersectionality must inform our efforts toward LGBTQ inclusion.

DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY



SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

AGEISM
ADULTISM
CISSEXISM
SEXISM
SIZEISM
RACISM
COLORISM
ETHNOCENTRISM
ABLEISM
CLASSISM
ISLAMOPHOBIA
ANTI-SEMITISM
NATIVISM

INTERSECTIONALITY

A THEORY OF OPPRESSION THAT CAN GUIDE OUR WORK SUPPORTING CLIENTS. ASKS US TO CONSIDER HOW ALL ASPECTS OF A CLIENT'S IDENTITY IMPACTS EXPERIENCES.

Let's watch a video of young LGBTQ leaders explaining why intersectionality is important.





■ Part 3:

Experiences of LGBTQ Youth



Research on SOGIE Development: “Are they too young to know?”

SO: In one study of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth:

- 75% recalled feeling “different” in childhood
 - Usually between ages 4 and 12 (age 8 on average)
- Most first identified as LGB between 12 and 16 years old
 - Average age 14 for both boys and girls

GI: In one study of transgender youth:

- Average age of “talking about gender being different” was 5 for trans girls and 8 for trans boys
- Not uncommon to do so as early as 2-3 years old

LGBTQ young people hold a diverse range of sexual orientations and gender identities.

62% of 2017 respondents identified as a sexual orientation other than “gay” or “lesbian.”

Nearly 25% of 2017 respondents checked a gender identity outside of the binary of male/female.

Misunderstanding, bias and discrimination continue to do harm to LGBTQ youth.

- LGBTQ youth are disproportionately **victimized**.
- LGBTQ youth are **overrepresented** in systems of care.
- LGBTQ youth are often in foster care because they were **rejected** for being LGBTQ.
- LGBTQ youth too often experience additional **abuse, discrimination and rejection** while in care.



Most Important Problems

LGBT youth identified

- 1 Non-accepting families (26%)**
- 2 School/bullying problems (21%)**
- 3 Fear of being out or open (18%)**

Non-LGBT youth identified

- 1 Classes/exams/grades (25%)**
- 2 College/career (14%)**
- 3 Financial pressures related to college or job (11%)**

Complex Challenges: LGBTQ Foster Youth in Schools

- LGBTQ youth have the right to:
 - An education
 - Personal safety at school
 - Be free from discrimination based on their gender identity
- Does every young LGBTQ person have an adult who cares about them and their schools experience?

Bullying & Harassment

- 71.4% hear “gay” used in a negative way
- 55.5% feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation
- 37.8% feel unsafe because of their gender expression
- 74.1% verbally harassed because of SO; 55.2% because of GE
- 36.2% physically harassed because of SO; 22.7% because of GE



School Push-Out

“The **vast challenges facing LGBTQ youth of color** build upon one another to create “school push-out,” where many students are pushed out of the school system altogether, enroll in alternative or disciplinary school, or enroll in a GED program. This exclusion influences academic success and well-being and, moreover, **sets LGBTQ youth of color on a path towards the juvenile justice system**, perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline.”



School-to-Prison Pipeline

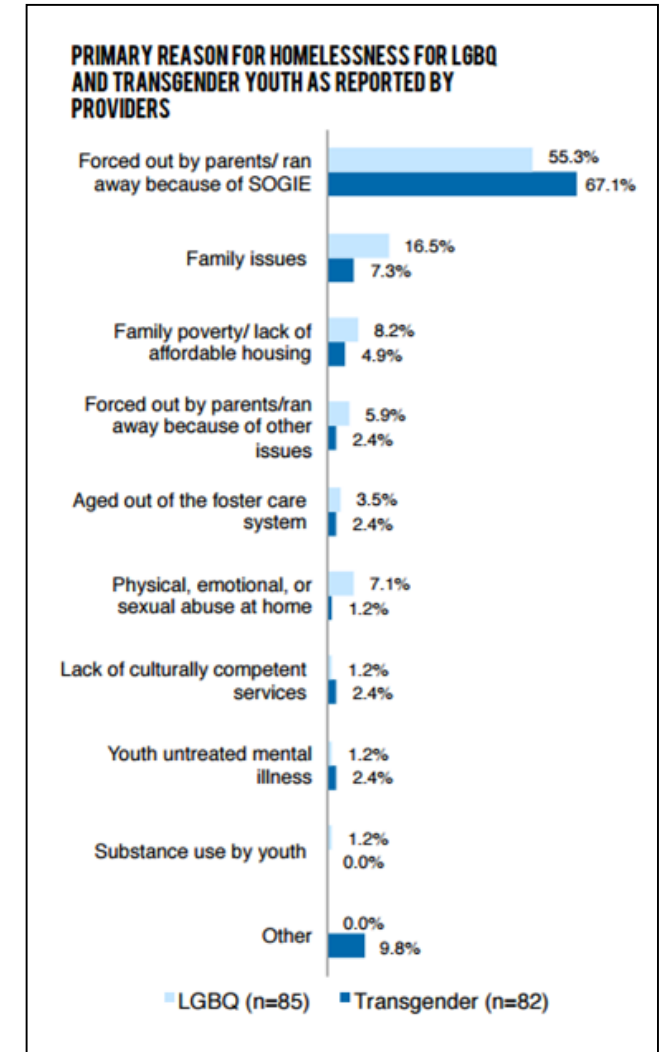
- LGB youth are up to **three times more likely** to experience harsh disciplinary treatment
 - particularly gender-nonconforming girls (GE)
- Higher rates of punishment **do not correlate** with higher rates of misbehavior among LGBTQ youth
- LGBTQ youth report **significant distrust** of school administrators

LGBTQ Youth & Juvenile Justice

- 300,000 LGBTQ youth arrested or detained every year; **60% are black or Latinx**
- Overrepresented: 13-15% of youth in juvenile justice system, but only 5-7% of general youth population
- 15 times more likely to be **sexually assaulted** in prison, often repeatedly.
- Transgender youth are often **isolated** in solitary confinement

LGBTQ Youth Homelessness

- As many as 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ
- Primary reason for homelessness is family rejection around SOGIE
- LGBTQ homeless youth are...
 - 7 times more likely to be victims of crime
 - Nearly twice as likely to report sexual victimization





■ Part 4:

Advocacy, Support & Affirming Placements



Providing Normalcy

Normalcy:

- Encompasses the collection of age- and developmentally-appropriate activities, experiences and opportunities that should make up the daily lives of young people within the context of a caring and supportive family
- Is a critical component in healthy social, emotional and cognitive development



“Normalcy” for Foster Youth

- Being part of a caring and supportive family that respects who they are
- Developing and cultivating friendships
- Engaging in extracurricular and everyday activities
- Being a person, not a label
- Making decisions, trying new things and sometimes making mistakes



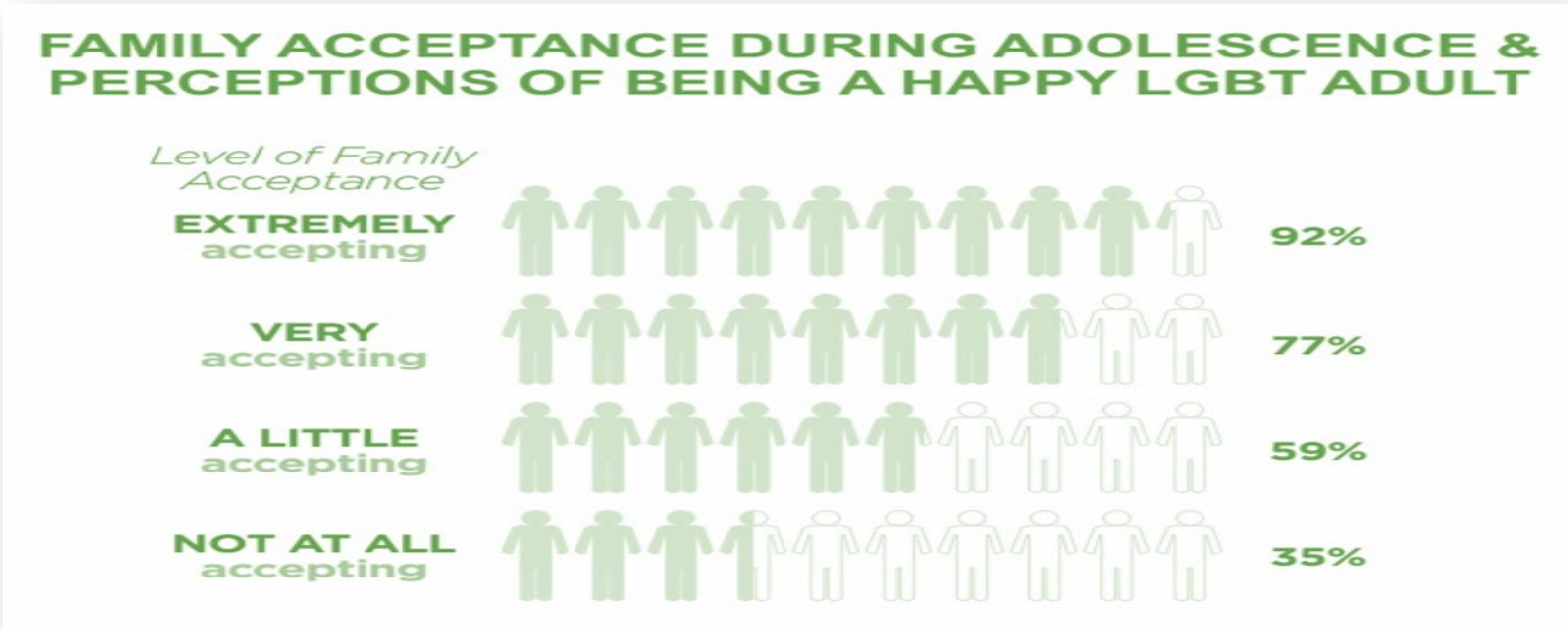
Foster Youth Rights

- **Personal Safety:** Right to be safe in placement and school (Related: Right to Education)
- **Freedom of Expression:** Right to express yourself through speech and dress
- **Access to Health Care:** Right to have access to physical and mental health care
- **Maintain Relationships with Siblings:** Right to be placed with siblings, if appropriate; right to contact with siblings if not placed together
- **Religious Freedom:** Right to practice desired religion (or none at all)

Accepting Behaviors

- Talking with the child about their LGBT identity
- Expressing affection when the child tells you or when you learn that child is LGBT
- Support the child's LGBT identity even though you may feel uncomfortable
- Advocate for the child when they are mistreated because of LGBT identity
- Require that other family members respect the LGBT child
- Bring the child to LGBT organizations and events
- Connect the child with LGBT adult role model
- Work to make congregation LGBT-supportive or find supportive faith community
- Welcome the child's LGBT friends and partner to home, family events and activities
- Support the child's gender expression
- Believe the child can have a happy future as an LGBT adult

Acceptance Is Key



Access to Health Care for LGBTQ Youth

- LGBTQ youth have the same range of health challenges, but are more vulnerable things to keep in mind include;
- Providers must be LGBTQ-competent and sensitive
- Access to health care includes:
 - Doctor visits
 - Therapy sessions
 - Age appropriate sex/STD education
 - **Protection from “conversion therapies” and other harmful attempts to change a youth’s identity**

Conversion Therapy is Not Effective, It is Extremely Harmful

- Conversion therapy is rejected by all mainstream medical and mental health organizations:
 - American Academy of Pediatrics
 - American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
 - American Counseling Association
 - American Medical Association
 - American Psychiatric Association
 - American Psychoanalytic Association
 - American Psychological Association
 - American School Counselor Association
 - Pan American Health Organization
- Conversion therapy has not been proven to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression by any credible scientific study.
- Both individuals (Dr. Robert Spitzer) and groups (Exodus International) that have previously supported conversion therapy have said it is ineffective.

Sexual Health and Wellness

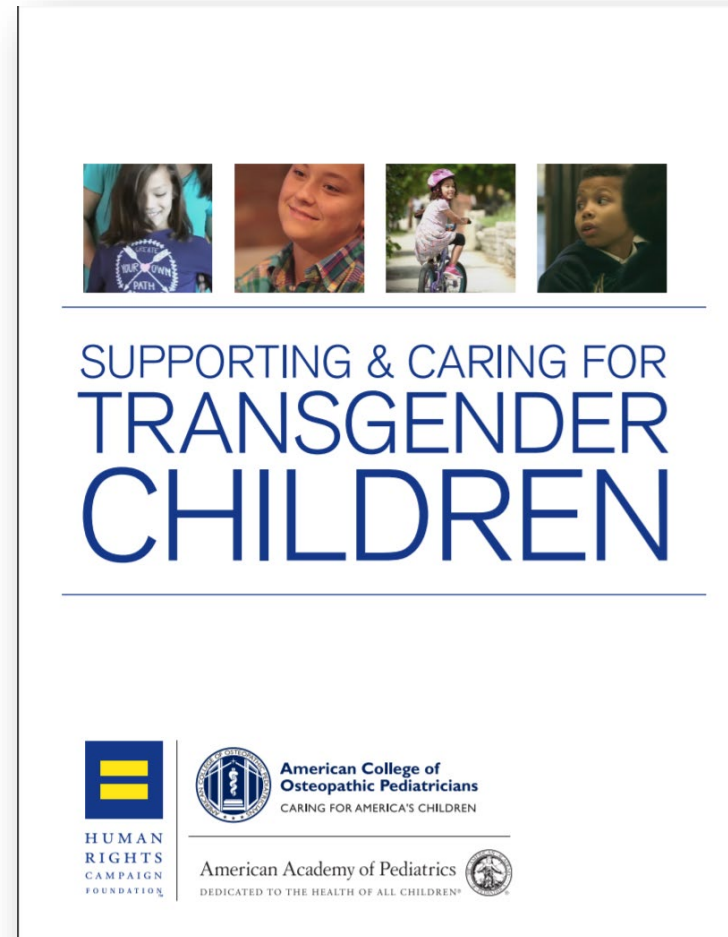
- Healthy youth make healthier decisions!
- Youth in foster care are at higher risk for pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infections
- What you and your agency can do:
 - Provide sex education and pregnancy prevention trainings for staff, if appropriate
 - Build relationships with organizations that do provide inclusive sexuality education
 - Have quality education resources available for youth
 - Trained staff can create a safe space to facilitate conversations with youth that are age and developmentally appropriate about:
 - Healthy relationships
 - Condoms/birth control
 - Sexually-transmitted infections, etc.

Health Care: Transgender Youth

- Not all transgender people choose medical intervention
- “Gender Dysphoria” is a diagnosable condition, not a mental illness, but the diagnosis is needed for prescribed hormone therapy
- Service providers cannot nullify active treatment plans
- Alternatives to professional treatment can be risky for youth

Resource Guide

Download at:
www.hrc.org/trans-youth



When we don't attend to affirming placements...

- **In one study conducted in NYC...**
 - 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
 - 100% of LGBTQ youth in group homes reported **verbal harassment**
 - 70% reported **physical violence** in group homes
- **And a LA-based study found...**
 - 12.9% of LGBTQ youth reported being **treated poorly** in foster care compared to 5.8% of non-LGBTQ youth
 - LGBTQ youth had a **greater average number** of placements and likelihood to have been placed in **congregate care**

“Affirming” – What does this look like?

Remember the accepting behaviors identified by research:

- Talking with child about their LGBT identity
- Expressing affection when the child tells you or when you learn that the child is LGBT
- Support the child’s LGBT identity even though you may feel uncomfortable
- Advocate for the child when they are mistreated because of LGBT identity at school or anyplace
- Require that other family members respect the LGBT child
- Bring the child to LGBT organizations and events
- Connect the child with LGBT adult role model
- Work to make congregation LGBT-supportive or find supportive faith community
- Welcome the child’s LGBT friends and partner to home, family events and activities
- Support the child’s gender expression
- Believe that the child can have a happy future as an LGBT adult



Prevent Double Standards for LGBTQ Youth in Care

REJECTION:

“Everyone was allowed to have their boyfriends over, but whenever I asked to have my girlfriend over they would tell me that it depended on whether she was coming as a friend or a girlfriend.”

Young lesbian on her experiences in foster care

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Source: McCormick, A. & Schmidt, K. (2014)

Prevent Double Standards for LGBTQ Youth in Care

ACCEPTANCE:

“On my first day my caseworker told my foster parents that I had a girlfriend and that I wanted to keep seeing her if it was possible. They said they would make sure that happened. I knew that I wasn’t going anywhere for a long time.”

Young lesbian on her experiences in foster care

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Questions?





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