

Supporting LGBTQ Youth

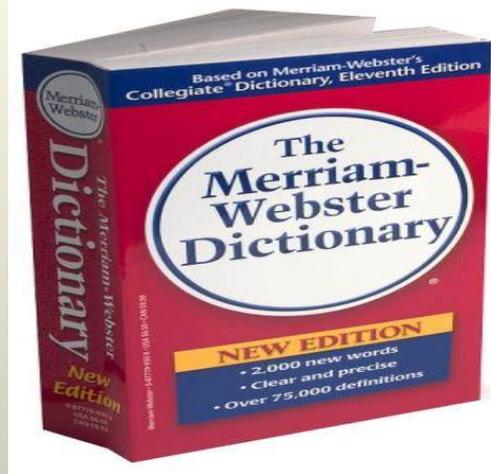


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Goals and Objectives

- To identify issues of risk, challenge and strength specific to LGBTQ youth and young adults and develop strategies that balance personal beliefs with professional responsibilities
- To increase knowledge and empathy regarding the unique stressors experienced by sexual and gender minority youth, their families and caregivers
- To demonstrate increased understanding of the issues around coming out and how they might impact youth



- Sexual Orientation- Defined by whom you are emotionally, romantically, erotically and intimately attracted to, for the most part and over a period of time. It exists on a continuum of feelings and attractions. It is NOT necessarily congruent with behavior.
- LGBTQ- An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning

Definition of Terms

- Gay/lesbian- A person who forms their primary loving, emotional, erotic, intimate and social connects with someone of the same sex role assignment
- Intersex- Persons who are born with chromosomal and/or reproductive differences. They may have an extra or missing chromosome, have some elements of both male and female reproductive systems or have genitals that do not appear clearly male or female at birth

Definition of Terms

- Transgender- An umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from expectations associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. May include pre-operative transsexuals, post-operative transsexuals, cross-dressers, etc.
- Transsexual- A person whose gender identity does not match expectations with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Definition of Terms

- Gender Identity- An inner psychological sense of oneself as a male, female, both, neither or something else. This refers to the gender with which one identifies regardless of one's sex
- Gender Expression- The communication of gender through behaviors (e.g. mannerisms, dress, speech patterns, etc.) and appearance. Societal definitions of gender can greatly influence these communications

Risk Factors



Depression and Suicide

- They tend to distance themselves from their support network (parents, teachers, relatives, other adults and friends)
- They have more depressive symptoms due to feeling like they do not fit into the world
- 30% of all completed suicides in the U.S. are by GLBTQ (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)
- GLBTQ Youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth

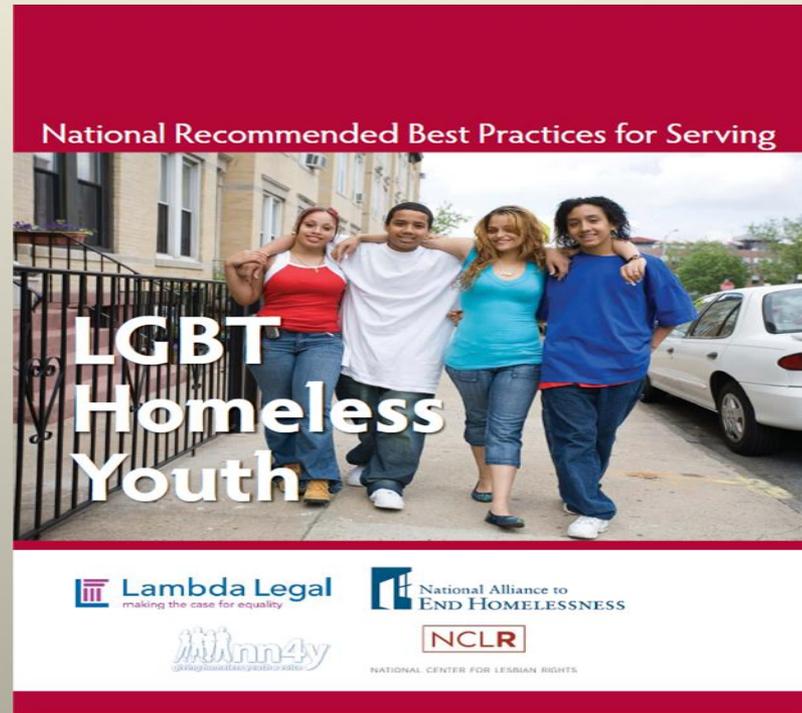
Sexual Abuse

- Lack of safe arenas to discuss sexual orientation places l/g/b/t/q youth at higher risk levels for sexual exploitation/abuse
- Youth often fear that disclosing sexual abuse (particularly same gender abuse) will also disclose their sexual orientation

Physical Abuse

- A number of population-based studies have documented a higher rate of physical abuse by family members among LGBT people compared to their heterosexual peers

Homelessness



- LGBTQ youth may be thrown out of their homes or experience violence resulting from adult response to their sexual orientation or gender identity
- 40% of homeless youth served by agencies identified as lgbtq (Williams Institute, 2012)

2013 National School Climate Survey (www.glsen.org)



- 74% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation (55% because of their gender expression)
- 30% of LGBT students reported missing at least one day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe in school

Risk Factors

- In one study LGB teens were found to be 190 percent more likely to use drugs and alcohol than their heterosexual peers (Marshal, 2008)
- Lesbian and bisexual youth are up to seven times more likely to get pregnant than their heterosexual peers (Saewyc, 2008)

Stage of identity development

- Pre-encounter
- Encounter
- Immersion
- Internalization
- Synthesis/Commitment

Stages of Identity Development

- PRE-ENCOUNTER
- The individual sees themselves as belonging in the mainstream. Often has no information/exposure to other identity groups. Defenses can be quite high during this stage.

Stages of Identity Development

- ENCOUNTER
- Initial exposure to gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgendered concept. The encounters may be thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors with someone of the same sex or may be intellectual, academic or social exposure to information. Vulnerability and confusion can be quite high during this stage. Internalized homophobia may play out significantly during this time.

Stages of Identity Development

- IMMERSION- The “sponge” stage. The individual begins to explore aspects related to their sexuality. This may include intellectual, social, physical and/or sexual experiences. “Rehearsal play” may occur where the individual “practices” various aspects of this newfound identity- often causing confusion and/or alienation to those around them. This stage is necessary for a healthy sense of self- can occur at any age.

Stages of Identity Development



- INTERNALIZATION
- The acceptance stage of identity development. I understand this to be who I am. This often results in a sense of grief and loss in addition to clarity and acceptance.

Stages of Identity Development



- SYNTHESIS & COMMITMENT
- Now the individual begins the process of addressing the other life issues that all people face (relationship forming, career goals, family formation, etc.). Includes a profound understanding that not everyone will accept this part of who I am but that does not change my sense of self.

Cultural Factors

- Ethnicity
- Race
- Religion
- Economics
- Cognitive Abilities
- Community Factors (urban/rural,etc.)

Organizational Culture

- Policies of your organization
 - Formal
 - Informal
- Practices of your organization
 - Forms
 - Intake Procedure
 - Language



ALL GENDER RESTROOM

*Anyone can use this restroom,
regardless of gender identity*

Family Support System

- Does the family know that sexual identity is an issue for the client?
- How has the family responded to other diversity issues amongst family members
- Family Acceptance Project Findings (SFSU)
- Safety issues
- Legal/ethical issues

Family Acceptance Project

- LGB youth who reported higher levels of 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
- 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse

The impact of positive family acceptance

- Just a little change, from no acceptance to a little acceptance makes a HUGE change in the risk factors for LGBT youth:
- Can cut the risk in half!
- Supporting families is important
- Focus on child/youth not on religious values or beliefs
- If there is limited family or caregiver support, help them make positive connections to reduce risk
- Caitlin Ryan: Cesar Chavez Institute, San Francisco State University

Creating a Welcoming Environment



- Posters, showing racially and ethnically diverse, same-sex couples, individuals and/or families
- Books/magazines with the words gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender visible
- LGBTQ friendly stickers or symbols posted in offices or on doors or bulletin boards (rainbow flag, HRC symbol, etc.)
- A universal, gender inclusive or gender neutral restroom

How to respond when a youth comes out to you

- Anticipate feelings of vulnerability
- Affirm, validate and show acceptance
- Start where the client is
- Avoid labeling
- Follow the youth's lead in terminology
- Provide accurate information that avoids myths and stereotypes
- Do not assume that their problems/issues are necessarily related to their sexual orientation/gender identity

Community Resources



- Know what's available in your community
- Be sure to ask “specifically” how often a referral source has worked “directly” with l/g/b/t clients
- Utilize the internet
- Utilize “informed” colleagues/peers

Resources



- The Trevor Project: A national 24-hour, toll free confidential suicide hotline for gay and questioning youth
 - <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
 - 866-4-U-Trevor (866-488-7386)

Resources

- HRC :The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality
 - www.hrc.org
- Child Welfare League of America: Children's advocacy organization active in lobbying and humanitarian projects in the US.
 - www.cwla.org
- National Center of Lesbian Rights: A legal **center** with a primary commitment to advancing the **rights** and safety of lesbians and their families
 - www.nclrights.org

Resources

- Family Acceptance Project : (FAP) is a community research, intervention and training initiative to study the impact of family acceptance and rejection on the health, mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay and bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth
 - **familyproject.sfsu.edu**
- Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays : National organization for education, advocacy and support for families and friends of LGBT persons. Chapters are available in all states – check website for local chapters and educational materials for families
 - www.pflag.org

Resources

- Children of Gays Everywhere: (COLAGE) National organization for children of LGBT parents
 - www.colage.org
- Family Equality Council: National organization to provide advocacy and support for LGBT parents and their families
 - <http://www.familyequality.org>

RESOURCES

- GLSEN : Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network
 - National organization for advocacy and information to promote safer schools.
 - www.glsen.org
- GSA Network: Gay, Straight Alliance Network: Youth-led organization to provide networking and support for GSAs
 - www.gsanetwork.org

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