

# Working with the LGBTQ Community

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*In-Service Curriculum*



## **Participant Guide**

Office of Child Welfare

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*3/1/2019*

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## Unit 1: Acronyms, Terms, and Definitions

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Define the acronym LGBTQ.
2. Define the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender.
3. Define the acronym SOGIE.
4. Define the terms sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

# Introduction

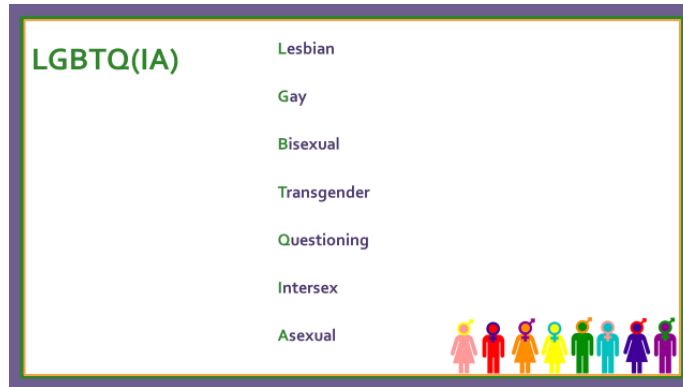
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## LGBTQ

LGBTQ is an acronym that is used to be inclusive of all individuals and communities. Approximately 5-10% of the general population identify as LGBTQ.



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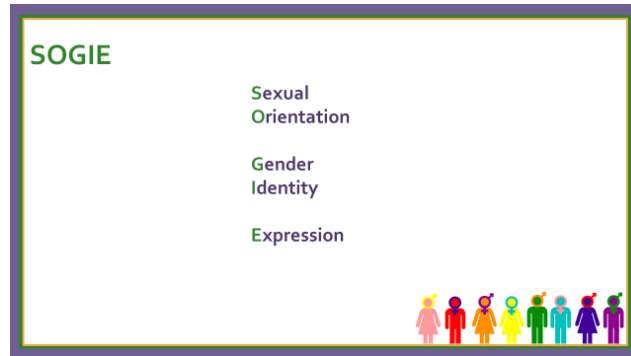
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# SOGIE

SOGIE is an acronym for the factors that determine membership in the LGBTQ community.



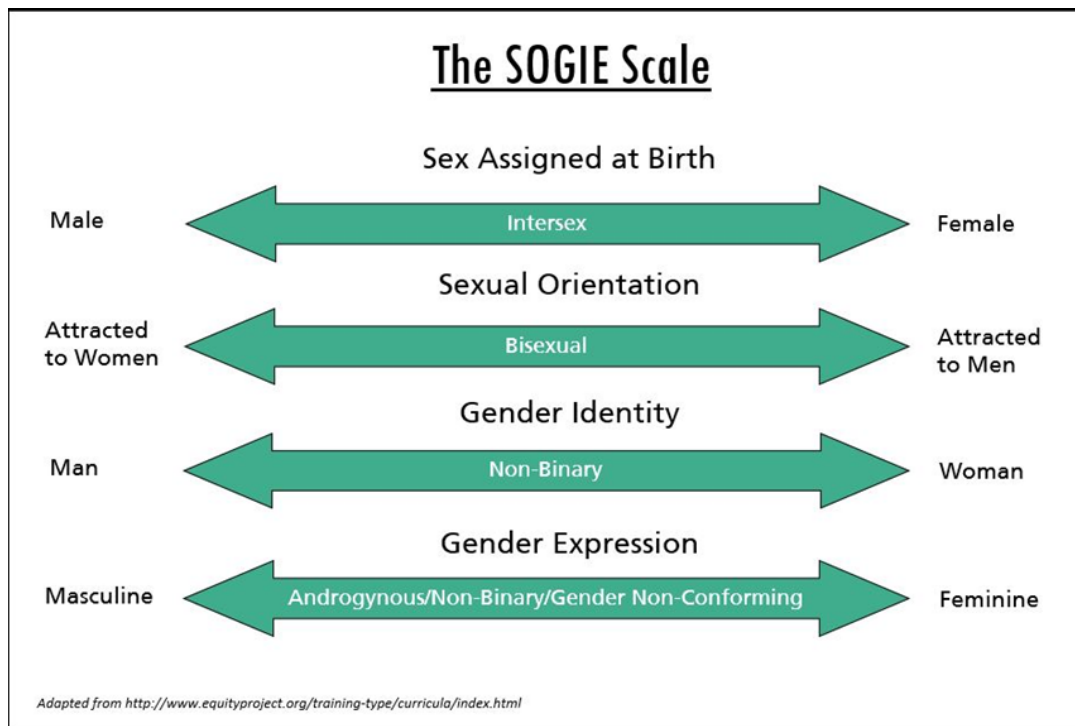

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### Sexual Orientation vs Gender Identity

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different things. A person's gender identity has **no** inherent relationship to their sexual orientation.

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### Gender Identity vs Gender Expression

**Gender identity** is a person's internal sense of being a man, woman, both, or neither. It refers to how people see and identify themselves rather than their sex assigned at birth.

**Gender expression** is not binary. People can express as one gender, a mix of genders, or try to express no gender at all.

The term **gender nonconforming** refers to a person who does not follow social ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on their sex or gender identity. Similar terms include gender creative, gender fluid, gender variant, gender queer, pangender, or non-binary.

The term **gender questioning** refers to a person who is questioning their gender identity or experimenting with different genders.

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## Unit 2: Basic Gender Concepts

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Define the terms sex and gender.
2. Identify the difference between cisgender and transgender.

## Sex

A person’s sex is determined by biological traits associated with being either male or female, such as sexual organs, genetic makeup, hormone production, and the like.

Sex is usually, although not always, a strict binary. Biologically speaking, the vast majority of people are either female or male.

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### **Sex Assigned at Birth**

The phrase “sex assigned at birth” is designed to be inclusive of all natural human variation.

Most people are born with a single set of sexual organs and are “assigned” to the corresponding sex when they are born.

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## Gender

Gender refers to the collection of roles, behaviors, activities, attributes, attitudes, and prohibitions that a society considers normal and appropriate for men and women. A person’s gender is determined by how they choose to interact with those societal expectations.

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## Cisgender and Transgender

Cisgender refers to someone whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align, i.e., someone who feels like they are the same gender as their biological sex.

Transgender refers to a person whose gender identity – whether they see themselves as a man, woman, or other – does not match the sex assigned to them at birth.

Some people who identify as transgender are eligible for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria involves a conflict between a person’s physical or assigned sex and the gender with which they identify.

In order to meet the diagnostic criteria in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-V*, an individual must show evidence of a strong and persistent cross-gender identification, a persistent discomfort about one’s sex assigned at birth, and clinically significant distress or impairment in important areas of functioning. Not all people who identify as transgender experience this, but some do and it can occur at any time in life.

Some people who identify as transgender choose to *transition* from living as their assigned sex to living as their identified sex, which may or may not include medical procedures, such as hormone therapy or gender confirmation surgery.

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## **Activity A: SOGIE Faces**

### **Directions:**

1. While looking at the SOGIE Scale in the Participant Guide, guess/point out the sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation of each celebrity.
  2. Discuss your observations with the class.
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### **George Clooney:**

Sex

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Sexual Orientation

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Gender Identity

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Gender Expression

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### **Ellen DeGeneres:**

Sex

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Sexual Orientation

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Gender Identity

---

Gender Expression

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**RuPaul:**

Sex

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Sexual Orientation

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Gender Identity

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Gender Expression

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**Jazz Jennings:**

Sex

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Sexual Orientation

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Gender Identity

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Gender Expression

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**Michael Sam:**

Sex

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Sexual Orientation

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Gender Identity

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Gender Expression

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## Unit 3: LGBTQ Facts and Statistics

**Learning Objective:**

1. Employ statistics to show the how LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems.

## Facts and Statistics

In 2014, the Center for Disease Control released the results of the first large-scale government survey designed to measure Americans' sexual orientation. The survey found that 1.6 percent of adults identified as gay or lesbian and 0.7 percent identified as bisexual (an additional 1.1 percent responded "something else," "I don't know," or didn't answer the question about sexual orientation). Based on the population of the U.S., this means there are more than 7.3 million gay and bisexual Americans. Studies from other nations over a number of years have found that between 1.2 and 6.8 percent of adults identify as LGBTQ.

Often youth who identify as LGBTQ enter the Child Welfare System for the same reasons as other youth, such as their families are unable to provide a safe, stable, and nurturing home for them due to a parent's incarceration, drug or alcohol abuse, mental illness, etc. Others are rejected, neglected, and/or abused by their families when they learn that the youth identifies as LGBTQ.

**Sources:** Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman & Mara Keisling, National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (2011): [https://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS\\_Report.pdf](https://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS_Report.pdf)

*Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Foster Care: Assessing Disproportionality and Disparities in Los Angeles* (2014): [https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LAFYS\\_report\\_final-aug-2014.pdf](https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LAFYS_report_final-aug-2014.pdf)

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## Transgender Facts and Statistics

The transgender population is less well-studied. In fact, we still do not know for sure how many Americans identify as transgender; the U.S. Census only provides two boxes for gender: male and female.

The best estimates we currently have come from the Williams Institute at the University of California - Los Angeles School of Law, whose research indicates that 0.3 percent of American adults identify as transgender. That is approximately 700,000 people.

Organizations, such as the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, provide some additional statistics regarding the transgender community. For example, one study from 2011 found that:

- 41% of transgender people surveyed said they had attempted suicide (compared with 1.6% of the general population).
- The suicide risk increased for transgender people who reported bullying, sexual assault, and job loss.

Research also shows that youth who identify as transgender are significantly overrepresented in both social services and juvenile justice settings, and that they face additional challenges because of their gender identity.

**Sources:** Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman & Mara Keisling, National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (2011): [https://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS\\_Report.pdf](https://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS_Report.pdf)

National Center for Transgender Equality, *Federal Survey: 40% of Transgender Prisoners Are Sexually Abused Each Year* (2014): <https://transequality.org/blog/federal-survey-40-of-transgender-prisoners-are-sexually-abused-each-year>

Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Supporting Your LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents* (2013): <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/LGBTQyouth.pdf>

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## Unit 4: LGBTQ Issues


**Learning Objective:**

1. Identify common stereotypes about people who identify as LGBTQ and the discrimination they face.

## Stereotypes and Misconceptions

### STEREOTYPES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

- People who identify as LGBTQ are found in every social, economic, racial, ethnic, and religious group.
- There was a time in this country when homosexuality was mistakenly identified as a mental illness.
- Everyone has perceptions or preconceived ideas about what it means to be LGBTQ.
- It is important to understand that an individual's SOGIE is only a small part of who they are.



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## Discrimination and Harassment

Intersectionality focuses on the intersection of different forms of discrimination or oppression. There are many aspects of identity that people discriminate against on a regular basis. These include, but are not limited to:

- Race/ethnicity
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Physical ability and/or appearance
  - Cognitive and/or learning disabilities
  - Religion
  - Nationality
  - Immigration status
  - Language
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## Unit 5: Supporting Youth Who Identify as LGBTQ

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify the importance of being sensitive to youth who identify as LGBTQ.
2. Identify local resources for youth who identify as LGBTQ.

## Education

Education about key issues that people who identify as LGBTQ face is paramount in assisting the LGBTQ community in a meaningful way. It is helpful to continually learn about these issues because they are constantly changing. One of the first topics to learn about is bias or prejudice.

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### Personal Bias and Prejudice

**Personal Bias and Prejudice**

- You should not assume that all of the young people you work with are heterosexual.
- Regardless of your own beliefs and biases, you must be professional and not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
- It is important to treat youth who identify as LGBTQ with the same dignity as anyone else.



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## Bias and Prejudice in Others

Some people may be subjected to multiple forms of bias or prejudice on the basis of distinct aspects of their identity. Forms of prejudice, such as homophobia, transphobia, sexism, classism, and racism, do not act independently.

Here are some ways to respond to other people demonstrating bias:

- Don't laugh
  - Speak up
  - Challenge bystanders
  - Do not "get even"
  - Be supportive
  - Involve those who can help
  - Be non-judgmental
  - Be inclusive
  - Formally object
  - Educate yourself and others
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## Non-Discrimination

### NON-DISCRIMINATION

- Let youth who identify as LGBTQ know you are willing to listen and talk about anything.
- Support their freedom of expression and show respect for their choices.
- If you make a mistake, apologize and move on.



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## Use of Language

Be aware of your language, body language, and other non-verbal communication. Language/communication is the first step to building trust.

It is helpful to learn about the terms youth who identify as LGBTQ use to identify themselves. A few guidelines include:

- Allow the youth to self-identify when ready
  - Mirror their language and/or use gender neutral language
  - Ask questions in a respectful way
  - Adjust if and when their identity and/or expression shifts
  - Don't use any slurs or jokes.
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- There are a few word choices that may be considered offensive and should be avoided. These include:
    - Lifestyle
    - Choice
    - Friend (when referring to someone's romantic partner)
    - Homosexual
    - Incorrect names and pronouns
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## Confidentiality

Child Welfare Professionals have a legal responsibility to protect confidential information regarding youth in their care. This includes information about a youth's gender identity.

One particular confidentiality concern deals with the act of coming out. Coming out is the process of disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others. It is a personal choice and an ongoing process.

The reactions of others can have a profound effect. People who identify as LGBTQ never know how their friends, family, or community will react.

There are different levels of outness, which makes it a complicated process. People usually cannot come out to everyone that they know at once so they are often coming out to multiple groups throughout the process.

It is important to remember that if someone comes out to you, keep it confidential for them. It is okay, and even recommended, to ask who else they are out to after they tell you.

Child Welfare Professionals should respect the privacy of a youth's SOGIE.

Any disclosure of information should be limited to information necessary to achieve a specific beneficial purpose for that youth. In these circumstances, the information should only be disclosed to individuals who have a need to know.

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## Psycho-Social Needs

### Family and Friends

Youth tend to try different things in an attempt to fit in with friends or establish a sense of who they are in a particular peer group. It may take some time to develop one’s particular personal identity.

Adults working with youth can help to minimize feelings of rejection by recognizing the importance peers and family have in a young person’s life (even when they exert a negative influence).

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### School and Activities

School can be a difficult place to navigate for a youth who identifies as LGBTQ. Many face pervasive harassment and violence from peers, teachers, and administrators within schools.

There is a major correlation between harassment and unsafe schools in school dropout, truancy charges, and other school-related offenses.

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## Physical Needs

### Medical Care

It is important to provide developmentally appropriate information and resources about sexuality and sexual health, including about LGBTQ issues.

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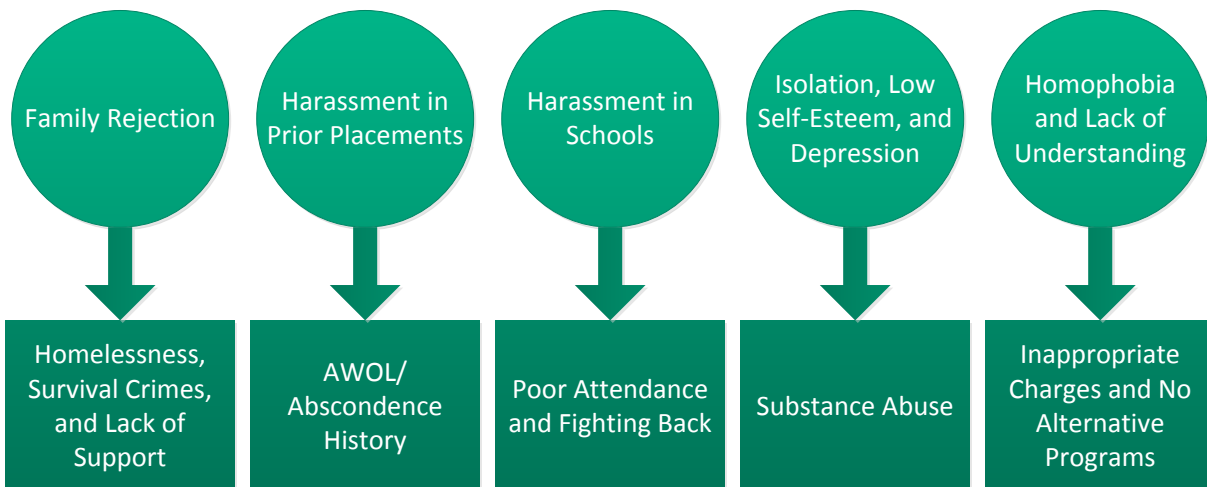
## Risk Factors

A 2013 study by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) that surveyed both LGBTQI and non-LGBTQ youth (ages 13-17) from around the country found some stark differences in the challenges they face.

- When asked to describe one thing in their lives they would change right now, the LGBTQ youth came up with completely different responses than the non-LGBTQ youth.
  - Top three responses for non-LGBTQ youth:
    1. Money/debt/finances
    2. Appearance/weight
    3. Improved mental health
  - Top three responses for LGBTQ youth:
    1. Understanding/tolerance/hate
    3. My parents/family situation
    4. Where I live/who I live with
  
- When asked to describe the most important problem they faced right now, the LGBTQ youth came up with completely different responses than the non-LGBTQ youth.
  - Top three responses for non-LGBTQ youth:
    1. Classes/exams/grades
    2. College/career

3. Financial pressures

- Top three responses for LGBTQ youth:
  1. Non-accepting families
  2. School problems/bullying
  3. Fear of being out or open

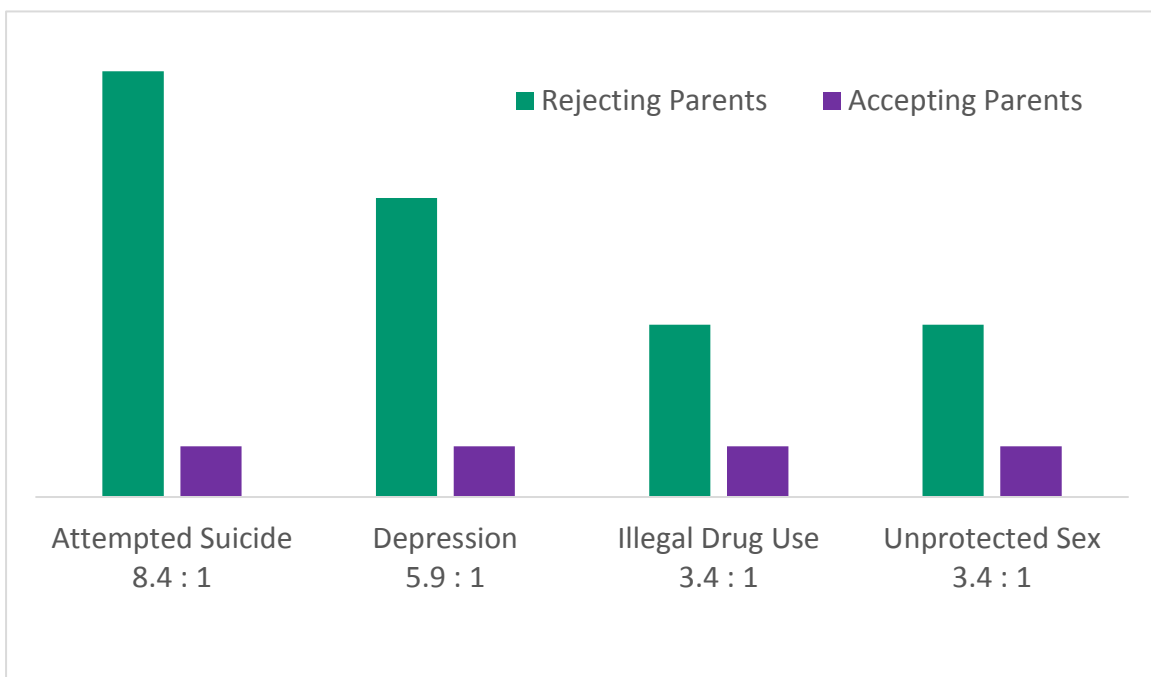


## Family Supports

Approximately one in every four families in the U.S. has a family member who identifies as LGBTQ.

Family rejection is the greatest risk factor for youth who identify as LGBTQ and it has an enormous impact on increasing the likelihood of engaging in risky behavior. There are clear links in the research between family acceptance during adolescence and positive health status in young adulthood.

The graphic below shows the difference between accepting and non-accepting parents:



Rejection can be expressed in many different ways:

- Some may hit or abuse a child because of their LGBTQ identity.
- Some may verbally harass or call the child names.
- Some may pressure the child to change.
- Some may tell them that God is going to punish them.
- They may tell the child that they are ashamed.
- Some families may have different rules for youth who identify as LGBTQ than other youth in the house.
- Some parents may even support inappropriate charges of sex offenses against their child.

It is important for Child Welfare Professionals to involve families and provide support and guidance to parents and caregivers to help them adjust to their child's SOGIE and to educate families on the positive impacts of family acceptance as well as the negative impacts of family rejection.

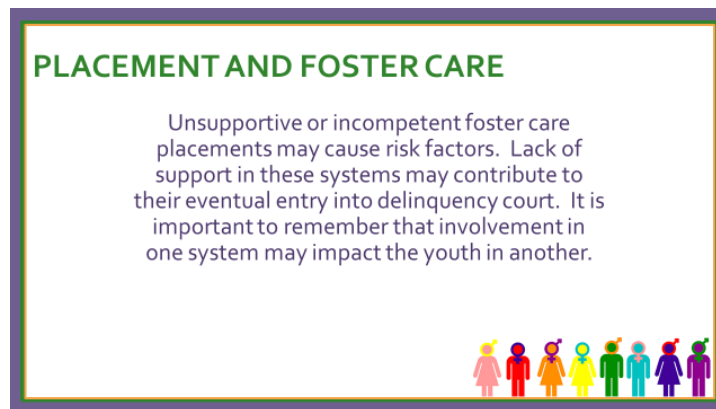
A great resource is Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). They offer a volunteer-based network of peer support chapters around the country.

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## Placement and Foster Care



All youth in care need nurturing homes that provide them with a safe place to process their feelings of grief and loss, freedom to express who they are, and structure to support them in becoming responsible, healthy adults. Creating a welcoming home for youth who identify as LGBTQ is not much different from creating a safe and supportive home for any youth.

Prior to placing a youth who identifies as LGBTQ, Child Welfare Professionals should consider if the personal beliefs of a prospective caregiver or foster or adoptive family are not in the child's best interests. Foster families may need guidance to understand the line between their obligations as caregivers and their personal beliefs.

Young people in foster care should never feel as though they must choose between being open and supported in their sexual orientation or gender identity and feeling welcome in a particular placement.



## Common Terms and Definitions

**Ally:** Describes a person who confronts and challenges heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexual privilege in herself or himself and others.

**Asexual:** Describes a person who experiences little to no sexual attraction.

**Bias:** Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

**Biphobia:** The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexual people.

**Bisexual:** Describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to both genders.

**Cisgender:** Describes a person whose gender identity matches his or her sex assigned at birth.

**Coming Out:** Describes the act or process of voluntarily disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Drag:** The act of cross-dressing as a part of a performance. Drag performance does not define a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Gay:** Refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to the same gender.

**Gender:** A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex assigned at birth, it is often closely related to the role that a person plays or is expected to play in society.

**Gender Creative:** See Gender Nonconforming

**Gender Expression:** Refers to how a person outwardly expresses their gender, by things like name, pronoun choice, style of dress, grooming habits, mannerism, voice modulation, and other characteristics or social cues.

**Gender Fluid:** See Gender Nonconforming.

**Gender Identity:** Refers to a person's internal and psychological sense of being male, female, in between, or neither.



**Gender Nonconforming (GNC):** Refers to a person who does not follow social ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on their sex or gender identity. Similar terms include gender creative, gender fluid, gender variant, gender queer, and pangender. One example would be a girl or woman who, in the past, may have been referred to as a “tomboy.”

**Gender Queer:** See Gender Nonconforming.

**Gender Questioning:** Refers to a person who is questioning their gender identity or experimenting with different genders.

**Gender Transition:** The experience by which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

**Gender Variant:** See Gender Nonconforming.

**Hermaphrodite:** An outdated medical term used to refer to someone having both male and female sex organs or other sexual characteristics. See Intersex.

**Heteronormative:** The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

**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.

**Heterosexuality:** Describes a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to individuals of the opposite sex.

**Homophobia:** The irrational hatred and fear of lesbian or gay people, or disapproval of other sexual orientations, regardless of motive. Homophobia includes prejudice, intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence against people on the basis of their gay or lesbian identity. It occurs on personal, institutional, and societal levels and is closely linked with transphobia and biphobia. Internalized homophobia is the fear and self-hate of one’s own gay or lesbian identity, which can occur for individuals who have been conditioned throughout childhood with negative ideas about sexual orientations other than heterosexuality.

**Homosexuality:** Considered an outdated clinical term that describes a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to individuals of the same sex. “Gay” and “lesbian” are more commonly accepted terms.

**Implicit bias:** Bias that is activated involuntarily and without awareness or intentional control. It resides deep within the subconscious and can alter our feelings or attitudes toward others.

- Everyone has personal values and beliefs, and therefore, everyone has implicit biases about race, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, etc.

**“In the Closet”:** Refers to a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex person who chooses not to disclose their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity to friends, family, co-workers, or society. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet.” For example, a person can be “out” in their social life but “in the closet” at work or with family. Also known as “on the down-low” or “D/L”.

**Internal bias:** Having private views about someone’s identity, but not necessarily talking about those views (e.g., internally believing that being gay is morally wrong, but not sharing those feelings with others).

**Intersectionality:** The study of the intersection of different forms of discrimination or oppression

**Intersex:** Describes a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. Intersex people are born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered “typical” for either males or females.

**Lesbian:** Refers to a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other women.

**Outing:** The act of publicly declaring someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity without that person’s consent.

**Overt bias:** Unconcealed, open preference that can come off as hostile to those who are not included in the preference (e.g., using homophobic or transphobic language openly, bullying, put-downs).

**Pangender:** See Gender Nonconforming.

**Pansexual:** A person who is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to members of all gender identities and expressions.

**Queer:** An umbrella term used to refer to all LGBTQ people; the term can be a political statement as well as an identity, seeking to expand upon limited sexual and gender-based categories. For some, “queer” has a negative connotation, given its historical use as a

negative term. Many LGBTQ people, however, have reclaimed the word and now use it in a positive light. Many people use the term “queer” because other terms do not accurately describe them.

**Questioning:** Refers to a person, often an adolescent, who is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

**Sexual Orientation:** Refers to a person’s emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to others.

**Transgender:** Refers to a person whose gender identity does not match the gender assigned to them at birth.

**Transphobia:** The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of transgender people, the transgender community, or gender ambiguity.

**Transvestite:** This is an outdated term that is offensive to many. Historically, this term referred to a person who adopts the dress and behavior typical of the opposite sex.

**Two Spirit:** A term used in some Native American communities for people who identify with gender roles of both men and women and/or are considered a separate or third gender.