



Great Ideas! for Family Leaders – Special Edition - April, 2017

Understanding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression (SOGIE) Supporting Children, Youth and Young Adults Who are LGBTQI2-S and their Families

Dear Family Leaders,

FREDLA is pleased to present this Special Edition of **Great Ideas!** focusing on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning, Two-Spirit (LGBTQI2-S) youth and their families.

We are in the midst of a gender revolution. It is difficult to believe that before the 1970s, the American Psychiatric Association's (APA's) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) listed homosexuality as a "sociopathic personality disturbance."ⁱ Forty years ago no one could have imagined the gender revolution and recognition that there is a broad spectrum of gender identities and expression. Today, language related to sexual preference, gender identity and gender expression is complicated and changing. Gender identity issues are surfacing in communities, schools, and courtrooms.

As family-run organizations, our primary concerns are the health and wellbeing of our youth and their families. The data is alarming! The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that: "Compared to heterosexual youth, LGBTQI2-S teens are more likely to experience bullying, physical violence, or rejection. As a result, LGBTQI2-S teens are at an increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and report higher rates of sexual risk behavior and substance abuse."ⁱⁱ

In the midst of this revolution, family-run organizations have a unique opportunity to reach out and support families of LGBTQI2-S youth and serve as a safe place where families and youth can come to receive support, connect with peers, and learn how to effectively advocate for themselves and their families. We can also engage LGBTQI2-S youth and families to get involved in helping shape the services, supports, providers and provider networks that serve LGBTQI2-S youth and their families.

We encourage you to share this Special Edition of **Great Ideas!** with your staff, families and system partners. Start a dialogue with your staff and connect with LGBTQI2-S resources in your community. We welcome your feedback on this issue and suggestions for other topics. To reach us, email info@fredla.org.

Thank you for all you do the support our families!

Jane Walker, MSW
Executive Director
FREDLA

LGBTQI2-S Youth Face Significant Disparities

LGBTQI2-S youth face harassment, increased expulsions and suspensions from school, homelessness, and less access to physical and mental health care. The data shows that schools are some of the most hostile environments for LGBTQ youth. Studies reveal that as many as 82% of LGBTQ youth were verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and as many as 64% because of their gender expression.ⁱⁱⁱ

The LGBTQI2-S population continues to experience worse health outcomes than their heterosexual counterparts as well. Due to factors like low rates of health insurance coverage, high rates of stress due to systematic harassment and discrimination, and a lack of cultural competency in the health care system, LGBTQI2-S people are at a higher risk for cancer, mental illnesses, and other diseases, and are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, use drugs, and engage in other risky behaviors.^{iv}

Research on the issue of family acceptance of LGBT youth conducted by Caitlin Ryan PhD., ACSW, Director of the Family Acceptance Project at San Francisco State University found that "compared with LGBT young people who were not rejected or were only a little rejected by their parents and caregivers because of their gay or transgender identity, highly rejected LGBT young people were:



What We Know Helps

Research shows that the way parents, foster parents, caregivers and families react to their LGBTQI2-S children has a powerful relationship to their children's health, mental health and well-being as a young adult.^v Family and caregivers who respond in a more supportive and acceptant manner, the better the outcomes for the young adult's health, mental health and well-being.

Early intervention may improve outcomes for gender diverse and transgender youth who are experiencing distress. Working with an interdisciplinary team; individualized plans and interventions to meet the needs of the adolescent within their environment and social context is recommended.

Faith-based institutions are also a key factor that can have positive impact in the life of a LGBTQI2-S youth or young adult. A surprisingly high number of teenagers involved in religious communities (up to 14%, according to one national study identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.^{vi} But only a fraction of them discuss their sexuality with their clergy or adult lay leaders.

Support from the faith based community ‘can be life-saving.’ As the 2003 Christian Community report, **Faith Matters**, said: “Those [youth] who were able to be open in their faith-based communities were also less likely to have considered suicide than other non-heterosexual teens. Those who are in faith-based institutions where there are negative views toward homosexuality and bisexuality rarely are open about their orientation. Those teens live with a very painful silence.”^{vii}

LGBTQI2-S RESOURCES FOR PARENTS, YOUTH & FAMILY-RUN ORGANIZATIONS

Terminology Resources

Terminology is continually evolving and expanding with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. The following websites contain glossaries of current terminology and can serve as a quick reference when working with a family.

- **LGBT Youth: Key Terms and Concepts – FindYouthInfo.gov**
http://youth.gov/sites/default/files/youthgov_LGBT_Terminology_508.pdf
- **LGBT A-Z Glossary – We Are Family**
<http://www.wearefamilycharleston.org/lgbt-a-z-glossary>
- **An Ally’s Guide to Terminology**
<http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/allys-guide-to-terminology.pdf>

Resources for Parents and Family Members

- **Advocates for Youth (AFY)**
AFY is an organization that champion’s efforts that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. The website contains a helpful Tip Sheet for Parents with LGBTQ Child. One important tip suggests asking your child before you "come out" to others on the child's behalf. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>
- **Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Teens: Facts for Teens and Their Parents**
This fact sheet has been developed by Healthy Children.org from the American Academy of Pediatrics. The fact sheet has sound advice for families such as, “Your teen did not choose to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Accept her or him and be there to help with any problems that arise.” <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/dating-sex/Pages/Gay-Lesbian-and-Bisexual-Teens-Facts-for-Teens-and-Their-Parents.aspx>
- **Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children**
Developed by SAMHSA, this publication emphasizes the critical role of families in reducing risk & promoting well-being. The guide is helpful to families as well as professionals to support families. <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/PEP14-LGBTKIDS/PEP14-LGBTKIDS.pdf>

- Parents, Families, Friends, and Allies of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**
 PFLAG, formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, is the United States' largest organization for parents, families, friends, and allies united with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). The website contains a wealth in information for parents on a range of topics such as, how to reconcile one's faith with their child's sexual orientation. <https://www.pflag.org/>
- Parents' Influence on the Health of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Teens: What Parents and Families Should Know**
 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health has a helpful fact sheet for families encouraging them to listen and support their LGBTQ youth as a critical factor in promoting teen's health and safe sex.
https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/parents_influence_lgb.pdf
- Sexual Orientation: Families Are Talking**
 Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) is a national nonprofit organization that affirms that sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living. They have developed a wonderful Tip Sheet for Families to Talk about Sexual Orientation and encourage families to take advantage of teachable moments with children of all ages. The Tip Sheet includes messages for children as young as 5-8 years and up through teens. This is a valuable resource for all families.
<http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=632&nodeID=1>
- Supportive Families, Healthy Children: Helping Families with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Children**
 Caitlin Ryan, PhD. ACSW, Director of from San Francisco State University's Family Acceptance Project, has published probably the best and most researched work on the tragic impact of family rejection when a child comes out. Dr. Ryan's message is clear; "We tell parents and caregivers to be honest about their feelings, because children know how their parents really feel... And be sure to tell your child that you love them."
http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/FAP_English%20Booklet_pst.pdf
- Helping Families Support Their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Children**
 This is another excellent paper for families with LGBTQ youth authored by Caitlin Ryan, Ph.D., A.C.S.W. Director of The Family Acceptance Project at San Francisco State University.
https://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/LGBT_Brief.pdf
- Supporting Your LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents**
 An estimated 5-10% of youth in foster care are LGBTQ. This guide is written specifically for foster parents to help them understand and support youth that may be in their care.
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/LGBTQyouth.pdf>

- **Webinar: Toward an Understanding of Youth Who are Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity/Expression Diverse (SOGIE) or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Two-Spirit (LGBTQI2-S)**
This webinar presented by Kathy Lazear, MA, and Peter Gamache, PhD, TA Network Cultural & Linguistics Competence Faculty, College of Behavioral & Community Sciences, University of South Florida focuses on terminology and the diversity within and among LGBTQ+ communities, as well as information on when children and teens may begin to express gender identity questions. <https://youtu.be/kJ-X7P2u1pg>

Resources for LGBTQ I2-S Youth and Their Friends

- **Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN): Student Action**
GLSEN is national education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ students. <https://www.glsen.org/>
- **Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Network**
GSA Network is a next-generation LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains queer, trans and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities. The website includes information on starting a Gay-Straight Alliance clubs in schools. <https://gsanetwork.org/>
- **It Gets Better Project**
The It Gets Better Project was created to show young LGBT people the levels of happiness, potential, and positivity their lives will reach – if they can just get through their teen years. The It Gets Better Project wants to remind teenagers in the LGBT community that they are not alone – and it WILL get better. <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>
- **The Trevor Project**
The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24. The organization has:
 - o **Trevorlifeline** - The only national 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention lifeline for LGBTQ young people (ages 13-24), available at 1-866-488-7386.
 - o **TrevorChat** - A free, confidential, secure instant messaging service for LGBTQ youth that provides live help from trained volunteer counselors, open daily from 3:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. ET / 12:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. PT.
 - o **TrevorText** - A free, confidential, secure service in which LGBTQ young people can text a trained Trevor counselor for support and crisis intervention, available Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 3:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. ET / 12:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. PT at 202-304-1200.

Resources for LGBTQ I2-S Youth by State

- **Lambda Legal** is the nation's first legal organization dedicated to achieving full equality for lesbian and gay people. They have compiled a listing of LGBTQ organizations by state. https://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/publications/downloads/fs_resources-for-lgbtq-youth-by-state_1.pdf
- **The Williams Institute**
Dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media and the public - See more at: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/mission/#sthash.SJ31Toec.dpuf>

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Am. Psychiatric. Assoc. 1952

ⁱⁱ Parents' Influence on the Health of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Teens: What Parents and Families Should Know https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/parents_influence_lgb.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ LGBTQ Youth of Color: Discipline Disparities, School Push-Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline https://gsanetwork.org/files/aboutus/LGBTQ_brief_FINAL-web.pdf

^{iv} How to Close the LGBT Health Disparities Gap <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2009/12/21/7048/how-to-close-the-lgbt-health-disparities-gap/>

^v Caitlin Ryan et al., Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults, 123 PEDIATRICS 346-52 (2009), [hereinafter Ryan et al., Family Rejection] (indicating that parents and caregivers play a significant role in the health and wellbeing of adolescents); see also Caitlin Ryan et al., Family Acceptance.

^{vi} Clapp, Steve, Kristen Leverton Helbert and Angela Zizak. Faith Matters: Teenagers, Religion, and Sexuality (Fort Wayne, IN: LifeQuest, 2003), 96.

^{vii} <http://religiousinstitute.org/acting-out-loud/lgbt-youth/>