Toolkit to Support Child Welfare Agencies in Serving LGBTQ Children, Youth, and Families

Capacity Building
CENTER FOR STATES

Children's
Bureau

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Introduction

As the culture and laws related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals have become more inclusive in recent years, an increasing number of LGBTQ people are self-disclosing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (i.e., "coming out") during childhood or adolescence. Additionally, the number of LGBTQ individuals coming forward to serve as temporary or permanent caregivers to children and youth in foster care has increased. With more LGBTQ-identified children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system, public child welfare agencies must adapt their policies and practices to address the strengths and needs of the LGBTQ community.

Purpose and Structure

The Capacity Building Center for States has designed this toolkit to help States and territories meet the needs of LGBTQ children, youth, and families by providing links to knowledge- and skill-building resources, including articles, videos, tools, training curricula, tip sheets, information briefs, websites, and other products. The Center for States has divided the resources into five categories:

- Creating a Culturally Competent Environment
- Best Practices for Supporting LGBTQ Children, Youth, and Families
- Training Curricula
- Supportive and Affirming Organization List
- Studies, Information Briefs, and Reports

In addition, a glossary that contains information on LGBTQ terminology, including definitions of commonly used terms, appears in Appendix 1 of this toolkit.

Creating a Culturally Competent Environment

As more individuals and families identify as LGBTQ, it becomes increasingly essential that child welfare agencies create a culturally inclusive environment for them. Creating a welcoming, culturally sensitive, supportive, and affirming agency for all people—regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression—requires commitment from leadership at the executive level that is communicated clearly and consistently to all staff.

An agency can lay the foundation for a culturally competent environment by assessing its readiness to work effectively with LGBTQ individuals and families as well as by directly addressing the needs of LGBTQ individuals through policies, guidelines, and procedures. Accordingly, the Center for States has divided the resources in this section into three categories:

- Readiness Assessments
- LGBTQ Policies/Guidelines/Procedures
- Building Cultural Competence

Readiness Assessments

By assessing for readiness, an agency is better able to recognize its strengths as well as its areas of growth and development. Assessing readiness involves completing a thorough examination of current practices, policies, and climate. Agencies can assess readiness in several areas, including program, policy, practice, staff attitudes, training needs, environment, and culture. The resources below include a variety of tools to assist agencies in assessing their readiness to work effectively with LGBTQ individuals and families.

- Human Rights Campaign (HRC), *All Children—All Families: Agency Self-Assessment*
- CSUSB ScholarWorks, *Designing a Measure: Measuring Social Workers' Attitudes toward LGBT Youth in Child Welfare*
- National Center for Cultural Competence, "Promoting Cultural Diversity and Cultural and Linguistic Competency: Self-Assessment Checklist for Staff of Residential Programs Providing Behavioral Health Services and Supports to Children, Youth, and their Families"
- National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), "Organizational Assessment Tool for LGBT Cultural Competency"

LGBTQ Policies/Guidelines/Procedures

A written policy that addresses sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression helps staff effectively work with LGBTQ individuals and promotes affirming and supportive practices. Including frontline staff, youth and family advocates, and community partners in the development of an LGBTQ policy can support ownership of the policy and the agency's work to welcome and affirm the LGBTQ children, youth, and families it serves.

An LGBTQ policy may expand upon a State or county's nondiscrimination policy. It also may focus directly on the needs and services provided to LGBTQ children, youth, and families, and may address the rights and needs of an agency's LGBTQ staff and community partners. The policy may be broad and general, or may focus on specific services and issues. For example, it may include a statement on safe placement practices.

The resources below include information about the protections and policies that currently exist within each State as well as examples of LGBTQ policies, procedures, and guidance that agencies may use as a starting point when developing or revising their policy.

Policies and protections by State:

- Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), *Inventory of State Policies Concerning LGBTQ Youth (September 2014)*

- Movement Advancement Project, *Securing Legal Ties for Children Living in LGBT Families: A State Strategy and Policy Guide (July 2012)*

Examples of policies:

- Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), *Policy Manual, Chapter 30: Introduction to Volume II*, *30-9: Non-Discrimination of LGBTQI Individuals (effective May 14, 2004)*

- New York City Administration for Children's Services, *LGBTQ Policy (issued November 11, 2012)*

Examples of guidance or standards of care:

- Allegheny County (Pennsylvania) Department of Human Services (DHS), *Standards of Practice (issued August 5, 2015)*

- CSSP, *"Guidelines for Managing Information Related to the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression of Children in Child Welfare Systems" (issued January 2013)*

- Child Welfare League of America, *"Recommended Practices To Promote the Safety and Well-Being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth and Youth at Risk of or Living with HIV in Child Welfare Settings"* *(issued in 2012)*

- Connecticut DCF, *"Working with Transgender Youth and Caregivers Practice Guide"* *(updated December 2014)*

- Minnesota DHS practice guide, Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning/queer youth

- Utah's Division of Child and Family Services, *Out-of-Home Services Practice Guidelines, Appendix B: How to Create a Climate of Safety and Convey Support for Children and Youth* *(revised November 2012)*

Building Cultural Competence

Clients who visit agencies observe their surroundings and attempt to gather clues about the care they will receive. These clues, or lack thereof, may impact a client's level of confidence in the agency and the client's overall experience. Culturally inclusive child welfare agencies provide children, youth, and families with the opportunity to see themselves mirrored in the agency's art and photos; feel visible instead of invisible; fill out forms inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity; and receive respectful treatment from support staff, frontline staff, training staff, and supervisory staff.

The resources below include articles, videos, and other tools designed to help agencies create a culturally competent environment for LGBTQ children, youth, and families.

- HRC, "All Children—All Families: Benchmarks of LGBTQ Cultural Competency"

- Center for States' video, *"Creating LGBTQ Affirming Agencies"*

- HRC, "LGBTQ-Inclusive Intake Forms"

- The Joint Commission, *Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community: A Field Guide*

Best Practices for Supporting LGBTQ Children, Youth, and Families

Public child welfare agencies across the United States are recognizing the diverse needs of the communities they serve, and are reviewing their current practices to ensure they support and affirm the needs of LGBTQ families. The following resources include best practice information for child welfare professionals regarding:

- Education—creating safe and affirming educational environments for LGBTQ students
- Normalcy—promoting normalcy for LGBTQ children and youth in foster care
- LGBTQ families—supporting LGBTQ caregivers and families involved in the child welfare system
- Health, well-being, and development—ensuring the health and well-being of LGBTQ children and youth

Education

Studies show better educational outcomes for LGBTQ students in a supportive environment. It is critically important that LGBTQ children and youth learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, and violence. This section contains resources for educators, community partners, States, and territories on best practices for creating safe and affirming educational environments for LGBTQ students.

- American Psychological Association (APA), "Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel" *(also available in Spanish)*
- Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, "Get the Facts: Realities of LGBT Students"
- Teaching Tolerance, "Best Practices: Creating an LGBTQ-inclusive School Climate"
- U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, "Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students"

Normalcy

Normalcy means allowing children and youth in foster care to experience childhood and adolescence in ways similar to their peers not in foster care. For young people who identify as LGBTQ, achieving normalcy can be complex, especially as it relates to exploring sexual orientation and gender identity. Caregivers with LGBTQ children and youth may lack knowledge about how to address LGBTQ-related issues and development. Although the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, Public Law 113 – 183, provides guidance on creating age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate experiences for children and youth in out-of-home care, CSSP encourages additional training for caregivers with youth who face additional barriers in the system, such as LGBTQ individuals. The resources below provide information about best practices for promoting normalcy for LGBTQ children and youth in care.

- Center for States' tip sheet, "Affirming and Supporting LGBTQ Children and Youth in Child Welfare"

- Center for States' webinar, "Supporting and Affirming LGBTQ Children and Youth"[1]

- Gender Spectrum, "Teens: Key tips on knowing your rights, discussing your experiences, and understanding your gender as you navigate your gender identity across multiple realms"

- HRC, "Supporting and Caring for Our Gender Expansive Youth: Lessons from the Human Right's Campaign's Youth Survey"

- Lambda Legal, "Getting Down to Basics - Tools to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care: Congregate Care Providers Working with LGBTQ Youth"

- NCLR, "Queer & Trans Youth in California Foster Care Have Rights: A Know Your Rights Guide"

- POLICY for RESULTS.org, "Promoting Well-Being Through the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard: A Guide for States Implementing the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (H.R.4980)"

- Video: "LGBTQ Youth: Voices of Trauma, Lives of Promise" (2016)

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[1] May access product after registering for CapLEARN, the Center for States' virtual learning environment. Registration is open to all interested individuals.

LGBTQ Families

As increasing numbers of LGBTQ families come forward to provide temporary and permanent care for children and youth, agencies must work to create policies and procedures that promote cultural competency, inclusive practices, and knowledge about their unique needs. According to a report by the Williams Institute (UCLA School of Law), same-sex couples are six times more likely to raise foster children than different-sex couples.[2] The resources below provide guidance on best practices to help agencies welcome and support LGBTQ single-parent and two-parent families as they navigate the child welfare system.

- Center for States' tip sheet, "Helping LGBTQ Parents Navigate the Child Welfare System"

- Lifelong Adoptions, Map of LGBTQ Adoption Laws by State

- National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUsKids, "Recruiting and Retaining LGBT Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families"

- National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections, "Supporting and Retaining LGBT Foster and Adoptive Parents"

- Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, "LGBT Populations and the Child Welfare System: A Snapshot of the Knowledge Base and Research Needs"

- The Future of Children, "Marriage and Family: LGBT Individuals and Same-Sex Couples"

- The Williams Institute, "LGBT in the South" *(March 2016)*

- The Williams Institute, "Estimates of transgender populations in states with legislation impacting transgender people"

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[2] *Gates, Gary J. (2012). Family Formation and Raising Children Among Same-sex Couples. The Williams Institute, University of California UCLA School of Law. Retrieved from http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/family-formation-and-raising-children-among-same-sex-couples/.*

Health, Well-Being, and Development

All children and youth in foster care, including those who are LGBTQ, have the right of access to appropriate health care. Mental and physical health-care providers may not engage in supportive and affirming practices, and may lack the training, experience, and skills to meet the special needs of LGBTQ individuals. Child welfare professionals must work collaboratively with mental and physical health practitioners to ensure both child welfare agencies and health-care providers are equipped to support the health, well-being, and development of LGBTQ clients and patients. This section provides resources on best practices for ensuring the health and well-being of LGBTQ children and youth.

- APA, "Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients"
- APA, "Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People"
- APA, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health: Information and resources regarding LGBT health disparities and advocacy from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns Office"
- APA, "Reducing Sexual Prejudice: The Role of Coming Out"
- HRC, "LGBTQ-Inclusive Intake Forms"
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Top Health Issues for LGBT Populations Information & Resource Kit*

Training Curricula

Staff training can play a significant role in creating a welcoming and an affirming agency environment for LGBTQ children, youth, and families. All staff members can benefit from introductory LGBTQ competency training, and staff members who have direct contact with children, youth, and families should receive additional training that focuses on building skills for effective practice with LGBTQ individuals. Training for cultural competency is an ongoing process, and agencies cannot achieve cultural competency through a one-time training or event. Agencies should ensure they adequately train staff by integrating LGBTQ competency into ongoing staff development. The resources below include training curricula for child welfare and other professionals related to working with LGBTQ children, youth, and families.

- APA, *The Respect Online Course: Preventing health risks and promoting healthy outcomes among lesbian gay bisexual transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) students*
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*
- Center for States, *Child Welfare Response to Child and Youth Sex Trafficking Curriculum*[3]
- Human Rights Campaign, *All Children—All Families: Training Curriculum*
- National Association of Social Workers and Lambda Legal, *Moving the Margins: Curriculum for Child Welfare Services with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Out-of-Home Care*
- CSSP, *National LGBT Curricula and Training Materials*

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[3] *May access product after registering for CapLEARN, the Center for States' virtual learning environment. Registration is open to all interested individuals.*

Supportive and Affirming Organization List

The "Supportive and Affirming Organization List" includes associations, programs, and organizations throughout the United States that work to support and affirm LGBTQ children, youth, and families through a variety of peer-, community-, and culture-based social support; education and outreach; and legal support.

If the Center for States should include any other organizations on this list, please contact us.

Inclusion on this list is intended for information purposes and does not constitute an endorsement by the Center for States or the Children's Bureau.

Studies, Information Briefs, and Reports

The resources below include studies, information briefs, and reports related to LGBTQ children, youth, and families. Agencies may use this information to build awareness, understanding, and knowledge about LGBTQ individuals.

- APA brochure, "Answers to Your Questions About Individuals With Intersex Conditions"

- APA brochure, "Answers to Your Questions About Transgender People, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression"

- APA brochure, "Answers to Your Questions for a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality"

- Office of The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *Identifying and Serving LGBTQ Youth: Case Studies of Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Grantees*

- Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, *Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of Youth at Age 19*

- APA, *Report of the APA Task Force on Gender Identity and Gender Variance*

- The Williams Institute, *Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Foster Care: Assessing Disproportionality and Disparities in Los Angeles*

- Urban Institute, *Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Engaged in Survival Sex*

- Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics video, "Same-Sex and Different-Sex Parent Households and Child Health Outcomes: Findings from the National Survey of Children's Health"

- Journal of Family Issues, "Stigmatization and Promotive Factors in Relation to Psychological Health and Life Satisfaction of Adolescents in Planned Lesbian Families"

- Journal of Homosexuality, "Adolescents with Lesbian Mothers Describe Their Own Lives"

Defining LGBTQ Terms

As lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) communities continue to grow and change, terminology evolves as well. Becoming familiar with and understanding the meaning of terms helps child welfare professionals have respectful and affirming discussions with LGBTQ children, youth, and families.

The glossary below contains currently used (as of August 2016) terms and definitions related to LGBTQ individuals. Please note that regional and cultural differences may exist in the use of various terms, and LGBTQ individuals may relate to and use some terms differently.

The Capacity Building Center for States has adapted definitions from the following sources:

Human Rights Campaign (HRC), *All Children—All Families*, "Caring for LGBTQ Children and Youth: A Guide for Child Welfare Providers"

It's Pronounced Metrosexual, "Comprehensive* List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Definitions"

Gender Equity Resource Center (GERC), "Definition of Terms"

A

Advocate: A person who actively works to end intolerance, educates others, and supports LGBTQ issues, concerns, equal rights, legislation, etc. *(HRC)*

Ally: A person who advocates and supports members of a community other than the person's own. In the context of the LGBTQ community, "ally" often refers to a non-LGBTQ person who advocates for and supports LGBTQ people. *(HRC)*

Androgynous: A term used to describe a person appearing and/or identifying as neither man nor woman, presenting a gender either mixed or neutral. *(GERC)*

Aromantic: A term used to describe a person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in forming romantic relationships. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Asexual: A term used to describe a person who has a lack (or low level) of sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, from people who experience no sexual attraction or have no desire for sex to those who experience low levels and only after significant amounts of time. Many of these different places on the spectrum of asexuality have their own identity labels. Another term used within the asexual community is "ace," meaning someone who is asexual. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

B

Bias: Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgement. *(GERC)*

Bicurious: A term used to describe a person who has a curiosity about having attraction to people of the same gender/sex (similar to "questioning"). *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Bigender: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity is a combination of man and woman; a person who fluctuates between traditionally "feminine" and "masculine" gender-based behaviors and identities, identifying with both genders (and, sometimes, a third gender). *(GERC; It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Biological Sex: Refers to the classification of people as male or female. Biological sex is determined by people's chromosomes (XX for females, XY for males), their hormones (estrogen/progesterone for females, testosterone for males), and their internal and external genitalia (vulva, clitoris, and vagina for females; penis and testicles for males). *(HRC)*

Biphobia: A range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, or discomfort) that a person may have/express toward bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the queer community as well as straight society. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Biphobic: A term used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of the range of negative attitudes toward bisexual people. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Bisexual: A person who is physically, romantically, emotionally, and/or relationally attracted to both men and women, though not necessarily simultaneously; a bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes. *(HRC)*

Butch: A person who self-identifies as masculine, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally. Some people use "butch" as a derogatory term for lesbians, but the term also can be claimed as an affirmative identity label. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

C

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and male assigned). Put more simply, if a person is not transgender, the person is cisgender. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Cisgenderism: The assumption that every person is cisgender, therefore marginalizing those who identify as transgender in some form. The term also refers to the belief that cisgender people are superior, and the act of holding people to traditional expectations based on gender, or punishing or excluding those who do not conform to traditional gender expectations. *(GERC)*

Cisnormativity: The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to transidentities or people. Leads to the invisibility of non-cisgender identities. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Closeted: A term used to describe people who have not disclosed their LGBTQ identity or who have told only a few people. When individuals break this silence, they "come out" of the closet. *(HRC)*

Coming Out: The process in which individuals first acknowledge, accept, and appreciate their sexual orientation or gender identity and begin to share it with others. Coming out happens many times over the course of a lifetime. *(HRC)*

Constellation: The arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Cross-Dressing: The act of occasionally wearing clothes and/or makeup and accessories traditionally associated with people of a different gender. Cross-dressers usually are comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and do not wish to change it. *(HRC)*

D

Demisexual: An individual who does not experience sexual attraction unless the individual has formed a strong emotional connection with another individual (often within a romantic relationship). *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Drag: The act of cross-dressing as part of a performance. Drag queens often perform in highly feminine attire. Drag kings often perform in highly masculine attire. A person may perform drag as a political comment on gender, as parody, or, simply, as entertainment. Drag performance does not define a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. *(HRC)*

Drag King: A person who performs masculinity theatrically. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Drag Queen: A person who performs femininity theatrically. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Dyke: Historically, a derogatory term referring to a lesbian or a masculine-presenting lesbian. Some lesbians have reclaimed this word and use it as a positive term, but it still is considered offensive when used outside of the LGBTQ community. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

E

Emotional/Spiritual Attraction: An affinity for a person that evokes the desire to engage in emotional, intimate behavior (e.g., sharing, confiding, trusting, interdepending), experienced in varying degrees (from none to little to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction and sexual attraction. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

F

Fag(got): Historically, a derogatory term for a gay man. Some gay men have reclaimed this word and use it as a positive term, but it still is considered offensive when used outside of the LGBTQ community. *(HRC)*

Family: Colloquial term used to identify other LGBTQ community members. For example, an LGBTQ person saying, "That person is family" often means that the person to whom the LGBTQ person is referring is LGBTQ as well. *(GERC)*

Family of Choice: Persons or a group of people an individual sees as significant in the individual's life. May include none, all, or some members of the individual's family of origin. In addition, it may include individuals such as significant others, domestic partners, friends, and coworkers. *(GERC)*

Feminine of Center; Masculine of Center: Phrases that indicate a range of terms of gender identity and gender presentation for individuals who present, understand themselves, and/or relate to others in a more feminine/masculine way. Feminine of center individuals also may identify as femme, submissive, transfeminine, or more. Masculine of center individuals also may identity as butch, stud, aggressive, boi, transmasculine, or more. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Feminine Presenting; Masculine Presenting: Terms that describe a person who expresses gender in a more feminine or masculine way, e.g., through hairstyle, demeanor, clothing, or style. Do not confuse with "feminine of center" and "masculine of center," which often include a focus on identity as well as expression. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Femme: A person who self-identifies as feminine, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting lesbian. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Fluid(ity): Generally attached to another term, such as "gender fluid" or "fluid sexuality," fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift over time between or within the mix of available options (e.g., man and woman, "bi" and straight, etc.). *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

FtM/F2M: Abbreviation for a female-to-male transgender or transsexual person. *(GERC)*

G

Gay: An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or relational attractions are to people of the same sex. Also used as an umbrella term to refer to the LGBTQ community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Gender Binary: The traditional idea that only two distinct and very different genders exist: female and male. *(HRC)*

Gender Conformity: When a person's gender identity, gender expression, and sex "match" according to social norms. (See "gender identity," "sex," and "gender expression" for more on gender.) *(GERC)*

Gender Diverse: A person who, either by nature or by choice, does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g., transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.). Preferable to "Gender Variant" because it does not imply a standard normativity. *(GERC)*

Gender Expression: Refers to all of a person's external characteristics and behaviors—such as dress, grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions—that are socially identified with a particular gender. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than their sex assigned at birth. Gender expression does not necessarily indicate sexual orientation. *(HRC)*

Gender Fluid: Refers to a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of male and female. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more man some days, and more woman other days. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Gender Identity: A person's innate, deeply felt psychological sense of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's sex assigned at birth. Gender identity is distinct and separate from sexual orientation and the sex a person is assigned at birth. Everybody has a gender identity, not just transgender people. *(HRC)*

Gender Neutral / Gender Inclusive: Inclusive language used to describe relationships ("spouse" and "partner" instead of "husband/boyfriend" and "wife/girlfriend"), spaces (gender-neutral/inclusive restrooms are for use by all genders), and pronouns ("they" and "ze" are gender-neutral/inclusive pronouns), among other things. *(GERC)*

Gender Non-Conforming (GNC): A term that describes a person whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, does not align in a predicted fashion with traditional, gender-based expectations. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Gender Normative / Gender Straight: A term that describes a person whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with traditional, gender-based expectations. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Gender Pronouns: Examples of gender pronouns include "she/her" and "he/him." It is important to use the gender pronouns that a person prefers when referring to that person. If unsure of which pronoun an individual youth prefers, ask sensitively rather than simply assuming. *(HRC)*

Gender Roles: The set of socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to females and males. Gender roles vary from culture to culture and over time. *(HRC)*

Gender Transition: The experience by which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another. Gender transition is a very individual process. To affirm their gender identity, people may go through different types of

transitions: social (can include changes in name, pronouns, and appearance—clothes or hairstyle), medical (includes use of hormone blockers or cross-hormones to promote gender-based body changes), and surgical (modifications to the body to remove or add gender-related physical traits). *(HRC)*

Gender Variant: Someone who, either by nature or by choice, does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g., transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.). *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Genderism: The system of belief that only two genders (men and women) exist and that gender is inherently tied to the sex assigned at birth. It holds cisgender people as superior to transgender people, and punishes or excludes those who do not conform to society's expectations of gender. *(GERC)*

Genderqueer: A term people use to describe their own gender identity. Often used by those who do not want to be labeled by fixed definitions of male/female. *(HRC)*

H

Hate Crime: Hate crime legislation often defines a hate crime as a crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person. *(GERC)*

Heteronormativity: The belief or assumption that all people are heterosexual, or that heterosexuality is the default or "normal" state of human beings. A heteronormative society operates on the assumption that heterosexuality and specific gender features are the human "default." These assumptions can be hurtful because they stigmatize and marginalize, making people who are LGBTQ feel like society perceives them as deviant or unnatural. *(GERC)*

Heterosexual: A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex. Also known as "straight." *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Heterosexual Privilege: Advantages that come with heterosexuality in this society and culture (e.g., the ability to have one's relationship legally recognized through marriage and the many benefits that come along with marriage). *(HRC)*

Heterosexism: The belief or assumption that all people are heterosexual, that heterosexual relationships and behaviors are superior, and the actions based on this assumption. *(HRC)*

Homophobia: An umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, or discomfort) that a person may have toward members of the LGBTQ community. The term also can connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. The term extends to bisexual and transgender people as well; however, the terms "biphobia" and "transphobia" emphasize the specific biases against individuals of bisexual and transgender communities. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Homosexual: An outdated clinical term used to describe a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. Considered derogatory and offensive by many gay people. "Gay" and "lesbian" are more commonly accepted terms used to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. *(HRC)*

I

In the Closet: A term used to describe individuals keeping their sexual orientation and/or gender or sex identity a secret. *(GERC)*

Institutional Oppression: The arrangement of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc. *(GERC)*

Internalized Homophobia/Transphobia/Biphobia: Refers to the self-identification of societal stereotypes by LGBTQ people, causing them to dislike and resent their own sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. *(HRC)*

Intersex: Describes people born with reproductive or sexual anatomies that are not considered "standard" for either male or female, including variations in genital or chromosomal makeup. Formerly known as "hermaphrodite" (or "hermaphroditic"), but these terms now are considered outdated and inappropriate. Some intersex individuals are recognized at birth and others come into an understanding that they are intersex at puberty or later in adulthood. *(GERC)*

Invisible Minority: A group whose minority status is not always immediately visible, such as some disabled people and LGBTQ people. This lack of visibility may make organizing for rights difficult. *(GERC)*

L

Lesbian: A woman who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attractions to other women. *(HRC)*

LGBTQ: An acronym that stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning." The "Q" sometimes stands for "queer." This acronym may be used as shorthand or as an umbrella term for all folks who have a nonnormative (or queer) gender or sexuality. Another popular option is GLBT. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Lifestyle: A term inaccurately used to refer to the sexual orientation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Avoid using this term as it is offensive. Just as there is no one heterosexual or straight lifestyle, there is no one lesbian, gay, or bisexual lifestyle. *(HRC)*

Lipstick Lesbian: Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way. Sometimes also refers to a lesbian assumed to be (or who passes for) straight. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Living Openly: Describes a state in which LGBT people are out with regard to their sexual orientation or gender identity in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. *(HRC)*

M

Marginalized: Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/community/society. *(GERC)*

Metrosexual: A man with a strong aesthetic sense who spends more time, energy, or money on his appearance and grooming than is considered gender normative. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

MSM/WSW: Acronym for "men who have sex with men" and "women who have sex with women." Used to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities (e.g., because a man is straight, it does not mean he is not having sex with men). Often used in the field of HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and treatment. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

MtF/M2F: Acronym for a male-to-female transgender or transsexual person. *(GERC)*

Mx.: A title (e.g., Mr., Ms., etc.) that is gender neutral (typically pronounced "mix"). Often used by individuals who do not identify within the cisgender binary. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

N

Non-Op: A transidentified person whose identity does not involve receiving sexual reassignment surgery / sex confirmation surgery. *(GERC)*

O

On T: When a person takes the hormone testosterone. *(GERC)*

Out: Used to describe individuals who have shared their sexuality or gender identity with others (to "come out" to friends, etc.). *(HRC)*

Outing: The act of publicly declaring someone's sexual orientation or gender identity, sometimes based on rumor or speculation, without that person's consent. *(HRC)*

P

Pangender: A person whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender identities. *(GERC)*

Pansexual: A person who is fluid in sexual orientation and/or sexual identity. *(GERC)*

Passing: (1) A term for transpeople being accepted as, or able to "pass for," a member of their self-identified gender/sexual identity (regardless of sex assigned at birth); (2) An LGB/queer individual believed to be or perceived as straight. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Pink Triangle: A symbol of remembrance. Gay men in the Nazi concentration camps were forced to wear the pink triangle as a designation of homosexuality. Women who did not conform to social roles, often believed to be lesbians, had to wear the black triangle. People wear the triangles today as symbols of freedom, reminding us to never forget. *(GERC)*

Polyamory/Polyamorous: Refers to the practice of, desire to, or orientation toward having ethically, honest, consensually nonmonogamous relationships (i.e., relationships that may include multiple partners). This may include open relationships and polyfidelity (which involves more than two people in romantic and/or sexual relationships that are not open to additional partners), amongst many other setups. Some polyamorous people have a "primary" relationship or relationship(s) and then "secondary" relationship(s), which may indicate different allocations of resources, time, or priority. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Q

Queer:

- An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQ people.
- A political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid.
- A simple label to explain a complex set of sexual behaviors and desires. For example, a person attracted to multiple genders may identify as queer.
- Some LGBT people feel the word has been hatefully used against them and are reluctant to embrace it. *(GERC)*

Questioning: The process of exploring one's own sexual identity, including, but not limited to, one's upbringing, expectations from others (family, friends, church, etc.), and inner motivation. *(HRC)*

R

Rainbow Flag: Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag in 1978 to designate the great diversity of the LGBTQ community. The International Flag Makers Association has recognized it as the official flag of the LGBTQ civil rights movement. *(GERC)*

Romantic Attraction: An affinity for someone that evokes the desire to engage in relational intimate behavior (e.g., flirting, dating, marriage); experienced in varying degrees (from none to little to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction or emotional/spiritual attraction. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

S

Same Gender Loving (SGL): A term some prefer to use instead of "gay" or "lesbian" to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender. *(HRC)*

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS): A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's biological sex. Many consider "gender confirmation surgery" a more affirming term. In most cases, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Some refer to different surgical procedures as "top" surgery and "bottom" surgery to differentiate between the types of surgery without having to be more explicit. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Sexual Attraction: An affinity for someone that evokes the desire to engage in physical, intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse); experienced in varying degrees (from none to little to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction or emotional/spiritual attraction. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Sexual Orientation: The type of emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings a person has for others. Sexual orientations include "heterosexual/straight," "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual." Everyone has a sexual orientation that goes a through multistage developmental process and may evolve over time. *(HRC)*

Sexual Preference: A term sometimes used to mean the same thing as "sexual orientation." Many LGBTQ people find this term offensive because it implies that their sexual orientation is a choice. *(HRC)*

She-Male: An offensive term used to refer to MtF transindividuals by the sex/porn industries to objectify, exotify, and eroticize the transbody. *(GERC)*

Skoliosexual: Individuals attracted to genderqueer and transsexual people and expressions (people who do not identify as cisgender). *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

SOGIE: Acronym for "Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression." The development of SOGIE is universal to all people. Talking to all children and youth about their SOGIE promotes healthy development and is essential to well-being. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Stereotype: An exaggerated, oversimplified belief about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences. *(GERC)*

Straight: A term used to describe a person who is attracted to a gender other than the person's own. Commonly thought of as "attraction to the opposite gender," but because not only two genders exist (see "transgender"), this definition is inaccurate. *(GERC)*

Straight Supporter: A heterosexual person who supports and honors sexual diversity, acts accordingly to challenge homophobic remarks and behaviors, and explores and understands his or her own bias. See also: "ally." *(HRC)*

Stud: A term most commonly used to indicate a Black/African-American and/or Latina masculine, lesbian/queer woman. Also known as "butch" or "aggressive."

T

Third Gender: A term for a person who does not identify with either "man" or "woman," but identifies with another gender. Societies that recognize three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, use this gender category. This category also serves as a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Top Surgery: This term refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest or breast augmentation for a female-type chest. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Tranny: A derogatory term used to refer to a transidentified person. Sometimes used by transpeople for empowerment. *(GERC)*

Transgender/Trans/TG:

- Transgender people are those whose psychological self ("gender identity") differs from the social expectations for the physical sex with which they were born. For example, a female with a masculine gender identity or one who identifies as a man. To understand this, one must first understand the difference between biological sex, which is one's body (genitals, chromosomes, etc.), and social gender, which refers to levels of masculinity and femininity. Often, society conflates sex and gender, viewing them as the same thing, but sex and gender are not the same.

- An umbrella term for transsexuals, cross-dressers, transgenderists, genderqueers, and people who identify as neither female nor male and/or as neither a man nor a woman. Transgender is not a sexual orientation; transgender people may have any sexual orientation. It is important to acknowledge that while some people may fit under this definition of transgender, they may not identify as such. *(GERC)*

Transition(ing): This term primarily refers to the process transpeople undergo when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Transman: An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females; also referred to as "transguy(s)." *(GERC)*

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia manifests in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination. *(GERC)*

Transsexual: Individuals who identify as a gender different from the one assigned at birth. They may seek medical intervention (through hormones and/or surgery) to live comfortably in the gender with which they identify. They usually live full time as a gender different from the one assigned at birth. *(HRC)*

Transvestite: An outdated term that is offensive to many and not commonly used. Historically, this term refers to a person (typically male) who adopts the dress and behavior typical of the opposite sex for purposes of emotional or sexual gratification. *(HRC)*

Two Spirit: An umbrella term traditionally used by Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Z

Ze/Hir: Alternate, gender-neutral pronouns preferred by some transpeople. Pronounced "zee" and "here." These terms replace "he" and "she" and "his" and "hers," respectively. Alternatively, some people who are not comfortable or do not embrace "he/she" use the plural pronoun "they/their" as a gender-neutral pronoun. *(It's Pronounced Metrosexual)*

Zir: Gender-neutral pronoun that can be used instead of his/her. *(GERC)*