

MENTORING *Tactics*

This Issue

**Mentoring Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, and Transgender Youth**

MENTORING
changing a life forever



APRIL 8, 2005

MENTORING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH

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PURPOSE

As more and more lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth come out about their sexual and gender identities at earlier ages, it is critical for mentoring programs to be aware of how they treat and work with LGBT youth and mentors. LGBT youth are at increased risk for becoming targets of violence, depression, disease, and even suicide because of the stigma surrounding homosexuality. From a very early age, one is inundated with negative messages about LGBT people. These hurtful words, attitudes, and beliefs strongly impact the self-esteem of LGBT youth and make their need for positive mentoring even greater.

As a sizable minority in our country, it is quite likely that you will serve and are serving both LGBT youth and adults through your programs. Because being LGBT is often invisible, organizations do not always know which of their clients might be LGBT. Therefore, organizations should work to make their programs safe, accepting, and respectful of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. By utilizing this manual to better understand and serve your LGBT clients, you are fulfilling your mission by helping to ensure that all youth and adults experience successful mentoring relationships.

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1: THE BASICS ABOUT LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) YOUTH

When talking about LGBT youth issues, it is important to understand the definitions of several important terms. Please refer back to this section later if you are unsure of what a word means.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS¹

Sexual Orientation: The deep-seated direction of one's sexual attraction, based on feeling AND NOT behavior. A person can identify as gay without having engaged in same-sex behavior.

Sexual Behavior: The behaviors and actions in which one engages, which does not determine orientation.

Sexual Identity: How one defines his or her sexuality and how it is presented to and perceived by others.

Homosexual: Someone who is romantically and sexually most attracted to people of his or her same gender. For example, a man who is attracted to other men.

Bisexual: Someone whose romantic and sexual attraction is directed at both genders. For example, a woman who is attracted to both women and men.

Gay: The preferred synonym for homosexual. Gay is typically used to describe men who are homosexual, but the term can be used for women as well.

Lesbian: A preferred synonym for women who are homosexual.

Questioning: Someone who is unsure of their sexual orientation and questioning the identity of their feelings.

Gender Identity: One's internal sense and expression of masculinity or femininity, not necessarily related to physical sex characteristics.

Transgender: An umbrella terms used to describe someone whose gender identity or expression differs from the conventionally-expected one associated with his or her physical sex. For example, a biological woman whose gender identity is masculine.

Pre-Operative: A transgender person who intends to alter their physical sex characteristics to resemble that of the appropriate sex through hormone therapy and/or surgery.

Post-Operative: A transgender person who already has altered their physical sex characteristics to resemble that of the appropriate sex through hormone therapy and/or surgery.

Non-Operative: A transgender person who does not intend to alter their physical sex characteristics to resemble that of the appropriate sex through hormone therapy and/or surgery.

LGBT: An acronym used to describe and include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

Queer: An umbrella term used by LGBT people. The term can be pejorative but has been re-owned and used by some LGBT people. It can be considered more inclusive of various sexual and gender identities.

Straight-Ally: A heterosexual person who accepts, promotes, and supports the rights of LGBT people.

Coming Out: The process of first recognizing one's non-heterosexual orientation or transgender identity and then sharing it with others.

Homophobia: The irrational fear of homosexuality resulting in prejudice and discrimination of LGBT people.

Heterosexism: The societal promotion of heterosexuality as being superior to other sexual orientations.

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL ORIENTATION²

Sexual orientation is an important part of a person's identity and one of the four components of sexuality. Sexual orientation is distinguished by an enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to individuals of a particular gender. The three other components of sexuality are biological sex, gender identity, and social sex role. According to the American Psychological Association, the three commonly-recognized sexual orientations are homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual. Sexual orientation is different from sexual behavior because it refers to feelings and self-concept. People may or may not express their sexual orientation through their behaviors.

There is no known cause for sexual orientation. While many theories about causation have been proposed, none has been proven. Most scientists agree that sexual orientation is not a choice and is shaped at an early age through complex interactions of biological, psychological, and social factors. For most people, sexual orientation tends to emerge during early adolescence without any prior sexual experience.

Homosexuality and bisexuality are not considered to be mental illnesses: research shows that homosexuality in and of itself is not associated with emotional or social problems. The American Psychiatric Association and American Psychological Association removed homosexuality as a classified mental disorder from their diagnostic manuals in 1973 and 1975 respectively. However, LGBT people often deal with difficulties in sharing their sexual orientation with others because of widespread homophobia. At an early age, most children are taught that homosexuality is wrong. LGBT people often internalize this belief, and it can create great emotional pain when their sexual orientation begins to emerge. They fear rejection and can go to great lengths to hide or deny their feelings.

Sexual orientation cannot be changed through "reparative therapy." In fact, more harm than good often results from therapies designed to change a person's sexual orientation. Instead, efforts should be focused on diminishing homophobia, which is based upon misinformation and stereotypes of LGBT people and homosexuality. By educating all people about sexual orientation and LGBT people, anti-gay prejudice is likely to diminish. Studies show that people who have the most positive attitudes toward LGBT people know someone who is openly-LGBT. And fears that access to information about homosexuality will affect a person's sexual orientation are simply not valid.

BEING TRANSGENDER³

Gender is often an important part of a person's identity. One of the first questions typically asked about a newborn baby is whether the child is a boy or girl. For some people, however, this gender assignment does not match their own internal sense of masculinity or femininity, and they feel at odds with their own body. This mismatch can vary, and the person may express that variation through a range of methods, ranging from dressing in gender-appropriate clothing to hormone therapy and reconstructive surgery.

The word "transgender" is actually an umbrella term used to include many distinct yet related groups which express gender variations in different ways. There are three main categories into which a transgender person may fall: pre-operative, post-operative, and non-operative. The decision to use hormones and surgery is a serious one and usually involves psychotherapy. Often, a person seeking surgery and/or hormone therapy will be diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder. This psychological classification is found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association. While a specific cause for being transgender is unknown, some theories suggest a biological or genetic reason.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not necessarily related, so it should not be assumed that a transgender person is also gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while a transgender person might struggle with expressing their true gender identity, they do not necessarily struggle with knowing their sexual orientation. Therefore, if a youth comes out as transgender, it does not mean that the young person is also gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Transgender youth can face many challenges. These young people frequently struggle to hide their true gender identity, resulting in arrested emotional development, deep feelings of shame, and low self-esteem. Coming out as transgender is often a difficult process for everyone involved since the stigma surrounding transgender people is pervasive and strong. Family and friends might experience a mix of emotions ranging from shock and denial to anger and loss. Despite the challenges, many more youth and adults are living their lives openly and honestly, making awareness of these issues critical to the success of youth organizations.

HOMOPHOBIA

Homophobia is defined as the irrational fear of homosexuality, resulting in prejudice and discrimination towards LGBT people. Homophobia is pervasive throughout our society and is taught to us from a very early age. These messages are often learned from our families, friends, schools, media, and government. Homophobia is institutionalized within our society with discrimination in employment, housing, military service, and marriage. Such discrimination is still legal in many states and within the federal government.

Homophobia creates serious challenges and risks for LGBT youth. This irrational fear is often internalized as a belief, making the process of coming out much more difficult for LGBT individuals. Like most people, they are taught and believe that being LGBT is shameful and wrong. This internalized homophobia can have detrimental effects on the emotional and physical welfare of LGBT young people, including low self-esteem, isolation, depression, harassment, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and, most tragically, suicide.

“COMING OUT”

The act of coming out is often a difficult one for LGBT youth and adults. Because of homophobia, LGBT individuals often experience fear and trepidation about telling others his or her sexual or gender identity. Coming out is a process that takes place over a long period of time, and some LGBT people never actually share their true identity. LGBT individuals must choose whether or not to come out to people they encounter every day, like their dentist, grocery store clerk, or co-workers. This constant pressure to decide on disclosure can be challenging for many LGBT people.

Developed by psychologist Richard Troiden, the following model⁴ is used to describe the process of coming out. Not all people who come out as LGBT follow this model exactly or chronologically. However, it provides a good framework for understanding identity development for LGBT people.

COMING OUT MODEL

Stage 1 - SENSITIZATION

The person, often at a very early age, experiences feelings of being different from same-sex peers.

Stage 2 - IDENTITY CONFUSION

The person feels in turmoil and feels uncertain about his/her sexual identity. Often occurs in adolescence though, as with all the stages, it could occur earlier or later. Begins to think he/she is probably gay. This stage can last anywhere from a month to the rest of the person's life. May develop problems of guilt, secrecy, self-hatred, and isolation because of homophobia that is being internalized.

Stage 3 - IDENTITY ASSUMPTION

This may occur in adolescence or later. The person begins to define and understand him/herself to be gay and begins to accept this, especially as he/she begins to find and interact with other gay persons. The person begins to find ways to cope with being an “other” in society.

Stage 4 - COMMITMENT

The person begins to feel comfortable with who he/she is and begins to act on who he/she is by entering into relationships with persons of the same sex, disclosing identity to other persons, and living a more complete and honest life despite the pressures of society. The person is probably willing to acknowledge his/her sexual identity to persons who ask and who offer some safety. Some become involved in educating other people about the issues so as to help eliminate homophobia.

2: THE NEEDS OF LGBT YOUTH

LGBT youth in the United States often face serious risks and challenges to their health and well-being due to widespread homophobia in our society. Numerous studies have documented the impact of homophobia on LGBT youth and their health. Following are some key findings from studies and surveys conducted between 1989-2004.

LGBT youth realize their sexual orientation early in life.

Many LGBT people report feeling “different” at an early age. Research shows that gay and lesbian youth begin self-identifying at an average age of sixteen. Anecdotal evidence shows that, from an early age, many transgender youth felt uncomfortable with their biological sex and/or expected gender roles.⁵

LGBT youth face increased health risks because of societal homophobia.

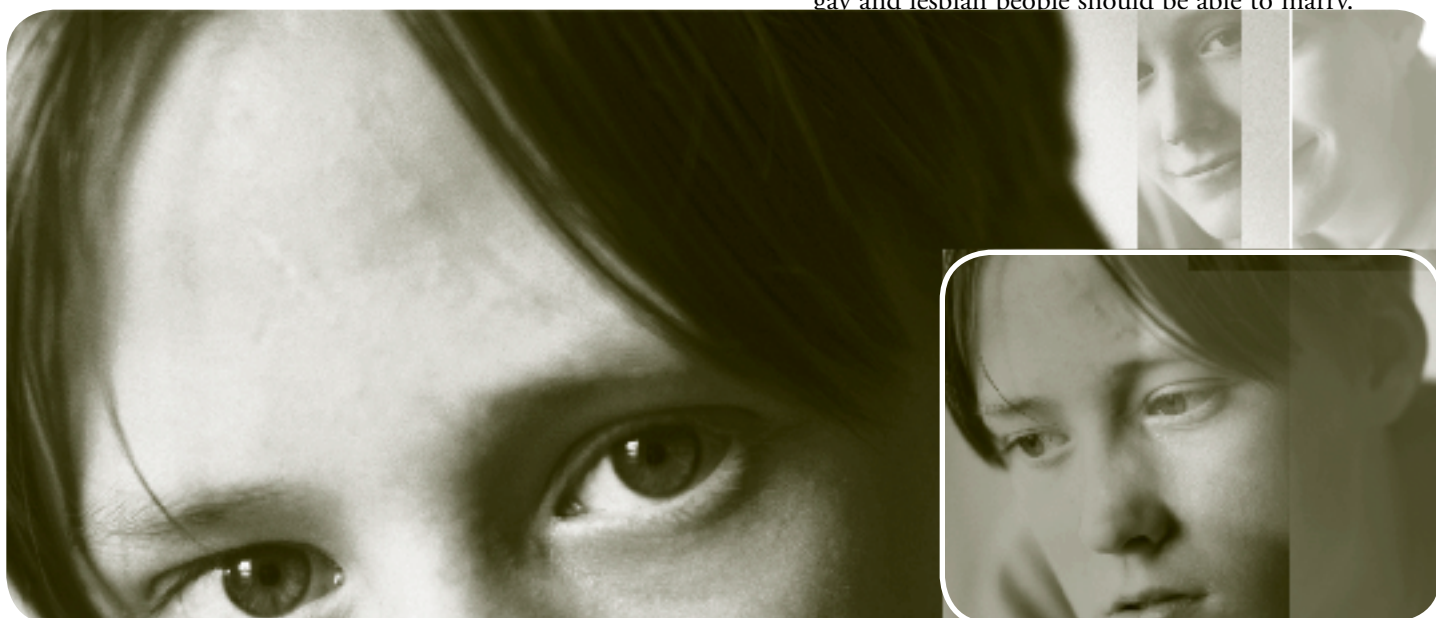
- Gay, lesbian, and bisexual orientation is associated with an increased lifetime frequency of use of cocaine, crack, anabolic steroids, inhalants, “illegal,” and injectable drugs.⁶
- 30% to 40% of homeless and runaway youth identify as LGBT.⁷
- LGBT youth are two to four times more likely to attempt suicide when compared to heterosexual youth.⁸
- Suicide is the leading cause of death among LGBT youth, accounting for up to 30% of completed youth suicides.⁹

LGBT youth are harassed in schools because of their real or perceived sexual orientation.

- In 2002, 7.5% of California middle school and high school students reported being harassed on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, which translates to over 200,000 students harassed every year.¹⁰
- Nationally, 84% of LGBT youth report being verbally harassed, with 39% being physically harassed.¹¹
- 55% of transgender students report being physically harassed because of their gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation.¹²
- 92% of all students report hearing homophobic remarks frequently, and 44% of students report hearing teachers make homophobic remarks.¹³
- 29% of LGBT students report missing at least one day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe.¹⁴

Studies show that a growing number of high school students and their families are open to discussing LGBT issues.¹⁵

- Nationwide, 67% of parents favor teaching students that gay people are just like other people.
- 56% of parents favor allowing groups or clubs on school campuses to promote tolerance and prevent discrimination against gay and lesbian students.
- In 2000, nearly four out of five high school students believed that gays should be able to join the military.
- In 2000, 54% of high school students believed that gay and lesbian people should be able to marry.



3: MENTORING LGBT YOUTH

LGBT youth frequently report feeling extremely isolated from traditional places of support like parents, school, and church. Mentoring programs and other youth organizations have an excellent opportunity to create safe spaces for young people to share their feelings, experiences, and identities without fear of judgment or rejection. By doing so, your program can help lessen the serious challenges and risks facing LGBT adolescents.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

In order to properly support a youth who is coming out as LGBT, staff, volunteers, and mentors should begin by being aware of their own attitudes and feelings regarding homosexuality. Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself:

1. How comfortable am I talking about homosexuality? About sexuality in general?
2. How do I respond to anti-gay jokes?
3. What was I taught about homosexuality? What do I believe?
4. What would I do if I knew one of the youth in my program was LGBT?
5. Do I have lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender friends?
6. How would I feel if someone I was close to came out as LGBT?

All volunteers and staff coming into contact with youth clients should at least feel comfortable in safeguarding the rights of LGBT young people. No youth should ever feel unsafe with his or her mentor or any mentor program staff.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

After assessing one's own feelings and attitudes towards homosexuality, it is important that you examine your organization's environment and policies on serving LGBT people. In order to properly serve LGBT youth, your organization should consider the following:

1. Are LGBT individuals listed in your brochure as people you serve?
2. Do staff orientations and volunteer trainings cover LGBT issues and policies?
3. Are homophobic comments not tolerated among staff, volunteers, or clients?
4. If you were an LGBT person at your organization, would you feel safe being open at your agency?
5. Are there any openly-LGBT persons working at or being served by your agency?
6. Are forms for clients and families inclusive of different types of households, including homes with partners of the same gender?
7. Do staff refer to "partner" or "someone special" rather than "husband" or "wife"?
8. Does your agency use contacts and makes referrals within the LGBT community?
9. Does your agency advertise services and job openings in LGBT media?
10. Is sexual orientation and gender identity included in your anti-discrimination policy that relates to staff, volunteers, and clients?

Mentor programs and organizations that want to create safe spaces and serve all youth should have this reflected in their program and organizational policies. All staff, volunteers, and clients should be made aware of these policies which expect safety and respect for all.

PROGRAM POLICIES ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

Mentor programs across the country are serving LGBT youth whether or not they are aware of it. As a guiding principle, programs working for the best interest of all youth should be sure to acknowledge and include LGBT information, training, and outreach. Effective mentor programs should have policies in place that promote the safety and health of all youth. These policies will be your guidelines to the proper functioning of your organization and to fulfilling your mission. Policies should include

1. A non-discrimination statement which includes sexual orientation and gender identity, covering staff, volunteers, and clients.
2. Clear anti-harassment policies which include prohibiting mistreatment of LGBT staff, volunteers, and clients. These policies should include consequences of harassing others based on real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
3. Training for staff and volunteers so they are well-equipped to serve LGBT youth and mentors. The training should be provided at the start of their relationship with the program and periodically thereafter.
4. Incorporate diversity into the activities of your program, including the LGBT community.
5. A hiring and volunteer recruitment plan which includes LGBT people.
6. Rules of confidentiality which protect youth from involuntary disclosure of their sexual and/or gender identity.

SCREENING FOR GOOD MATCHES

All good mentoring matches involve a multi-point screening process for both the youth and adult to ensure the best match and the most successful mentoring relationship. If you are matching a youth who is out as LGBT, be sure to consider his or her unique needs when matching them with an adult. Some of these needs could include feeling isolated from family and peers, as well as externalized

It is critical that mentors understand their own feelings about homosexuality and that they understand the impact homophobia has had on their beliefs.

and internalized homophobia. Your intake process with the youth should include asking about their needs to help make a strong match. Adults with a matching sexual and/or gender identity should be considered when matching the youth with a mentor. If you match the young person with a heterosexual adult, be sure that adult is trained and very comfortable working with a LGBT youth.

During the application and interview process, mentors should be asked to describe their comfort in working with an LGBT youth. All mentors should be comfortable working with a LGBT youth since a young person may not disclose this information during their intake process. A person who actively promotes discrimination against LGBT people should not be accepted as a mentor. Just as you would not want a racist or sexist person volunteering with youth in your program, you should not want someone who promotes homophobia.

TRAINING AND SUPPORTING MENTORS

All mentors should receive training about working with LGBT youth and have information about issues and needs of these adolescents. A youth may start the program before coming out as LGBT, and your mentor should be trained to know how to support the youth with this kind of disclosure. It is critical that mentors understand their own feelings about homosexuality and that they understand the impact homophobia has had on their beliefs. You can help mentors do this by providing them with self-assessment tools and use activities designed to explore and understand homophobia. See the Resources section to find these tools. Mentors should also know that they can turn to support staff for help. Staff should be trained and have access to resources in the LGBT community. Support and encourage a mentor of a youth who has come out to search for information about being LGBT.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE¹⁶

Your mentors and staff should be trained to work with different types of disclosure, including coming out as LGBT. The following are some supportive and appropriate ways to respond to an adolescent who is coming out.

DO'S

1. Be supportive. Let your youth know that he or she is okay.
2. Use the words the youth uses. If she describes herself as bisexual, do not say she is lesbian.
3. Deal with the youth's feelings first. Oftentimes, young people are feeling frightened, alone, and/or guilty. Allow them the time and space to talk about how they are feeling.
4. Ask the youth if he or she has told anybody else. It is helpful to know if they have others to turn to for support. Offer to support the youth in finding community resources to help him or her connect with the larger LGBT community.
5. It is important to understand that the youth is still the same person. You just know more about him or her.
6. Respect the youth's confidentiality and do not share the information with others unless they tell you it is okay.
7. Take the time to find out information about LGBT people, issues, and history.
8. Just be yourself. The youth has trusted you enough to come out to you. You do not need to be an expert on LGBT issues. You simply need to continue being the positive role model mentor you are by actively listening, asking good open-ended questions, and affirming the youth as a wonderful person.
9. Celebrate and congratulate your youth on coming out. It is a very courageous action for a person to take in a homophobic world.

Here are some things to avoid doing if a youth comes out as LGBT.

DON'TS

1. Do not ask questions or make statements that deny or doubt the youth. Such questions and statements include:
 - Are you sure?
 - It's just a phase.
 - I don't want to hear about it.
 - You need counseling.
 - I am so sorry.
 - Have you tried dating someone of the opposite sex?
2. Do not ask questions that would have been considered rude in the relationship before the disclosure.
3. Do not criticize the youth for being different.
4. Do not assume the youth is sexually active.

By understanding how to appropriately respond to any kind of disclosure, mentors and staff will help to ensure their relationships with youth are safer and more successful.

SUPPORTING “QUESTIONING” YOUTH

Youth, particularly LGBT youth, may go through a period where they are uncertain of how to identify and label their sexual/romantic feelings or gender. For a youth who is questioning their sexual or gender identity, mentors can play a critical role in providing safety for the youth. A young person who has a trusting, caring adult to turn to without fear of judgment is less likely to engage in risky behaviors in order to cope with the stress of homophobia and uncertainty. Mentors and program staff should follow the same “Do’s and Don’ts” list above when working with a youth who is questioning.

YOUTH CONFIDENTIALITY

Mentor programs should always respect and prioritize the confidentiality and rights of the youth. This confidentiality clause should be clearly stated and connected to disclosures like coming out as LGBT. Mentors should not tell a youth’s parent that their child is LGBT. That is the responsibility and option of the young person. Instead, the mentor should support their mentee in his or her decision to tell others about his or her sexual or gender identity.

PARENTS

If a youth comes out to his or her parents as LGBT and they turn to your organization for support, be sure to listen to their feelings and concerns. Encourage them to seek support through other organizations such as Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). See the Resources section for more information.

If a person is concerned about their youth having an openly-LGBT adult mentor, share with them your policy of non-discrimination and celebration of diversity. Let them

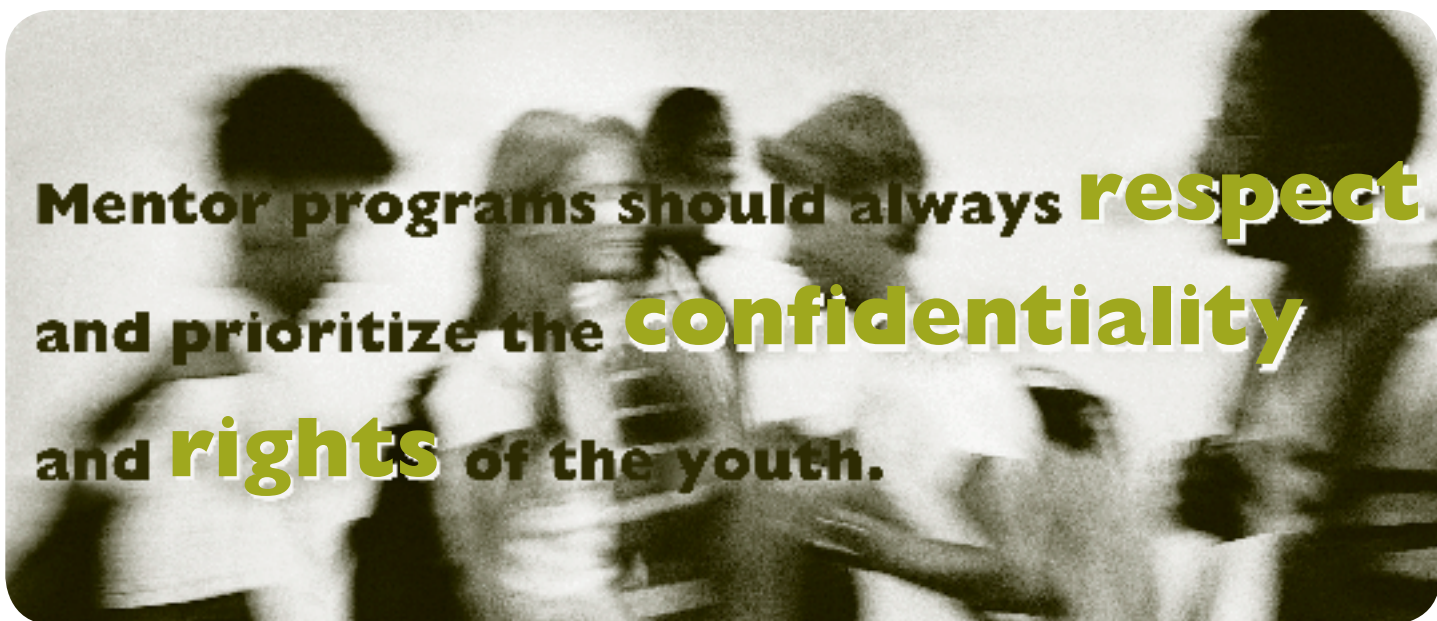
know that by following best practices for mentor programs, your program is always working to ensure the safety of the youth and the success of the mentor relationship. Also share with them your full trust in the integrity of the mentor and your program’s screening and matching process. However, if the family is obviously concerned and uncomfortable with the match, do not force the issue since it may serve as a roadblock in the development of the relationship.

If your program is specifically designed to match LGBT youth with LGBT adults in a one-on-one mentoring relationship, you should disclose this in the parental consent form. Mentors should never feel that they have to hide their purpose for working with the youth, and they should not have to hide their true identity. This will only hinder the positive development of the mentoring relationship.

As always, it is advisable to consult with your agency’s legal counsel with questions about liability and legal responsibility.

POSITIVE ACTIVITIES FOR LGBT YOUTH AND MENTORS

Activities for mentors and youth can include the chance to explore different aspects of the LGBT community. Especially if a youth is out as LGBT, your program could play a critical role in introducing him or her to the many aspects of the LGBT community. One-on-one and group activities might include volunteering at a local LGBT Community Center, screening an LGBT-themed film, attending an LGBT community event like a poetry slam, or reading LGBT-themed books. Mentors have an excellent opportunity to role model embracing diversity and exploring new communities.



4: LGBT ADULT MENTORS

SUPPORTING “OUT” MENTORS

Mentors who are LGBT can provide excellent role-modeling for a young person who is coping with social and systemic prejudice and discrimination. Many LGBT adults have developed strong, positive coping skills for surviving in a world which regularly attempts to devalue their self-worth as a LGBT person. A mentor who wants to be “out” as LGBT to his or her mentee and the mentee’s family should be respected and supported in this decision. Program staff should then take the initiative in disclosing the potential mentor’s sexual orientation prior to conducting the match. In an ideal world, all families would be open and feel comfortable with welcoming a good mentor into the life of their child, regardless of religion, sexual orientation, gender, or ethnicity. However, that is not always the case. All those areas should be taken into consideration when making a match. At the same time, it is imperative not to make the incorrect assumption that all families will feel uncomfortable with an LGBT mentor.

Mentor programs can support their LGBT mentors in being “out” in many affirming, practical ways:

1. Make your organization’s non-discrimination and inclusion policies immediately clear to volunteers, clients, and their families.
2. Communicate your support for LGBT mentors to be “out” with the mentee and his or her family from the start.
3. Provide LGBT sensitivity and awareness training to all incoming mentors and youth.

RECRUITING LGBT ADULT MENTORS

The LGBT community is an excellent resource for mentoring programs looking for qualified, caring adult volunteers. Many LGBT adults are looking to give back to their community in a constructive, positive way. In addition, they bring with them a wealth of experience and another diverse perspective from which youth in your mentor program may learn. Recruitment tools should be targeted at places like LGBT community centers and other LGBT community groups, such as recreation clubs. Recruitment messages should be specifically targeted at LGBT individuals by using the words gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender in your outreach campaign.

5: SCENARIOS

The following examples cover various situations relating to working with adults and LGBT youth. By considering what questions to ask and ways to handle situations, you can feel better prepared to support LGBT clients, volunteers, and their families. The following scenarios can also serve as examples of the type of issues and situations you can bring up during mentor training.

Mentors who are LGBT can provide excellent role-modeling for a young person who is coping with social and systemic prejudice and discrimination.

Example 1

Maria is fourteen years old and was referred to your program by her school counselor. During the referral, the counselor shares with you that Maria is often targeted for harassment by her peers. During the intake process, Maria shares that she told a friend she is lesbian. That friend told other people, and she is now regularly teased and called anti-gay names.

Questions to Ask:

1. What are some important needs to consider when matching Maria with a mentor?
2. How does Maria feel about identifying as lesbian?
3. How is the school handling the harassment?
4. Do Maria’s parents know she is lesbian?
5. What skills would a mentor need to work well with Maria?

Suggested Strategies:

Maria has two major challenges: being harassed at school and surviving in a very homophobic environment as a young lesbian woman. These should be given strong consideration when matching her with an appropriate mentor. Ideally, her mentor is someone who understands what it is like to be teased at school and can affirm and support Maria as a lesbian. Her harassment at school is likely to cause academic and attendance problems, so mentor program staff should be proactive in providing the school counselor with a list of suggested LGBT resources in order to work on improving the safety of the school.

Example 2

Thirteen-year-old John and his mentor, Mitch, started their mentor relationship three months ago. During a recent check-in call with you, Mitch shared that John came out to him as bisexual. Mitch reported that he listened supportively to John as he talked about feeling scared that his parents would disown him if they ever figured it out. Mitch is not sure how to further support John.

Questions To Ask:

1. How can you support Mitch in knowing what to do?
2. How has John's fear of his parents finding out he is bisexual affected him?
3. How can you provide Mitch and John with access to resources in the LGBT community?
4. Does John know that Mitch shared his sexual identity with you?

Suggested Strategies:

Mitch should be praised for supportively listening to John talk about his feelings of fear, and he should be encouraged to continue listening. It is important to remind him that he is not a therapist and not to take on feelings of responsibility. As a mentor, he can help John find LGBT community resources (such as a LGBT youth group) which may be helpful. Provide Mitch with a list of these possible resources to use in his mentoring with John. Be sure to ask Mitch if John knows he is talking with you about his bisexuality. If not, be sure to respect Mitch's confidentiality and do not share your knowledge about John with other people.

Example 3

Teresa was recently matched with thirteen-year-old Liz for a one year mentor relationship. Liz shared with Teresa that she is lesbian. Since then, Teresa has noticed that Liz is noticeably depressed. During one of the support calls, Teresa shares with you that she is concerned about Liz.

Questions to Ask:

1. How can you help Teresa support Liz?
2. What resources would you recommend?
3. How do you handle cases of potential suicide?

Suggested Strategies:

The immediate and greatest concern is to make sure that Liz is not a danger to herself. Talk to Teresa and ascertain the level of seriousness of Liz's depression. Does she need a listening ear? Is finding counseling resources necessary? Or does the situation call for immediate intervention? Remind youth and volunteers that if a mentee's life or somebody else's life is in danger, then your program is required to get them help.

6: SUMMARY

Every day, an increasing number of youth are coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Mentor programs matching youth with adult role models need to be well-equipped to support and empower these young people. LGBT youth are often at increased risk for harm because of homophobia and their invisibility in many youth organizations. However, the benefits from mentor programs which recognize their LGBT clients and appropriately address their needs will go far in fostering healthy youth development and reducing homophobia in the world.

Mentor programs should also recognize and celebrate the profound resilience and strength of these youth who live day to day in a world which tells them to be ashamed of who they are. Fortunately, many of our LGBT youth grow into healthy, well-functioning adults who can serve as strong mentors for youth facing sometimes daunting challenges and obstacles. The lessons in this manual will serve as a guide for your organization to support our young people and give them a better chance at living healthy, happy, and successful lives.



7: RESOURCES

The following is a compilation of resources your organization can use when working with youth and their mentors. Utilizing these resources will help you to successfully meet the needs of your clients, volunteers, and staff.

PUBLICATIONS ON LGBT YOUTH

1. GLSEN, “**2003 National School Climate Survey**,” 2003.
2. National Mental Health Association, “**What Does Gay Mean?**,” 2002.
3. California Safe Schools Coalition and the 4-H Center for Youth Development, University of California, Davis. “**Safe Place To Learn**,” 2003.
4. Seattle Public Schools, “**1995 Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey**,” reprinted in Third Annual Report of the Safe Schools Anti-Violence Documentation Project, 1996.
5. The Centers For Disease Control and the Massachusetts Department of Education, “**The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey**,” 1995.

ONLINE RESOURCES

1. **GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network)**
Information on education and school-based harassment issues
www.glsen.org
2. **GSA Network (Gay-Straight Alliance Network)**
Resources and information for gay-straight alliance clubs
www.gsanetwork.org
3. **California Safe Schools Coalition**
Resources and advocacy for safe schools for LGBT students
www.casafeschools.org
4. **SIECUS**
Sexual health research and policy organization
www.siecus.org
5. **Advocates For Youth**
Resources and advocacy for youth sexual health issues
www.advocatesforyouth.org/glbqtq.htm
6. **National Mental Health Association**
Information and resources for mental health issues
www.nmha.org
7. **PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)**
Resources and support for LGBT people and their families.
www.pflag.org

8. **Human Rights Campaign**
National legal advocacy group for LGBT issues
www.hrc.org
9. **ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)**
National legal group focusing on civil rights
www.aclu.org
10. **Out Proud**
Information and support for LGBT youth
www.outproud.org
11. **Centers for Disease Control**
Information about HIV/AIDS
www.cdc.gov/hiv

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

1. **Outlet Program-Community Health Awareness Council**
LGBT youth support, leadership, outreach, and education
Mountain View, CA
www.chacmv.org/outlet.htm
2. **Billy DeFrank Gay and Lesbian Community Center**
LGBT community center
San Jose, CA
www.defrank.org
3. **Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Community Center**
LGBT community center
Los Angeles, CA
www.laglc.org
4. **San Diego Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender Community Center**
LGBT community center
San Diego, CA
www.thecentersd.org
5. **The Center**
LGBT community center
San Francisco, CA
www.sfcenter.org
6. **Lavender Youth, Recreation, and Information Center**
LGBT youth resource center
San Francisco, CA
www.lyric.org
7. **Trevor Project**
LGBT youth support and suicide prevention
Los Angeles, CA
www.trevorproject.org

8: SOURCES

8. Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

Support for LGBT people and families
Chapters statewide and nationally
www.pflag.org

9. GLSEN

Support for LGBT students and teachers
Chapters statewide and nationally
www.glsen.org

HOTLINES

1. LYRIC Youth Talkline (*chat line for LGBT youth, operated by peer advocates*)

1-800-246-PRIDE
Hours: Monday - Saturday, 6:30-9:00 PM PST

2. AIDS Hotlines

1-800-342-AIDS
24-Hour Hotline

3. Gay and Lesbian National Hotline

1-888-843-4564
Hours: Monday - Friday, 6:00-11:00 PM EST

4. Trevor Helpline

1-800-850-8078
24-Hour Suicide/Crisis Line

¹ GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network), www.glsen.org

² American Federation of Teachers, American Psychological Association, National Education Association, et al. Just The Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth - A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel.

³ Transgender Special Outreach Network of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Our Trans Children.

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⁵ Advocates For Youth. (2002, June). *Transitions*, Vol. 14, No. 4.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and the Massachusetts Department of Education. (1995). The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

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Mentoring is an effective and increasingly popular approach for creating positive change in young people's lives. Early results from mentoring programs are promising, suggesting that positive, consistent attention from an adult, even a non-relative, can create change.

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