



Critical On-going Resource Family Education

# Right Time Training: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

CORE TEEN CURRICULUM

# In Acknowledgement

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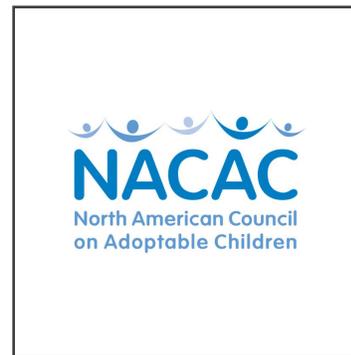


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# CORE TEEN CURRICULUM: RIGHT TIME TRAINING

The CORE Teen Curriculum is comprised of three components: 1) Self-Assessment; 2) Classroom Training, and 3) Right Time Training. It was developed through a 3 year Foster/Adoptive Parent Preparation, Training and Development Initiative cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant #90CO1132. Project partners included Spaulding for Children; the ChildTrauma Academy; The Center for Adoption Support and Education; the North American Council on Adoptable Children; and the University of Washington.

The intent of the project was to develop a state-of-the-art training program to equip resource parents to meet the needs of older youth who have moderate to serious emotional and behavior health challenges who require intensive and coordinated services and may be at risk for more restrictive congregative care.





# SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION

## OVERVIEW

The purpose of this learning opportunity is to enhance your learning around sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE). SOGIE is a term that includes all types of sexual orientation and gender identities and expressions. In this program, the term *diverse SOGIE* is used to describe youth who are expressing a non-traditional sexual orientation or gender identity, and who need to be supported through their sexual orientation or gender identity exploration with understanding and acceptance. The learning objectives are to:

- ▶ Increase awareness of the complexities of youth who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S)
- ▶ Strengthen understanding of behaviors that demonstrate acceptance and support of LGBTQ2S youth
- ▶ Enhance awareness of the critical role that family support plays in determining long term well-being outcomes for the youth in your care
- ▶ Learn strategies to help reconcile your value system with the support needs of your youth
- ▶ Enhance awareness of the needs for advocacy for LGBTQ2S youth

“

I belong to the people I love, and they belong to me. They, and the love and loyalty I give them, form my identity far more than any word or group ever could.

”

~ Veronica Roth

Youth who identify themselves as LGBTQ2S are disproportionately represented in the foster care system. Data is difficult to collect in this area, as there are no consistently applied strategies in place to track sexual orientation and gender identity. However, in studies that have been conducted, it appears that there are about two times the number of LGBTQ2S youth in the foster care system as there are in the general population. There are a number of reasons for this, including the rejection, abuse, or isolation that youth experience from their families of origin when they share their sexual identity. Foster parent training programs have not consistently and expressly trained caregivers to meet the needs of LGBTQ2S youth. While there are common needs, such as safety, security, and unconditional acceptance, there are also more unique circumstances that caregivers need to understand and support. Additionally, because providing LGBTQ2S youth with support and acceptance may challenge your own value system and create tension and conflict, you need to consider your level of readiness for parenting this special population of youth.

This video segment will cover a variety of topics, including introductions to terminology and nuances to language, illustrations of some of the unique experiences and needs that may surface with LGBTQ2S youth, and common myths associated with sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. This segment is intended to raise your awareness of the role of caregivers in assuring for the safety and well-being of LGBTQ2S youth, as well as highlight protective factors that will positively impact the well-being outcomes for the youth being cared for in your home.

This video segment highlights the specific research around parental and family acceptance—an important protective factor that helps to promote well-being—and the correlation to well-being outcomes for LGBTQ2S youth. After hearing global discussions about the importance of family support, the video will offer concrete ideas and strategies for demonstrating that your home is a welcoming, supportive, and safe place for youth and will describe the critical role of advocacy that you will play in your youth's life, and the possible risks your youth faces if they do not have a trusted adult to fulfill that role.

## PRE-VIDEO DISCUSSION

Family rejection is linked with serious health and mental health problems for LGBTQ2S youth. Youth who are highly rejected by their families and caregivers are more than eight times as likely to attempt suicide; nearly six times as likely to report high levels of depression; more than three times as likely to use illegal drugs; and more than three times as likely to be at high risk for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. This video segment highlights the specific research around parental and family acceptance—an important protective factor that helps to promote well-being—and the correlation to health outcomes for LGBTQ youth. After hearing global discussions about the importance of family support, the video will offer concrete ideas and strategies for demonstrating that your home is a welcoming, supportive, and safe place for youth and will describe the critical role of advocacy that you will play in your youth’s life, and the possible risks your youth faces if they do not have a trusted adult to fulfill that role.

“

Listen. Ask questions.  
Affirm that the child knows  
who they are.

”

~Jesse Fullencamp

- ▶ What do you believe youth who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity need?
- ▶ Does the language used in your home promote safety and well-being for a child who identifies as LGBTQ2S?
- ▶ How will my family members and support persons react to my child being LGBTQ?

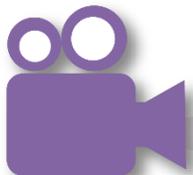
Resource Families can unintentionally communicate rejection to youth who are LGBTQ2S. Behaviors that families think are helpful and motivated by care and concern and trying to help the teen have a “good life” and be accepted by others, such as parental pressure to change an adolescent’s gender expression to enforce gender conformity so they will not be “picked on” or be at risk for bullying or violence, can be perceived by the youth as rejection. Making statements to the youth such as: “This is just a phase” or “You will grow of it”, or believing that the youth is too young to understand their sexual orientation or gender identity or that they are just confused as a result of the abuse they suffered, are examples of statements that parents may consider harmless, but in fact communicate a sense of rejection and lack of acceptance of the youth. These messages of rejection are often motivated by care and concern, but come from parental fear and anxiety.

- ▶ What experiences do you have with members of the LGBTQ2S population? What have you learned from these experiences?
- ▶ When you think about a child living in your home who identifies as LGBTQ2S, what are your biggest worries?

Providing LGBTQ2S youth with support and acceptance may challenge your own value system and create tension and conflict. Depending on your level of experience with LGBTQ2S issues, you may feel somewhat out of your comfort zone.

- ▶ How do you believe sexual orientation is determined?
- ▶ What religious guidance is offered to you on the issue of sexuality or sexual orientation?

Pay close attention to the personal stories shared in the segment, as they will illustrate some of the values reconciliation that families had to face. Think of other questions you may have and reflect on them while reviewing the video.



**23:45 MINUTES**

**VIEW** the SOGIE Right Time Episode

## POST VIDEO DISCUSSION

Talk with your viewing partner or support system about your reactions to the video. Was there anything that you heard that surprised you? What questions remain for you?

This video segment provided information on the critical role of parental and family support on a child's well-being as they move through the process of understanding and accepting their LGBTQ2S identity. You heard experts discuss the variety of cultural and societal messages that make it challenging for youth to come out, as well as family dynamics that either helped or hindered a young person's ability to feel safe in disclosing this part of their identity.

Discuss the experiences you have had with the LGBTQ2S community with your viewing partner.

- ▶ What are the issues that you are most comfortable with?
- ▶ What areas would you like to learn more about?

In the video, you heard parents and experts describe that LGBTQ2S identities are all a natural part of the continuum of ways that human beings identify themselves and live out their lives. We all have a sexual orientation and we all have a gender identity which is intrinsic to who we are. How we express the truth that we feel inside about our gender is our gender expression.

In the video you heard parents and professionals describe several misconceptions about LGBTQ2S youth:

- ▶ "They can't know, they're just confused, they'll grow out of it"
- ▶ "Sexual orientation and gender identity are lifestyle choices"
- ▶ "It's all about SOGIE"
- ▶ "LGBTQ2S identity is caused by sexual trauma"
- ▶ "There is something wrong with you"

Talk with your viewing partner about these misconceptions.

- ▶ Do you share any of these beliefs?
- ▶ Was there anything that you learned about these myths that surprised you?

As in other video segments, intentional parenting strategies that are restorative and intended to strengthen your relationship were discussed, including child directed interaction, unconditional acceptance of the youth's identity and experiences, and self-reflection of your own feelings and reactions to your child. All of this work is intended to support your journey in becoming a more intentional parent.

Parents who are new to this topic may feel overwhelmed as you are exposed to new information and concepts related to parenting LGBTQ2S youth. You are encouraged to give yourself time and patience with the learning process. Consider reviewing the information on the resources page to help familiarize yourself with the important issues that will help you be a successful parent of LGBTQ2S youth.

“

If you can't love and support them as they are, then you shouldn't be parenting them.

”

~Nicole Pauling

## PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE

Research has demonstrated that parental acceptance is a critical variable to assuring that LGBTQ youth experience positive mental and physical health outcomes over their lifetime. As was identified in the video segment, parental beliefs, expectations, and level of knowledge impact a parent's response to their child's diverse SOGIE.

Read each caregiver behavior and determine if the behavior is accepting, rejecting, or if you are unsure. Talk about your responses with your viewing partner or worker.

<u>Parenting Behavior</u>	<u>Accepting</u>	<u>Rejecting</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Maintaining a neutral, open facial tone and body posture during discussions of sexual orientation or gender identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asking questions about a youth's experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reserving judgement and not outwardly showing opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laughing at a "negative" gay joke on a television show	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening and tuning into the youth's emotional reactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging the youth to tone down their expression of sexual orientation for their own safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging the child to change so that they can have a "good life" or "fit in"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintaining consistent rules about age appropriate activities for all youth; sleep overs, dating, requirements to meet romantic partners, school dances or events, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeking out knowledge regarding language, symbolism, and common familial reactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding conversation around sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making statements that LGBTQ identity is a fad, and kids are just experimenting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

When they experience mistreatment in the community or school, assuming they were at fault for the reaction they received	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging the child to avoid talking about their identity in front of certain people or groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making statements such as “he’ll grow out of it” or “he is too young to know what he wants”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Purchasing hygiene products or clothing that reflect the youth’s gender identity or gender expression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# RAISING AWARENESS OF THE GENDER BINARY

Gender binary is the classification of sex and gender into two distinct and opposite forms of masculine and feminine. For example, when a male is born, gender binarism assumes the male will be masculine in appearance, character traits, and behavior, including having a heterosexual attraction to females.

Most societies across the world function in a gender binary, that being, recognizing either boys and girls, men or women. For those who identify as non-binary, this is an aspect of the culture that continuously communicates that they do not belong. Sex and gender are different concepts; sex is what is assigned at birth based upon a superficial designation often based on external reproductive organs. Gender is the identity one intrinsically experiences and expresses which may or may not be consistent with their sex assignment. Science has long identified that even sex exists on a continuum, as some are born with a combination of male and female internal and external reproductive organs and/or different hormone balances. However, the concept of gender existing on a continuum continues to be one that many struggle to understand.

To raise your awareness of how pervasive the gender binary is in your day to day life, consider how often you encounter each of the below:

- ▶ Men or women assigned restrooms
- ▶ Men or women assigned locker rooms/dressing rooms
- ▶ Greeting cards organized for “Him” and “Her”
- ▶ Toy aisles in stores – organized with boy or girl toys
- ▶ Clothing organized for boys or girls, men or women
- ▶ Commercials or television shows that portray only gender binary examples
- ▶ School or work dress codes that describe expectations in terms of men’s and women’s clothing choices
- ▶ School policies regarding school events such as blocking same-sex couples from proms and dances or requiring girls to wear dresses and boys to wear tuxedos
- ▶ Gender reveal parties



Please note other examples of the gender binary that you have noticed.

Questions to Consider:

- ▶ What might you do in your home to demonstrate gender neutrality? Consider things like keeping room color, bedding and decor neutral.
- ▶ What steps will you take to demonstrate to youth in your home that you do not make assumptions based upon the gender binary? Consider things like offering a variety of activities to the youth and supporting their preferences or making a variety of clothing stores available to the youth and allowing youth to make their own clothing choices.
- ▶ To what degree does your community demonstrate gender neutrality? How might you support shifting to greater neutrality within your community?

## REFLECTING ON BELIEFS ABOUT SOGIE

The topics of sexual orientation and gender identity have long been invisible or silent in our country. This is related to social norms, religious beliefs, moral standards, or other reasons, but generally has contributed to misunderstandings about the issues. Below are common beliefs about SOGIE. Read each item. Mark the box indicating if you agree or disagree with the item. If most of your family or friends agree with the item, note that by marking the last box.

<u>SOGIE Beliefs</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Family &amp; Friends</u>
This is just a phase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is unnatural for people to be LGBTQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay people are harmful role models for children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I highlight people of diverse SOGIE, I could alter my child's identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People choose their sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have to be LGBTQ to understand and support a youth that is LGBTQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ people are more sexually active than the heterosexual people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most sexual predators are LGBTQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A person's diverse SOGIE identity was caused by someone or some sexual event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diverse SOGIE is a mental illness or perversion, and can be cured or changed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If people were not so overt in their sexual orientation or gender expression, their life would be less difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I need to choose between my values or faith, and supporting a LGBTQ child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My acceptance and support of this child's SOGIE status is not important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Questions for Reflection:

- Review the number of items that you agree with. What does this say about your ability to support LGBTQ youth?
- Consider the number of items that your friends and family agree with. What might this indicate in terms of the support that you will or will not have while parenting LGBTQ youth?

# RESOURCES

These resources can provide some additional information that may help you explore Parental Regulation further.

- ▶ **Basic Definitions: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)**  
This resource, found on the KidsVoice (a non-profit agency that advocates in court and in the community to ensure a safe and permanent home for abused, neglected, and at-risk children) website, provides definitions for various types of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and other commonly used terms related to SOGIE.  
<https://kidsvoice.org/download/?t=resources&id=131>
- ▶ **Use of Personal Gender Pronouns**  
These resources describe the use of Personal Gender Pronouns and their importance.  
<https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/>  
<https://lgbt.williams.edu/resources/trans-resources/pronouns/>  
<https://lgbtq.vassar.edu/transandnon-binaryresources/gender-pronouns.html>  
<https://www.gsafewi.org/wp-content/uploads/What-the-heck-is-a-PGP1.pdf>
- ▶ **LGBTQ Affirming Foster and Adoptive Parents Needed**  
This recruitment brochure from the New York City Administration for Children's Services describes some of the qualifications needed to effectively parent LGBTQ youth and provides tips for creating an affirming home for LGBTQ youth.  
[https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/lgbtq/ACS\\_AffirmingFamiliesBrochure.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/lgbtq/ACS_AffirmingFamiliesBrochure.pdf)
- ▶ **Supporting Your LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Parents**  
In this factsheet, you will learn about LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system, the unique risks they face, and the important role that foster parents can play in reducing those risks. You will discover specific actions that you can take to create a welcoming home for all youth in your care and to promote your youth's health and well-being in the community. At the end of this factsheet are links to many resources for more information and support.  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/LGBTQyouth.pdf>
- ▶ **How to Support Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth**  
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, better known as Lambda Legal, is an American civil rights organization that focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities as well as people living with HIV/AIDS (PWAs) through impact litigation, societal education, and public policy work. This link provides several quick tips for creating an affirming environment and advocacy.  
<https://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/article/youth-trans-family-support>
- ▶ **Relationships and Sexuality: How to Support Youth in Foster Care and Adoption**  
This article addresses key relationship and sexuality issues for foster youth, and provides strategies for parents and professionals to address these needs.  
<https://nacac.org/resource/relationships-and-sexuality/>
- ▶ **Ensuring Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being for Transgender Youth**  
This article provides guidance intended to ensure that transgender youth are not re-traumatized in our care, and provides concrete tips that parents can use to welcome, support, and affirm transgender youth so they can build permanent connections and live to their full potential.  
<https://nacac.org/resource/transgender-youth-adoption/>

# CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

Throughout this session, you have been presented with information designed to add to your understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Now, it is time to develop a plan to address those areas you would like to change. Consider the points / questions below, as well as your self-assessment and classroom material, when identifying a plan to improve your skills related to parenting youth with diverse SOGIE.

- ❖ Identify / define the specific issue or concern you have related to parenting youth with diverse SOGIE.
  - ▶ If you completed the CORE Teen Self-Assessments, consider your results related to the characteristics that are essential to support parenting youth with diverse SOGIE (acceptance, supportive, attentiveness, spirituality, and advocate).
  - ▶ You may also want to review the material that was presented in classroom Session 4: Nurturing Youth's Cultural/Racial/Ethnicity and Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity and Expression.
  - ▶ The resources identified above may also support the development of your plan.
  - ▶ Consider to re-visiting the video [LGBTQ Youth: Voices of Trauma, Lives of Promise](#)
  
- ❖ Review your responses to the parenting behaviors checklist.
  - ▶ What behaviors can you identify that may need to shift?
  - ▶ Which characteristics are strengths of yours?
  - ▶ How will you handle the feelings you may have during difficult moments? What will you need to stay regulated and feel well supported?
  
- ❖ You have learned that in order to establish a safe, restorative, healing relationship with your youth, some of your deeply held beliefs may need to shift. This is a challenging task, however, research shows that there are a variety of techniques that can assist us in shifting our belief structure. Review your responses to the SOGIE Beliefs Checklist. If you are challenged in your values or beliefs, please select at least one of the suggestions below for your Action Plan.
  - ▶ Discuss with friends or family what you have learned with others regarding the research that exists regarding LGBTQ2S youth. Attempt to share the information you have learned in this classroom portion and real time video with others who may have misconceptions regarding this population.
  - ▶ Research local LGBTQ2S events in your community and attend one. Having positive experiences and interacting with people directly can have tremendous impacts on our pre-conceived notions regarding a group of people.
  - ▶ Connect with others who can support you on this journey, such as PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).
  - ▶ Think about how you will navigate extracurricular activities, dating, clothing choices, and Prom, homecoming and other school events. Do you know your local school district's policies and resources for LGBTQ2S youth?
  - ▶ If your challenge is around your faith, there are resources within your own community to help you reconcile the dissonance you may be feeling. Visit the websites below to access additional materials specific to religious reconciliation.
    - <https://www.hrc.org/resources/faith-resources>
    - <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/resources/sogi/>

- ❖ Including youth in the learning process is your first opportunity to signal that you are a safe person. Consider how you might involve your youth in your Action Plan as part of the growth process.
  - ▶ Use community resources and share with your youth what you have learned; ask them questions and participate jointly in beginning to understand the continuums of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.
  - ▶ Allow youth to be the expert and encourage them to share their views.
  
- ❖ Consider your current support system and determine if you have the support needed to parent youth with diverse SOGIE.
  - ▶ Did you identify attitudes and beliefs in your support network that will be helpful? How will you access these supports?
  - ▶ If members of your network are not good sources of support for parenting youth with diverse SOGIE, how will you navigate your ongoing relationships with those individuals? What might you need to consider in terms of the interaction between the youth and those members of your network?
  
- ❖ Consider the level of community resources and advocacy opportunities that are available to you.
  - ▶ Does your community have specialized medical providers in sexual health, gender expression or transition?
  - ▶ Are there community –based organizations that support LGBTQ2S youth?

Based on your reflection on the areas outlined above, select some areas where you need enhance your skills in parenting youth with diverse SOGIE. Add these areas to your Action Plan.

Areas that I need to learn more about	Ideas about how I will learn more	What resources (both people and educational) will you reach out to for help?	Who will give me feedback on my efforts?
1.			
2.			
3.			