

SUPPORTING LGBTQ YOUNG  
PEOPLE IN FOSTER CARE  
*THE ROLE OF MASTERS AND JUDGES*

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# Defintions

- ▣ Lesbian
- ▣ Gay
- ▣ Bisexual
- ▣ Transgender
  - Gender identity
  - Gender non conforming
  - Drag
- ▣ Questioning/Queer

# Impact of Silence

- ▣ 3 People who are important in your life
- ▣ 3 Places you like to frequent
- ▣ 3 Activities you like to engage in
- ▣ 3 Topics you like to discuss

# What do we know?

- ▣ What experiences do you think LGBTQ youth have in
  - Group homes
  - Foster homes
  - Court
  - With Lawyers
  - In School
- ▣ What do they hear/see?
- ▣ How might they react?

# Foster Care

- ▣ 17.5% of youth in the foster care system identify as LGBTQ, although they make up 5% to 10% of the general population
- ▣ 26% of LGBTQ youth reported that their parents or guardians told them to leave home after learning of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- ▣ LGBTQ youth entering foster care are “twice as likely to have experienced family conflict, child abuse, and homelessness as other youth”



- ▣ 74% of youth believed they had experienced prejudicial treatment by service providers because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- ▣ In another study, 100% of LGBTQ youth reported experiencing verbal harassment
- ▣ 70% alleged they were victims of physical violence in group homes
- ▣ 78% stated that they were removed or ran away

- ▣ LGBTQ youth who have been rejected by their families are:
    - eight times more likely to have attempted suicide
    - six times more likely to exhibit high levels of depression
    - three times more likely to engage in illicit drug use
    - three times more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior
- than peers with supportive families



# Education system

- ▣ 90% reported hearing their classmates use anti-LGBTQ language (“that’s so gay,” “fag,” “dyke,”) on a regular basis
- ▣ 21% of students regularly heard staff use homophobic language and 26% observed staff making negative remarks about someone’s gender expression
- ▣ 21% reported being taught about positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, and events.
- ▣ Slightly more than half were able to access information about LGBTQ communities and issues via school internet

- ▣ 80% of LGBTQ students reported experiencing verbal harassment from peers because of their sexual orientation
- ▣ Nearly 60% of students surveyed have endured name calling and threats in response to their gender expression.
- ▣ 30% of students had faced minor physical harassment such as being pushed or shoved, while 10% received more serious injuries, such as having been punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon
- ▣ Approximately 40% of students reported damage to personal property such as cars, clothing, and books
- ▣ Sexual harassment was a problem for 60% of the students
- ▣ Electronic harassment or “cyberbullying” was reported by almost half of the students

# Education

- ▣ Of the students who were victims of bullying
  - 65% never reported these incidents to school staff
  - 63% never told a family member about the incident
- ▣ Among students who did report incidents to school authorities
  - 56% said that reporting resulted in effective intervention.

# Code of Conduct

- ▣ (5) A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice. A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct manifest bias or prejudice, including but not limited to bias or prejudice based on race, sex, ...sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, and shall not permit staff, court officials and others subject to the judge's direction and control to do so.

# Judicial Bench Cards

- ▣ Positive Attitudes
- ▣ Fair Treatment
- ▣ Services and Support
- ▣ Placement and Permanency

# Judges/Masters

- ▣ The Judge is the gate keeper for a youth's safety, permanency, and well being. Everyone follows the Judge's lead. The Judge is unbiased, objective, and decides what is in the best interests of the child. The Judge decides whether the child comes into care, what services are ordered, visitation with parents and siblings, the child's permanency plan, and whether the department has made reasonable efforts.
- ▣ If the Judge creates an open, supportive courtroom for all young people (LGBT included), insists the agency keep the youth safe, approve an appropriate placement, and requires all parties to respect the youth, then other professionals will respect the Judge's lead.

# Safety/Permanency/Well Being

- ▣ Foster homes/Group homes
- ▣ Families
- ▣ School
- ▣ Mental health/Substance abuse
- ▣ Service providers
- ▣ Social Workers
- ▣ CASA
- ▣ Lawyer
- ▣ Social Activities
- ▣ Homelessness

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