

Supporting Permanency for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care

Host

Children's Bureau

Moderator

Taffy Compain

Children's Bureau

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Today's Objectives

To promote and support safety, permanency, and improved well-being for LGBTQ youth in care by highlighting:

- Effective engagement and welcoming strategies for the youth, caregivers, and the State agency
- The importance of providing appropriate services to support permanency and connections for LGBTQ youth
- The importance of initial and ongoing individual assessments
- Helpful resources that will support those working with this population

Today's Presenters

Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative (Center for the States)

- Emily (Emmie) Brunelle, Youth Consultant

Los Angeles LGBT Center

- Lisa Parrish, Project Director

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

- Juliana Harms, Administrator of Social Work Practice

2015 National Foster Care Month Initiative

- A collaborative effort of the Children's Bureau, Child Welfare Information Gateway, and partnerships with Federal, State, and local agencies, organizations, associations, and system-involved youth and families.
- Provides a website that offers targeted information for youth, caregivers, professionals, and the community that focus on supporting and achieving permanency for children and youth involved in foster care.

National Foster Care Month 2015

GET TO KNOW THE MANY FACES OF FOSTER CARE



May is National Foster Care Month, a time to recognize that we each can play a part in enhancing the lives of children and youth in foster care. Find resources and information to help ensure that their future is bright.

[Learn more](#)



Home

Resources

Real-Life Stories

Promote

More

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth>

Why the focus on LGBTQ Youth?

- There are approximately 182,000 youth ages 10–18 in foster care in the United States. Conservative estimates provide that an estimated 5–10 percent are LGBTQ.
- Like all young people, LGBTQ youth in foster care need individualized supports and services. This support begins with connecting them with a nurturing family to help them feel safe and protected, negotiate adolescence, support their identity, and grow into healthy adults.

Federal Supports

- White House
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Administration for Children and Families

Emmie's Story

<https://www.fosterclub.com/article/emmies-story>

Why is it important to support LGBTQ youth?

Youth Need:

- Safe spaces - placements and people
- Inclusion to experience normalcy
- Acceptance - This is different from tolerance!
- Protection and prevention from bullying
- Prevention of further trauma and shame
- Community – “It takes a village!”
- Ability to develop their identity

RISE PROJECT LOS ANGELES

Lisa Parrish, RISE Project Director, Los Angeles LGBT Center

Children's Bureau National Foster Care Month Webinar
May 14, 2015



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Public-Private Collaboration

- RISE Project: 5-year cooperative agreement awarded to Los Angeles LGBT Center for 2011-2015
- To design and evaluate interventions aimed at increasing permanency among LGBTQ youth in child welfare system
- Collaboration led by the Los Angeles LGBT Center with:
 - County departments (children and family services, mental health)
 - Private foster care agencies
 - LGBT and legal advocates (Children's Law Center of LA, UCLA Williams Institute)

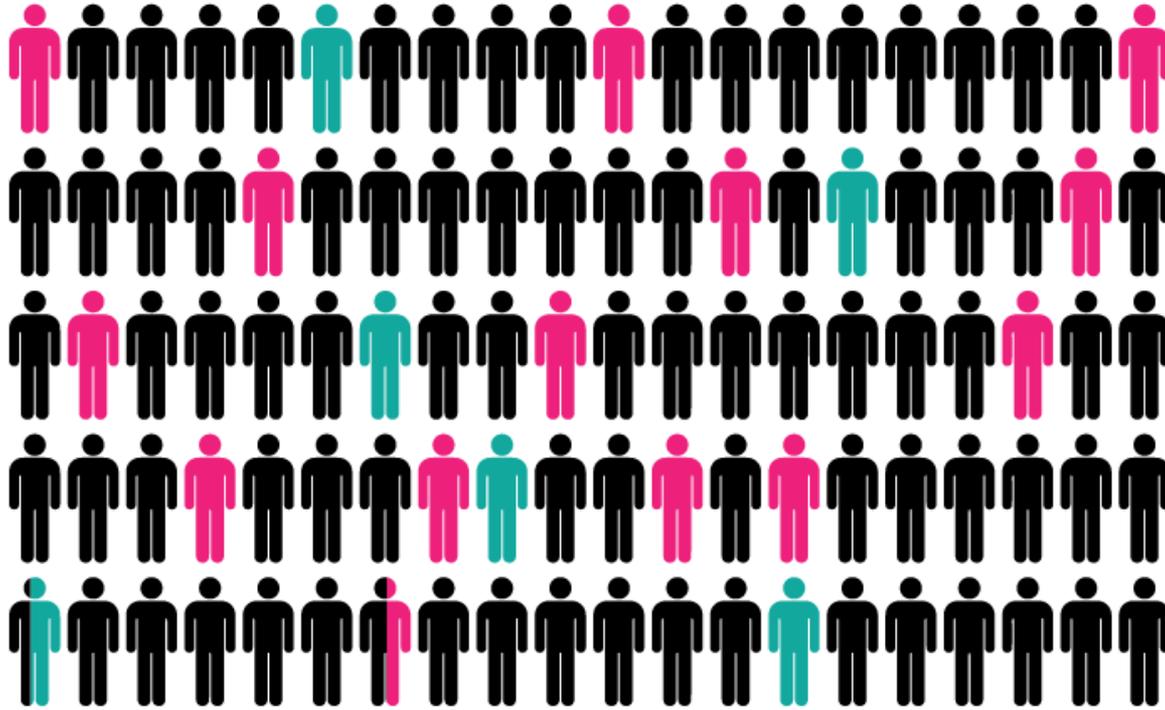


The RISE Project

- Los Angeles Foster Youth Survey
 - *Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Foster Care: Assessing Disproportionality and Disparities in Los Angeles, 2014*
- Outreach and Relationship Building (ORB) intervention, an organizational-level component
- Care Coordination Services intervention, a child- and family-level component



Los Angeles Foster Youth Survey Results



3000 Potential Contacts
786 Responses

13.4% LGBTQ
5.6 % Transgender
19% identify as LGBTQ

Data Source: Wilson, Bianca D.M., Ph.D., Khush Cooper, MSW, Ph.D., Angeliki Kastanis, M.P.P., and Sheila Nezhad, M.D.P.
Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Foster Care: Assessing Disproportionality and Disparities in Los Angeles. 2014. Print.



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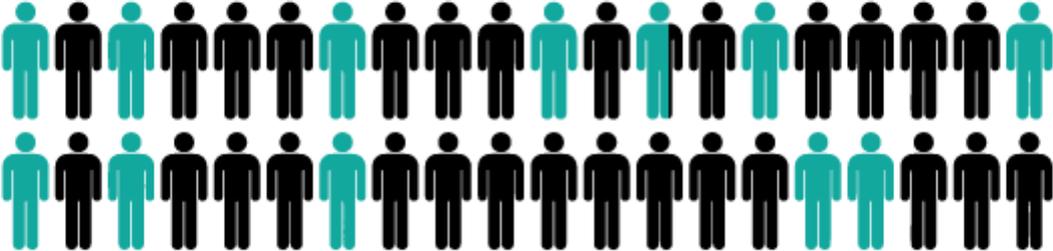


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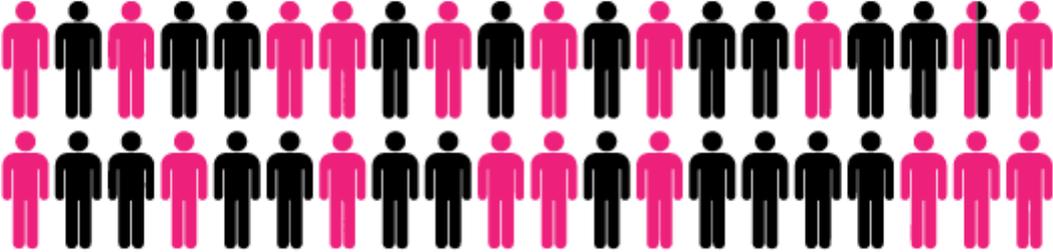


37.7% of LGBTQ youth Reported Discrimination related to LGBTQ Identity or Gender Expression

29.5% of 12-16 year olds (ALMOST 1 IN 3)



46.3% of 17+ year olds (ALMOST 1 IN 2)



Data Source: Wilson, Bianca D.M., Ph.D., Khush Cooper, MSW, Ph.D., Angeliki Kastanis, M.P.P., and Sheila Nezhad, M.D.P. Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Foster Care: Assessing Disproportionality and Disparities In Los Angeles. 2014. Print.

RISE Care Coordination Services

- Care coordination teams - RISE staff
 - Facilitator
 - Youth specialist
 - Parent partner (parent of an LGBTQ child)
 - Clinicians
 - Family finding specialists

Form a Child and Family Team with professional and natural supporters



RISE Care Coordination Services

- Eligible children and youth
 - LGBTQ and gender non-conforming children and youth ages 5-19
 - With open child welfare cases in foster care or at home
 - Can be dually involved with the probation system
 - Cannot be in a locked setting unless a transition to a lower level of care is planned



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Care Coordination Services: 5 Essential Functions & Goal

Child Level Intervention



Care Coordination Services: Essential Functions & Phases



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The RISE Initiative is funded by 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 number 90-CT-0154.

WHAT RISE DOES:
ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

ENGAGEMENT

COLLABORATIVE TEAMING

STRENGTHS & NEEDS BASED PRACTICE

FAMILY CONNECTIONS EXPANSION

LGBTQ SUPPORT & EDUCATION



PHASE 1 PREPARATION & TEAMING

- ▶ Contact with Caseworker
- ▶ Intake meeting with youth
- ▶ Youth Specialist 1-on-1
- ▶ Parent Partner 1-on-1
- ▶ First Team meeting



PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ 4 - 6 Team Meetings
- ▶ Completed Vision Statement, Strengths Chat Family Map & Eco Map
- ▶ Initial Plan of Care
- ▶ Family Finding discovery plan



PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ Expand network of natural supports
- ▶ Provide LGBTQ educational materials
- ▶ Increase in LGBTQ integration behaviors
- ▶ Assess Emotional Permanency Indicators



PHASE 4 TRANSITION

- ▶ Identify Permanency Resource
- ▶ Develop Transition Plan
- ▶ Sustain family's consistency and commitment to LGBTQ integration behaviors
- ▶ Graduation

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RISE

Los Angeles County

RISE Project Care Coordination Team Enrollment

Current enrollment
n=40
3/3/2015



RISE
Headquarters



15 Youth placed
in Group Homes



11 Youth placed
with Family

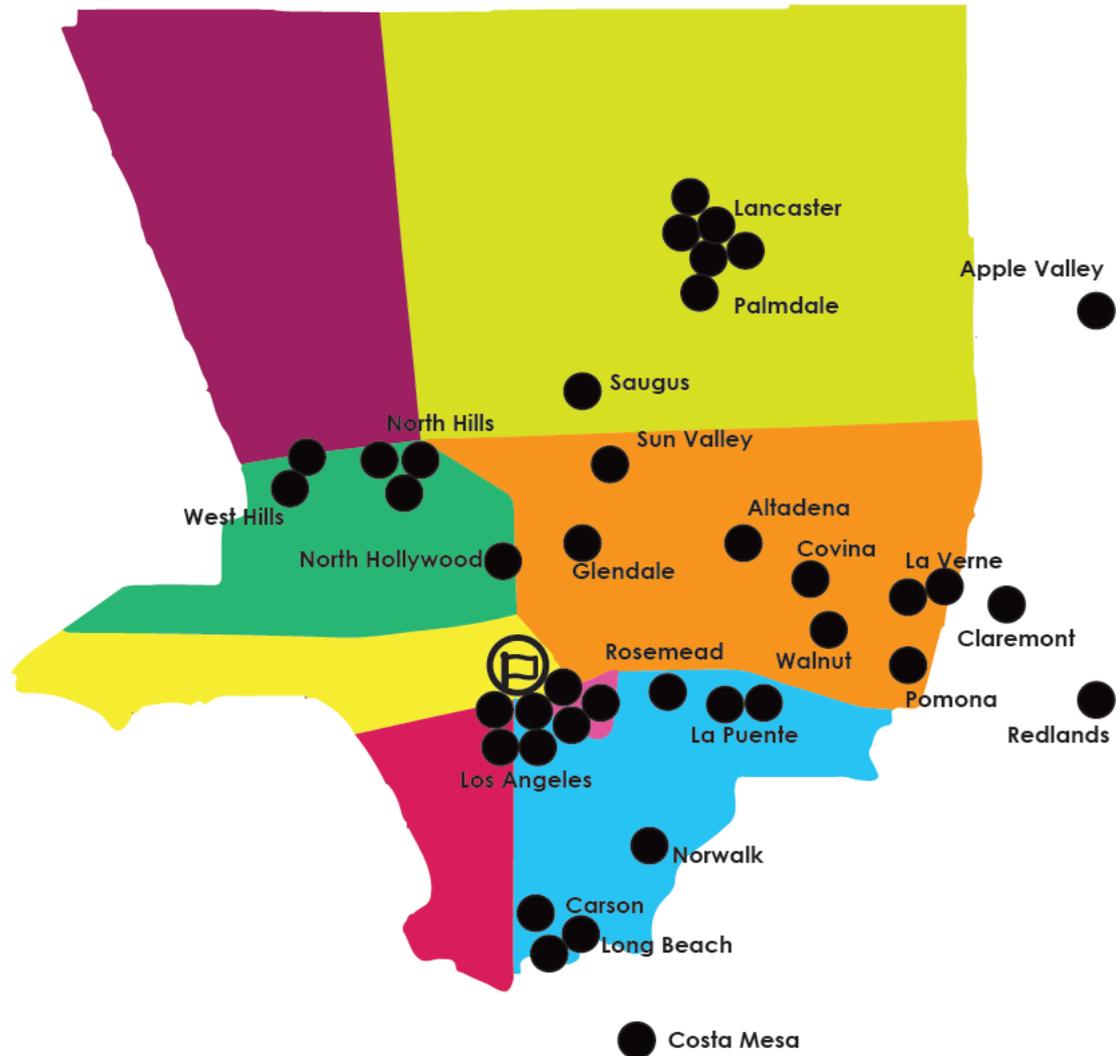


11 Youth placed
in Foster Homes



3 Other Placements

(Not Pictured: 1 youth out-of-state)



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Key Observations: LGBT Identity, Part 1

- Teams very protective of youth, fearing re-traumatization via rejection of their orientation, identity, or expression. Therefore, teams cautious to reach out to “family” that weren’t already identified as affirming.
- Teams excelled at youth engagement and affirmation, and encouraging youth voice in the process. Teams were at times slow to develop a network of support—the youth’s immediate needs came first. Teams still hesitant to challenge youth who were reluctant to expand their natural support network.



Key Observations: LGBT Identity, Part 2

- Youth felt validated, they reported feeling stronger; and their well-being appeared to improve.
- Families, caregivers, parents began to also feel validated and wanted more education on LGBTQ identity to understand their children.



For More Information Contact

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Supporting Permanency for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Juliana Harms, LCSW ACSW C-ACYFSW

Clinical Division - Administrator of Social Work Practice

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

- **State agency – one director**
- **Serve children and families in 102 counties with populations between approximately 2,000 and 5 million people**
- **Field offices established throughout the State to cover multicounty jurisdictions**
- **Staff within the offices are a combination of Administrative, Management and Service Delivery personnel from the divisions of Child Protection, Permanency, Intact and Support Programs (licensing, monitoring, legal, budget/finance, clinical, etc.)**

Youth in Care

- Illinois has 17,507 youth in care.
- Ages 0-21
- Placement throughout State with relatives, traditional foster care, specialized foster care, adolescent foster care, group home, residential facilities
- Partnerships with private child welfare agencies – provide case management and care for approximately 80 percent of children served by the Illinois child welfare system
- Twenty-four different court jurisdictions oversee juvenile court cases.

Origin of Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Policy

- Illinois DCFS was the first child welfare agency in the nation to develop an LGBTQ youth service policy, resulting from:
 - Recognition of increasing numbers of LGBTQ youth in the care of the Department. *DCFS director supports creation of written policy and training for staff.*
 - 2003 – Discussion regarding needs of LGBTQ youth
 - ❖ DCFS administration
 - ❖ DCFS psychologists
 - ❖ Lambda Legal
 - ❖ State legislator(s)

Origin of DCFS Policy Cont'd

- Initial practice guidelines in 2003:
 - ❖ ***“Do No Harm”***
 - ❖ ***Dos and Don'ts for interventions with LGBTQ youth in substitute care – remove “pathology”***
- DCFS Psychologists and Clinical personnel provided best practice training to DCFS and private agency partners. Grassroots efforts were undertaken to offer education and resources for child welfare staff.
- Individual consultation available
- Out of the Margins Listening Forums (2003/2004)

Training and Practice Development

- **LGBTQ program added to Clinical Division – Specialty Services**
- **Specific Statewide LGBTQ coordinator position**
 - Consultation
 - Education/training/outreach
 - Resource development
 - Liaison with court and community
 - Data tracking
- **Ongoing partnership with DCFS psychologist for training and consultation**
- **Statewide LGBTQ Resource Guide**

Training and Practice Development

- **“FOUNDATIONS” training for new DCFS and private agency staff incorporates LGBTQ topics.**
- **Ongoing community partnerships/efforts with private child welfare agencies, providers, court, citizen allies**
- **Updated policy guide includes evidence-informed research and practice expectations, delineation of youth rights in care.**

DCFS Policy Transmittal 2009.6

- **Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning are protected by the Illinois Human Rights Act. They have many legal rights while in care, including the right to be free from verbal, emotional, and physical harassment in their placements, schools, and communities. The adults involved in their care have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that they are safe and protected. These youth also have the right to be treated equally, to express their gender identity, and to have the choice to be open about their sexual orientation.**

Where Are We Now?

- Expansion of LGBTQ Coordinator consultation role to include work with intersex individuals and ward/nonward youth and families – LGBTQIY/F
- Recognition and acknowledgment of increasing number of transgender (gender-expressive, gender-nonconforming) youth in care
- Efforts by resource/recruitment program dedicated to securing LGBTQ-affirming placement resources and developing foster resources in LGBTQ community
- Cook County and collar court systems reflecting youth identity with respect

Where Are We Now?

- **Training/technical assistance by Dr. Gary Mallon (2013-14)**
- **Policy enhancement to include trans-specific youth needs and rights (gender expression, documentation, placement, social-emotional)**
- **Cross-divisional efforts to support LGBTQ placement stability and family/community investment for youth (moving them from a silo)**
- **Relationships with medical professionals (Dr. Rob Garofalo - Lurie Children's Gender and Sex Development Program)**
- **Role of DCFS guardian in "Critical Decisions" for DCFS youth**

Where Are We Now? Cont'd

- Illinois Coalition on Youth: focus on prevention of youth homelessness
- Illinois DCFS youth listening forums – scheduling
- Survey of DCFS youth in care – scheduling
- Resource building: enormous variance throughout State
- Curriculum development for stand-alone training that can be accessed by all DCFS staff and private agency partners
- Development of youth-friendly information resources:
 - Electronic
 - Paper
 - Popular media

Still addressing challenges of creating change in a State agency and adjusting a binary system for nonbinary youth

People First: Legal Protections for Diversity

Illinois Human Rights Act

The Illinois Human Rights Act **prohibits discrimination** because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and over), physical and mental disability, **sexual orientation**, citizenship status, marital status, arrest record, and military status.

Illinois: Gay Marriage

- Civil unions allowed since 2011
- Gay Marriage Bill signed
November 20, 2013; law took
effect June 1, 2014

Illinois House Bill 0217

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Synopsis as introduced:

Creates the Youth Mental Health Protection Act. Defines "mental health provider" and "sexual orientation change efforts" or "conversion therapy." Provides that no mental health provider shall engage in sexual orientation change efforts with a person under the age of 18.

- Re-referred to Rules Committee April 24, 2015

For More Information Contact

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Emmie's Conclusion

How can workers be more supportive?

- Support youth-led, youth-driven, youth-centered plans and processes.
- Be willing to ask questions like:
 - “What are your pronouns?”
 - “How do you identify?”
- Remember: sexuality and gender are NOT their life!
- Go beyond cultural sensitivity.
- Meet youth where they are.

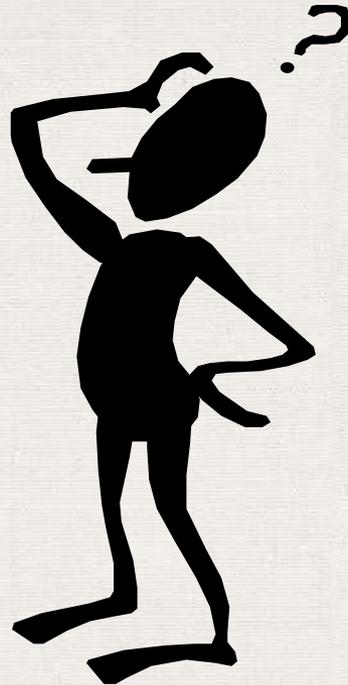
How can caregivers (and their families) be more supportive?

- Create a space of acceptance and support.
- Take the time to understand perspectives.
- Assess their individual needs.
- Educate family members (don't make this the youth's responsibility).
- Protect their vulnerability.
- Talk, don't hide.

What can agencies do?

- Bring youth to the table.
- Train workforce on LGBTQ vocabulary, current issues, best practices, etc. (ongoing training).
- Train and work with caregivers (relatives).
- Establish and implement policies and procedures based on youth experience.
- Openly and positively discuss LGBTQ youth and common issues.
- Consider using peers. Representation is important!
- Recruit homes specific to queer youth.

Questions



Noted Resources

National Foster Care Month 2015:

Get to Know the Many Faces of Foster Care

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth>

- Advancing LGBT Health and Well Being LGBT Issues Coordinating Committee 2014 Report
- Human Services for Low-Income and At-Risk LGBT Populations: An Assessment of the Knowledge Base and Research Needs

Both reports and more are available on the National Foster Care Month website at:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/resources/cwprofessionals/diverse/#LGBTQyouth>



Contact Information for the Children's Bureau's National Foster Care Month Initiative

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Evaluation Survey

Thank you for attending the webinar. We look forward to receiving your feedback.

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2127112/2015-National-Foster-Care-Month-Webinar-Survey-Supporting-Permanency-for-LGBTQ-Youth-in-Foster-Care>