

## BUILDING STAFF COMPETENCY

Despite recent progress toward legal and social equality for LGBTQ\* Americans, societal stigma remains strong and both LGBTQ youth and parents face significant challenges and disparities as they interact with child welfare systems.

Now — as some lawmakers work to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ youth and parents — it is perhaps more important than ever for these systems to work to improve practice with LGBTQ\* youth and parents. Staff training is an essential component of this work. This Beginner's Guide to LGBTQ Inclusion covers key best practices for agency leaders seeking to implement LGBTQ staff training.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL LGBTQ STAFF TRAINING EFFORTS

- » **Train all staff members and make the training mandatory.** All agency employees, including clerical staff, top management and any other employees who have direct contact with clients should receive LGBTQ competency training.
- » **Provide both foundation-level and advanced, role-specific training.** This will ensure all staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to support and serve their LGBTQ clients.
  - » Foundation-level LGBTQ training content includes: key terms and concepts, empathy-building exercises and opportunities to explore unconscious bias, research on the experiences of LGBTQ youth and parents in child welfare systems, best practices for creating an LGBTQ-inclusive environment.

### TERMS TO KNOW:

**\*LGBTQ:** Acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning."

**Lesbian:** Describes women who are attracted to other women.

**Gay:** Describes people who are attracted to members of their same gender.

**Bisexual:** Describes people who are attracted to more than one gender.

**Transgender:** Describes a person whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth.

**Queer:** Describes fluid identities and orientations, sometimes used interchangeably with "LGBT."

**Questioning:** Describes people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

**SOGIE:** Acronym for "sexual orientation, gender identity and expression." Everyone has SOGIE, not only LGBTQ people.

**Sexual Orientation:** A person's emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to other people.

**Gender Identity:** A person's internal sense of being male, female, or, for some people, a blend of both or neither.

**Gender Expression:** The ways people show their gender to others through clothing, haircut, roles and activities, etc.

- » Advanced, role-specific content should align with the scope of your agency's services. For example, if your agency provides recruitment services, you should receive training on best practices in recruiting and retaining LGBTQ resource parents.
- » **Conduct LGBTQ training on an ongoing basis.** A one-time agency-wide training effort will meet training needs temporarily; however, continued training efforts are necessary due to staff turnover and the evolving nature of best practices in LGBTQ inclusion. At a minimum, agencies should ensure that all new hires receive LGBTQ competency training. Ongoing training activities may include brown bag lunches where the focus is a specific LGBTQ topic; staff watching a film and having a discussion afterwards as part of a diversity series, etc.
- » **Carefully choose LGBTQ training curriculum and trainers.** When assessing your training options, consider the following:
  - » **Training content:** Inquire into what is included in the content and discuss how the content will apply to your agency's services. For example, if one of your agency's primary services is parent recruitment, the training should feature material that speaks to best practices with recruiting LGBTQ parents.
  - » **Trainer expertise in child welfare & LGBTQ competency:** Trainers with a firm grasp in both LGBTQ competency and child welfare are best prepared to provide the caliber training that can make your agency a leader in supporting and serving LGBTQ clients.
  - » **Trainer experience:** Determine whether the trainer has experience facilitating training at agencies like yours. Factors like the scope of your agency's services and the size of your staff can impact how well a trainer is able to meet your agency's training needs.

## TRAINING FROM ALL CHILDREN - ALL FAMILIES

The HRC Foundation's All Children - All Families project offers a three-part LGBTQ competency training series for child welfare organizations as well as a Training of Facilitators program aimed at building an organization's internal capacity to train on LGBTQ issues. To learn more, or set up a training for your agency, visit [hrc.im/acaf-training](http://hrc.im/acaf-training).

For a compilation of LGBTQ resources for child welfare professionals — including those that can be used for staff training and development — visit [hrc.org/acaf-resources](http://hrc.org/acaf-resources).

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## LEARN MORE

This tip sheet shares a few considerations for ensuring your LGBTQ staff training efforts are successful. Download the additional tip sheets in this series for more detailed information and ideas on next steps. Also check out the HRC Foundation's All Children–All Families project's innovative self-assessment tools, staff training offerings, and technical assistance for child welfare agencies at [www.hrc.org/acaf](http://www.hrc.org/acaf).

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