



Resources

- [OKC Youth United](#)
- [New York Times article, "Coming Out"](#)
- [It Gets Better Project](#)
- [Child Welfare League of America](#)
- [Lambda Legal](#)
- [National Prevention Strategy: America's Plan for Better Health & Wellness](#)

Oklahoma Healthy Transition Initiative Sites

Cleveland County
Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center
Family Frontier System's of Care
405-573-3903

Tulsa County
Youth Services of Tulsa
918-582-0061

For newsletter questions, contact: lgoldberg@odmhsas.org

Save the Date!!

Children's Behavioral
Health Conference

May 15-17, 2012

Tulsa Southern Hills
Marriott

Contact: 405-522-8019

Tools to Support and Engage LGBTQI2-S Youth

The first and foremost important step to being culturally competent with youth that are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, 2-Spirit is to acknowledge that these young people live and work in every community, including yours. Below are excerpts from 'Caseworkers with LGBTQ Clients' published by the [CWLA/Lambda Legal](#) Joint Initiative that helps in developing culturally sensitive relationships with this population.

Acknowledge that LGBTQ young people are in your midst.

Don't assume that all of your clients are heterosexual. Even if you think you do not have clients who are LGBTQ, you most likely do. Many LGBTQ young people fear the negative reactions that come from revealing who they are and carefully hide that they are LGBTQ.

Examine your own beliefs/attitudes that might affect your professional responsibilities to your LGBTQ clients. Be aware of your own beliefs, prejudices and gaps in knowledge surrounding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Regardless of your personal beliefs, you have a professional duty to care for your LGBTQ clients.

Be aware of your language.

Eliminate antigay slurs from discussion. Use gender-neutral language with all of your clients. For example, rather than asking a teenage boy if he has a girlfriend, ask if he has "someone special" in his life. Learn the difference between "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" and use the words *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, *transgender* and *questioning* in appropriate contexts.

Create a positive physical environment in your office that welcomes and affirms LGBTQ people.

Display recognizable symbols of support such as pink triangles and rainbow flags to let all your clients know that you are a sensitive, safe and welcoming person for LGBTQ people to go to.

Be prepared to work effectively with transgender youth.

Transgender youth may have unique medical and housing needs; they often face serious risk of harassment and violence. It's important that you seek out additional resources, if necessary, to provide appropriate services and placements. Allow all of your clients to express their gender identities in ways that are most comfortable for them, including allowing transgender clients to dress in the manner they choose. Be supportive of transgender young people's gender identity and expression. If you practice the above suggestions you can develop a trusting relationship that will be beneficial in providing culturally competent services for those youth with whom you work.

Questions? Contact: Robert Blue, OSOC Cultural Competency Coordinator, 405-522-3660 or rblue@odmhsas.org

ISSUE

03 Young Adults in Transition

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From the Oklahoma Healthy Transitions Initiative

Challenges for LGBTQ in rural & frontier areas

Youth often remain
anonymous in their
communities

Lack of anonymity in
rural communities may
"exacerbate" the
homophobia youth
experience from peers

Youth may use media,
such as chat rooms
and websites, to help
them discover and
develop their identity

Youth may connect
more often through
community
organizations for social
justice and economic
issues than through
social media

Public parks, parking
lots of fast food
restaurants, or
Wal-Mart are often
meeting spots for youth
in communities that
lack gay community
centers



OK Transition Workgroup "Youth & Young Adult Guided Strategic Planning"

On July 15, 2011 youth, young adults and providers from across the state convened to discuss the many challenges young people face as they transition to adulthood. Those youth who have experienced out-of-home care were invited to provide expertise that was representative of youth populations targeted to receive services through state, tribal, and local initiatives and programs aimed at helping youth transition successfully to adulthood. Adults working with transition-age youth also attended and contributed their insights. Youth participants included former foster youth, wraparound youth and young adults and youth who have experienced the Oklahoma juvenile justice system who shared their insights and opinions of perceived assets and gaps in existing programs or in the delivery. Experience was based on individual experiences in of out-of-home care: 1) program or practice elements which have been successful at engaging them or otherwise enhancing their opportunities to successfully manage the obstacles they had to overcome during their transition; 2) areas that need improving or are missing; and 3) ways they can be improved.

Notes were taken during open discussion on issues the participants find critical to effectiveness and were combined with written comments from participants. Information and input collected during the meeting was used for a larger statewide planning meeting on July 26, 2011.

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health
and Substance Abuse Services

Creating a Positive Environment in School

Teach respect for other students and prohibit bullying, harassment, and violence against other students.

Have "Safe spaces" for LGBT2Q youth to receive support from school staff, such as a counselor's office, designated classroom.

Encourage the development of gay-straight alliances that are supportive of LGBT2Q students.

Use health curricula and educational materials about sex that apply to LGBT2Q and use inclusive language and terminology.

Promote training for school staff on creating a safe environment for LGBT2Q students

Provide access to community service providers that services to LGBT2Q youth. (CDC, 2011).



Personal Stories from LGBT2Q Youth

Parents can help their LGBT2Q youth by talking openly with them and being supportive. Parents can also watch for signs of bullying, harassment, and depression.

The New York Times recently did a project called "[Coming Out](#)" (to allow lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth (LGBT2Q) to share their struggles, experiences, and stories. The story included several accounts by teens and young adults about their experience of coming out (New York Times, 2011).

The youth are each from different walks of life and have had very different experiences, each with unique challenges. Among them are Kailey Jeanne Cox, 15, of Denton, Texas, a devoted Christian who struggled at first with being Christian and a lesbian; and Joel Brimmerman, 17, of Wichita, KS, currently transitioning from female to male who tells of his challenges with being accepted by family and school mates. Also among them is Thomas Miller, 17, of Mandeville, LA, a member of his school's R.O.T.C. program and considering military after high school. Thomas said he does not feel completely accepted by other R.O.T.C. members and is unsure of joining the military due to the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that was in place at the time of the story. There is also Elsie Sethi, 17 of Brooklyn, NY whose sister "kicked her out" of the house when she started dating a girl. The article includes an anonymous story from Nowmee S., who immigrated from a south Asian country, states, there is no word for "queer" or "lesbian" in her native language (New York Times, 2011).

The New York Times began the project after the suicide of Tyler Clementi, a freshman at Rutgers College jumped from the George Washington Bridge after his roommate streamed a video of him and another man in a romantic situation on the internet (New York Times, 2011). The Times contacted the youth through advocacy groups and social networking sites such as Facebook (New York Times, 2011). The youth are from different parts of the country and are in different stages of coming out (New York Times, 2011).

In response to a rash of gay teens committing suicide and bullying of gay students in school "[It Gets Better](#)" was created. "It Gets Better" is a project that provides a website where young people can get support, share their stories, and view videos from older members of the LGBT2Q population telling them "it gets better" and they can lead successful and happy lives. Youth can also receive support through the Trevor Project. "The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth" (thetrevorproject.org). The Trevor Project offers youth a place to connect with other LGBT2Q youth, counseling through chat or a hotline, a place to submit questions, and links to community resources.

Source: New York Times http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/23/us/23out.html?_r=1 ; It Gets Better Project <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>



Violence Against LGBT2Q Youth

A national study found that LGBT2Q youth are more than twice as likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth.

Another study conducted in the Midwest of 7,000 7th and 8th graders found that students in a positive school climate and not experiencing homophobic teasing had the lowest levels of suicidal thoughts, depression, alcohol and drug use, and unexcused absences.

The study also found that LGBTQ youth were more likely to experience bullying and substance abuse than their heterosexual peers.

It was also found that students questioning their sexuality were more likely than heterosexual or LGB youth to experience bullying, drug use, depression, suicidal thoughts, and unexcused absences from school (CDC, 2011).

Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), 2011

This Month's Q&A Tips

Q: What are some resources for LGBT2Q young adults?

A: There are many resources available online for health information. It's important to use credible sources. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Who is the author?
- What information is available?
- Are citations provided?
- When was it published?
- Why does the resource exist?
- Is it comprehensive?



- [Go Ask Alice!](#)
- [Teens Health](#)
- [CDC Young Adults](#)
- [Young People's Sexual Health](#)
- [OK County Health Departments](#)
- [Planned Parenthood](#)
- [Central OK Eastern OK](#)

Results from a 2009 survey of LGBT2Q Youth

8 out of 10 students have been verbally harassed at school

4 out of 10 had been physically harassed at school

6 out of 10 felt unsafe at school

1 out of 5 had been the victim of physical assault at school

(Centers for Disease Control & Prevention)



Stay Informed

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Call: 800-522-8336

[Facebook odmhsas](#)