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School-Based Advocacy for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care

Webinar Series for National CASA/GAL for Children

October 6, 2020

Today's Presenter

Karey Scheyd

(pronouns: she/her)

ACAF Master Trainer & Consultant

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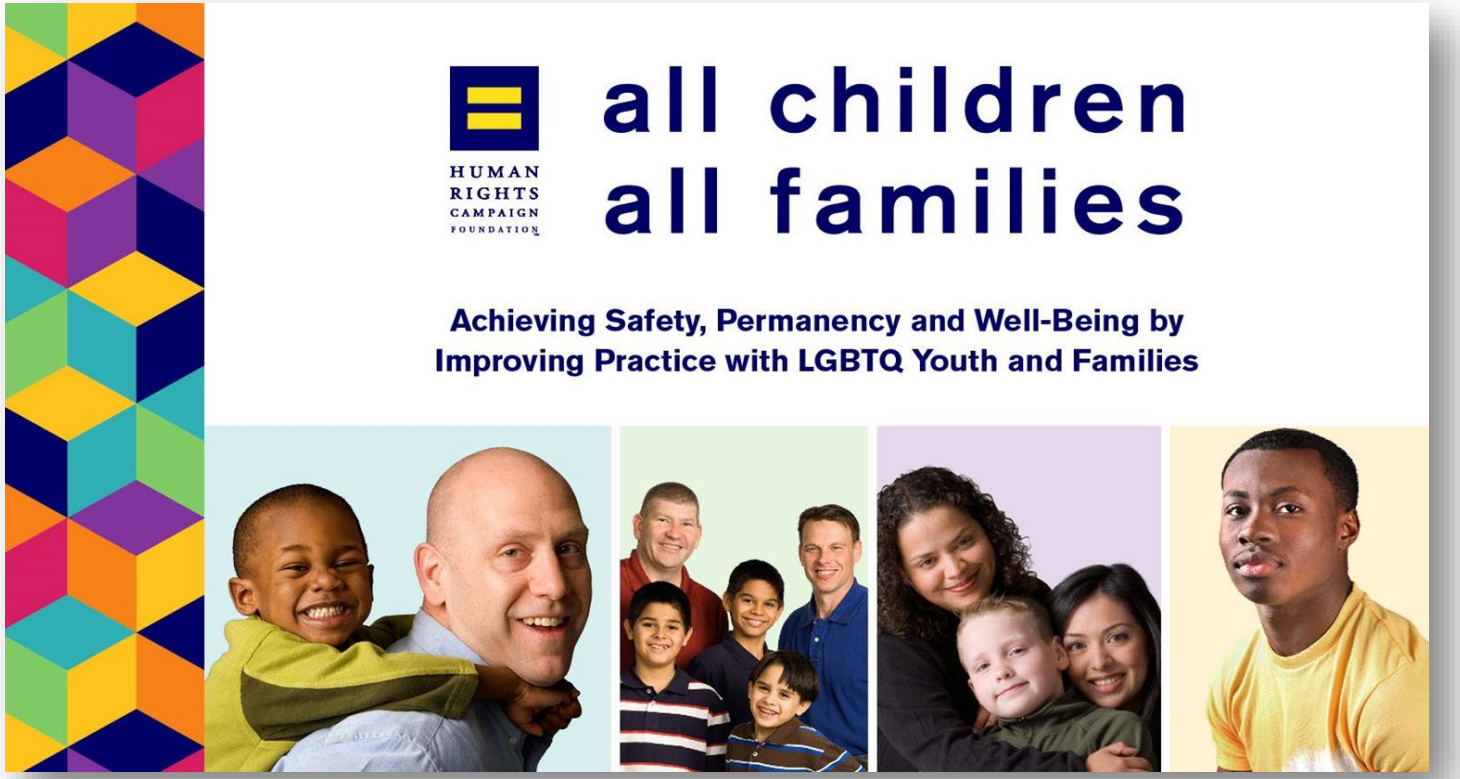

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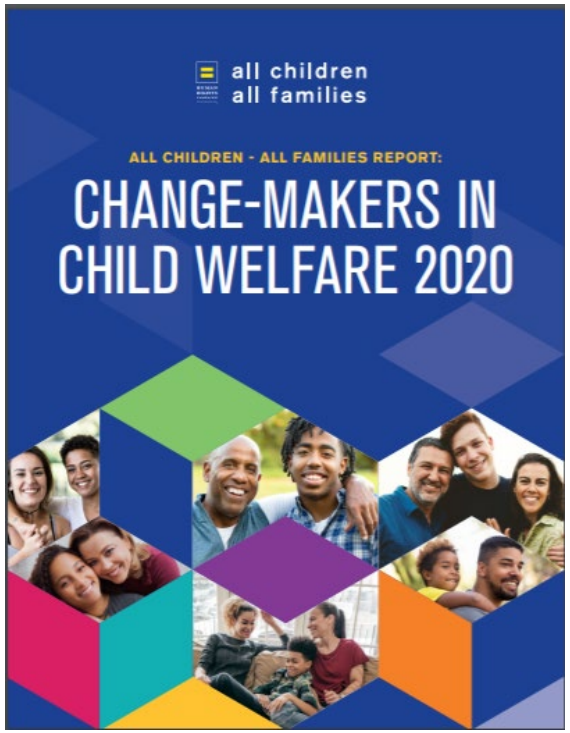

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Four-Part Series

Setting the Foundation 9/8	LGBTQ Volunteer Engagement 9/10	Advocating for LGBTQ Youth 9/23	**Advocating in Education System 10/6**

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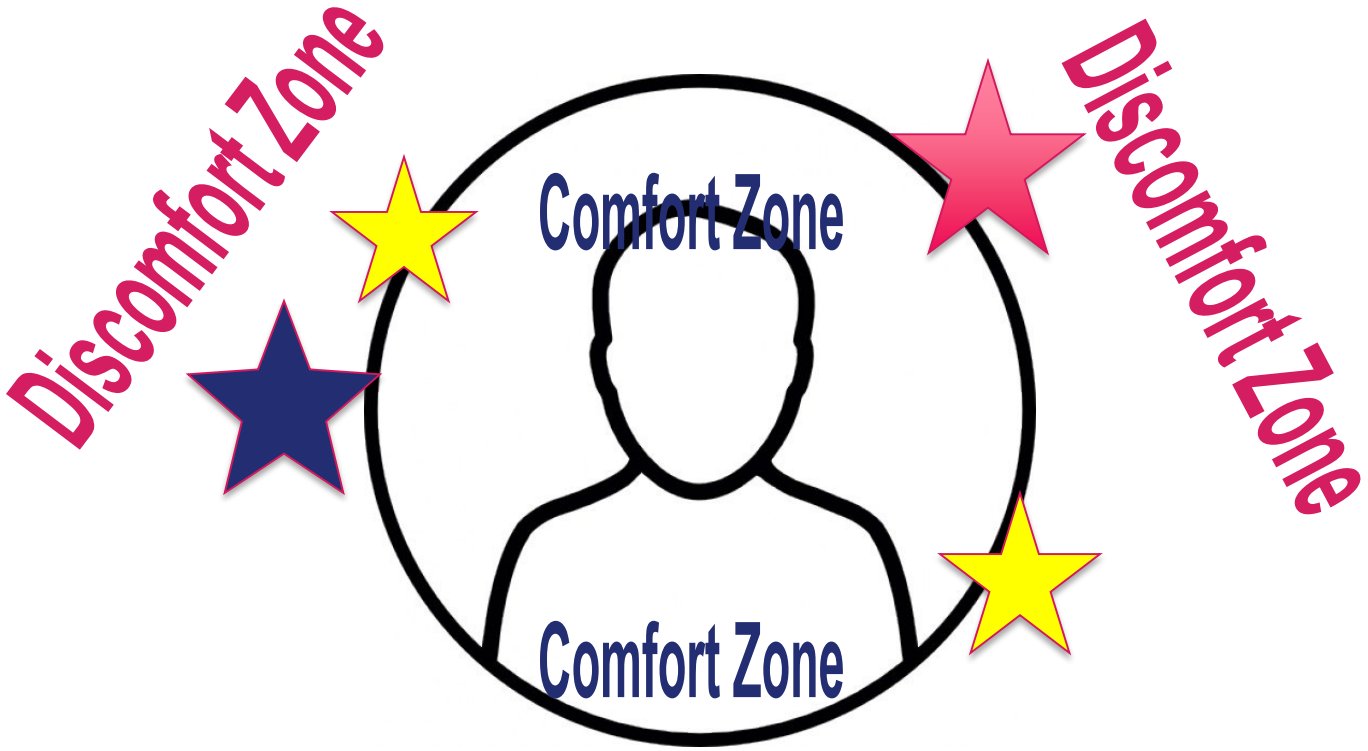
Let's create a "Brave Space" together.



"Change happens at the edge of your comfort zone."

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Source: Hunter, D. (2011)

Today's Agenda

Review:
SOGIE Terms & Research

Educational Advocacy and Support

Resources

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Let’s take 3 quick polls…

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Part 1: Review

SOGIE Terms & Research
on LGBTQ Youth in Schools

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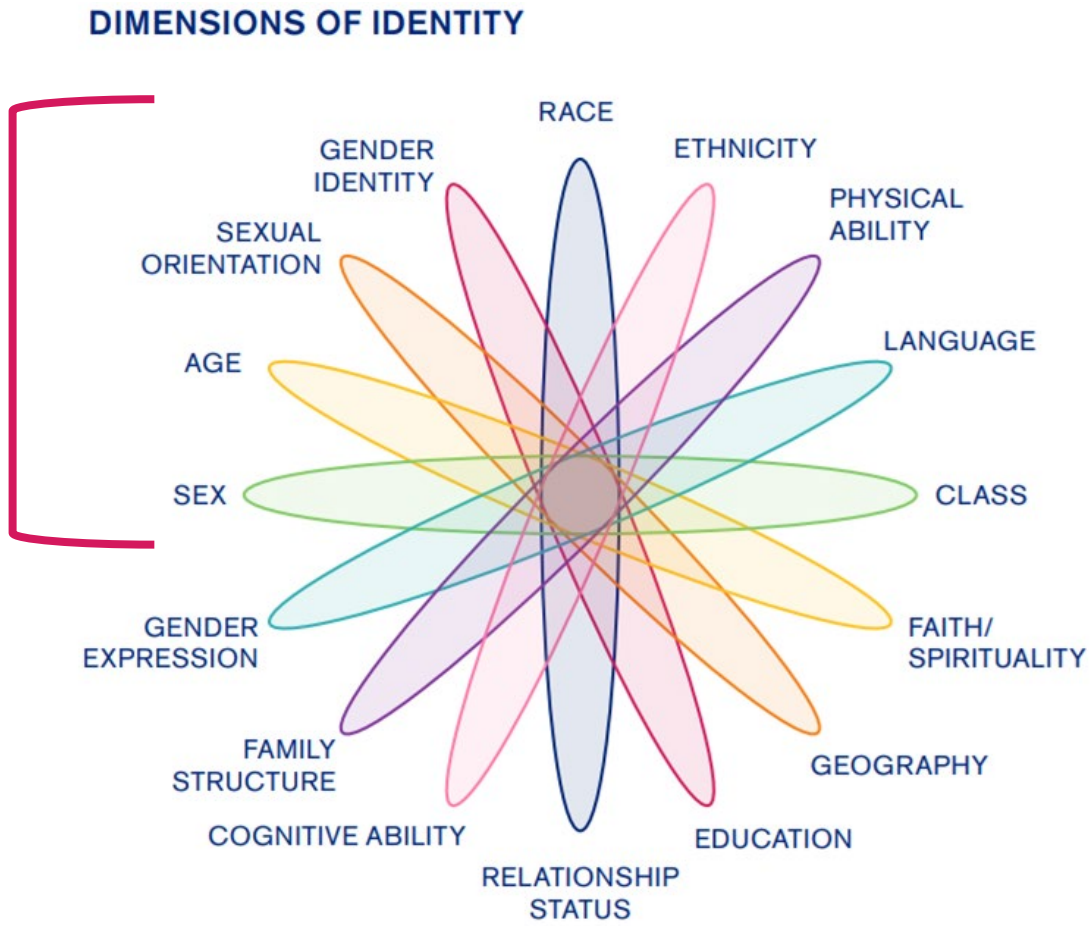
There are many dimensions of identity. Today, we're zooming in on SOGIE.



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Source : Allegheny County Department of Human Services (2015)

Let’s review LGBTQ and SOGIE.

LGBTQ

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer
- Questioning

SOGIE

- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Gender Expression

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Sexual Orientation is:

A person's **emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction** to another person.

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Straight
- Asexual
- Pansexual

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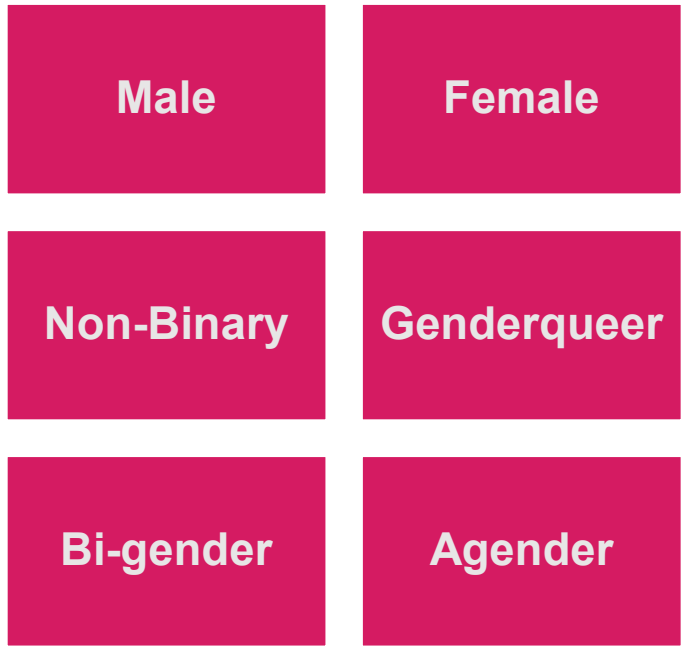
Gender Identity is:

A person's **internal sense of being male, female, or a blend of both or neither.**



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There are two key terms related to gender identity that we should understand:

Cisgender

Sex Assigned At Birth

=

Gender Identity

Transgender

Sex Assigned At Birth

≠

Gender Identity

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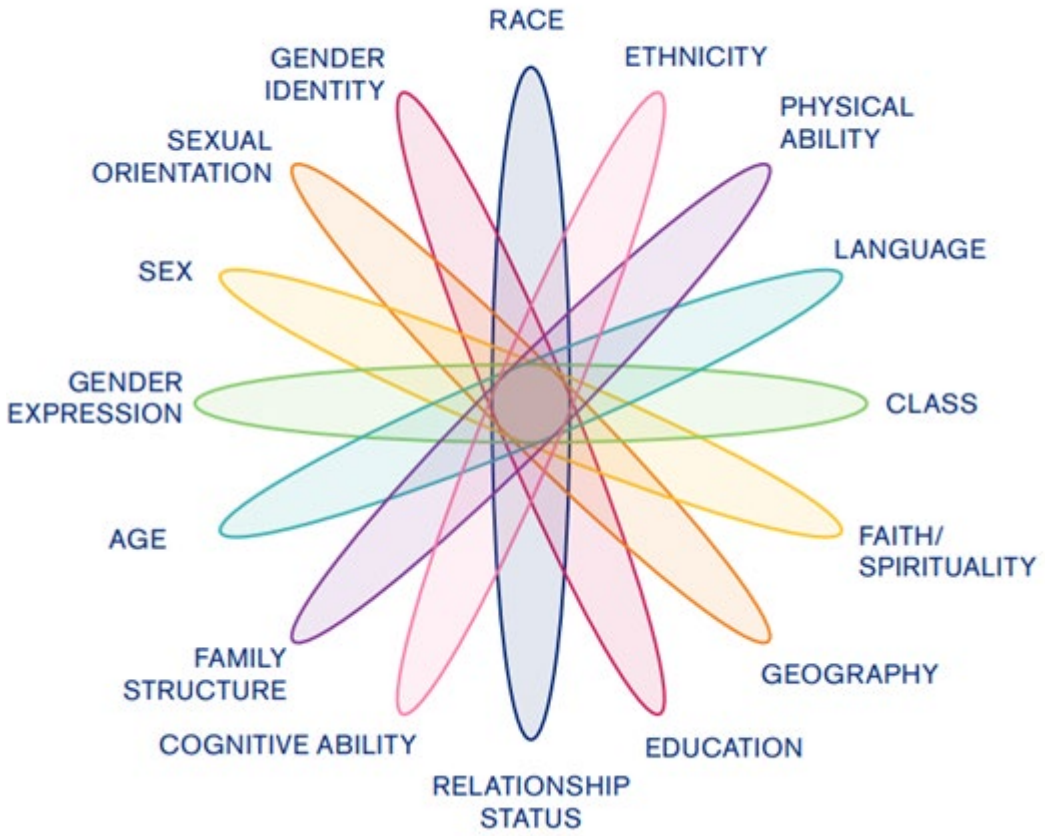
Intersectionality must inform our efforts toward LGBTQ inclusion.

DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY



SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

AGEISM
ADULTISM
CISSEXISM
SEXISM
SIZEISM
RACISM
COLORISM
ETHNOCENTRISM
ABLEISM
CLASSISM
ISLAMOPHOBIA
ANTI-SEMITISM
NATIVISM

INTERSECTIONALITY

A THEORY OF OPPRESSION THAT CAN GUIDE OUR WORK SUPPORTING CLIENTS. ASKS US TO CONSIDER HOW ALL ASPECTS OF A CLIENT'S IDENTITY IMPACTS EXPERIENCES.

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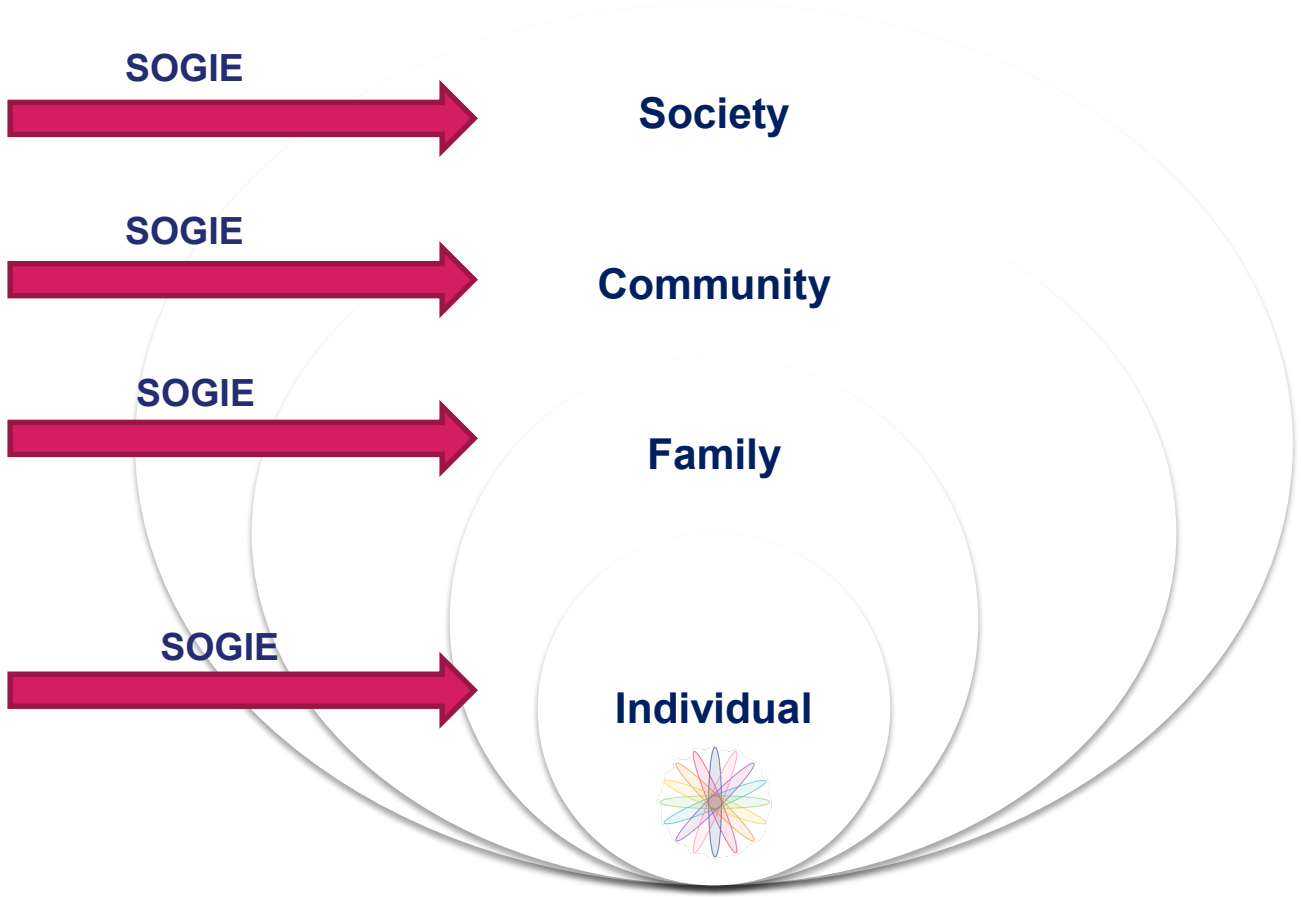
SOGIE in Context



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Let’s review the relevant research on LGBTQ youth.

Identities

Experiences

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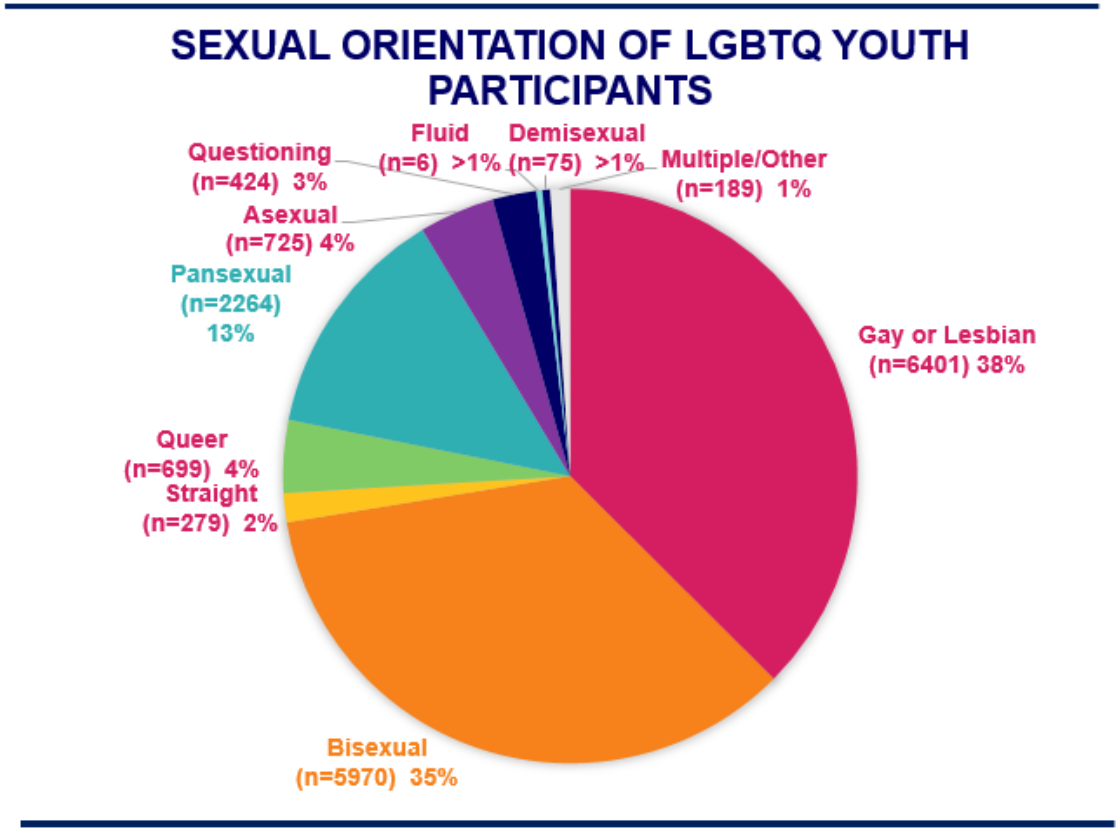
Sexual Orientations



62% of 2017 respondents identified as a sexual orientation other than “gay” or “lesbian.”

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Source : Human Rights Campaign (2017)

Gender Identities

Nearly 25% of 2017 respondents checked a gender identity outside of the binary of male/female.

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Source : Human Rights Campaign (2017)

Research on SOGIE Development:
"Are they too young to know?"

SO: In one study of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth:

- 75% recalled feeling "different" in childhood
  - Usually between ages 4 and 12 (age 8 on average)
- Most first identified as LGB between 12 and 16 years old
  - Average age 14 for both boys and girls

GI: In one study of transgender youth:

- Average age of "talking about gender being different" was 5 for trans girls and 8 for trans boys
- Not uncommon to do so as early as 2-3 years old

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Sources: D'augelli, A. R., Grossman, A. H., & Starks, M. T. (2008), Keo-Meier, C., Pardo, S., Olson, J., & Sharp, C. (2015, June)

Experiences of LGBTQ Youth

- Disproportionately victimized
- Overrepresented in systems of care
- Often in foster care because they were rejected for being LGBTQ
- Abuse, discrimination, and rejection while in care

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Sources: Mitchum, P. & Moodie-Mills, A. (2014); Durso, L. & Gates, G (2012); Wilson, B.D.M., Cooper, K., Kastanis, A., & Nezhad, S. (2014)

Complex Challenges: LGBTQ Foster Youth in Schools

LGBTQ Youth have the right to:

- An education
- Personal safety at school
- Be free from discrimination based on their gender identity

Does every young LGBTQ person have an adult who cares about them and their schools experience?

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Bullying & Harassment

71.4% hear “gay” used in a negative way

55.5% feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation

37.8% feel unsafe because of their gender expression

74.1% verbally harassed because of SO; 55.2% because of GE

36.2% physically harassed because of SO; 22.7% because of GE

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Source: Kosciw, J., Greytak, E., Palmer, N., & Boesen, M. (2014)

School-to-Prison Pipeline

LGB youth 3X more likely to have harsh disciplinary treatment

- Especially gender-nonconforming girls

Higher rates of punishment are not from higher rates of misbehavior

Significant distrust of school administrators

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Source: Mitchum, P. & Moodie-Mills, A. (2014)

Part 2:

Educational Advocacy & Support

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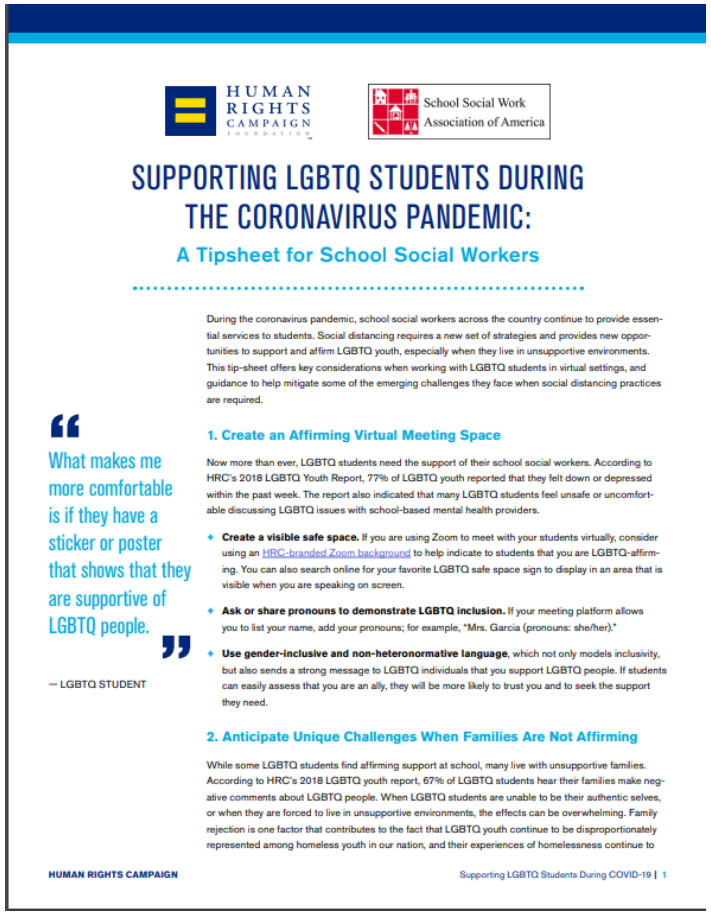
COVID-19 Considerations & Resources



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School Social Work Association of America

SUPPORTING LGBTQ STUDENTS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC:

A Tipsheet for School Social Workers

During the coronavirus pandemic, school social workers across the country continue to provide essential services to students. Social distancing requires a new set of strategies and provides new opportunities to support and affirm LGBTQ youth, especially when they live in unsupportive environments. This tip-sheet offers key considerations when working with LGBTQ students in virtual settings, and guidance to help mitigate some of the emerging challenges they face when social distancing practices are required.

"What makes me more comfortable is if they have a sticker or poster that shows that they are supportive of LGBTQ people."

— LGBTQ STUDENT

1. Create an Affirming Virtual Meeting Space

Now more than ever, LGBTQ students need the support of their school social workers. According to HRC's 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report, 77% of LGBTQ youth reported that they felt down or depressed within the past week. The report also indicated that many LGBTQ students feel unsafe or uncomfortable discussing LGBTQ issues with school-based mental health providers.

- **Create a visible safe space.** If you are using Zoom to meet with your students virtually, consider using an HRC-branded Zoom background to help indicate to students that you are LGBTQ-affirming. You can also search online for your favorite LGBTQ safe space sign to display in an area that is visible when you are speaking on screen.
- **Ask or share pronouns to demonstrate LGBTQ inclusion.** If your meeting platform allows you to list your name, add your pronouns; for example, "Mrs. Garcia (pronouns: she/her)."
- **Use gender-inclusive and non-heteronormative language**, which not only models inclusivity, but also sends a strong message to LGBTQ individuals that you support LGBTQ people. If students can easily assess that you are an ally, they will be more likely to trust you and to seek the support they need.

2. Anticipate Unique Challenges When Families Are Not Affirming

While some LGBTQ students find affirming support at school, many live with unsupportive families. According to HRC's 2018 LGBTQ youth report, 67% of LGBTQ students hear their families make negative comments about LGBTQ people. When LGBTQ students are unable to be their authentic selves, or when they are forced to live in unsupportive environments, the effects can be overwhelming. Family rejection is one factor that contributes to the fact that LGBTQ youth continue to be disproportionately represented among homeless youth in our nation, and their experiences of homelessness continue to

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Supporting LGBTQ Students During COVID-19 | 1

- Create an affirming virtual meeting space
- Anticipate challenges related to non-affirming environments
- Maintain confidentiality & privacy
- Connect youth with virtual supports

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Educational Advocacy

Learning challenges from trauma

Challenges with placements and stability

School can be a supportive or damaging experience

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Educational Advocacy
In advocacy work, safety is key!

- It's simple: students who don't feel safe can't focus on learning.
- Students who experience acceptance at school are more highly motivated, engaged in learning and committed to school.
- All children need a sense of continuity, stability and normalcy.

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Source: Osterman, K. (2000)

Step 1: Listen
Ask the youth how they feel about school.

- Hearing their perspective and how they feel about school is important.
  - Do they have supportive adults in the school?
  - Do they have friends and/or activities they like?
  - What is their favorite class, etc.?
- Know each individual youth's experience - every child has different needs and a different story.
- Don't overgeneralize based on the child's SOGIE.

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Source: Osterman, K. (2000)

Step 2: Resources

Identify resources based on the child's age.

- Early Childhood (0-36 months)
- Pre-kindergarten
- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School
- College
- And beyond

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Step 3: Your Role
Clarify your role.

- Who makes educational decisions for youth in care?
- What are everyone's roles?
- What are the relevant laws and policies in your state?
- Does the youth have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?
  - What is the plan?
- Understand the importance of confidentiality.
  - Can you/should you share their SOGIE status with others?
  - With whom do you share the youth's IEP?

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Step 4: Stability

Understand the importance of stability.

- Help the youth to stay in the same school when possible.
- Maintain community connections when possible.
- If a school transfer has or will occur pay attention to:
  - Enrollment
  - Records transfer
  - Credit transfer
  - Identifying supportive adults/resources in that school
  - LGBTQ-related policies & resources

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Step 5: Ongoing Advocacy
Pay attention on a regular basis.

- Young people need adults who regularly pay attention to:
- Attendance
- Discipline (if any)
- Experiences of bullying (if any)
- Grades and tests
- Extra-curricular activities
- Food access/nutrition
  (breakfast and lunch programs if needed)

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Step 6: Special Education Needs

Be willing to ask for help and seek supportive services in order to meet child's needs.

- When a child needs special services:
- Learn the process
- Who can be an education surrogate?
- What are the evaluations available and necessary for this child?
- Do they need an IEP?
- How can progress be ensured?
- How will this IEP keep them on track for a successful graduation?

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Step 7: Graduation and Beyond

Keep the big picture in mind.

- What is the youth's plan for graduation and/or transitioning out of care?
- Do they have enough credits?
- Do they have the right credits for what they want to do next?
- Timelines for applications
- College- tuition
  - Waivers and scholarships
- Vocational and Trade Schools

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Case Study: Gabrielle

- Gabrielle is 14 years old
- In foster care for three years with three different placements
- Defies stereotypes related to gender expression
- Does well socially in their after-school club
- Has few friends at school
- Is reading at grade 4 level
- Is shy and not talkative with most adults
- Currently in trouble for being in a fight on the school bus

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Part 3:

Resources

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Field Forward Newsletter

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FIELD FORWARD

MOVING FORWARD TO FULL LGBTQ INCLUSION

Welcome to the start of Fall! We hope that everyone is doing their best to stay healthy and safe as the weather cools down. This month HRC paid tribute to Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. HRC President Alphonso David reflected on her legacy, "Today, we lost an unqualified, undisputed hero. She wasn't just an iconic jurist, Justice Ginsburg was a force for good -- a force for bringing this country closer to delivering on its promise of equality for all." Read HRC's full statement.

Supporting Your LGBTQ Workers

Child Welfare Workforce Development Month comes to a close today -- have you reflected on the ways your workplace is supporting your LGBTQ employees? If you want to learn more, watch our on-demand webinar, "Becoming An Employer of Choice for the LGBTQ Community." Designed for agency leaders, the webinar provides an overview of key policies and benefits for

ACAF Project Updates

The 2021 participation cycle will launch in October. Stay tuned for more information!

Resource Spotlight

Visit HRC's Voting Center for mail-in ballot info and to confirm your voter registration status today!

https://www.thehrcfoundation.org/professional-resources/field-forward-all-children-all-families-monthly-newsletter

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Welcoming Schools Program

www.welcomingschools.org

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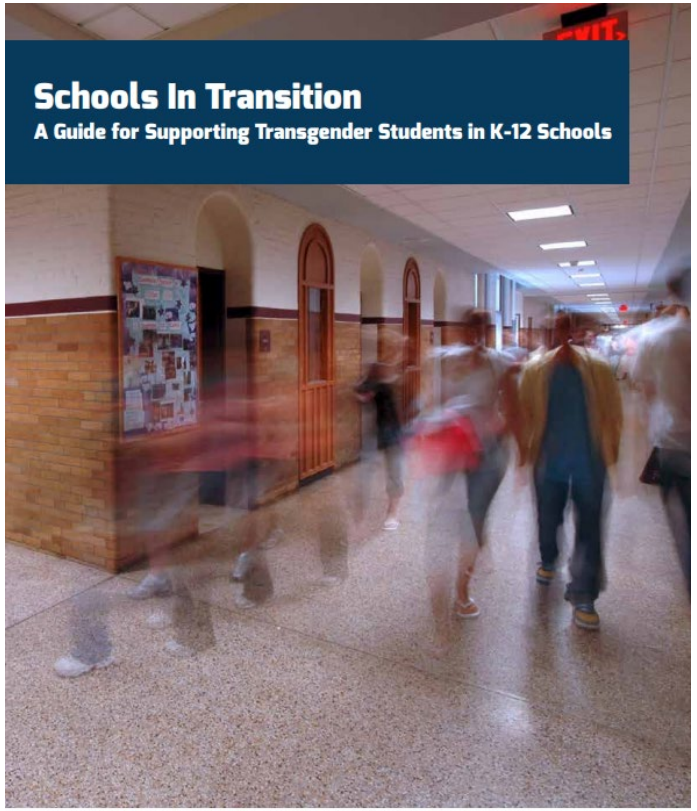
Schools in Transition Guide



https://www.hrc.org/resources/schools-in-transition-a-guide-for-supporting-transgender-students-in-k-12-s

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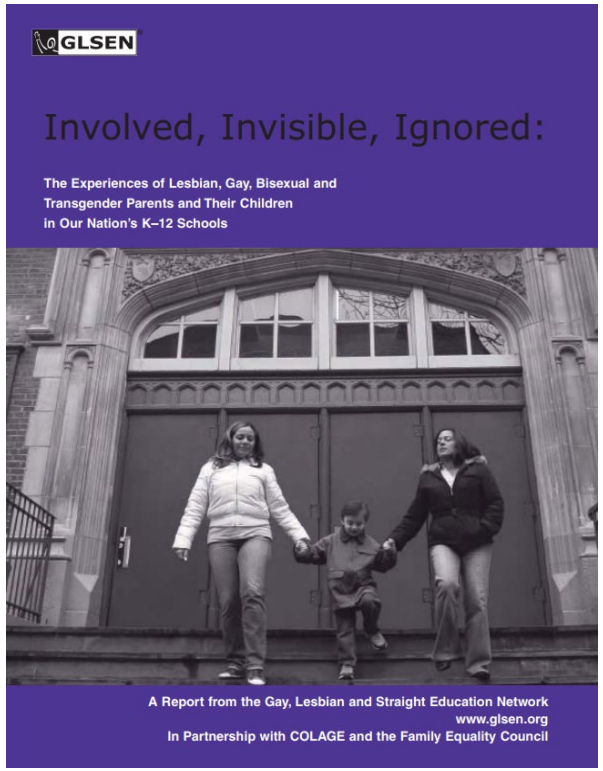

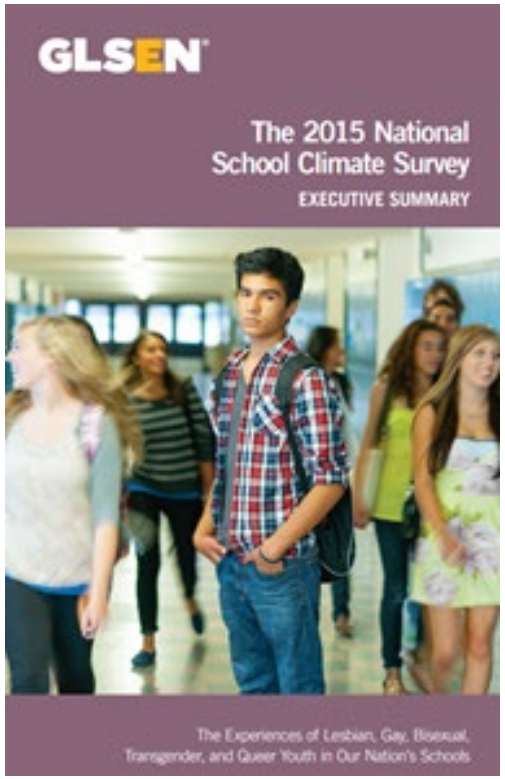

www.glsen.org

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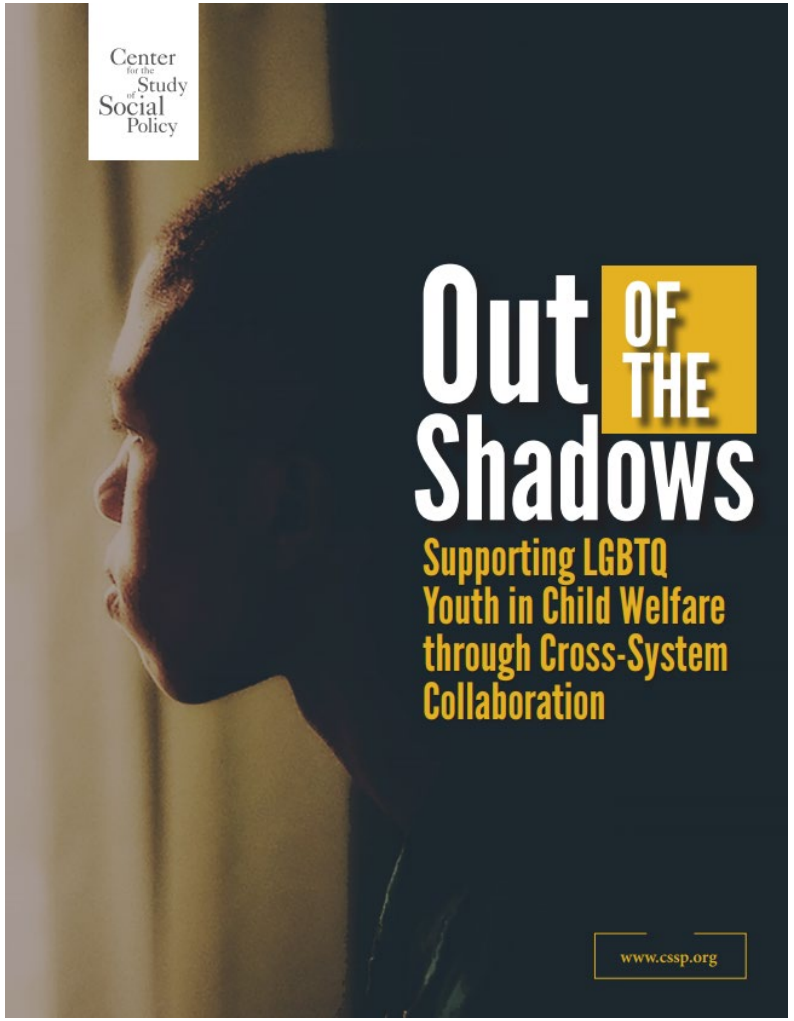
Center for the Study of Social Policy

www.cssp.org



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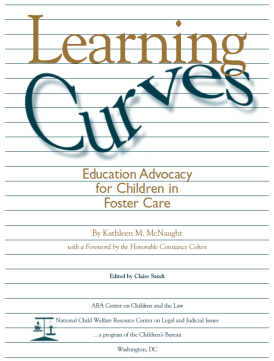
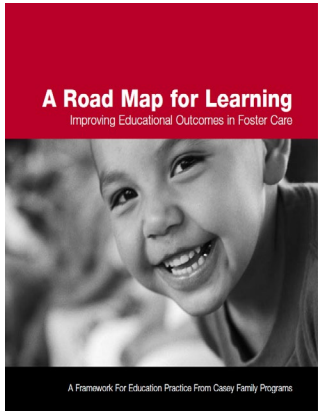
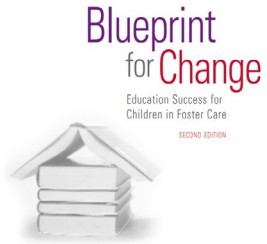
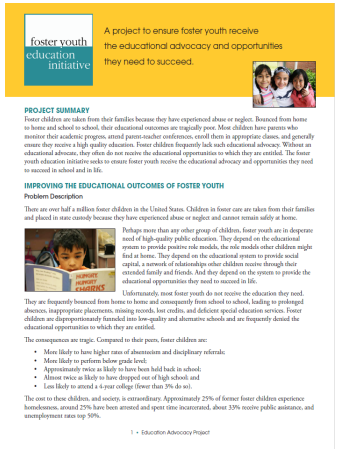
Legal Resources

- ABA Center on Children and Law – www.americanbar.org
- Casey Family Program – www.casey.org
- The Legal Center for Foster Care and Education – www.fostercareandeducation.org
- The National Center for Youth Law – www.youthlaw.org









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