



# LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care Listening Sessions Report



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPENING STATEMENT	3
Youth Participants	4
LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Visibility Management	5
LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care	6
LISTENING SESSION THEMES	9
Safety, Comfort, and Acceptan	9
LGBTQ+ Role Models and Organization	10
Family Acceptance/Rejection	11
Finding Joy and Belongin	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	13
RESOURCES	16

## OPENING STATEMENT

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is proud to serve and support the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/gender non-binary, queer and questioning (LGBTQ+) communities of New York. OCFS licenses, authorizes, and oversees many of the systems-of-care that youth in New York State encounter, such as foster care, juvenile justice settings, and runaway and homeless youth residential programs, among others. It is critical that the services and programs provided and/or overseen by OCFS be informed by the expertise of young people who have experienced those systems; authentic stakeholder voice is vital to equitable policy and practice.

Older youth in foster care often disproportionately identify as LGBTQ+, and their experience in care has not been fully understood. As part of our commitment to lifting the voices of those most impacted by policy and practice, staff at OCFS, in collaboration with members of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) held a series of “Listening Sessions” with youth and young adults in foster care who identify as LGBTQ+. To begin this process, OCFS conducted four initial Listening Sessions in November 2020 to hear from LGBTQ+ youth about their experiences in care, how the system affirms their LGBTQ+ identity, and how the system leaves them feeling rejected for their LGBTQ+ identity.

Four themes were identified from the initial Listening Sessions: 1) Intersectionality of Race and Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE), 2) Safety, Comfort, and Acceptance, 3) LGBTQ+ Role Models and Organizations, and 4) Family Rejection. Building on what was learned from the initial set of Listening Sessions, OCFS conducted additional Listening Sessions to learn more about the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in foster care.

### Listening Session Framework

It was important to establish a framework for outreach, as well as a list of questions that would generate dialogue regarding the youth’s specific experiences. The initial set of questions were established based on a review of the relevant research and policies that impact LGBTQ+ youth in the foster care system. To create a familiar environment, one of the YAB team members advised staff on ways to make the virtual Listening Sessions more comfortable for younger participants using music, silly ice breakers, and an interactive wheel of questions to engage and foster discussion.

This project was expected to run for six months, with two sessions during the last week of each month on Monday and Tuesday, from 4 -6 p.m. Sessions began in late June 2021 and ran sessions through mid-December 2021. Each two-hour session was guided by two OCFS staff and two YAB members.

The original plan was designed to be an in-person experience; however, due to COVID-19, all sessions were hosted virtually. This shift increased opportunity for youth from across the state to participate at a time and date that worked for them. This also likely created a less intimidating environment, allowing youth to participate discreetly without their camera on and without the presence of multiple adults in the room.

## Youth Participants

The criteria for youth to participate in the listening sessions included

- Ages 12 - 21,
- Openly LGBTQ+ identified, and
- Currently living in a foster care setting.

Youth could voluntarily leave the session at any time and could participate at the level of their choosing.



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Visibility Management

In planning for the sessions, it was important to our team to be rooted in the current research available regarding LGBTQ+ youth, especially those who are in the foster care system. During this process, the concept of Visibility Management (VM) became prominent. VM can be summarized as the ongoing process that all LGBTQ+ persons engage in to assess their environment for safety around their LGBTQ+ identity (Greeno et al., 2021). For example, an adult who identifies as lesbian and has a wife may not discuss that aspect of her identity among new co-workers if she feels like it would be met with harassment or if she has a general feeling that it would be unsafe to do so. In this way, VM is a way in which LGBTQ+ persons decide how overt or hidden they are with their LGBTQ+ identity in any given context or environment.

Literature shows that LGBTQ+ youth choosing to stay “in the closet” with their foster family or caseworker to avoid any unwanted harassment, negative discussions about their identity, often strains the relationship with their caseworker or family. Staying closeted may be a strategy to avoid being returned to a congregate care setting should the foster family reject them (Dewaele et al., 2019). LGBTQ+ foster youth may choose not to disclose their identity to protect themselves in the moment.

While this can be effective in preventing unwanted experiences related to their SOGIE, VM research has also assessed the mental health impact of disclosing or concealing an LGBTQ+ identity. People who publicly declare their LGBTQ+ identity also experience a reduction in their risk for issues of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. By being open and honest about their identity they are reducing their internal feelings of shame or despair, and in disclosing their identity, they establish relationships with others who can help them understand what they are experiencing (Feinstein et al., 2018).

Conversely, a person concealing their LGBTQ+ identity may experience increased feelings of shame or despair and have fewer connections to people who can support them around their LGBTQ+ identity. These experiences can negatively impact a person’s mental health and increase feelings of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts (Feinstein et al., 2018). As such, it appears most beneficial for an LGBTQ+ person’s mental health to experience environments that feel safe for them to publicly identify as LGBTQ+.

## LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care

It is vital to understand the experiences of youth in foster care to create policies and practices that are responsive to their needs. Research on the experiences of youth who identify as LGBTQ+ in the foster care system show some unfortunate disparities. According to research, LGBTQ+ people generally make up approximately 8-10% of the general population (Baams et al., 2019). However, the percentage of youth in systems-of-care, specifically foster care, who identify as LGBTQ+ are estimated at between 20-34% (Baams et al., 2019, Sandfort, 2019). This would mean that LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in the foster care system by 200-400%. In New York State, as of December 31, 2020, there were 4,896 youth between the ages of 14 to 21 in foster care, so it is estimated that approximately 1,000 of those youth identify as LGBTQ+.

The literature shows that family rejection related to coming out is a significant contributing factor to LGBTQ+ youth entering foster care (Robinson, 2018). LGBTQ+ youth who enter foster care are more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to

- experience 10 or more placements (Baams et al., 2019),
- stay in a congregate care setting (Baams et al., 2019),
- experience higher rates of school bullying (Baams et al., 2019),
- experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts/attempts (Ryan et al., 2010),
- age out of foster care without a permanent adult resource (Ryan et al., 2010),
- enter the juvenile justice system (Mountz, 2019),
- experience street homelessness (Baams et al., 2019), and
- experience/abuse drugs and/or alcohol (Baams et al., 2019).

In the Fall 2019, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) in New York City conducted a study of more than 600 youth in the ACS foster care system. Their five findings of that project (Sandfort, 2019, page 5), which align with many of the themes and outcomes of the Listening Sessions, are below:

*According to the results:*

1. **LGBTQAI+ youth are overrepresented in foster care.** More than one out of three youths (34.1%) ages 13-20 in New York City foster care identify as LGBTQAI+. This is substantially higher than the proportion of LGBTQAI+ youth in the general population.
2. **LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care are more frequently youth of color.** With almost three quarters of the sample identifying as African American/Black and almost a third identifying as Latinx, the sample reflects the population of New York City youth in foster care, in which people of color are disproportionately represented. Within this already racially and ethnically disproportionate group, LGBTQAI+ youth are more likely to be Latinx and slightly more likely to be African American/Black.
3. **The placements of LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care are often different from placements of non-LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care.** Compared to non-LGBTQAI+ youth, LGBTQAI+ youth were more likely to be placed in group homes or residential care and less likely to be placed in family-based care. Also, LGBTQAI+ youth were less satisfied with their current placement. LGBTQAI+ youth were more likely to say that they experienced little to no control over their lives in foster care and to have heard staff or other people refer to them as “hard to place.”
4. **The family experiences of LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care can be challenging.** While LGBTQAI+ youth were more likely to be in touch with family members, they saw these family members less frequently. Furthermore, LGBTQAI+ youth experienced family members as less supportive than non-LGBTQAI+ youth did. Fewer LGBTQAI+ youth reported that there were adults in their lives, other than family members, who they could rely on and with whom they felt supported.
5. **LGBTQAI+ young people have more struggles with institutional systems and higher risk factors for depression.** LGBTQAI+ youth had been absent without permission from their foster care placements for significantly more days than non-LGBTQAI+ youth; they also were more likely to have been homeless and to have had negative confrontations with the police. In addition, LGBTQAI+ youth were more likely to have been criticized for behaving and for dressing too much like the other sex. These risk factors were associated with differences in well-being: LGBTQAI+ youth reported experiencing more depressive symptoms and fewer feelings of optimism compared to non-LGBTQAI+ youth.

It is with this context that our team sought to listen to the experiences of the LGBTQ+ youth involved in New York State's foster care system, hoping to gain additional understanding from youth with lived experience to inform policy and guidance in our goal to improve child welfare outcomes.





## LISTENING SESSION THEMES

Throughout the six-month period of Listening Sessions, the facilitators convened to debrief each session, share quotes captured, and identify the themes that were emerging from the discussions. Many of the themes from the 2020 sessions of 13 youth were reiterated by the 12 additional youth in 2021.

### **Safety, Comfort, and Acceptance**

*“It’s not scary to come out, it’s scary how people are gonna be to you AFTER you come out.”*

As a child welfare system that provides oversight of all foster care settings, we need to recognize that there are LGBTQ+ youth present in every space. Some we can identify because they have come out to us, and others are afraid to share their identity or are still questioning and may not yet know if they are LGBTQ+.

*“When I saw the Pride flag in my counselor’s office...I felt a spark of happiness, a sense of safety, relief.”*

Youth spoke of looking for verbal cues and visible signs (ally stickers, LGBTQ+ flags, LGBTQ+ information and activities) that foster care settings are affirming so youth can determine their safety. The youth expressed how they carefully pick and choose who they will talk to or ask questions about their needs in general, including their needs related to SOGIE.

*“When they question (my identity), it feels like the person is ‘disgusted.’ I think. It’s like they are offering you other options, but there aren’t. Don’t ask me questions like, ‘but how do you know?’ or ‘are you sure?’ or ‘have you really thought about it?’ I already thought about this myself, I have weighed the benefits and risks of who I am, and I’m okay with that.”*

Youth indicated that having adults support their identities is crucial to their building relationship and trust. Well-meaning questions about a youth’s identity exploration may be received as judgment or dismissive from the adult, rather than supportive. Youth spoke of a desire for professionals to have a general understanding of the queer community and to affirm their

gender expression and pronoun usage or to at least make a genuine attempt. In every Listening Session, when asked about things adults can do to make them feel safe about their LGBTQ+ identity, at least one participant said that they feel safer around adults who use the name and pronoun they have requested.

*“Where would I go? What if a foster parent don’t accept it, or they’re not comfortable with it? You could be bouncing around hoping and praying that somebody will accept it and hope that LGBTQ+ people aren’t something they don’t want to be around.”*

Youth expressed fear that they would be rejected by foster families due to their identity. For youth who have already experienced the trauma and loss of removal, this additional fear of further rejection and loss can create tension and strain. Alternatively, youth who were cared for by LGBTQ-identified foster parents or had an LGBTQ-identified family member reported affirming experiences and interactions with those caretakers.

*“I was in foster care 6 years, and none of those parents would come to school or support me like other parents. They should be asking, ‘how was your day in school?’”*

This youth described how he didn’t think it would matter to tell his foster parents that he was being bullied in school. He shared that he had to address this issue on his own by going to the principal. Although the youth’s actions demonstrated his strength and skill at advocating for himself, not all youth will navigate the same way under similar circumstances. Youth may not be equipped to address such concerns independently and instead internalize their feelings of isolation.

## **LGBTQ+ Role Models and Organizations**

*“(it would be great to) see more adults like me so I can know who I want to become.”*

Youth shared that they don’t see enough LGBTQ+ adults reflected within the child caring profession. Transgender youth who participated in the Listening Sessions expressed a

heightened desire to see other trans people, particularly adults, and pathways to access educational information about transgender identities while residing in foster care. Creating visibility for adults who identify as LGBTQ+ who work with youth in care helps to create visions of future selves that are positive, productive, and achievable.

Many youths shared that they have not attended LGBTQ+ events or have never accessed programming from LGBTQ+ affirming organizations in their home community or the community in which they are placed. Like many identities, LGBTQ+ people create community and culture among one another. LGBTQ+ events can provide the introduction and support for youth to explore these identities among their peers and help co-create positive culture. Without access to these events or organizations, many youth run the risk of isolation and withdrawal.

### **Family Acceptance/Rejection**

*“My mom loves me, but she says she just misses the old me, before I came out, which I can understand...”*

Youth who evolve over time in their fundamental identities, particularly around gender identity and expression, can experience specific types of losses and guilt. Youth often expressed a deep desire to connect to their family, which in some cases translated in gratitude for family “acceptance” that they experienced. However, in listening carefully to their experiences, they often described environments/connections that were not intrinsically accepting or affirming. Youth described how their family members supported their LGBTQ+ identity and yet those same family members would misgender the youth or refer to the youth using derogatory terms. The thirst for connection and love appears to have created conditions for youth to accept “crumbs” of support rather than insist on having their whole self acknowledged and celebrated. This may contribute to future re-traumatization related to tentative permanency connections and further experiences of rejection.

*“Being LGBTQ+ is a sin; you’re going to hell; it’s a choice...”*

Unfortunately, some youth described experiencing rejection by their family of origin for their LGBTQ+ identity, and then after moving into a foster home, experiencing similar, if not identical, rejection. Specifically, several youths identified that both their families of origin and foster families were responding to their LGBTQ+ identity by telling them that “being LGBTQ+ is a sin;

it means you're going to hell; it's a choice," or adults conveyed they were "praying for them in order to save their souls."

*"LGBTQ+ youth hear everything. Right after I moved in, I heard my foster mom talking about a 'ladyman from work' and I worried/assumed she wouldn't be LGBTQ+ affirming."*

Acceptance is a journey and for some it may not happen. The youth shared conflicting examples of being accepted by close family members and rejected by other family members or even rejected depending on how "out" the youth was at a given moment by a family member who at times expressed affirming messages. In addition, youth identified that they were always listening to the adults around them to assess their safety, which aligns with the concept of Visibility Management from the literature review.

### **Finding Joy and Belonging**

Youth in foster care need to be provided experiences where they can be social, date, enjoy LGBTQ+-friendly activities, be "out" without judgment in the community or in affirming spaces . This includes being given opportunities to explore affirming activities and interests. Due to lack of available partners and peer scrutiny, LGBTQ+ youth often may not have the opportunity to enter safe, mutually healthy relationships with other LGBTQ+ youth, both romantically and platonically. This disconnects them from a common experience that many adolescents go through, creates isolation, and limits their sense of belonging to the world and their community.

*"Having more events that are LGBTQ (specific) would be helpful for kids knowing more about themselves and knowing that staff are doing stuff like this and are helping and supportive. Not everyone has the support that they need, so normalizing it would make it helpful for kids."*

Youth who had participated in an LGBTQ+ specific event (an LGBTQ+ prom, regular attendance in a school LGBTQ+ club, virtual chat groups via LGBTQ+ centers, etc.) often expressed their joy at being in an inherently LGBTQ+ affirming space surrounded by fellow members of the LGBTQ+ community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These conversations with the youth provide insight to areas for improvement for youth in foster care. Based on the information from the listening sessions, several recommendations emerged.

### 1. **Training on LGBTQ+ affirming practice**

Training for workers, supervisors, and foster and kinship resources should focus on understanding the LGBTQ+ community, the specific needs of youth in care who identify as LGBTQ+, and skills for working with and meeting the needs of youth and family members. Training should be mandatory and regularly occurring. Access to tip sheets and checklists for local departments of social services (LDSSs) and voluntary agencies (VAs) to assess any foster care setting for safety and inclusivity should be made widely available.

### 2. **Engagement with local LGBTQ+ partners**

New York State has an array of LGBTQ+ serving organizations. LDSSs and VAs should forge relationships with local LGBTQ+ organizations to educate all youth about the community supports for social and educational programming and to establish pathways for these organizations to bring expertise and activities into foster care settings. These partnerships can help strengthen the organization's ability to better meet the needs of youth and families who intersect with the child welfare system as well.

### 3. **Creating and Maintaining Safe (Emotional and Physical) and Affirming Spaces**

Site visits to programs and offices offer an opportunity to assess if the physical environment is providing clues or clear statements about inclusiveness and affirmation. Organizations can prominently display flags, literature, images, and information about LGBTQ+ people and communities in their spaces. Staff who are out can be role models. Forms and staff should use gender-neutral language when inquiring about family, romantic relationships, and self-identification. Including pronouns in emails or in introductions can provide a much-needed signal to youth who are unsure if they can disclose their identities or questions.

#### 4. **LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ Affirming Foster Family Recruitment**

Youth who reported being placed with foster families who identified as LGBTQ+ felt understood and affirmed by those families. Agencies should seek LGBTQ+ youth and community voice when developing a recruitment strategy and connect with local LGBTQ+ organizations and LGBTQ+ religious institutions to create opportunities to outreach to the LGBTQ+ adults in local communities. LDSSs and VAs can utilize the media and ensure messaging includes voices and imagery of LGBTQ+ persons to encourage LGBTQ+ participation and normalization.

#### 5. **Normalizing LGBTQ+ Experiences Through LGBTQ+ Specific Events and Programming**

Outings and activities need to include those that bring awareness and education to youth about the LGBTQ+ community and normalize LGBTQ+ Pride. LGBTQ+ youth need to be provided opportunities to engage with other members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially adults who can serve as role models. If we do not create opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth in foster care to meet LGBTQ+ role models, the youth may never meet an adult who can help them understand the experiences they are having or connect to peers who are having similar experiences.

#### 6. **Accessing Safety and LGBTQ+ Affirming Case Planning**

Families need support and education to process and develop acceptance over time for their LGBTQ+ identified child. Caregivers may need specialized supports individually and as a family unit. LDSSs need to be knowledgeable about LGBTQ+ affirming service providers and sensitive to any SOGIE-related issues that may be present in the placement to help avoid placement disruptions.

#### 7. **Intersectional Approach**

While this topic was discussed often, not all youth were comfortable talking about specific ways that their race impacted their SOGIE and vice versa. That said, we felt it was critical to identify that there are two disparities at play in this intersection: LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in the foster care system, and Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color (BIPOC) are overrepresented in the foster care system. As such, wherever SOGIE is being discussed, it is critical to be informed about the needs of BIPOC youth

and to be culturally responsive, as there is likely a large overrepresentation of BIPOC LGBTQ+ youth in the system.

## 8. Ongoing Listening Sessions for Marginalized Populations

The Youth Advisory Board has been instrumental in developing and facilitating these Listening Sessions. Youth who participated in this project often expressed gratitude at being provided the opportunity to discuss their experiences and to feel that they are able to impact not only their own experience, but the experiences of other LGBTQ+ youth in foster care in New York State. As such, it is also recommended that localities and agencies find ways to elicit the voice of youth in their programs who identify as LGBTQ+. There may be geographical or cultural issues that are not statewide that can be locally addressed, whereas other issues may be more universal.

## CONCLUSION

These Listening Sessions, and others like them, provide a unique and powerful opportunity to hear directly from youth in foster care who identify as LGBTQ+ about their experiences and needs. We know that the majority of youth in foster care are children of color, and those who identify as LGBTQ+ have additional vulnerabilities and trauma experiences. It is the collective responsibility of system partners to create environments where youth feel safe, provide diverse opportunities for their healthy development and wellbeing, and ensure equitable access to culturally responsive supports for youth and their families to achieve permanency. When there is genuine affirmation and celebration of the diversity of youth and families impacted by the child welfare system and inclusiveness is prioritized, the system will foster resiliency and healing for all.

We would like to offer our deepest gratitude to the LGBTQ+ identified youth who were willing to share their insights and experiences during the Listening Sessions. Their contributions are what bring authenticity to the information contained and the recommended system improvements.

## RESOURCES

In New York, LGBTQ+ youth in out-of-home placement have the right to the same care and support as non-LGBTQ youth. New York's LGBTQ families have the right to participate in the foster care system in the same fashion as a non-LGBTQ family. While the principles and expectations are the same, working with individuals of the LGBTQ community may require additional knowledge, access to resources, and a deeper understanding of the LGBTQ community, their history, and culture.

**Note:** External links are provided for the convenience of the user. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement or approval by the Office of Children and Family Services, as noted in the disclaimer. When users click an external link and leave the OCFS website, they should be aware that they are subject to the privacy and security policies of the external site.

To successfully work with LGBTQ youth and families, it is vital to understand the vocabulary of the LGBTQ community and the nuances of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE). An understanding of the term SOGIE is an important lens through which to view this work. All people, not just LGBTQ people, have a sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. To learn more about the vocabulary used by the LGBTQ community and other OCFS policy guidance supporting LGBTQ+ youth and their families being served by our child welfare system, please visit the resources below:

- 2021- *Introduction of the LGBTQ+ Community Practice Model* ([21-OCFS-INF-06](#)), [Attachment A-LGBTQ+ Community Practice Model](#)
- 2016- *Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression* ([16-OCFS-INF-10](#)) with information on [SOGIE Terminology](#), [SOGIE Development Across the Lifespan](#), and a [Quick Tips Guide](#). As an additional resource please visit the [National SOGIE Center](#) a centralized site for accessing resources and requesting technical support for SOGIS data collection. For LGBTQ foster youth, family reunification can be difficult if the family of origin is rejecting of their child's LGBTQ identity. It is important to engage biological families, and to work with them to best support their child. The following report provides information and strategies from the Family Acceptance Project on how to best engage rejecting families of LGBTQ youth:
- [A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children](#) ([16-OCFS-INF-04](#))



- 2020- *Child Welfare League of America and Lambda Legal Toolkit: Getting Down to Basics: Tools to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care* ([20-OCFS-INF-10](#))

Understanding and celebrating the history of the LGBTQ equality movement can be important for LGBTQ people to develop a connection to their community. June is traditionally celebrated as LGBTQ Pride Month, but celebrations of Pride happen in New York State year-round. To learn how to connect to such an event, or create your own, please download the LGBTQ Pride Celebration Toolkit, [Create Your Own Pride Toolkit](#)

- The [Human Rights Campaign's All Children All Families](#) program supports foster care agencies working with LGBTQ families and youth. Please find more information on their program and on LGBTQ cultural competency and terminology in their [archive of webinars](#).
- Indian Health Services maintains a list of [LGBTQ cultural competency trainings](#), with a focus on the specific needs and challenges of LGBTQ Native Americans.
- [GLMA](#), an association of medical providers dedicated to LGBTQ affirming practice, maintains a [webinar series on LGBTQ cultural competency](#) as well as creating supportive environments for working with LGBTQ clients.

The following directories can help identify the nearest LGBTQ Center or LGBTQ-affirming service provider:

- For a safe online space to communicate with someone about your LGBTQ identity, reach out to the [LGBT National Help Center](#). They offer:
  - A national LGBTQ? youth talk line: 800-246-7743
  - Weekly online chat rooms
  - Online chat with peers
- To locate the nearest LGBTQ center on [Center Link](#), a nationwide directory of LGBTQ centers, which may provide the following services:
  - Direct access or referral to LGBTQ-affirming mental and medical health providers, legal services, nonprofit programming, housing/shelter needs, etc.
  - Cultural competency training for agencies, districts, schools, etc.
  - LGBTQ-affirming and informed mental health professionals on staff
  - Ongoing programming for youth and adults
  - Consultation services to assist in program development or incident resolution

- To locate the nearest LGBTQ health and human services provider online from this [New York State LGBT Health and Human Services Network directory](#), maintained by [The Center](#) in New York City.
- New York City, LGBTQ-affirming providers are also listed at the [NYC Comptroller's LGBTQ Guide of Services](#). The directory includes different categories of service types, specific LGBTQ identities, an interactive map, and a search function.

## Resources Regarding Transgender, Gender Nonconforming and Nonbinary Youth (TGNC)

The Office of Children and Family Services recognizes and supports the gender identity of all youth. It is important to better understand transgender, gender nonconforming (TGNC) youth, gender identity and expression, inform youth about protections they have against gender-identity discrimination, and to understand their needs and experiences related to gender transition.

The resources below introduce TGNC gender transition through videos, webinars, and education on gender transition and pronoun usage, and information from TGNC health programming worldwide. Further learning for New York State employees about gender identity can be found on the [Statewide Learning Management System](#) under the title "Gender Identity Toolkit."

- [Video of Stella Keating at the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Equality Act](#)
- [Ted Talk by TGNC Woman Raised in Foster Care in New York](#)
- [Webinars by UCLA on Gender Identity and Health](#)
  - [Gender Identity Development and Medical Options for Transgender Youth](#)
  - [Caring for LGBTQ Youth: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#)
  - [The Role of Behavioral health in Gender Affirming Care](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign Educational Webinars](#)
  - [He, She, They: Inclusive Language Practices for Organizations](#)
  - [Creating an Atmosphere of Affirmation & Love for Trans Youth: Lessons from Former Foster Youth Turned Adoptive Parent](#)
  - [Supporting Trans & Gender Expansive Youth](#)

- The World Professional Association for Transgender Health: [Assessment and Treatment of Children and Adolescents With Gender Dysphoria \(pg. 10\)](#)
- For LGBTQ people, visibly safe spaces are important for their physical and mental safety. OCFS has created its own “LGBTQ+ friendly” image to download, print, and display

# LGBTQ + friendly



Office of Children  
and Family Services

[ocfs.ny.gov](http://ocfs.ny.gov)

## References

- Baams, L., Wilson, B. D. M., & Russel, S. T. (2019, February 11). *LGBTQ youth in unstable housing and Foster Care*. Pediatrics. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30745432/>
- Baams, L., Wilson, B. D. M., & Russell, S. T. (2019, March 1). *LGBTQ youth in unstable housing and Foster Care*. American Academy of Pediatrics. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://dx.doi.org/10.1542%2Fpeds.2017-4211>
- Dewaele, A., Van Houtte, M., Buysse, A., Lyubayeva, A., Trippas, M., & Baeken, A.-S. (2019). *What Predicts Visibility Management at Work? A Study of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Flemish Government Employees*. Psychologica Belgica. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.psychologicabelgica.com/>
- Feinstein, B. A., Dyar, C., Li, D. H., Whitton, S. W., Newcomb, M. E., & Mustanski, B. (2018, December 5). *The longitudinal associations between outness and health outcomes among gay/lesbian versus bisexual emerging adults - archives of sexual behavior*. SpringerLink. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-018-1221-8>
- Greeno, E., Matarese, M., & Weeks, A. (2021, June 18). *Attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of child welfare workers toward LGBTQ youth*. Taylor and Francis Online. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2021.1940415>
- Mountz, S. (2019, December 11). *Remapping pipelines and pathways: Listening to queer and transgender ...* Sage Journals. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0886109919880517>
- Robinson, B. A. (2018, January 29). *Conditional Families and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth Homelessness: Gender, Sexuality, Family Instability, and Rejection*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jomf.12466>
- Ryan, C., Russel, S. T., Huebner, D., Diaz, R., & Sanchez, J. (2010). *Family acceptance in adolescence and the health of LGBT young adults*. psycnet.apa.org. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1744-6171.2010.00246.x>
- Sandfort, T. G. M. (2019, December). *Experiences and Well-Being of Sexual and Gender Diverse Youth in Foster Care in New York City*. <https://www1.nyc.gov/>. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/about/2020/WellBeingStudyLGBTQ.pdf>