



A PRACTITIONER'S RESOURCE GUIDE:
Helping Families
to Support Their
LGBT Children



Increasing Family Support: How to Help Right Now

Given the early ages of coming out and the critical need for family education and guidance, the dearth of targeted services to help diverse families support their LGBT children is a significant barrier to addressing the prevention, care, and support needs of LGBT children and adolescents. Until such services are widely available, practitioners and agencies can take several basic steps to respond to these needs in the following ways (Ryan & Diaz, 2011):

- Provide training on engaging and supporting families with LGBT children for all practitioners and agencies that work with children, youth, and families (see Resources, p. 12).
- Include LGBT young people and families when describing populations served in agency literature, brochures, outreach activities, and websites to ensure that LGBT youth and families know that your agency welcomes them and will provide services for them.
- Include information on the importance of family support and on the relationship between family acceptance and rejection and health risks and well-being for LGBT youth in all parent and caregiver education resources, activities, and programs.

- Ask adolescent patients and clients about their sexual orientation and gender identity.¹ Ask about family reactions to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, including specific behaviors that parents, families, and caregivers use to respond to their child’s sexual orientation and gender expression.²
- Provide education, support, and counseling to parents, families, foster parents, and caregivers who are engaging in rejecting behaviors. This includes using educational materials to help them understand the impact of their behaviors on their LGBT child (see Resources below), and providing coaching, counseling, peer support, and family therapy.
- Include families and caregivers of LGBT children and youth on advisory groups for child, youth, and family service programs and agencies.
- Do outreach to invite and include families and caregivers of LGBT children and youth and their LGBT children in recreational, social, and community activities and events offered by practitioners, programs, and agencies that serve children, youth, and families.
- Include LGBT books, brochures, and posters in agency waiting rooms, offices, and care facilities. Many LGBT youth and those who may be questioning their identity look for “safe zone” or rainbow stickers to indicate that a provider will be open and respectful in providing support and addressing needs related to their LGBT identity.