

POINT SOURCE YOUTH ON BEHALF OF OCFS PRESENTS:

SUPPORTING TRANS YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

Training 1 • 2023

Executive Summary

Trans, non-binary, and gender-expansive youth experience some of the highest rates of homelessness, discrimination, violence, and self-harm among young people in the US. Meanwhile, many of our nation's existing resources and support systems for young people fail to meet the unique needs of trans youth and their families, whether bio or chosen. This toolkit, based on a 2023 webinar training with trans-identified service providers with extensive experience working with gender-expansive young people, explores best practices, actionable tools, and resources for supporting and engaging gender-expansive youth, their families and caregivers.

Speakers

Maddox Guerilla, Senior Consultant, DCTs, *Point Source Youth*; Facilitator

Landon (LJ) Woolston, Director, DCTs, *Point Source Youth*; Co-facilitator

Naz A. Seenauth, LMSW, Deputy Executive Director of Programs, *The Ali Forney Center (AFC)*

Noah Nilson, LCSW, Program Manager, Mental Health Community Partnerships, *Hetrick-Martin Institute (HMI)*

Charlie Barba-Cook, Deputy Director, *CloseKnit*



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The purpose of this resource is to provide information & guidance from experts in their field that is as updated and accurate as possible. It is not intended to give medical advice for individuals or organizations.

This toolkit builds upon our 2022 webinar / toolkit on [Sexual orientation, Gender Identity and Expression \(SOGIE\)](#). For newer learners, we recommend engaging that toolkit as a precursor.

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Five Action Steps Your Organization Can Take

1

Put Values into Practice via an Equity Assessment. Assess your organization's policies, practices, and built environment for equity considerations regarding the needs of trans youth, their families, and caregivers. This process should be conducted at all layers of the organization and should involve front-line staff and trans-identified young people (compensating them fairly for their input). If there is not a solid understanding of these needs in-house, it is recommended that organizations look to trans-led consulting entities that regularly conduct organizational assessment work.

2

Adequately Resource Families & Lift the Burden off of Young People. Oftentimes, youth who are exploring gender or who are transitioning are also required to resource and educate their families and caregivers in the process. This added burden can be stressful, heavy, and sometimes triggering, as people around them will express feelings and make mistakes as they learn and grow. We can alleviate this burden by ensuring that families and caregivers are meaningfully connected to agency staff, resources, and education independent of the youth's involvement. Some examples include PFLAG and SOFFA groups, having an updated resource pamphlet for families, and offering access to counseling and/or educational workshops.

3

Stock Gender-Affirming Items In-House. When families are struggling to navigate a young person's transition, emotionally and/or financially, it can be helpful for gender expansive young people to be able to access gender-affirming items (binders, gaffs, bras, etc.), accessories (earrings, wigs, makeup, etc.), and hygiene products (colognes, deodorants, etc.) through your agency. Having a clothing/hygiene closet can make a tremendous difference for young people, especially those who may also be experiencing poverty at home.



4

Honor Confidentiality Between Youth, Families/Caregivers, and Other Providers.

Outside of a situation requiring mandated report, gender expansive youth AND their families need to be able to share thoughts and feelings with their service providers, and to trust that this will not be shared with others. Most importantly, young people should never be outed to family members/caregivers without consent - this could present safety issues, as well as loss of housing, financial support, etc.

5

Hire Trans, Non-binary and Gender-Expansive Front-line Staff.

Ensuring that there is trans representation on staff who are accessible to gender expansive youth is important for young people being able to see themselves reflected in elders, and increases the likelihood that they will feel safe having exploratory discussions about their feelings, gender identity/expression, dating, and other topics that may come up surrounding their transition process.



Q&A



As service providers, how might we respond when a young person reveals that they are considering transitioning (or says they are questioning their gender identity)? What about if it were to be a caregiver contacting you needing support around this issue — is there any specific tailored advice you would give to them?

“For young people, it can be incredibly scary to come out or share this with folks. You might be the first person the young person is speaking with, and the way that you respond may be **deeply impactful** in shaping the rest of their gender journey.

For some parents and caregivers, they have a lot of questions and are bringing a lot of emotions into this — grief, loss, anxiety, fear. I often think of it as my space/role to **hold some of that for the parents or caregivers** so that young person doesn't have to.”

— Noah Nilson



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In the face of rejection or misunderstanding regarding their gender identity, many trans and gender-expansive youth create chosen families rooted in kinship and support. What are some concrete ways that we can contribute to an atmosphere of inclusion and safety for trans/non-binary youth and chosen caregivers within our organization’s programs? And how can our organizations codify “inclusion” for kinship/chosen families in the form of written policy (i.e. paperwork/intakes, internal processes, and formalized systems)?

“It’s really important to understand the difference between the role of somebody who is a paid support person versus the actual chosen family. I would recommend not identifying yourself as their chosen family because you want to make sure that they have access to permanent connections in their lives. That’s why it’s really important that you **help them find an opportunity to build chosen families** when you can.

In terms of paperwork and processes, using the words “chosen family” can have a huge impact. At my organization, we **weave chosen family in really intentionally throughout all of our policies** — even bereavement policy for staff”

— Charlie Barba-Cook



How might we support families/caregivers for “crossover” trans/non-binary youth who may be navigating multiple systems at one time? (i.e. criminal legal system, child welfare system, behavioral health system, etc.)

“If folks **know their rights**, they have a greater chance of advocating for themselves and their youth.”

— Naz A. Seenauth



We are currently witnessing many states attempting to pass legislation to restrict access to gender-affirming care for trans, non-binary, and gender-expansive young people. How can service providers instill hope in supportive families and caregivers who may be anxious about what is happening in other parts of the country?

“I think a lot of what’s happening right now is really terrifying, and I think it’s important to validate and hold space for parents’ and caregivers’ fears. I also think when things are feeling particularly bleak for some folks, it can feel impactful and empowering to **become engaged politically**, to take small steps to speak out against this, as opposed to just sitting and holding all of what is happening.”

— Noah Nilson





Can you share more on how we as service providers can support trans youth and guide them through the process such as body changes, sexual orientation, dating, and/or emotional feelings? (e.g., maybe somebody has questions around transitioning, and what they would wear in relation to affirming garments, boxers, packers. Or, they may want to know how they find a partner.)

“If you don’t have the answers, consider the places you can refer to, and how your organization can also be sure to have the resources that are needed? One way of thinking about guiding folks through the process is [having resources]. One impactful way as a service provider is to have a **closet full of clothes** (like a donation closet) where young adults can pick the clothes that they want and need. Be sure to check regularly that your sizes are inclusive.

Also, if you’re finding a lot of young folks are **requesting an item**, think about how to generate funds to make that purchase.”

— Naz A. Seenauth



Tools & Resources for Service Providers, Youth and Families /Caregivers

- [PSY’s SOGIE Toolkit](#): The nuts and bolts of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression as explained through our 2022 OCFS workshop and associated SOGIE Toolkit
- [The Gender Unicorn](#): A visual explanation of SOGIE
- [Find a PFLAG Chapter](#): PFLAG is the nation’s first and largest organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ+ people and those who love them
- [Coming Out](#): A handbook for LGBTQ young people published by the Trevor Project
- [Circle Mapping](#): This exercise/resource from [Close-Knit](#) is intended to support service providers in helping young people to identify and create systems of support
- [Plume vs. Folx](#): These virtual/in-home services offer transition-related hormone replacement; this article explores the differences between the two platforms



Panelist-Provided Resources in New York

HEALTH

- [Medical Minor Consent Bill](#): Permits any child who is at least fourteen years of age to have administered to himself or herself, regardless of parental consent, certain immunizations required or recommended by law.
- [Callen Lorde HOTT Program](#): Callen-Lorde Community Health Center provides sensitive, quality health care and related services targeted to New York’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities — in all their diversity — regardless of ability to pay.
- [Apicha Community Health Center](#): Proudly serves Asians and Pacific Islanders, Latinos, African Americans and all individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, or those who are living with HIV/AIDS.
- [LGBTQ Support Services - Mount Sinai Hospital](#): Provides medical and mental health services specifically designed to meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adolescents.
- [Gender and Family Project - Ackerman Institute of the Family](#): The Gender & Family Project provides comprehensive services for gender expansive children, transgender adolescents, their families and communities.

LEGAL

- [TLDEF](#): Committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, and public policy efforts.
- [Sylvia Rivera Law Project](#): Works to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination or violence.
- [Urban Justice’s Center Legal Clinics](#): Serves tens of thousands of people in NYC a year, on critical issues ranging from homelessness, to discrimination, to seeking asylum, to escaping intimate partner violence.



SOCIAL/SUPPORT

- [LGBTQ Center](#): Offers the LGBTQ communities of NYC advocacy, health and wellness programs; arts, entertainment and cultural events; recovery, parenthood and family support services.
- [Crux Climbing](#): Dedicated to expanding access to the sport of rock climbing and outdoor recreation for LGBTQ communities in the New York metropolitan area and eastern New York.
- [Big Brothers & Big Sisters of NYC](#): Committed to connecting young people of all backgrounds to positive adult mentors who can offer guidance, support and genuine care.

TRANS PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA (TV SHOWS, MOVIES, ETC.)

- [Paris is Burning \(HBO\)](#): Filmed predominantly in Harlem, New York City, the film illuminates the vibrant scene of drag balls.
- [Tangerine \(HBO\)](#): After hearing that her boyfriend/pimp cheated on her while she was in jail, a transgender sex worker and her best friend set out to find him and teach him and his new lover a lesson.
- [Alice Junior \(Netflix\)](#): A transgender teen, Alice, wants to land her first kiss but wants to be accepted for who she is at high school before getting the kiss.
- [Disclosure \(Netflix\)](#): Disclosure is an unprecedented, eye-opening look at transgender depictions in film and television, revealing how Hollywood simultaneously reflects and manufactures our deepest anxieties about gender.
- [Dead End: Paranormal Park \(Netflix\)](#): One of few TV animations aimed at young people that features a trans lead, Barney, voiced by trans actor Zack Barack.
- [I am Jazz \(TLC\)](#): Jazz is a transgender young woman with a unique perspective and some unexpected daily experiences.
- [Pose \(HULU\)](#): Pose displays a sympathetic, non-transphobic representation of trans women since they are portrayed as diverse and non-stereotypical.
- [Kiki \(2023 Sundance\)](#): An inclusive community performance group from Harlem, New York, explores their passion for dance, art and expression.

