

# Impact Justice

## LGBTQ Youth in the Child Welfare and/or Juvenile Justice Systems Interviewing Tool

### Guidelines for Effectively Engaging Youth

- Remind youth that you ask everyone the same questions and that you do not make assumptions about people (mention this before every interview, not just before you ask questions regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression [SOGIE]).
- Your goal is to create a safe space for youth to disclose their SOGIE at their own pace and on their own terms; hesitancy to disclose a SOGIE identity in the beginning is common given the harassment and discrimination many LGBTQ youth have encountered.
- Be mindful of your own beliefs, cultural norms, and gaps in knowledge surrounding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- Remember “silent” communication: Ensure that your physical space is welcoming to LGBTQ youth by including posters, signs, books, and materials that are affirming of LGBTQ youth.
- Remember that everyone has a sexual orientation, a gender identity, and an expression of that gender; your advocacy should encompass all youth.
- Interviewing techniques should include open and inclusive questions that are asked of ALL youth, not just youth you think are LGBTQ.
- Children are generally first aware of their gender identity between ages 2 and 4.
- Children are generally aware of their sexual orientation by age 10.
- Keep in mind that many youth do not use labels to define themselves. However, you must be aware of behaviors and appearances that place them at risk of discrimination and harassment, as well as other people’s perceptions of youth.
- Remember to ask youth how they want information about their SOGIE recorded and with whom you can discuss their SOGIE; remind youth of the situations where you must disclose their SOGIE (e.g., in accordance with laws or obtaining appropriate services for youth).
- Remember that some transgender people will refer to their gender as the one they transitioned to and not use the term “transgender” (i.e., someone assigned “male” at birth who transitioned to female (girl) may say she is a “girl” and not a “transgender girl”).

### **Recommended Intake Questions (demographic or similar section)**

- 1) What is your gender? (Select all that apply.)  
Girl/woman, boy/man, transgender, genderqueer, two-spirit,  
other \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What was your sex at  
birth? Male, female,  
intersex
- 3) What is your gender expression? (Select all that  
apply.) Masculine, feminine, two-spirit, other  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is your sexual orientation? (Select all that apply.)  
Heterosexual/straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer, asexual, two-spirit,  
other \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Who are you attracted to? (Select all that  
apply.) Girls/women, boys/men, other  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6) (For staff) Does the youth's gender expression match the cultural and societal  
expectations in the general community (for example, if the youth identifies as a  
boy, does the youth dress and "act" in ways that are expected of boys in the  
general community)?  
Yes, no, not sure

### **Recommended Interview Questions**

(Ask after establishing some initial rapport.)

- 1) What is your preferred name and gender pronoun?
- 2) Tell me about the important people in your life. How do they support you? What, if  
anything, do you have in common with them?
- 3) Are you dating someone special? What is this person's name? Tell me about  
this person.
- 4) Do you like any afterschool or community activities? For example, sports  
programs, programs for LGBTQ kids, programs for youth of color, artistic  
programs?
- 5) Have you ever been picked on at school for any reason (clothing, weight,  
not masculine or feminine enough, sexual orientation, etc.)?
- 6) What kinds of conflicts/arguments do you have with family members at home  
(school, curfew, your friends, the people you date, etc.)?