

LGBT-HEADED FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Youth Perspectives

Welcome to Today's Webinar!

**Co-presented by AdoptUSKids and the National Resource
Center for Permanency and Family Connections**

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NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
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FAMILY CONNECTIONS
at the Harbor Center
Specialty School of Social Work

Webinar Outline

- Research Presentation on the Perspectives of Youth Adopted from Foster Care by Lesbian and Gay Parent(s)
- Youth Perspectives, Practice Tips, and Resources for Families
- Question and Answer Session

Presenters

- Patricia A. Cody, Ph.D., AdoptUSKids research and evaluation team
- Gerald P. Mallon, DSW, Julia Lathrop Professor of Child Welfare, National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections Executive Director
- Moderator: Casi Preheim, NRCRRFAP at AdoptUSKids

Perspectives of Youth Adopted from Foster Care by Lesbian and Gay Parent(s)

June 21, 2012

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Overview of Today's Research Presentation

- Review of Prior Studies and Project Background
- Review of Selected Literature
- Methodology
- Findings
- Questions

Project Background: Prior Research

Barriers and Success Factors in Adoption from Foster Care: Perspectives of Families and Staff (2002-2007)

- Barriers faced by families in the process of adopting a child from foster care (300 families, 382 adoption staff)
- Success Factors study involved interviews with families who completed an adoption of a child from foster care (161 families)

Barriers & Success Factors in Adoption From Foster Care: Perspectives of Lesbian and Gay Families (2010)

- Follow-up interviews with LGBT individuals from Barriers and Success Factors study (Ten LGBT adoptive or prospective adoptive parents participated in interviews.)
- Focus groups were also conducted (Six focus groups were conducted with 43 total participants.)

Poll Question

Participant Poll:

What type of barriers do you think prospective LGBT families face in your state?

Project Background

In 2010, findings from the report, *Barriers & Success Factors in Adoption From Foster Care: Perspectives of Lesbian and Gay Families*, were presented to AdoptUSKids.

AdoptUSKids developed a temporary, time-limited advisory group of experts in the area of LGBT adoptions that met via conference call. The advisory group recommended conducting research in which youth adopted by lesbian and gay parent families have the opportunity to share their experiences in their own words.

Selected Examples of Prior Research

Although some studies (e.g., Erich, Kanenberg, Case, Allen & Bogdanos, 2009; Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Tan & Baggerly, 2009) in this area have included samples representing a wide range of adoption experiences, more research is needed with regard to children adopted from foster care by lesbian and gay parents.

Parental sexual orientation is not strongly associated with adopted children's outcomes (e.g., Averett, Nalavany, & Ryan, 2009; Erich, Leung, & Kindle, 2005; Farr et al., 2010).

Erich and colleagues (2005) found no significant differences in child outcomes among a sample of 47 lesbian- and gay-parent adoptive families and 25 heterosexual-parent adoptive families.

Selected Examples of Prior Research

In a study of 210 adopted adolescents with 154 lesbian, gay, or heterosexual parents, qualities of parent-child relationships and attachment were not significantly associated with parental sexual orientation (Erich et al., 2009).

Gianino, Goldberg, & Lewis, 2009, interviewed 14 racially diverse youth adopted by LGBT-headed families, ranging in age from 13 to 20 years old. They recommended parental preparation to help children navigate issues with adoption, racism, heterosexism, and homophobia.

The authors concluded that future research incorporating the views and experiences of adopted children and youth growing up with lesbian and gay parents would be informative.

Methodology: Recruitment

Summer of 2011

- AdoptUSKids evaluation team began working with agencies, support groups, and professional contacts across the United States in an effort to secure a sample of youth who had been adopted from the U.S. foster care system by lesbian or gay parents.
- Kinship Center in California and North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) in Minnesota provided the greatest assistance with participant recruitment and data collection.
- Many support groups and agencies across the country worked with the evaluation team to assist with recruitment.
 - Challenges included the following: children were too young for this study, families were too busy to participate, and agency IRB processes did not support engagement in external research.

Methodology: Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for this study were as follows:

- Participants had to be at least thirteen years old at the time of enrollment in the project (two of the participants were young adults at the time of enrollment).
- Participants were adopted from the U.S. foster care system.
- Participants were adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s).
- Participants' adoptions needed to be intact at the time of participation.

Adoptive parents were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire.

Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis

- Adopted youth and young adults participated in a focus group or interview that lasted between one and two hours.
- Focus groups and interviews were conducted by Kinship Center clinical staff, NACAC staff, and evaluation team members with expertise in LGBT issues.
- Focus groups and interviews were transcribed without identifying individual participants and coded/checked by evaluation team members with expertise in LGBT issues and qualitative coding.
- Data were analyzed with the use of HyperResearch qualitative coding software.

Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis, continued

- Focus group and interview participants were not identified in the transcripts.
- Themes/concepts were coded if they were discussed in an interview or by at least one participant in a focus group.
- Coding a theme/concept in a focus group does not indicate the number of participants in the group who mentioned this theme, nor does it mean that all focus group members reported the theme.

Limitations and Strengths of Research Design

Limitations

- Small sample
- Limited geographic representation
- Limited racial and ethnic diversity

Strengths

- Hearing directly from youth adopted from foster care by LGBT parents fills a significant literature gap.
- Youth had the opportunity to share their own opinions about their adoptions.
- The study laid the groundwork for additional research to learn about the youth perspective in their own voices.

Sample Demographics

- Thirteen families participated in the project.
 - The families were from California (n=9, 69.2%), Minnesota (n=3, 23.1%), and Iowa (n=1, 7.7%).
- Six (46.2%) of the couples were married, four couples (30.8%) reported living with their partner in a committed relationship, two (15.4%) couples were in a legal partnership and one participant (7.7%) was a single parent.
- There were twenty-five parents in the thirteen families who participated in this project.
 - There were sixteen lesbian parents (eight couples) and nine gay parents (4 couples, 1 single).

Demographics, continued

- Race/Ethnicity of Adoptive Parents
 - Two (8%) parents were Hispanic.
 - Twenty (80%) parents were White.
 - Two (8%) parents were Asian/Pacific Islander, and one (4%) parent was Arabic.
- Number of Children
 - Families were parenting 44 children of which 41 were adopted, 2 biological, and 1 fostered.
 - The number of adopted children ranged from one child to seven children.
 - Twenty-four (58.5%) of the adopted children met the criteria for this research.
 - Twenty-one (87.5%) were adopted by both of their parents at the same time, and two (8.3%) were adopted by one parent and then later adopted by their second parent through a second parent adoption.

Adopted Youths' Demographics

- Gender
 - The majority were female (n=14, 58.3%).
 - Ten (n=10, 41.7%) were male.
- Race/Ethnicity of Youth
 - Hispanic (n=12, 50%)
 - White (n=5, 20.8%)
 - Asian/Pacific Islander (n=3, 12.5%)
 - Black/African American (n=2, 8.3%)
 - Bi-racial or multi-racial (n=2, 8.3%)
- Eighteen (75%), of the youth were in a transracial adoption, and 5 (25%) were in a same race adoption.

Adopted Youths' Special Needs

- Fourteen (58.3%) of the participating adopted youth were reported to have special needs. Ten (41.7%) did not.
- The most commonly reported special needs included:
 - Education / Learning Disability / Language Delay (n=7, 29.1%)
and
 - ADD/ADHD (n=5, 20.8%).

Birth Family Knowledge that Children were Adopted by LGBT Parents

- Eighteen (75.0%) families reported that their adopted children's birth families knew that they were being adopted by LGBT parents.
 - Nine (50%) indicated that the birth families were supportive.
- Six (25.0%) families reported that the birth families did not know their children were being adopted by an LGBT-headed family.
- The majority of the families (n=15, 62.5%) reported that their children had some contact with members of their birth family.

Findings

- Sample findings from this report are being presented.
- The full report will be available on the AdoptUSKids website.

How Youth was Told that Adoptive Parents were Lesbian or Gay

- Participants in four (57.1%) of the focus groups and three (50%) interviews reported that their adoptive parents had shared their sexual orientation with them.
- Participants in four (57.1%) of the focus groups reported that their adoptive parents never explained to them that they were lesbian or gay, but that they just knew.
- Participants in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview said that they do not remember or were too young to know at the time of adoption.

Adoption Workers' Feelings about Lesbian/Gay Parents

- Participants in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that their worker was supportive of the placement.
- Participants in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they did not remember.
- Participants in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups indicated that their worker was “okay” with the placement.

Youth Perspectives

Youth's worker was supportive of placement:

- “I told my worker I was scared. She said that I am going to have good parents and was supportive of my two-mom family.”

Youth's foster parents had negative feelings about placement because parents were lesbian/gay:

- “My foster mom had feelings about a two-dad family. She didn't really show it, but the tone of her voice sounded like she did. She was a little bit disgusted that it would be two dads.”

Was Youth asked Feelings about Placement with Lesbian/Gay Parents?

- Participants in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and three (50%) interviews reported that they were not asked their opinion.
- Participants in five (71.4%) of the seven focus groups reported not remembering or knowing.
- Participants in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they were asked their opinion about the placement.

Youth Perspectives

Youth was not asked their opinion:

- “I don’t think she ever asked me how I felt. There was no discussion.”

Youth was asked their opinion about placement:

- “We talked about how I would have two moms and what it felt like for me and if I understood it at all. I said that I don’t feel bad, upset, or different about it.”

Youth's Feelings/Attitudes about Moving In with a Lesbian/Gay Parent(s)

- Participants in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they did not understand what it meant to have gay parents.
- Participants in five (71.4%) of the seven focus groups reported that they were excited about their new family / liked their parents / were grateful for the adoption.
- Participants in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview stated that they were grateful to be out of their foster home and in a better placement.

Youth Perspectives

Youth didn't understand what it meant to have gay parents/ to be in a gay family:

- “I didn't even know about gay and lesbian families. I thought they were make believe and not real because they were two dads.”

Youth was excited about the family / liked their parents / grateful for the adoption:

- “It was really exciting because when I used to visit them [it] seemed like they loved me, and I loved them too.”

Did the Adoptive Parents Talk with Youth about His or Her Feelings?

- Participants in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview indicated that their adoptive parents did not talk with them about their feelings.
- Participants in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups reported that their social worker/therapist and their parents talked to them about their feelings.
- Participants in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups reported that their adoptive parents talked to them about their feelings.

Youth Perspectives

Youth's social worker/therapist did discuss youth's feelings:

- “I talked to her about how other friends had a mom and a dad, and how when I was little I was afraid that people would judge me for it. We talked about my feelings and how to cope with it and everything. They helped me understand what it was like and helped me understand what I was feeling so I could be more comfortable with the situation.”

Youth's Worries/Concerns about having Lesbian/Gay Parents

- Participants in three (42.9%) of the focus groups reported that they were unaware of social prejudice.
- Participants in three (42.9%) groups expressed that they were worried that they would be made fun of / judged / not accepted.
- Participants in two (33.3%) interviews reported that they did not have any concerns or worries.

Youth Perspectives

Youth was worried they would be made fun of / judged / not accepted:

- “I thought that the kids in the neighborhood wouldn’t like me because they would judge me by who my parents were. So when I moved into the neighborhood, I didn’t talk to anyone.”

Best Things about having Lesbian/Gay Parents

- Participants in five (71.4%) of the seven focus groups reported that lesbian/gay parents are more open-minded, accepting, and understanding.
- Participants in four focus groups (57.1%) mentioned positive aspects about being adopted, not specific to having lesbian or gay parents.
- Participants in two (28.6%) of the focus groups and two (33.3%) interviews reported that they enjoyed having a unique family that bends the gender roles.

Youth Perspectives

Teaches youth to be more open minded / accepting / understanding:

- “I don’t know what the best thing is, but I am glad I am not the type of person who thinks that gays are from a different world. I am glad that I accept the fact that I have gay dads. I am glad that I’m more accepting of different types of families.”

Hard Things about having a Lesbian/Gay Parent(s)

- Participants were teased by peers and made fun of at school (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 3 interviews, 50%).
- Life is not any harder because the participant has lesbian/gay parents (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 3 interviews, 50%).
- Teasing by peers was worse when youth was younger, and reduced as youth aged (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%).

Youth Perspectives

Youth is teased by peers and made fun of at school:

- “At first I didn’t think it was bad, but then when I was being teased at school, I thought it kind of sucked.”
- “If you’re adopted in a gay or lesbian family, then it is awkward to explain that you have two dads or moms. There are some people who will take that and destroy your life.”

How Youth Manages Hard Issues regarding having a Lesbian/Gay Parent(s)

- The most frequently reported theme was that the youth ignores others / tunes them out (n=5 focus groups 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%).
- Youth confronts / talks with / manages peers making negative comments about lesbians/gays (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 3 interviews, 50%).
- Youth does not tell their parents about challenges/emotions (n=4 focus groups, 57.1%).

Youth Perspectives

Youth ignores others / tunes them out:

- “I just don’t pay attention to what people have to say. I just let it go over my head, like whatever. People have their opinions and that is that.”

Youth confronts peers making negative comments about lesbians/gays:

- “I don’t let them know that my parents are gay, but I stick up for what is right, as in if someone is saying stuff in general about being gay, I’ll be like, ‘Okay, who are you to judge?’.”

Talking about Family

- Youth doesn't go into detail / casually tells others they have gay parents, without concern (n=6 focus groups, 85.7% and 2 interviews, 33.3%).
- Youth avoids talking about it / doesn't talk about it unless they have to (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%).

Youth Perspectives

Youth doesn't go into detail / casually tells others they have gay parents, without concern:

- “I usually just say it casually, like just naturally. At my school I've gotten in such a habit of saying it.”

Youth avoids talking about it / doesn't talk about it unless they have to:

- “I don't tell everyone about it. I'm not ashamed about it, but I don't want it to leak out so that people would come ask me if I have a gay mom. I don't want them to start the whole negative process over again, because I've gotten over it and I've forgotten it, and I don't want to remember it again. There is a part of me that is still protective about it.”

Deciding Whether to Tell Others about Lesbian/Gay Parents

- Youth has to trust the other person before telling them (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 1 interview, 16.7%).
- Youth just tells others / it is a part of who they are / they are proud of their family (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 2 interviews, 33.3%).
- Youth does not want to explain their situation to others, which restricts having friends over (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).

Youth Perspectives

Youth has to trust the other person before telling them:

- “I tell the people I have a bond with. Because I have trust problems with certain people, and it is hard for me to tell people without feeling judged unless I have a bond with them.”

Youth just tells others / it is a part of who they are / they are proud of their family:

- “Most people hide who they really are from strangers. They meet new kids, and then once they get to know the person they take the mask off. But, I think that is a waste of time. I just show myself as who I am, and I don’t wear the mask.

How Others Respond to Finding Out Youth has Lesbian/Gay Parents

- Others are accepting / comfortable with it / okay with it (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%).
- People tell others and that gets back to youth (n=5 focus groups, 71.4%).
- People ask questions about lesbian/gay stereotypes / make lesbian or gay stereotypes (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%).
- Others express subtle judgment / non-acceptance (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 1 interview, 16.7%).

Youth Perspectives

Others are accepting / comfortable with it / okay with it:

- “The people we’ve told are really receptive to it and understanding and stuff.”

People tell others and that gets back to youth:

- “I told one of my friends...and apparently it got leaked out. There is one kid ... (he was) kind of a bully, and he would always say ‘you’re gay.’ That was hard for me.”

People ask questions about lesbian/gay stereotypes / make lesbian or gay stereotypes.

- “When people find out that I have gay parents, they think I am gay too. They think that if you have gay parents it moves on to you and you turn out gay. And then the whole family is gay because you have gay dads. That is not how this works.”

Changes in Feelings about Lesbian/Gay Parents

- Youth's feelings have not changed over time (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 3 interviews, 50%).
- Youth has become indifferent / youth is used to being teased/embarrassed (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%).
- Youth's feelings have grown more positive over time (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).

Youth Perspectives

Youth's feelings have not changed over time:

- “I have always loved them. As long as I have a mother, since I'm a girl, I guess I'll be fine. Having two dads would be the worst, when they wouldn't know how to take care of me very well. All these girl things they wouldn't know what to do with.”

Youth's feelings have grown more positive over time:

- “I think it has gotten better. For me personally, it has been so hectic lately at my house that it has been a bunch of things. I think it has gotten a lot better, like its more positive.”

What Youth Would Change about their Family

Most of the themes surrounded common teenage wishes about their families, like wishing their parents were less strict, etc. Participants in one focus group (14.3%) reported that they wished their family would be less visible / a little more 'normal'. The participants did not specify if they felt the visibility was due specifically to being adopted by a lesbian/gay parent(s) or adoption in general.

What Youth Would Change about School

- Youth's school would be more accepting of gays/ lesbians / would have more awareness of gays/lesbians (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%).
- Increase overall acceptance / reduce gossip / judgment (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).

Advice for Youth Being Adopted by a Gay or Lesbian Parent(s)

- Youth would tell their friend to stay strong / prepare for bullying/teasing (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%).
- Youth would tell them that it will be (just like) a normal family (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%).
- Youth would tell their friend what to say to others who talk to them about it (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).
- Advise the youth to surround themselves with people that support you / choose trustworthy friends (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).

What Adoption Workers Should Know

- Participants suggested that workers prepare and educate the child before being placed with a gay or lesbian parent (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%).
- Don't let worker's own feelings get in the way / don't discriminate based on parents being lesbian/gay (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%).
- Ask youth if they are okay with it (2 interviews, 33.3%).
- Be supportive and understanding about youth's concerns / negativity affects youth even if they say it doesn't (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%).

Thank you

The AdoptUSKids Evaluation Team would like to thank the following people for their support and assistance with the project:

Carol Biddle, Kinship Center

Rachel Farr, UMASS-Amherst

John Levesque, NRC for Adoption

Gary Mallon, NRC for Permanency and Family Connections

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AdoptUSKids is operated by the Adoption Exchange Association and is made possible by grant number 90CQ0002 from the Children's Bureau. The contents of this presentation are solely the responsibility of the Adoption Exchange Association and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau, ACYF, ACF, or HHS. The Children's Bureau funds AdoptUSKids as part of a network of National Resource Centers established by the Children's Bureau.





LGBT-Headed Foster and Adoptive Families: Youth Perspectives

Youth Perspectives, Practice Tips, and Resources

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June 21, 2012

www.nrcpfc.org



Youth Perspectives, Practice Tips, and Resources

- 10 Things Children and Youth May Want their LGBT Foster or Adoptive Parents to Know
- Tips for Child Welfare Professionals: Talking about LGBT-Headed Families
- Additional NRCPFC Resources



10 Things Children and Youth May Want their LGBT Foster or Adoptive Parents to Know

1. Let me tell my friends and other people in my life about our family, in my own time, and in my own way.
2. I may have heard myths and stereotypes about LGBT people. Help me to understand more about the realities and diversity of LGBT people's lives. Help me to critically reflect on media messages and representations.



10 Things Children and Youth May Want their LGBT Foster or Adoptive Parents to Know

3. Help me to connect with other kids who have LGBT parents (if I want to).
4. I love you and support you AND it is not my job to be an advocate for LGBT rights. Please respect my choice if I don't want to go to the Gay Pride Parade (or another LGBT event). I may want to do these things. I may not. It may depend on the opportunity or particular point in my life.



10 Things Children and Youth May Want their LGBT Foster or Adoptive Parents to Know

5. I might be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, straight, or questioning, and I may identify in another way. Please be supportive of my healthy development – whatever my identity may be – and understand that it's not about you!
6. Teach me respect for diversity by modeling a response to prejudice, discrimination, and injustice. Help me to develop my own responses and help me to think about my safety.



10 Things Children and Youth May Want their LGBT Foster or Adoptive Parents to Know

7. Please talk to me honestly and let me ask questions whenever I have them.

8. Sometimes you (and I) may feel like the world is watching, and we have to be the perfect family.



10 Things Children and Youth May Want their LGBT Foster or Adoptive Parents to Know

9. Understand that sometimes it might be easier for me to talk to another supportive adult about questions I may have. I might be afraid of hurting your feelings.

10. Remember: On a day-to-day basis, it's not about having gay or transgender parents, it's about having parents!



Sources used in developing this NRCPFC resource:

- *Coming Out to Your Kids. COLAGE. (October 2010)*
<http://www.colage.org/resources/coming-out-to-your-kids/>
- *Gender in LGBTQ Families (Webinar). Lesbian and Gay Family Building Project. (January 2012)*
<http://www.prideandjoyfamilies.org/resources.php#1>
- *The Family Pride Guide to Talking with Your Child about Political Attacks on our Families. Family Pride. By Corri Planck and Cris Farenthold.*
<http://www.familypride.org/publications/prideguide.pdf>

**Thanks to our colleague Mary Keane and her family
for review and feedback!**



Tips for Child Welfare Professionals: Talking about LGBT-Headed Families

Participant Poll:

*How much experience, if any, do you have with
talking to children or youth about joining an
LGBT-headed resource family?*



Tips for Child Welfare Professionals: Talking about LGBT-Headed Families

This section of the presentation will cover:

- Recommendations for getting started
- Talking with birth families
- Talking with children/youth



Tips for Child Welfare Professionals: Talking about LGBT-Headed Families

Getting Started:

- Educate yourself! Be prepared to provide accurate information to the child/youth, birth family, and others involved, as needed. Don't wait until you are working with an LGBT couple or person to do so – start today!



Tips for Child Welfare Professionals: Talking about LGBT-Headed Families

Getting Started:

- Remember that you only know that an individual prospective resource parent is or is not LGBT if they choose to share that information with you. Avoid making assumptions about someone's gender identity or sexual orientation.



Tips for Child Welfare Professionals

Begin by talking to the LGBT person or couple.

- Discuss how you work with birth families and children/youth when preparing a child/youth to join a new family.
- Keep in mind that a person's LGBT identity may not automatically be disclosed in a discussion about the family or family structure. It may be appropriate to discuss with the person or couple whether or not to share this information with the birth family and child/youth and the pros and cons of each option.



Tips for Child Welfare Professionals

Begin by talking to the LGBT person or couple.

- Make sure the person or couple is comfortable with any personal information that you plan to share about them and the reason that you are sharing it.
- Follow any policies/protocols for sharing confidential information.



Talking to Birth Families about their Child Joining an LGBT-Headed Family

- Talk about different types of families.
- Emphasize that you are trying to find a family that is a good fit for the child/youth.



Talking to Birth Families about their Child Joining an LGBT-Headed Family

- You might say, “We are looking for the best family for your child, one that will be a good match. We have lots of different kinds of families. [You can give examples]. Sometimes we have lesbian and gay families. How would you feel about [child] being placed with a family with two moms?”
- Share some information about why you think the family is a good fit for the child/youth.



Talking to Birth Families about their Child Joining an LGBT-Headed Family

- Answer any questions they have in an open-minded manner while being affirming of the LGBT person/couple.
- In the absence of accurate information, people may rely on myths and stereotypes. Point out stereotypes as needed, in a non-judgmental manner. Provide accurate information.



Talking to Birth Families about their Child Joining an LGBT-Headed Family

Let the family lead in terms of concerns they might have.

- Avoid assuming the family will have particular concerns, or that they will have concerns at all. They may have different concerns than you anticipate. They may be comfortable with their child being placed with an LGBT-headed family.
- If they have concerns about what *other people* might think, help them to process and explore these concerns. Create a plan together for how they could manage these potential reactions.



Talking to Children/Youth about Becoming Part of an LGBT-Headed Family

- Talk about different types of families.
- Get an understanding of a child's comprehension of the subject of LGBT-headed families and LGBT issues early in discussions. This will allow you to carry on the rest of the discussion in a more meaningful way.
- You can use pictures and stories of LGBT-headed families as you explore with the child what the family could look like. For younger children, this may help gauge whether they notice any "difference" and their perspective on it.



Talking to Children/Youth about Becoming Part of an LGBT-Headed Family

- Emphasize that you are trying to find a family that is a good fit for the child/youth.
- You might say, “We have been looking for a family that will be a good match for you. There are all different kinds of families. Some families have a mom and a dad, some have a mom, some have 2 moms, some have a grandma and grandpa and a dad. The family we think would be great for you has two dads.”



Talking to Children/Youth about Becoming Part of an LGBT-Headed Family

- Share some information about what makes the family special and why you think they are a good fit for the child/youth.
- Ask them how they would feel about becoming a part of this family and whether they have any questions.



Talking to Children/Youth about Becoming Part of an LGBT-Headed Family

- Answer any questions they have in an open-minded, inclusive, affirming, and developmentally-appropriate way.
- Start with where the child/youth is in terms of their level of knowledge about LGBT people and LGBT-headed families.
- Let them know that it is ok to have questions (both immediately and later on).



Talking to Children/Youth about Becoming Part of an LGBT-Headed Family

Let the child/youth lead in terms of concerns they might have.

- Avoid projecting *your* fears or addressing what *you imagine* the child or youth might fear. They may have different concerns than you anticipate, or they may not have concerns.
- Provide accurate information in response to any misinformation or concerns based on myths about LGBT people.



Talking to Children/Youth about Becoming Part of an LGBT-Headed Family

- If they have concerns about what *other people* might think (peers, birth family members, foster parents, etc.), help them to process these concerns.
- Assist the child/youth with coming up with a plan that works for them for how they might manage these possible reactions and who will provide them with support.



NRCPFC Resources

- On- and Off-Site Technical Assistance
- Information Response Services
- Web-based Resources



NRCPFC Resources

Poll question:

Would you or your State be interested in requesting TA around talking with children, youth, and birth families about LGBT resource parents?



NRCPFC Web-based Resources

- Digital Stories: View Cliff's Story
http://www.nrcpfc.org/digital_stories/
- New Resource List
 - NRCPFC and T&TA Network Resources for Child Welfare Professionals Working with LGBT-Headed Resource Families
 - Resources for LGBT-Headed Resource Families and their Children



Resources for LGBT-Headed Resource Families and their Children (from New NRCPFC List)

COLAGE is an organization for children, youth, and adults with a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer Parent. <http://www.colage.org/>

- *Let's Get This Straight: The Ultimate Handbook for Youth with LGBTQ Parents (purchase)*
- *Coming Out to Your Kids (free)*



Resources for LGBT-Headed Resource Families and their Children (from New NRCPFC List)

Family Equality Council connects, supports, and represents the one million lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents in this country and the two million children they are raising. <http://www.familyequality.org/>

- *Talking to Children About Our Families*
- *LGBTQ Family Friendly Children's Book List*



NRCPFC Web-based Resources

➤ *Webcast: Parenting Older Adolescents (2011)*

<http://www.nrcpfc.org/webcasts/24.html>

➤ *LGBTQ Issues & Child Welfare Hot Topic Webpage*

[http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info
services/lgbtq-issues-and-child-welfare.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/lgbtq-issues-and-child-welfare.html)