



**GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE
FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT
LEGAL INSTITUTE**

**The Impact of Child Trauma on System-Involved
Children and Youth in Kansas**

Part VI

**Preventing and Responding to Trauma Among
LGBTQ Youth**

**Part VI Overview: Preventing and Responding
to Trauma Among LGBTQ Youth**

- Disparate representation of LGBTQ youth in foster care
- Foster care risks to LGBTQ youth
- Barriers to LGBTQ fostering and adoption

What kinds of trauma do LGBTQ youth experience?

- 33% of LGB students reported a suicide attempt in the last year, vs. 8%
- 84% called names or had safety threatened
- 45% of LGBTQ youth of color experienced harassment and/or assault
- 64% feel unsafe at school; in one month, 29% missed one or more days of school
- 25%-40% of homeless youth may be LGBTQ

Why are LGBTQ youth over-represented in foster care?

- Research consistently confirms over-representation of LGBTQ youth in foster care
- LGBTQ youth risk rejection by families when they come out
- At worst, youth are forced out of their homes, run away, enter foster care

LGBTQ youth experience foster care differently

Several disparities exist:

- Higher average number of placements
- Higher likelihood of living in group home
- LGBTQ youth often experience multiple forms of discrimination (race, disability, gender identity)

Observers attribute the disparity to the non-affirming nature of foster care placements and the high level of bias and discrimination that LGBTQ youth face.

LGBTQ youth experience foster care differently

More than twice as likely to report poor treatment by the foster care system:

- Removed or ran away from foster care placements due to hostility
- Verbal harassment
- Physical violence in group homes

→ Only a minority of states have laws in place to protect LGBTQ foster youth from discrimination—
Kansas does not yet have such laws

What can child welfare workers do?

- Cultural competency training
- Include LGBTQ in data collection and forms
- Assess readiness of current foster parents to affirm LGBTQ youth
- Include LGBTQ issues in foster parent training
- Review relevant resources, including Human Rights Watch's "Caring for LGBTQ Children & Youth: A Guide for Child Welfare Providers"

What can child welfare workers do?

- NCTSN advises providers never to expect or pressure youth to "come out"
- Use inclusive language
- Recognize there is a difference between "same sex encounters" and being LGBTQ
- Connect youth with support groups or student organizations to interact with LGBTQ youth
- Learn about the stages of sexual identity development for LGBTQ individuals

Obstacles to serving LGBTQ youth in Kansas

- Experts have recognized that LGBTQ adults are potentially good caregivers
- But foster care and adoption by LGBTQ adults is controversial in Kansas
 - 2013 Johnson Cty case finding that DCF blocked adoption by a lesbian couple
 - Sens. Forrest Knox and Mary Pilcher-Cook
 - In April, a legislative committee rejected a third request for an audit to detect anti-LGBTQ discrimination

Obstacles to serving LGBTQ youth in Kansas

- Possible legal/institutional obstacles
 - November 2015 hearing by Foster Care Adequacy Committee on fitness of LGBTQ adults to foster
 - Gov. Brownback executive order prohibiting discrimination against clergy and religious organizations opposed to same-sex marriage
 - Unknown whether there is discrimination in the system