



**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