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Strategies to Enhance Conditions for Learning for LGBT Students

Jeffrey Poirier, Ph.D. Candidate, M.A., Human and Social Development Program Lead of LGBT Youth and Family Initiatives

Dustin Miller, Ph.D., Principal, Dublin City Schools

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AIR's Human and Social Development (HSD) Program

Purpose:

- We promote well-being and improve outcomes for children, youth, families, and communities by building individual, workforce, and organizational capacity.

Approaches:

- We work within and foster collaboration across systems—mental health/substance abuse, juvenile justice, child welfare, health, and education—strengthening their capacity to use evidence-based strategies.
- Using research and data, we plan, transform, and evaluate policies and practices and design new studies to measure impact and generate new knowledge.
- We engage stakeholders and consumers, enabling their voices to shape the policies and services that affect them.



School Experiences That Contribute to a Healthy School Climate and Academic Achievement

Protection

- Connection
- Safety
- Positive relationships with adults and peers
- Caring interactions
- Academic challenges
- Academic support
- Academic engagement
- Positive role modeling
- Social emotional learning
- Positive behavioral supports
- Access to needed services and supports

School Experiences That Contribute to Poor School Climate and Low Academic Achievement

Risk



- Lack of connection
- Danger
- Teasing, bullying, gangs
- Negative relationships with adults and peers
- Uncaring interactions
- Low expectations
- Academic disengagement
- Academic frustration
- Poor role models
- School-driven mobility
- Reactive punitive approaches to discipline

Benefits of Improved School Climate

- Improved test scores
- Improved graduation rates
- Improved school safety
- Improved student attendance
- Reduced drop-out rate
- Improved working environment
(student-teacher and peer relationships)
- Higher rates of teacher satisfaction

Conditions for Learning: The Important Role of Schools

Students are safe

- Physically safe
- Emotionally and socially safe
- Treated fairly and equitably
- Avoid risky behaviors
- School is safe and orderly

Students are supported

- Meaningful connection to adults
- Strong bonds to school
- Positive peer relationships
- Effective and available support

Students are challenged

- High expectations
- Strong personal motivation
- School is connected to life goals
- Rigorous academic opportunities

Students are socially capable

- Emotionally intelligent and culturally competent
- Responsible and persistent
- Cooperative team players
- Contribute to school community

Social Influences on Well-Being

Experiences such as and chronic stress
associated with...

Peer rejection

Bias and stigma

Violence, including abuse and assault

Loss of connection to culture/community

Rejection from (or loss of) family and other adults

Lead to negative outcomes such as...

Substance abuse

Disparities in quality of care

Running away and homelessness

Self-harm as well as suicide attempts/completion

Entry into child welfare and (or) juvenile justice systems

School failure or poor school outcomes (e.g., attendance)

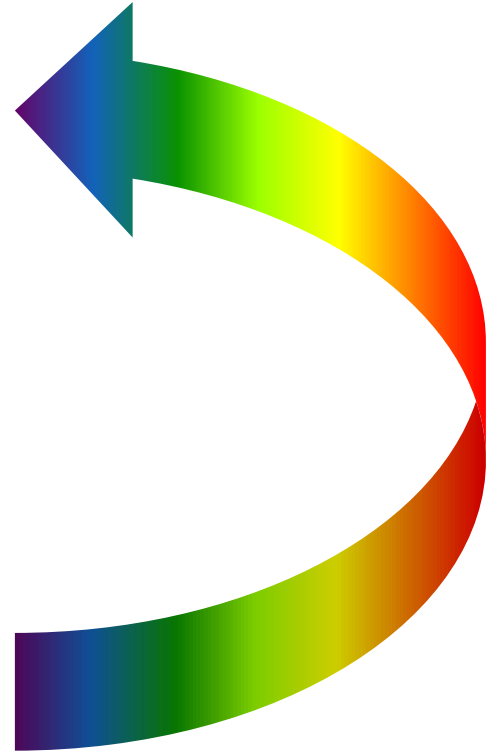
Increased mental health challenges (e.g., anxiety, depression)

Improving LGBT Youth Outcomes

Positive Outcomes:

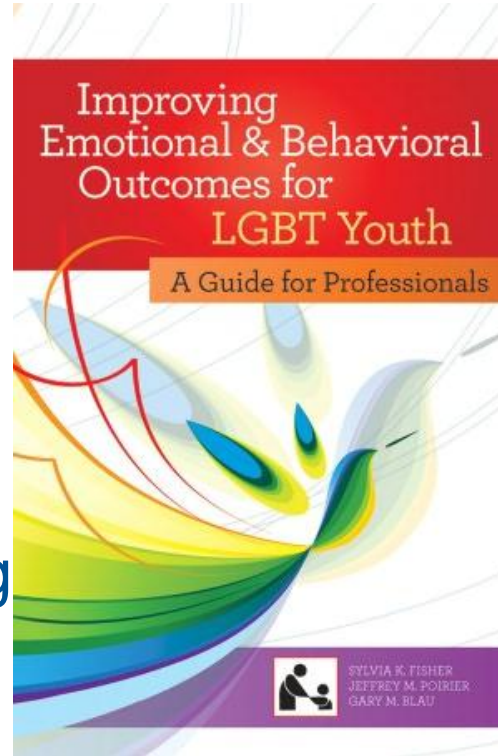
- Increased resilience
- Improved school attendance
- Reductions in bias and stigma
- Peer support and healthy connections
- Lower recidivism (or no system involvement)
- Decreased homelessness and likelihood of running away
- Increased support from families, other adults, and community
- Reductions in mental health and substance abuse challenges

Decreased Stress and Improved Policy,
Services, and Social Supports



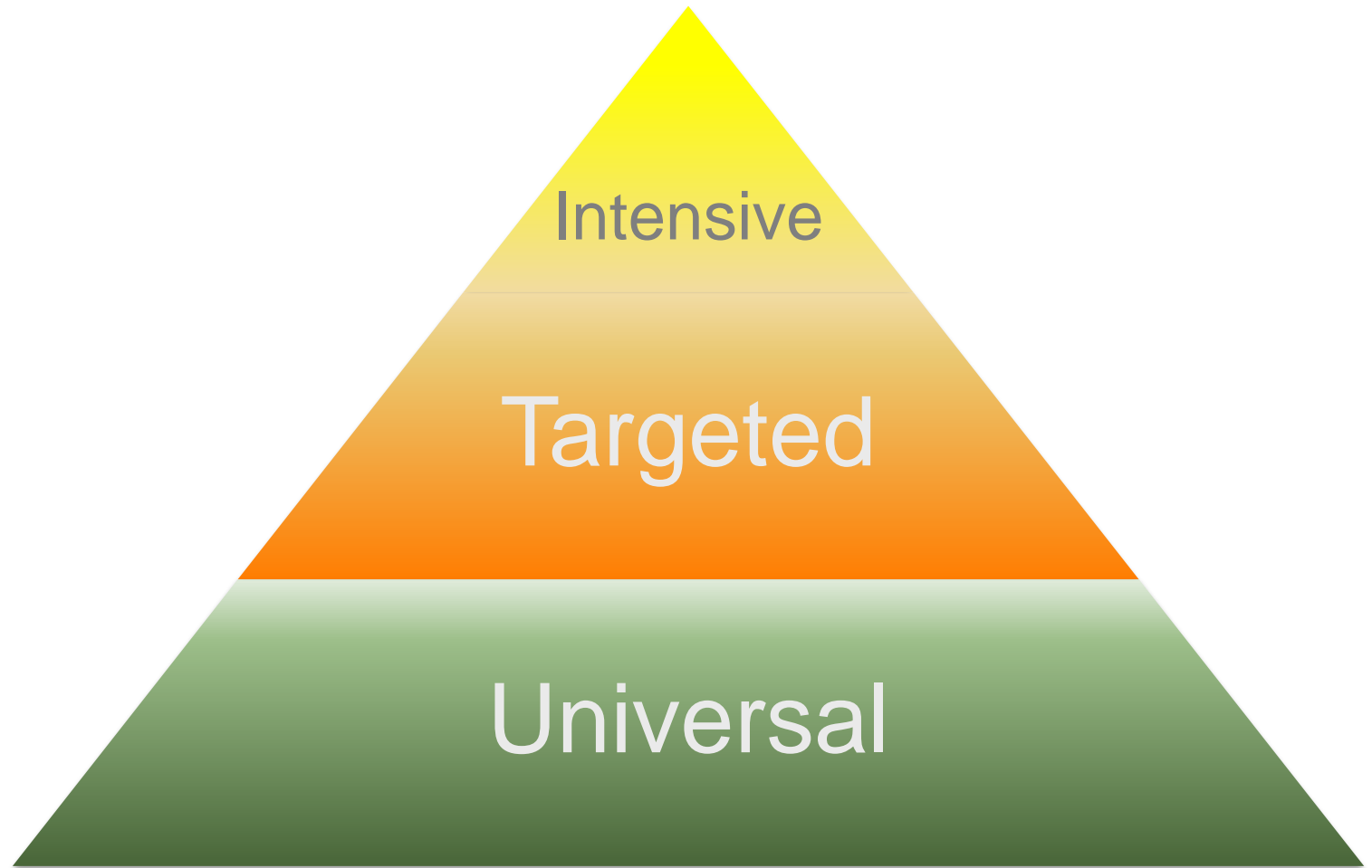
Standards of Care for LGBT Youth

1. Assessment and continuous quality improvement
2. Nondiscrimination policies
3. Staff knowledge
4. Intake, data collection, information sharing
5. Safe, supportive environments



6. Practices that support identity
7. Peer connections
8. Family connections
9. Access to affirming services and supports
10. Community outreach

A Multi-Tiered Approach



Standard 1: Assessment and Continuous Quality Improvement Efforts

- ✓ Conduct a needs assessment or readiness survey to understand capacity of staff to provide culturally and linguistically competent services and supports to LGBT youth, their families, and LGBT-headed families
- ✓ Assess staff strengths and needs related to their knowledge and skills
- ✓ Leverage existing surveys
- ✓ Use results to monitor improvement planning

Sample Questions to Guide this Process

- What are the district's/school's outcomes for this population?
- What has the district/school done to promote and infuse competence in serving and supporting LGBT youth and their families?
- What challenges has the district/school encountered in meeting the needs of LGBT youth and their families?
- What action steps are necessary to address the issues identified?

Self-Assessment Checklist

- Includes 29 questions to heighten awareness and sensitivity of personnel to the importance of cultural competence in human service settings
- Designed for all personnel working with LGBT youth and their families
- Developed by Georgetown University's National Center for Cultural Competence
- Including in the book and available for free online at:
<http://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/Final%20LGBTQ%20Checklist.pdf>

Use the Assessment Data to Guide and Monitor Improvement Efforts...

Don't stop with the assessment....

- ✓ Monitor the effectiveness of school implementation of services, supports, policies and procedures
- ✓ Evaluate school progress toward its goals
- ✓ Obtain feedback to institute appropriate changes to meet school goals on an ongoing basis

What Are Some Ways You or Your School Address This Standard? Could Address It?

- Your thoughts...

Standard 2: Establish and Enforce Nondiscriminatory Policies

- ✓ Prohibit all forms of harassment and stigma
- ✓ Preclude contracting with external organizations who discriminate or do not have policy protections
- ✓ Inform youth and staff about formal grievance procedures
- ✓ Designate an office/staff to review complaints and make determinations regarding graduated disciplines

Standard 3: Promote Staff Capacity

- ✓ Build staff capacity by using training curricula and trainers that effectively inform them about LGBT youth and address:
 - Vocabulary and definitions relevant to LGBT and questioning youth
 - Myths and stereotypes
 - Developmentally appropriate concerns
 - How to support a young person in understanding their LGBT identity
 - Approaches to working with families of LGBT youth
 - Community resources

Standard 4: Incorporate Appropriate Intake and Data Collection Processes

- ✓ District/school forms
- ✓ Confidentiality in data collection and information sharing for program planning and placement considerations



Standard 5: Promote a Safe, Supportive and Culturally Competent Environment

- ✓ Display symbols that positively represent the LGBT community
- ✓ Encourage students to participate in identifying policies, procedures, and practices
- ✓ Be sensitive to how youth self-identify and use language that respects and acknowledges their preferred identity
- ✓ Foster and identify safe spaces



Standard 6: Implement Practices that Support Preferences and Affirm Identity

- ✓ Provide the same quality of services and care as delivered to other youth
- ✓ Allow students to express their gender identity
- ✓ Refer to students using their preferred pronouns and names (rather than legal names)
- ✓ Provide access to affirming counseling
- ✓ Be clear with students about how information about their LGBT identity will and will not be shared

Support Students Who Are Gender Diverse



Standard 7: Promote Healthy Peer Connections



- ✓ Foster:
 - Opportunities for LGBT students to meet and support one another (for example, but not only, Gay-Straight Alliances)
 - Mutual support
 - Personal development
- ✓ Provide opportunities to access affirming recreational activities

Standard 8: Strengthen Family Connections

- ✓ Share information about LGBT identity development with families
- ✓ Increase their knowledge about needs, interests, and perspectives of LGBT youth and importance of family connections
- ✓ Decrease rejection, promote nonjudgmental attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate respect and concern
- ✓ Encourage families to allow youth to participate in family activities

Standard 9: Promote Access to Affirming Services

- ✓ Create collaborative partnerships and coordination to increase the array and access to services needed to meet specific needs of youth:
 - Job placement
 - Mental health
 - Postsecondary education
- ✓ Access phone and web-based resources, such as the Trevor Project lifeline (866.488.7386), Trevorchat, Trevorspace, Ask Trevor

Standard 10: Community Outreach

- ✓ Engage youth in conducting community outreach and promoting awareness of issues such as bullying, self and social acceptance, identity formation, depression, and suicide
- ✓ Identify and distribute resource lists and community contacts for LGBT services and information
- ✓ Collaborate and foster relationships with youth and family organizations



Action Planning Exercise

Questions and Discussion

National Organizations

- Advocates for Youth: <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org>
- Findyouthinfo.gov: <http://findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth>
- Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN): www.glsen.org
- National Association of School Psychologists: <http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/glb.aspx>
- Safe Schools Coalition: www.safeschoolscoalition.org
- Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health: <http://tapartnership.org/content/education/publications.php?id=topic15#topic15>; and <http://tapartnership.org/COP/CLC/lgbtqi2s.php>
- The Trevor Project: www.thetrevorproject.org

Thank you for coming!

Please feel free to reach out:

**Jeffrey Poirier
202.403.5368
jpoirier@air.org**

**Dustin Miller
dm12osu@me.com**