



Becoming an Affirming Caregiver for LGBTQ+ Youth

Like all young people, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ+) children and youth in foster care need nurturing families and caregivers to help them navigate their teenage years and grow into healthy adults. To help create a home where LGBTQ+ youth feel safe, it is important to support and accept the young people in your care without bias. Research shows that family and caregivers who create accepting and supportive environments can enhance the health, mental health, self-esteem and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth.

What does "affirming" mean?

- Understanding *everyone* has a Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and a person's SOGI and sense of self may change over time.
- Believing all people are **worthy of love and respect**, inclusive of their SOGI.
- **Warmly welcoming** and encouraging youth to be their true selves without judgement.
- Actively working to meet the **unique needs** of LGBTQ+ youth.

What does affirming care look like?

- Letting youth know you will **always** be supportive, even as you are still learning.
- Keeping a youth's SOGI **private** unless the youth gives permission to share.
- **Advocating** for youth's safe inclusion in the home, school and community.
- Using **correct names and pronouns** and correcting others who do not.
- Supporting a youth to **dress** in the way they feel most comfortable, according to their gender identity.
- Supporting a child's **friendships** with others who are also LGBTQ+.
- **Sharing** with the social worker if you feel services are not affirming the child's SOGI.

- Attending **support groups** or advocacy groups to better understand how to provide support and get accurate information.

How can I learn to provide affirming care?

- Complete the new online training: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth – Considerations for Caregivers, available at: bit.ly/UCLACWT.
- Watch the animated short: Support for LGBTQ+ Youth Starts at Home: A #AsYouAre Project, available at: bit.ly/AsYouAreShort.

Are there resources available?

Yes! We have many local community and County partners to support our youth and caregivers. To see available resources, visit: dcfs.lacounty.gov/youth/lgbtq-youth/.

Have additional questions? Contact us!

- Jamie Estrada, DCFS LGBTQ+ Program: estraja@dcfs.lacounty.gov
- Jessica Brown, DCFS Office of Equity: brownj@dcfs.lacounty.gov

Encouraging someone to be entirely themselves is the loudest way to love them.
-Kalen Dion, Author and Visual Artist