Empowerment Model for Helping LGB Youth Negotiate the Coming-Out Process within the School Setting
Texas School Counseling Association
February 9, 2014

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What is Sexual Identity/Orientation?

“...deliberate utilizations of inclusive language by school counselors can subtly challenge stereotypes and encourage awareness (DePaul, et.al., 2009).”

- Sexual orientation is a pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes.
- Recent data and research estimates indicate that 3.5% - 10% of the population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.
- The visibility of LGBTQ individuals as a group is higher than ever.
Some Numbers...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>From GLSEN 2003 National School Climate survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>anti-gay violence goes unreported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x</td>
<td>more likely to commit suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7x</td>
<td>more likely to be a victim of a hate crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>report being bullied during school/college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>report being physically harassed because of their sexual orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26x</td>
<td>a day LGBTQ hear anti-gay slurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>reported faculty/staff never intervened when slurs made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>GPA for LGBTQ students who can identify supportive staff/faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>GPA for LGBTQ students who cannot identify supportive staff/faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some Numbers to Consider…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-10%</td>
<td>of 4200 Students are LGBTQ</td>
<td>240 - 420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2%</td>
<td>of 4200 students have parents who are LGBTQ</td>
<td>42 - 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15%</td>
<td>of 4200 students have siblings who are LGBTQ</td>
<td>420 - 660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(assuming 1.5 siblings each 😊)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16-27% ← TOTAL STUDENTS INVOLVED → 702 – 1164

In a class of 30: 4 – 8 students are closely involved
Ethical Standards for School Counselors

“Professional school counselors are advocates, leaders, collaborators and consultants who **create opportunities for equity** in access and success in educational opportunities”

“Each person has the **right** to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that **advocates** for and affirms all students from diverse populations including:...**sexual orientation, gender identity/expression,**...”

“Each person has the right to feel **safe** in school environments that **school counselors help create**, free from abuse, bullying, neglect, harassment or other forms of violence.”

(ASCA, 2010)
Foundation

“What we believe about students, families, teachers, and the educational process is crucial in supporting successes for every student. (ASCA, 2005)”

Personal/Social Development

Standard 7:
Respect for Self and Others
Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

Competency 1:
Knowledge of the importance of self-concept.
Role of the School Counselor

- **Awareness**: School counselors are aware that negative school experiences increase the risk for negative health.
- **Support**: Create a school climate that is safe, affirming, and conducive to learning and healthy development.
- **Leader**: School counselors are strategically positioned to connect with administrators, families, faculty, and the community.
- **Prevention**: Use of strategies to enhance the visibility, openness, and acceptance of LGB issues.
What is Coming Out?

What is “The Closet?”

Lifelong process (Cass 1979, 1981)
1. Identity Confusion (feeling different)
2. Identity Comparison
3. Identity Tolerance (find support groups)
4. Identity Acceptance (Coming Out)
5. Pride Development
6. Synthesis
Delivery System

Empathy, Genuineness, Unconditional Positive Regard

- LGBT or questioning people need **time** to work through their feelings.
- Respect confidentiality. **Trust** is important!
- Help, but **don’t force**. LGBT or questioning people need to move at the pace they feel most comfortable.
- Deal with **feelings first**.
- Share that you are **honored**!
General Systems Model
An Integrative Model for Counselors Helping LGB Youth Through the Coming-Out Process

**Client Inputs**

**Internal Factors:**
- Sexual-Identity Stage
- Internalized Feelings of Homophobia
- Self Esteem/Acceptance
- Mental Health Behaviors

**External Factors**
- Family Environment
- School/Peer Environment
- Access to LGB Support Network
- Race/Culture
- Religion
- Previous Counseling Experience

**Counselor Strategies and Interventions**
- Addressing Personal Homophobia
- Openly Accepting and Being Supportive of LGB youth
- Getting Training re: LGB Issues; i.e., knowing stages of development
- Working With Parents As Needed – educating, conflict management, etc.
- Addressing family issues, peer issues, school environment,
- Addressing religious issues/beliefs
- Addressing issues of race/culture
- Addressing previous counseling exp.
- Providing Resources (i.e., literature and support groups)
- Specific Techniques: Role Playing, Reframing issues
- Social Advocacy/Policy Changes

**Client Outputs**
- Self Esteem/
  - Self Acceptance
- Mental Health Behaviors
- Family Support
- Peer Support
- LGB Community Support
- Institution Support
- Religion/Schools
- Gender Identity Acceptance/Integration

Continued Support as Needed
Management System: Action Plan

Creating a Safe School Climate

A small group of committed citizens can change the world – and it is the only thing that that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

- An ally is someone who works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for the oppressed population.

- The work of allies has been a historically effective way of changing the thinking of the dominant culture.
Being an Ally

Help students gain the knowledge:

1. An Ally is:
   - A provider of a safe space
   - A role model
   - A person who challenges homophobia and heterosexism

2. An Ally can be:
   - An activist
   - An educator or speaker
   - A participant in campus and community activities

3. An Ally is NOT:
   - An expert
   - A spokesperson
Resources for Counselors

- PFLAG
  - www.pflag.org
- Gay/Straight alliances (GSA’s) – High School
  - www.gsanetwork.org
- GLSEN: Gay, lesbian and straight education network
  - www.glsen.org
- Safe Zone/Safe Spaces) - Universities
- ALGBTIC; TALGBTIC through ACA and TCA
  - www.algbtic.org
  - www.txca.org/tca/TALGBTIC_Home.asp
- Churches/Church Leaders (Cathedral of Hope)


