

# LGBT2-S Headed Families:

## Service Needs and Culturally and Linguistically Competent Services and Supports

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# Overview of Presentation

- Introduction and Overview
- Who are LGBT2-S Families?
- What are the Challenges and Strengths for LGBT2-S Families?
- What are the Service Needs for LGBT2-S Families?
- What are Culturally & Linguistically Competent Services & Supports for LGBT2-S Families?



# Parents/Caregivers Who Are LGBT2-S and Their Children

*There are an estimated  
6–14 million children with one or  
two gay, lesbian, bisexual,  
transgender or  
two-spirit parents in the U.S.*



# Construction and Constitution of LGBT2-S Families: *The Bramble Bush*

- **LGBT2-S families are constructed through numerous means:**
  - **Blended Families**
    - Step-families
    - Heterosexual-origin families
    - Hetero-gay families
  - Foster Parenting/Adoption
  - Artificial Insemination
  - Other
- **The constellation of a single family can include a combination of more than one of these constructions.**



# Greater Societal Context

## Threats to the Integrity of LGBT2-S Families

- Homophobia/ Transphobia
- Institutionalized Heterosexism
- Stigmatization
- Societal Prejudice and Rejection
- Legal Challenges to Family Integrity
- Limited Societal Supports
- Stereotypes about LGBT Persons
- Stereotypes about LGBT Families

## Social Systems Intersecting with LGBT2-S Families

- Families of Origin
- School
- Workplace(s)
- Religious Institution(s)
- Neighborhood/Community
- LGBT Community
- Other Social Systems, Institutions, Structures

**LGBT2-S  
Families**





# LGBT2-S Families: Coming Out & Implications for Intervention

- **Coming Out:** Declaring one's identity, specifically, being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, whether to a person in private or a group of people. To be "in the closet" means to hide one's identity.
- **LGBTQ2-S families** have to come out continually, and sometimes in risky situations. Fear can alienate children and family members in the home from pursuing social contacts, seeking help in schools, etc.
- There can be a defensive response from some **LGBTQ2-S families** in which family challenges are "hidden" from others to preserve the integrity of the family unit and minimize intersections with potentially threatening social systems, including physical and behavioral health systems, in addition to educational, community and legal systems.



# Summary Research Findings About LGBT Families

- Some new research suggests that lesbian and gay families are in some respects better for children than heterosexual families... Research on the division of parenting and household labour among lesbian co-parents and gay-co-parents has shown a distinct pattern of equality and sharing compared to heterosexual parents, with corresponding positive well-being for the partner's relationship with each other, and the child's adjustment. (Millbank, 2003, pp. 546-547).
- What differences have emerged, however, suggest that gay and lesbian parents tend to be more responsive to their children, more child oriented, and more egalitarian in their sharing of the workload, characteristics associated with a more positive child outcome. (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002, p. 67).
- Significant, reliable social scientific evidence indicates that lesbian and gay parents are at least as fit, effective, and successful as heterosexual parents. The research also shows that children of same-sex couples are as emotionally healthy and socially adjusted and at least as educationally and socially successful as children raised by heterosexual parents. No credible social scientific evidence supports a claim to the contrary. (Stacey, in Cooper & Cates, 2006, p. 34).



# Summary Research Findings About LGBT Families *(cont.)*

Some reviewers have emphasized that these positive findings exist despite significant discrimination remaining (e.g., Foster, 2005; McNair, 2004; Millbank, 2003; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 2000). Typical comments include:

- Central results of existing research on lesbian and gay couples and families with children are exceptionally clear. Beyond their witness to the sheer existence of lesbian and gay family lives, the results of existing studies, taken together, also yield a picture of families thriving, even in the midst of discrimination and oppression. (Patterson, 2000, p. 1064).
- Lesbian couples are confronted by an environment that disavows their unions, challenges their right and fitness to parent, and denies them basic civil and legal protections to individual and family security. Yet, they have succeeded in creating nurturing, egalitarian families in which they are bearing and raising well-functioning, well-adjusted, and socially tolerant children. (Parks, 1998, p. 376).





# Summary Research Findings About LGBT Families *(cont.)*

## Division of Care in Different Types of Parenting Couples

- A predominantly equitable pattern of caring for children in planned lesbian-parented families, with the non-birth mother's level of involvement in parenting being higher than fathers generally undertake, and being on a par with that of the birth mother.
- Gay male parenting couples have also found that they undertake parenting more equitably than heterosexual partners, although not as equitably as lesbian couples do (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; McPherson, 1993; Patterson & Chan, 1999).



# Challenges for LGBT2-S Families

- **Exclusion, stigma, prejudice and discrimination related consequences (e.g., shame, secrecy and embarrassment associated with societal bias).**
- **Social inequalities and disparities in health and access associated with culture, ethnicity, gender identity, language, race, sexual orientation, etc.**
- **Health disparities including emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual wellness.**
- **Lack of support from familial/cultural/social/educational/faith-based groups and institutions.**



# LGBT Families and What's Happening in

## **Our Schools** *(GLSEN's Involved, Invisible, Ignored: Experiences of LGBT Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K-12 Schools 2008)*

- LGBT families are more likely to be involved in their child's education than the general parent population.
- More than half (53%) of parents described various forms of exclusion from their school communities; being prevented or excluded from full participation in school activities and events; excluded by school policies and procedures; being ignored and feeling invisible.
- LGBT parents reported mistreatment from other parents in the school community (26%) and even from their children's peers at school (21%).
- Parents whose child's school had a comprehensive safe school policy protecting children from bullying/harassment based on actual or perceived SO/GI reported lowest levels of maltreatment.



## Legal Challenges/Threats to LGBT2-S Families

- LGBT2-S families are seldom recognized legally
- The lack of marriage equality endangers family integrity and intactness
- Former opposite-sex spouses often have priority in legal actions over same-sex partners/spouses
- Some LGBT2-S families feel threatened and vulnerable, which can lead to being “closeted” – this can be detrimental to all family members, especially children
- There is increasing acknowledgement of LGBT2-S families and their needs, but much of this is on a case-by-case, state-by-state basis
- *Is this really all about gender?*



# Addressing Legal Challenges/ Threats to LGBT2-S Families

- Advance Directives
- Wills
- Powers of Attorney
- Relationship/Custodial Agreements and/or Guardianships
- Domestic Partnership Agreements *(when and where available)*
- Marriage *(when and where available)*





# ***A Changing Climate: What Does it Mean for LGBT2-S Families?***

- **Five states recognize same-sex marriage**
- **There is increasing recognition of LGBT2-S families, but significant disparities exist in the majority of U.S. states and local municipalities**
- ***Is there a social lag in societal acceptance and service structure?***



# Mission to Support LGBT2-S Families

- **Promote accessible, strength-based, and culturally and linguistically competent services and supports that improve the lives of children, youth, and families in the populations of focus without regard to age, culture, ethnicity, family composition, gender, gender expression, gender identity, geographical location, language, living situation, race, religion/faith, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.**
- **Eliminate shame, stigma and the experience of discrimination among children, youth and families.**
- **Promote mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and wellness**



# Family-Driven Approach to Services and Care for LGBT2-S Families

- Empowerment and full inclusion of LGBT2-S families in all phases of care and service delivery, treatment planning, etc.
- Empowerment of LGBT2-S families in guiding the support they need.
- Delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate services for all persons, regardless of racial/ethnic identity and geographic location (*e.g., Native American, Latino, Asian, African American, Territorial, Reservation, Rural/Urban, etc.*).



# Therapist/Provider Support

- Function as “ally” – demonstrate your organization/practice is LGBT2-S supportive.
- Enhance cultivation of culturally and linguistically competent services and social supports and interventions.
- Social supports include drawing strength from community and community resources.
- Exercise caution in potentially threatening environments – this is important.



## **Therapist/Provider Support** *(cont.)*

- **Conduct family-centered clinical approaches such as FFT with a renewed understanding of the specific concerns and issues associated with LGBT2-S families.**
- **Promote personal and familial empowerment and resilience.**
- **Advocate within your local and national civic, educational and professional associations, groups, organizations – the support of allies is fundamental to acceptance and support for LGBT2-S families.**





# Service and Support Plans Identify Strength-Based, Creative, Practical, Culturally Competent Strategies to Meet the Needs Identified by the Child, Youth and Family

## Culture and Strengths

- ❑ Alex
  - ❑ is a good student
  - ❑ has demonstrated peer leadership in elementary school
- ❑ Judy and Alice (co-parents)
  - ❑ support Alex and are responsive to his needs
  - ❑ will advocate for Alex at school
  - ❑ have strong social consciousness
- ❑ Steve (donor) provides some financial and emotional support for Alex
- ❑ Nuclear family is close
- ❑ School principal reports that Alex's school environment will be supportive

## Needs

- ❖ Alex needs to
  - ❖ develop a peer support network
  - ❖ deal with "coming out" issues since his family structure differs from that of some of his peers
  - ❖ feel safe at school
  - ❖ feel that he is "OK" and contributing to school, faith community, community
- ❖ Judy and Alice need to
  - ❖ develop a social support network
  - ❖ secure the support of family of origin
  - ❖ identify an accepting faith community
  - ❖ secure legal and financial protections to maintain integrity and safety of family unit

**Family Vision: To get along better; to ease Alex's transition to middle school; to ensure family security**

## Strategies

- Alex will work attend school counseling to facilitate transition to middle school
- Alex will join after-school clubs and group meetings about topics/activities that interest him
- Judy, Alice, Alex and Steve (as needed) will participate in family counseling
- Judy, Alice, Alex and Steve will attend Rainbow Family and Family Equality organization meetings
- Judy and Alice will investigate legal and financial options to protect Alex and ensure family security
- Judy and Alice will work with counselor to identify means of securing support of family of origin
- School will provide in-service to school staff to understand LGBT2-S issues and provide strong support and intervention in the event of bullying

Adapted from: Lazear, KJ (2009) Primer Hands On



# Engaging LGBT2-S Families to Provide Culturally & Linguistically Competent Care

- Recognizing Social Supports through Eco-Mapping (e.g., **Strong connections, Tenuous connections, Stressful connections, Flow of energy**)
- Learn about local, state and national LGBT2-S resources for LGBT2-S families.
- Include LGBT2-S families in organizational life & events.
- Change exclusionary practice; integrate language about LGBT2-S-headed families in organizational materials, forms, resources, etc.
- Natural helping networks are support systems (Gottlieb, 1983; Pancoast, 1980).
- Social support from other families can reduce anxiety in parents (Ireys, Sills, Kolodner, & Walsh, 1996).



# Create a Safe Environment for LGBT2-S Families

SYLVIA NOTE – I will add photos of LGBT2-S Families Here



Lazear, 2008 Many Faces of Trauma



# Supports for LGBT2-S Families

**Child Welfare League of America:**

<http://cwla.org/programs/culture/glbtc.htm>

**Family Equality Council:**

<http://www.familyequality.org/site/PageServer>

**Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network:**

<http://www.glsen.org>

**Gay Parent Magazine:**

<http://www.gayparentmag.com>

**Human Rights Campaign:**

<https://www.hrc.org/issues/parenting.asp>

**Rainbow Families of DC:**

<http://www.rainbowfamiliesdc.org/>



# Resources

- *2007 School Climate Survey* (also movies and books to help educate students in an entertaining way) - The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network – [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)
- *Getting Down to Basics Tool Kit: Facts About Being LGBT* – Lambda Legal - [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org)
- The Trevor Helpline – 1-866-488-7386 - The Trevor Project – [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
- National Association of LGBT Community Centers
- PFLAG – Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays – [www.pflag.com](http://www.pflag.com)
- Family Acceptance Project - <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>
- Asset-Based Approaches for LGBTQI2-S Youth and Families in System of Care – [www.rtckids.usf.edu](http://www.rtckids.usf.edu)
- The Safe Schools Coalition – [www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)





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- Foster. (2005).
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