

# **Practice Considerations for work with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered & Questioning Youth and Families in Child Welfare**

## **Activity Guide**

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## Taboo: Let's Talk About Sex

**Purpose:** To help participants recognize the discomforts associated with talking about issues of sexuality so that dialogue can occur about this discomfort before moving on to issues about sexual identity and sexual orientation.

**Time:** 20 - 30 minutes

**Materials:** Taboo Cards  
Timer  
Note paper  
Pencil  
Prizes

### Directions:

- ❑ This exercise will begin dialogue about the sexual language and is loosely modeled after the popular Milton Bradley game, *Taboo*. We will play two rounds of this game (or until you've worked with all 12 cards) and you'll each get a chance to play the role of Clue-giver.
- ❑ Ask participants to break off into pairs to form a team.
- ❑ Ask teams to pair up with another team. Partners from the same team should sit facing each other.
- ❑ Provide each group with a packet of 12 cards. Tell participants not to look inside the packets, and indicate that inside each packet are 12 cards, each containing a "guess word" and a list of 4 more "taboo" words.
- ❑ Each team will use 6 of the cards provided.
- ❑ Each group must decide which team will go first, and then that team must decide who will be the clue giver, and they should hold the clue packet.
- ❑ Teams will receive a point for every time the clue giver can get his/her teammate to say the guess word at the top of the card without using any of the 4 taboo words.

- Review the Rules:
  1. The clue giver **MAY NOT**:
    - Say any piece of the guess word (at the top of the card)
    - Use any of the taboo words or versions of them (e.g., TV for television)
    - Use “sounds like” or hand gestures of any kind|
  2. The clue giver **MAY**:
    - Use sentences
    - Descriptors
    - Sing
    - Use as many (non-taboo) words as you want
    - **Note: If the clue giver accidentally uses a taboo word or the guess word, you must discard that card and you will lose a point.**
  
- Provide an example on a flip chart of what a card looks like. In this case the word is “apple” and we want you to guess it without using any of the following words: core, red delicious, granny smith, pie, and cobbler. So you could say, “New York is called the big...” or “some would say it’s like comparing blank and oranges.” Ask participants about some other ways one could try to get someone to guess apple?
  
- At the end of two rounds, the team with the most points will receive a prize.
  
- Set the timer for 5 minutes and if you guess all six of the clues before times up, allow participants to talk amongst their group about the concepts you guessed. When we call time we’ll have you switch places and roles for the second round.

**Debrief Questions and Large Group Discussion Prompts:**

1. How was that for you? (Was it uncomfortable to say the words? How about to see them?)
2. How fast did you pick up on the concept/situation/word/phrase being described?
3. What words or terms made you the most uncomfortable?
4. What issues came up for you around the words or terms that made you uncomfortable?

Transition back to Curriculum:

Suggest that sex in general is a topic that many people are uncomfortable talking about, especially with people they do not know. Indicate that while this may be true, in order for one to become culturally competent with the special population of GLBT youth and families, that dialogue around sexual identity and orientation must occur. Mention that one of the reasons this does not happen is because of people's fears about saying something that will be interpreted as offensive or hurtful, even if it is not meant to be. Set the expectation that during this training, it will be important for people to be open and tolerant of others and their ideas and questions. Talk about the need to take risks and ask questions, and the need to help provide information and create understanding.

*Excerpted from the Bay Area Academy/California Youth Connection's "Youth Development, Empowerment and Super Strategies for Supporting Transition Aged Youth" training curriculum. Funded by a grant from Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, 2001-2002.*

## Sample Cards: Taboo

This is a list of possible “guess words” and corresponding “taboo” words for use during the “Let’s Talk about Sex” game. Review them and select 12 to place on cards for participants. These are not intended to be required terms for use, so modify, delete and add to them as needed.

Erection: penis, hard, man/men, sex

Orgasm: arousal, sex, ejaculation, pleasure

Areola: circle, breast, female, nipple,

Vagina: girl/woman, sex, birth canal, urination

Aphrodisiac: sex, arousal, oysters, turn on

Pubic hair: body, private, color, curly

Castration: penis, man/men, male, remove

Circumcision: foreskin, man/men, penis, remove

Gynecologist: doctor, exam, childbirth, girl/woman

Kissing: lips, smooch, French, people

Masturbation: stimulation, touch, self, sexual

Insemination: pregnancy, fertilization, penis, vagina

Ejaculation: penis, hard-on, orgasm, man/men

Penis: man/male, organ, part, sex

Breasts: girl/woman, part, nursing, chest

Nipples: breast, chest, biting, sucking

Semen: man/men, fluid, sperm, ejaculation

Foreplay: sex, intercourse, touching, kissing

Vibrator: sex, vibrating, movement, toy

Wet dreams: sex, arousal, ejaculation, sleep

## Early Learnings

**Purpose:** To help participants become aware of the messages that they have received throughout life that impact their values and attitudes about GLBTQ individuals.

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** overhead or flip chart  
Pens/markers

**Directions:**

- Provide introduction to participants:
  - *Explain that we all come to this training with messages we've received throughout our lives, some of which may have been internalized, about homosexuality. These messages can be 1) factual, accurate information, 2) inaccurate, misinformation or 3) lacking information or no information at all – which results in the message that gay people don't exist. This exercise will give you an opportunity to think back about these messages...what was your message? Who gave you the messages? How old do you think you were when you received that message?*
- Break participants into pairs. Ask participants to spend 5 minutes per person discussing the following three questions. (Have questions from above written on overhead or flip chart.)
  - What were the early messages you received about people who were GLBT? (e.g. Were you told not to go near your Uncle Charlie because he was gay; your parents had friends who were a lesbian couple; you heard a sermon at church about homosexuality being a sin.)
  - How old do you think you were?
  - Who, or where, did you get the message from? (parents, media, church, etc.)

- After discussion in pairs, discuss and process as a large group. Use a T-Chart labeled “Spoken Message”/“Internalized Message” to record the responses.

**Trainer’s Notes:**

1. For the group discussion, ASK: “What were the messages that you heard?”
  2. Then go beyond that and ask them to think about what the internalized message was that they were left with.
    - *NOTE: The internalized message impacts us in ways we may not even realize. It may impact our attitudes re: GLBT into adulthood “it takes up a piece of our heads.” Examples of internalized messages include “God hates homosexuals”, or a comedic images of gay people in film. The internalized message may be that gay people are not taken seriously.*
- *Be sure to pay close attention to maintaining participant safety during this exercise. Do not push people if they cannot identify an internalized message. Try rephrasing a general question to the group to identify potential internalized messages if this becomes necessary.*

Transition back to Curriculum:

Suggest that some people may have received positive messages about people who are GLBT while others got very negative ones. Indicate that when these messages become internalized they stay with us and may take a lifetime to unlearn. Our awareness of them is critical, as these early messages impact our attitudes about GLBT issues as adults. Ask why participants think there are so many negative messages and stereotypes about GLBT and do a brief brainstorming session if time allows. (possibilities may include: don’t know anyone who is openly gay, ignorance, societal messages, rely on other people’s opinions, homophobia)

Activity adapted with permission from *Gay and Lesbian Youth Support: A Training for the Casey Family Program*, The GLYS Project, Healthcare of Southeastern Massachusetts, Inc., March 2000.

## As A Matter of Fact

**Purpose:** To provide factual information about GLBT youth and individuals and help participants understand that it is likely they are working with GLBT individuals in their caseloads. It emphasizes the importance of identifying these individuals and coordinating services effectively.

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Materials:** 3X 5 Note Cards - prepared

**Directions:**

- Distribute the prepared index cards ahead of time with the number and corresponding statements on them. The cards include national data from Advocates for Youth and information from the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which is a CDC tool implemented by state Departments of Education throughout the country; Massachusetts is the only state that asks about sexual orientation.
- Ask participants to read them allowed in order.
  1. One of the most common things we feel is isolation. I often feel like I'm all alone, especially because there is so little information available and so few places to meet other gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth.
  2. We are five times more likely than our peers to skip school because we don't feel safe.
  3. We are five times more likely than our heterosexual peers to be the targets of violence or harassment, and nearly twice as likely to be threatened or injured by someone with a weapon.
  4. Approximately 28% of us drop out of school.
  5. 26% of us get kicked out of our homes.
  6. A lot of us end up living on the street. 20 – 40 percent of homeless youth identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.
  7. Though we never intended to, many of us survive on the street by exchanging sex for money, food, or shelter. 73% of kids on the street engage in survival sex.
  8. 21% of lesbians and 28% of young men who have sex with men say they've engaged in unsafe sexual behaviors that place us at high risk for HIV and STD's.
  9. Compared to other adolescents, we are 2 times more likely to use alcohol, 3 times more likely to use marijuana, and 5 times more likely to use cocaine.

10. We are nearly 3 times more likely to have been pregnant, or to have gotten someone pregnant.
11. We are 4 times more likely to have attempted suicide.
12. Suicide is the leading cause of death among gay youth.

After participants have finished reading these facts, the trainer may want to have them read one more time for the group.

Transition back to Curriculum:

Indicate that these statistics are compelling reasons why it is important for health and human service organizations to ensure they are places that provide non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate services to GLBT youth. Suggest that the best way to do this is by utilizing a GLBT affirming approach with all individuals.

Activity adapted with permission from *Gay and Lesbian Youth Support: A Training for the Casey Family Program*, The GLYS Project, Healthcare of Southeastern Massachusetts, Inc., March, 2000.

## Should I Tell?

**Purpose:** To provide an interactive way for participants to explore the issues of privacy& confidentiality when considering disclosing a youth's sexual identity/orientation.

**Time:** 20 - 30 minutes

**Materials:** Note Cards - prepared  
Flip Chart

**Directions:**

- Prepare 6 separate note cards with the questions listed in this module of the curriculum in the participant's manual. These questions are:
  1. Should I document anything about the youth's sexual identity/orientation?
  2. Should I tell my supervisor or coworker's about the youth's sexual identity/orientation?
  3. Should I tell the foster parent about the youth's sexual identity/orientation?
  4. Should I tell service providers about the youth's sexual identity/orientation?
  5. Should I tell the youth's family members about the youth's sexual orientation?
  6. Should I put information into the court report?
  
- Break participants up into 6 groups. Give each group a note card. Ask the group to consider and discuss the question they have on the card amongst themselves for the following 2 situations:
  1. The youth has clearly self-identified as GLBTQ at the time of entering the foster care system
  2. The youth is questioning their sexual identity/orientation and/or exploring issues of GLBT while in foster care and has mentioned this to some friends, and the social worker, but no one else.

List these two situations on the flip chart so that groups can reference them during their discussions.

- Give groups 5-10 minutes to discuss their question amongst the group. Then reconvene the large group.

- Ask a representative from each group to read their group's question aloud and summarize some of the discussion that happened amongst their group.
  
- Allow the large group to add additional comments to what was said as time allows.

Transition back to Curriculum:

Suggest that disclosure, privacy and confidentiality are difficult issues in child welfare practice. Encourage participants to look within their own organizational structure to seek guidance.

## Video Resources

The following is a list of videos that could be accessed for video clips by the trainer. The list is adapted from one prepared in Mallon (2001). Where available, contact information is listed so that tapes can be acquired.

*Choosing Children: A film about lesbians becoming parents.* (1985). This film takes an intimate look at the issues lesbian women who become parents after coming out face. Cambridge Documentary Films, P.O. Box 385, Cambridge, MA 02139; (617)354-3677.

*Out Loud.* (1995). This film is about GLBTQ youth that lasts for about 19 minutes. Contact: Frameline, 346 Ninth Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94103; (414)703-8650.

*Homoteens.* (1995). This film is about GLBTQ urban youth of color. Contact: Frameline, 346 Ninth Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415)703-8650.

*Straight from the heart.* (1995). This film has parents talking about their process of coming to terms with having a gay or lesbian child. Contact: Woman Vision, c/o Transit Media, 22D Hollywood Avenue, Hohokus, NJ 07423; (800)343-5540.

*My Family is Different.* (2002). This video is a discussion facilitated by Linda Ellerby amongst youth and adults exploring the role and impact of having parents that are gay or lesbian. Youth who support homosexuality, and those who oppose it speak out. Aired by Nickelodeon.

## **Hand-outs/Overheads**

The following pages contain material that the trainer may utilize as handouts or overheads for the training session. These can be modified or adapted by the trainer as needed.

## Definition of Terms

- Sex:** A person's biological maleness or femaleness  
Genetic Sex: the biological sex based on chromosomes  
X X Chromosomes = girl  
X Y Chromosomes = boy  
Anatomical Sex: the biological sex based on physical attributes
- Gender:** A term that moves beyond one's biological sex to begin to incorporate psychological and social issues that influence a person's attributes and begins to account for masculine and feminine qualities.
- Gender Role:** The behaviors and characteristics of people over a period of time based on their gender that reflect attitudes and beliefs; usually culturally defined and based on masculine or feminine roles
- Gender Identity:** A subjective term that reflects a person's definition of his/her gender, which may not match one's biological sex
- Sexual Identity:** A term used to describe a person's sense of self from a social and psychological perspective. The roles and practices of one's sexual identity is often culturally influenced as expectations are set within a social context
- Sexual Orientation:** The direction that expression of sexual attraction occurs in an emotional and/or physical sense. This includes heterosexuality (opposite gender attraction), homosexuality (same gender attraction) and bisexuality (attraction to both genders)
- Heterosexuality:** The sexual orientation of people who have an emotional and or physical sexual attraction to people of the opposite gender than their own
- Homosexuality:** The sexual orientation of people who have an emotional and/or physical sexual attraction to people of the same gender as their own
- Gay:** A word used to describe a person who identifies him/her self as having a homosexual sexual orientation. The term usually reflects a personal and social identity and is used to reflect pride in oneself and an acceptance of who they are

- Lesbian:** A word used to describe a woman who identifies herself as having a homosexual sexual orientation. The term may also have social, political and cultural significance to a person
- Bisexuality:** The sexual orientation of people who have an emotional and/or physical sexual attraction to people of their same gender, and to people of the opposite gender of their own.
- Transgender:** A term used to describe a person who has a gender identity that is different from one's biological gender. They have feelings that they believe are those of the other sex, and often believes that a "mistake" was made. They may ultimately seek medical help to alter their appearance. Also referred to as transsexual.
- Questioning:** A term often used to describe people who are exploring issues around their sexual orientation
- Hermaphrodite:** A term used to describe a person with the biological, hormonal and physical attributes of both the male and female gender. Also referred to as intersexed.
- Transvestite:** A term used to describe men or women who gain sexual and psychological pleasure from wearing clothing typically worn by someone of the opposite gender.  
*Note: Most transvestites are heterosexual and are often married.*  
Transvestites should not be confused with female impersonators, which are men who dress up as women and perform in night clubs for a living.
- Cross Dressing:** A term used to describe when a person dresses in clothing usually worn by a person of the opposite gender
- Drag Queen:** A term used to describe a heterosexual or gay man who is a transvestite and will cross-dress in public for performance
- Drag King:** A term used to describe a heterosexual or lesbian woman who is a transvestite and will cross-dress in public for performance
- Queer:** A term now being used by some within the gay community to refer to gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered peoples and questioning people.

## **Stages of Sexual Identity Development for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Youth**

### **Stage One: Pre-Encounter**

- *Baseline or pre-coming out stage*
- Occurs prior to the youth having any understanding of his or her own sexual orientation
- Individuals (as children) during this stage are not conscious of same-sex feelings
- May experience feelings of conflict, often feeling somehow “different”.

### **Stage Two: Encounter**

- *Coming-out stage*
- Includes the initial exposure to various terms, feelings, or people who may be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.
- Individuals begin to acknowledge their homosexual feelings and may discuss them with others.

### **Stage Three: Immersion**

- *Exploration stage*
- Explores either physically, sexually, intellectually, or emotionally their feelings about his/her sexual identity.
- Often involves tremendous risk-taking, both in the relationships and in the acknowledgement of one’s sexual identity.
- Loss of family, friends, and support groups may occur here.
- Sexual and social activity with others begins.
- Interpersonal skills, a sense of personal attractiveness, and a sense of sexual competence begin to develop.

### **Stage Four: Internalization**

- Individual begins to integrate information and become clear on who he/she is as a person.
- The development of stable committed relationships occurs.
- A period of grief and loss may occur as the person deals with the effects of the previous stage on other parts of their personal life.
- Depression can become quite acute during this period.

### **Stage Five: Synthesis/Commitment**

- *Integration stage*
- Comfort with their sexual identity achieved
- Sexual identity now becomes only one factor in defining who the individual is.

(Based on the work of Eli Coleman. (1981-1982). Developmental stages of the coming out process. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 7(2-3): 31-43.)

## At-Risk Behaviors for GLBT Youth

GLBT youth are at heightened risk when compared to their heterosexual counterparts for a variety of issues during adolescence. These can include the following:

- **Depression/Suicide**—as the youth attempts to handle the reaction of family members, strong feelings of sadness, loss of appetite and lethargy may arise. While some youth can handle the process, others may not, and it can be dramatically impacted by their family’s reaction to their coming out. ***Youth questioning their sexual identity are three times more likely to attempt suicide than other youth.***
  
- **Running Away/Homelessness**—in several recent studies, over 35% of homeless youth acknowledge being gay or lesbian or questioning their sexual orientation. The homelessness may be a result of running away, but could also be a result of the youth being forced to leave home because of the family conflict over their sexual identity.
  
- **Psychiatric Hospitalizations-** Some youth may suffer from severe psychiatric disorders in addition to or as a result of the conflict that they are experiencing. This can lead to the need for high levels of treatment to ensure their safety and well-being, or that of others around them. Transgender youth may be at heightened risk for this, as their behaviors may seem even more non-conforming than others.
  
- **Heightened Sexual Activity**— In the process of coping with the response of family members, people may turn for comfort to others in a sexual way and may not have information related to sexually transmitted diseases.

## Exploring Questions for Parents

The following are some possible questions that could be used when talking with parents about children or youth during any initial investigation to assess risk and safety – they are not designed to be all inclusive, but to give some ideas for how questions could be framed in a GLBTQ affirming manner. *Answers to questions already answered by a parent should impact which questions are asked further down on the list of questions. The answers may also provide suggestions for rephrasing the question in a way more appropriate for the interview situation you are in.*

### Parent's Attitude Toward Child - Parent/Child Relationship

- Tell me about your child.
- What do you think about your child?
- What are your child's favorite activities? What does your child like to do?
- What do you think of your child's behaviors?
- Does your child have any behaviors or attitudes that you are concerned with?

### Parent's understanding of Child's Sexual Development

- Does your child have friends?  
If yes, who are they and what do you think of them?  
what kinds of things do they do together?  
If no, why do you think that is?
- Have your child's friends begun to date?
- Do you have rules in your house about dating and relationships?
- Does your child have any special relationships or special friends?
- Does your child currently have someone that is special to them?  
If yes, what do you think about them?  
If no, has the child had someone special to them before? What was that like?

These questions can be used during any investigation to assess risk and safety. The idea is to work with the parents/caretakers to develop a heightened understanding of the parent-child relationship in a manner that would allow any parent to feel comfortable in addressing GLBT issues, questions or concerns if they are present within the family. Child welfare practitioners will not know these issues are present unless someone tells them!

## Exploring Questions for Children and Youth

The following are some possible questions that could be used when talking with children or youth during any initial investigation to assess risk and safety. These questions, like the questions for parents, are not designed to be all inclusive, but to give some ideas for how questions could be framed in a GLBTQ affirming manner.

### Child's Attitude toward Parent – Parent/Child Relationship

- Tell me about your parent/caretaker
- What do you think about your parent/caretaker
- Do you do things with your parent/caretaker?  
If yes, what kinds of things?  
If no, how does that make you feel?

### Child's Self Perception

- What kinds of things do you like to do? Favorite games, TV shows, etc.  
What about each of them do you like?
- Do you have friends?  
If yes, who are they and what kinds of things do you like to do together?  
If no, what do you think about that? (does it bother him/her?)

### Child's Gender & Sexual Identity

- Do you like playing with girls or boys more?
- What do your parents/caretakers think of your friends?
- Do you have rules in your house about dating/relationships?  
If yes, what does the child think of them?
- Are any of your friends in relationships yet?  
If yes, what are their significant others like?  
If no, do any of them want to be?
- Are you in a relationship yet?  
If yes, what is your significant other like?  
If no, do you want to be?
- What would the perfect significant other be like?

These questions start by gathering general information about the child and the family, and then move toward more specific and personal questions. The idea is to use information gained earlier to build upon later in the interview. Questions may be modified or not asked at all depending upon earlier responses. *It is essential to remember when framing questions to children to do so in a manner that allows the child to really tell you what they think.*

## Creating a Safe Environment

The following is a list of steps that child welfare practitioners can take to help create safe environments for all youth, including GLBTQ.

1. Recognize and acknowledge that some of the people, children and adults, that you are working with are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or questioning.
2. Enhance your personal/professional knowledge about gays and lesbians through readings, speakers, or by talking with openly gay or lesbian professionals who are willing to act as a “cultural guide” and teach you about gay and lesbian issues.
3. Use gender neutral language such as “partner”, “significant other” or “someone special in your life” when talking about people and relationships – and talk about relationships!
4. Include Gays and Lesbians as a group when talking about diverse groups and other cultures of people (e.g.: Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, Developmentally Challenged, Gays & Lesbians).
5. Interrupt and stop or walk away from derogatory comments, slurs or jokes that are at the expense of any group.
6. If a person you are working with tells you that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning, acknowledge it and discuss it with them. Explore what it means to them and how it connects to their identity and behaviors.
7. Be clear on the differences between transgendered, transsexual and transvestite. While each is a member of a sexual minority community, transgendered people, transvestites and transsexuals may not be gay or lesbian, and would require different services.
8. Research and stay current on resources for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning individuals in your community. It may be good to visit them and be prepared to escort a person to them who is using the agency for the first time!

Material adapted from Mallon, Gerald P., 1999, *Let's Get This Straight: A Gay and Lesbian Affirming Approach to Child Welfare*, Columbia University Press, New York.

## Factors to Consider When Coordinating Services

When coordinating services for GLBTQ youth, some factors to consider when looking at service providers are:

- Does the youth need the support and safety of being with a group of people who are addressing similar issues and experiences?
- Can the youth get services from the agency that will allow them to be who they are?
- Will the youth be able to disclose information about their sexual identity and orientation if he/she wants to?
- Will the youth be stigmatized, labeled, teased or made to feel like an outsider by staff or other participants in the program because of their sexual identity or orientation?

GLBTQ youth may, or may not need specialized services to address issues they are having. Use these to guide the decision about what type of services to access.

## Factors to Consider when Monitoring Services

When monitoring services, it is important to look at several factors for GLBTQ youth. These factors include:

- Is the person comfortable with where they are receiving services? Why or why not?
- Does the person like the services? Why or why not?
- Does the person feel that the services helping? Why or why not?
- Does the person feel like they can talk about issues related to their sexual orientation? Why or why not?

Depending on how these, and other questions you ask are answered, it may be necessary to coordinate new services, or renegotiate the terms of the services currently being provided.

## Should I Tell?

The following contains some suggestions of things to keep in mind for some of the questions:

- **Should I document anything about the youth's sexual identity/orientation?**

When thinking about this question, consider whether the information that could be documented are observations, comments/concerns from other people, or based on statements or discussions with the youth directly.

If the information is coming from other people – consider who they are in relation to the child and services being provided and coordinated for them. If the service provider or caretaker is giving you information, or a parent is discussing information that is of concern to them, some documentation in the case record may be appropriate, and helpful if another worker needs to take over the case.

Documentation typically serves as a paper trail for other staff within the department and is a tool that allows a supervisor to review work. It is also something that can be accessed by other professionals in some instances, including attorneys. When documenting information, only put what is absolutely necessary to maintain the flow of information.

If the information is coming from the youth directly, make sure the conversation includes some discussion about your role in working with them, part of which includes keeping track of how they are doing. Let them know that some of the discussion will be included in their case record, and what it might look like.

- **Should I tell my supervisor or coworker's about the youth's sexual identity/orientation?**

Again, consider the source of the information. In most any case, discussion about a case related matter is more than appropriate for discussion with a supervisor. Where you may want to ensure more privacy is amongst other staff and co-workers. A good guide for deciding whether or not someone needs to know is the following: ***Will the information, if provided, allow the person receiving the information to more effectively serve the youth's needs?*** If yes, then giving the information is likely to be appropriate. If no, then it is not likely that it is necessary to share the information.

- **Should I tell the foster parent?**

As with co-workers, the question – “Will the information, if provided, allow the person receiving the information to more effectively serve the youth’s needs?” should serve as a guide. If yes, then giving the information is likely to be appropriate. If no, then it is not likely that it is necessary to share the information.

Often times, the answer to that question for foster parents will be yes. What becomes very important is that the youth knows that a discussion with the foster parent is occurring, so that they can raise objections, share concerns, or ask for you to wait. They may also indicate that they are comfortable with some information being shared, and prefer that some not be shared. This can be discussed and negotiated with the youth. If questions or concerns arise for the child welfare practitioner, talk with the youth about them, and let them know the plan is to seek out assistance from your supervisor before doing anything.

- **Should I tell service providers?**

With service providers, the question – “Will the information, if provided, allow the person receiving the information to more effectively serve the youth’s needs?” needs to be applied to each specific service provider. If the answer is yes, then share the information. If the information is shared, however, it is again important to talk with the youth about what information is being shared, with whom, and for what purpose. The youth may have some suggestions, or ask that some information not be shared. They may also want to be the one that gives the information to certain providers as well.

- **Should I tell family members?**

Talking with family members is likely to be a very personal and private process, and if this is necessary, it is strongly recommended that the youth is part of a discussion around how to talk with family members. One time where it may become important to talk with family members is if the care provider and service providers are aware of the information, and the information is likely to be included in a court report that the parents or family members will receive.

- **Should I put information into the court report?**

Keep in mind that information recorded in a court report is visible to a number of individuals. Depending on the nature of the case and how much information is openly discussed with family members, service

providers and care providers the amount of information disclosed in a court report will vary. Consult with your supervisor and/or the Department's legal counsel when contemplating these issues.

If information is being put into the court report, be sure to advise the person the information is about that it will be in the report. It may be helpful to them to have that awareness and it will help build and maintain a trusting and helping relationship.