

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

## **Trainer's Manual**

**Bay Area Academy  
October 2002  
By: Laura Dobbs, MSW**

## Table of Contents

General Trainer's Notes	1
General Overview of Training	2
Morning Session	3
Welcome & Housekeeping	3
Setting Guidelines	3
Ice Breaker Activity	4
Defining Common Terms	4
Break	5
Regrouping Exercise	5
Formation of Sexual Identity	5
Stages of Sexual Identity	6
Issues of Abuse: Risk and Safety Assessments	6
Questions for Youth and Parents	7
Afternoon Session	
Reconvening Discussion: GLBTQ Parents	8
Youth Placement Issues	9
GLBTQ Care Providers	10
Break	10
Coordinating Services	10
Monitoring Services	11
Disclosure & Issues of Personal Privacy	11
Wrap Up & Evaluation	11

## General Trainer's Notes

This trainer's manual is designed to provide a general overview of the curriculum Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered & Questioning Youth and Families in Child Welfare, as well as a more specific recommended outline for the day. It is designed to work in conjunction with the Participant's Manual, which has the bulk of the content material provided within it. Trainers need to review the manual and modify the outlines as needed based on their styles of training and the needs of the group participating in the training.

The day is broken out by timeframes and the session is intended to run between 9 am and 4 pm, with two 15-minute breaks and an hour lunch. If the training session is being held in different time frames, this will need to be adjusted. Also, the breakdown of time within each training session is designed to be a general guide to help ensure all materials are covered throughout the course. They can be modified and adjusted as needed to meet the needs of the trainer and or the training group.

Some sections include a heading called **Trainer's Philosophy**. This section is designed to give the trainer a taste of key concepts that will be helpful to address. It can identify areas where issues for participants may arise or areas of sensitivity are being approached. Additionally, there are sections entitled **Trainer's Note**, which are sections designed to help the trainer be clear on what is being presented at a point in time and why. It may contain factual information or suggestions or ideas for the trainer. Finally, each section has a portion called **Possible Activities**. This section includes activities that are designed to help spark ideas for the trainer about ways to engage and interact with the participants.

Please utilize these possible activities and ideas in any way that seems appropriate. The specifics of the activities are detailed in the Activity Guide if they are not spelled out in the Trainer's Manual. They can be modified, moved, adapted or deleted in any way that seems to work for the trainer. The trainer should also feel free to supplement with any alternative activities or ideas that they may have.

**It is important that the trainer also make efforts to continually illustrate that there are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth and families being served throughout the child welfare system.** It is appropriate to draw on the experiences and practices of participants to further illustrate this point. This will help with the transfer of learning for the participants into their actual casework practice.

## General Overview of Training

Below is a general outline designed to provide structure to the three days worth of material so that all content areas can be addressed in some way. Adjust the flow of curriculum as needed to meet specific training objectives.

### AM SESSION:

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Introductions
9:15 – 9:30	Setting Guidelines
9:30 – 10:00	Taboo: Let's Talk about Sex
10:00 – 10:15	Defining Common Terms
10:15 – 10:30	BREAK
10:30 – 10:40	"As A Matter of Fact"
10:40 – 10:50	Formation of Sexual Identity
10:50 – 11:00	Stages of Sexual Identity Development
11:00 – 11:45	Issues of Abuse
11:45 – 12:00	Questions for Youth and Parents
12:00 – 1:00	LUNCH

### PM SESSION:

1:00 – 1:20	GLBTQ Parents
1:20 – 1:50	Youth Placement Issues
1:50 – 2:30	GLBTQ Care Providers
2:30 – 2:45	BREAK
2:45 – 3:05	Coordinating Services
3:15 – 3:45	Issues around Confidentiality
3:45 – 4:00	Wrap-up and Evaluation

## Morning Session

9:00 – 9:15: Welcome and Housekeeping Matters

*Include personal introduction of trainer and the Bay Area Academy as the organization responsible for putting the training together. Be sure participants have signed in, put on name tags, received packets/training materials and are made aware of logistical issues such as the location of the bathrooms.*

**Group Introductions:** Ask participants to introduce themselves, including who they are and what type of work they do. Also ask people to share why they are interested in this as a training topic. *This is information that the trainer can draw upon throughout the training session.*

9:15 – 9:30: Setting Guidelines

**Trainer's Philosophy:** Throughout this training it will be important for the trainer to keep in mind that the content of this curriculum can bring about a wide range of emotional responses from the participants, which the participants may or may not be aware of them selves. There is likely to be a wide range of attitudes and experiences amongst participants. Because of this, it will be important that the **purpose of the training** is clear, and that some **Group Guidelines** are established. Guidelines can be created as part of a group process, with participants setting the guidelines, or they can be predetermined by the trainer. *Keep in mind, having the group create the guidelines will take more time.*

### **Purpose of Training:**

The purpose of the training is to assist child welfare workers in recognizing that the client population in child welfare includes people that are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (GLBTQ) and to help identify a model of practice that can be utilized in the child welfare setting. This includes the areas of safety and risk assessments, placement and case management.

*Ask participants how many people have participated in trainings on GLBTQ issues before this one. Acknowledge that because of the wide diversity of personal and professional experiences that people shared in the introduction time, there will be a lot that participants can learn from each other throughout the day. Discuss that this topic can be a very sensitive subject that can evoke a wide range of emotions, and as a result*

*group guidelines are needed. Either provide pre-done guidelines, or ask the group to help create them.*

**Suggested Group Guidelines:**

The following are a few suggestions of guidelines that the trainer may want to include on any guidelines that are established or predetermined for the group:

- **Confidentiality** (*this will be important in helping people feel comfortable talking about issues around sexuality*)
- **Recognize we all have different experiences – there’s no right or wrong** (*this will be important in facilitating discussions within small groups or the larger group, as other participants should be seen as resources to further our own understanding of the world*)
- **Share what you are comfortable with** (*this will help ensure people do not feel like they have to talk about sexuality at a personal level – this training is not designed to focus on values and/or personal experiences*)
- **Speak in terms of “I”** (*ask participants to try not to generalize experiences of a group or culture, and speak to what individuals have experienced themselves*).

**Review Agenda:** Briefly introduce participants to the participant manual and the training day outline included.

9:30 – 10:00: Ice Breaker Activity

1. Taboo: Let’s Talk About Sex (See Activity Guide)
2. Early Learnings (See Activity Guide)

**Trainer’s Note:** These activities are designed to help participants begin to talk about the issue of sex and sexual orientation in a safe way within the group. Be sure to reference the Activity Guide for the purpose of each activity, as they are different. Select the activity that is most appropriate for the training group’s needs.

10:00 – 10:15: Defining Common Terms

Utilize this time to help establish common definitions of terms relating to sex, gender and sexual identity. Some key terms to discuss amongst the group include:

- Sex
- Gender
- Heterosexuality

- Homosexuality
- Bisexuality
- Transgender
- Transvestite

**Trainer’s Note:** It may be helpful to have these words and a brief definition put on flip chart paper around the room so that they can be referenced by participants throughout the training.

10:15 – 10:30: BREAK

10:30 – 10:40: Regrouping Exercise

**Possible Activity:**

1. As A Matter of Fact (See Activity Guide)

10:40 – 10:50: Formation of Sexual Identity

**Trainer’s Philosophy:** The important thing to emphasize in this section is that a person’s gender and sexual identity begins to form at birth, and it is impacted by both our genetic/biological system, and the culture in which we are raised. It is **not** intended to get into the “causes” of a person’s sexual orientation, but to lay a foundation to later discuss how the biological and social aspects of life impact the process people experience. It should create a natural transition to a discussion of the stages of coming out, with a highlighted note that the culture a person is raised in can dramatically effect this experience for individuals.

**Key Points of Interest:**

- Sex is determined based on chromosomal and anatomical aspects
- A person’s sex influences how one experiences the world
- By 18 months, children have a clear understanding of their sex, and are beginning to understand gender expectations
- By the age of 4, most children have a clear sense of their gender identity.

**Trainer’s Note:** Because most children have a clear sense of their sex, gender, and gender expectations by the age of 4, many homosexual and transgendered individuals will report feeling “different” at this age, although they describe not always being sure why they feel different until they are somewhat older.

## 10:50 – 11:00: Stages of Sexual Identity Development

Use this time to review the five stages of Sexual Development based on the work of Eli Coleman. Some dialogue about the process and how it can be smooth or rough for the person depending on the person's culture and support systems is important. Reference the material on *The Impact of Culture and Ethnicity* in the participant's manual.

## 11:00 – 11:45: Issues of Abuse: Risk and Safety Assessments

**Trainer's Philosophy:** During this time, some dialogue about the possible attitudes of child welfare practitioners when thinking of adolescent youth and abuse allegations should be explored. This must be done in a way that does not put participants on the defense. Standardized Risk Assessment tools put adolescent youth at a low risk when considering their age alone; however at this age and stage of development is when adolescent youth explore and formulate their sexual identity. This process can create conflict, and heightened levels of risk which must be explored in the risk assessment process for all adolescent youth. The purpose of this time will be to challenge participants to consider how they look at adolescent youth and abuse allegations.

*Review the four key types of abuse and discuss how GLBTQ youth can be at risk for each type of abuse. Special attention should be paid to the section on Emotional Abuse and the possible behaviors that can be exhibited by youth as a result of their experiences.*

### **Possible Activities:**

1. This section contains an Applied Activity: Risk and Safety. Ask participants to break into groups of 3-4 people per group and review the information presented in the Background & Investigation Findings. Upon completion, ask participants to identify their risk and safety concerns for Jorge and come up with 3 possible intervention strategies. Take time at the end to have each group report back to the larger group.
2. Utilize the case study for Chris in this section of the manual to help participants see how youth can be at risk of abuse or neglect in a way that exposes them to the child welfare system. Note that this case illustration is based on an actual child welfare investigation in California. Have participants complete this activity.

*Ask participants to review the case, and then break into groups of 4-5 people. Have participants answer the four questions at the*

*end. Have each group report back to the larger group and compare responses and reactions to the case study.*

3. Ask participants to share their experiences of investigating child welfare allegations where GLBTQ issues were present as a factor relating to safety and risk and discuss them in the large group.

**Trainer's Note:** Questions about the inclusion of “Q” in GLBTQ may arise during this time. Reference the material in the participants guide for this issue. You may want to bring it up early on, or leave it for later, or if the group brings it up.

#### 11:45 – 12:00: Questions for Youth and Parents

Facilitate a discussion about how to approach youth and families in a way that allows for issues around sexual identity to be explored in the assessment process. Suggest to participants that because sexual identity development is an issue for all adolescent youth, it is something that needs to be explored in every risk and safety assessment. The model for doing this is a GLBTQ affirming model, where questions and discussions are framed in a way that would be inclusive of all sexual identities and orientations. Record comments on flip chart

**Trainer's Note:** Refer to the sections entitled “Exploring Questions for Parents” and Exploring Questions for Children and Youth for this section. The special topic section on bisexual youth may also be relevant to cover here.

A point for discussion may include the need to be careful in what words or phrases are used when talking with people. For example, the commonly used phrase “partner” may not make sense to many youth, or even parents, but asking about “someone special” might. Being sensitive in how questions are asked also means listening to people’s responses, because their response may guide the practitioner toward comfortable language for the person. This awareness will help in the interview process.

#### 12:00 – 1:00: LUNCH

## Afternoon Session

1:00 – 1:20: Reconvening Discussion: Parents

**Trainer’s Philosophy:** The time used on the topic of GLBTQ parents should help participants recognize that there are a lot of GLBTQ individuals that are currently parenting children. It must further challenge the participants to recognize their opinions about this in order to set them aside when assessing safety and risk to children. Both heterosexual and homosexual individuals possess biases that can impact their assessment, and they must be recognized and acknowledged. While some may have a bias against GLBTQ parenting, others may be strong supporters of it. Child welfare practitioners must be able to set aside their biases/opinions and determine whether or not a parent’s sexual orientation is an issue that impacts the risk and safety of a child and provide interventions accordingly.

**Trainer’s Note:** It is also possible that the “parents” for the child are grandparents that are now raising grand-children. This could be a point of discussion for the group, as the dynamics may change for these families.

### **Possible Activities:**

1. Discussion Question for the Group: Could the sexual orientation of a parent or parents impact the risk and safety of a child?

*Allow participants to dialogue about this issue, asking for people to expand on their answers and support why or why not a parent’s sexual orientation does or does not impact risk and safety. Suggest that a parent’s sexual orientation and their relationship status can be a factor to consider in assessing risk and safety. Mention that any type of parental relationship, heterosexual or homosexual, can impact the amount of stress in a home, which can impact the risk and safety of a child.*

*Also mention that this does not mean that relationship and sexual orientation are issues that are a significant factor of safety and risk to children in every household, just that it is one that must be assessed.*

2. Lead the group into creating a **list of factors** that might be important to look at when evaluating the parent/caregiver

relationship and whether or not it impacts the safety and well-being of the children.

- *Be sure to address the issue of the ambiguity of roles within the family system as a significant issue to explore.*

3. Video Clip: “My Family is Different”

This video was aired on Nickelodeon and is facilitated by Linda Ellerby. It explores the role and impact of gay and lesbian parents in their family systems from the perspective of gay and lesbian parents, their children, and those who do not believe in or support homosexuality. There is a strong message of respect and tolerance in the video.

1:20 – 1:50: Youth Placement Issues

**Trainer’s Philosophy:** This section addresses two types of youth:

1. Those who identify themselves as GLBTQ
2. Those who do not identify themselves as GLBTQ

*For those youth who identify themselves as GLBTQ, the main emphasis should be on the importance of the dialogue between child welfare practitioner, the youth, and the caretaker in regards to placement issues. This dialogue is an essential part of the child welfare practitioner’s role in helping to assist the development of a solid placement. The dialogue allows for the youth’s needs to be clearly identified, and for a complete assessment to be made about the caretaker’s ability to meet the youth’s needs.*

*For those youth who do not identify themselves as GLBTQ, which is any youth, heterosexual or homosexual, the emphasis for the child welfare practitioner is on a **GLBTQ affirming model** of interviewing. This requires that child welfare practitioners evaluate their **overall practice** and explore whether or not their interviewing techniques communicate openness to various sexual identities and orientations.*

**Possible Activities:**

1. Brainstorming: Discuss techniques participants currently utilize, or one’s they can think of, that could help create safe environments for all youth. Record ideas on a flip chart.
  - a. Review the steps child welfare practitioners can take to help create safe environments for all youth (Participant’s Manual)

2. **Applied Activity: Youth In Placement**  
Break participants into groups of 4-5. Ask participants to read case scenario for Nam Kim and answer the discussion questions in the group. Participants can report back to the larger group for further discussion.

1:50- 2:30: GLBTQ Care Providers

**Trainer’s Philosophy:** There is a wide range of opinion about whether or not GLBTQ individuals should be licensed foster parents and/or adoptive parents for foster children. While there are many myths about the impact on a child being placed with a care provider who is homosexual, there is no evidence to support that homes where one or both caretakers are homosexual would negatively impact the child. Given that California is a state that mandates that child welfare practitioners consider the “best interest of the child” and with the rapidly growing population of children in foster care, the lack of available homes, and the largely untapped population of GLBT homes that are willing and interested in providing homes for foster children, child welfare practitioners must evaluate the appropriateness of placing children into homes where GLBT individuals are caretakers. Highlight the idea that with the concurrent planning process, this could be a way to help facilitate permanency for a number of children who do not currently have it.

**Possible Activities:**

1. **Applied Activity: To Place or Not To Place** (based on an actual child welfare case in California). Break participants into groups of 2-3. Ask them to read the case information on the child and potential caregiver and identify the following:
  - a. Areas of strength
  - b. Areas of concern
  - c. Placement Recommendations
  - d. Service Coordination
2. Facilitate a group discussion about what factors would be appropriate to look at when evaluating a potential GLBTQ caregiver for placement to determine if they are able to meet the needs of a child.

2:30 – 2:45: Break

2:45 – 3:05: Coordinating Services

Some discussion about whether or not specialized services for GLBTQ youth, parents or care providers should be coordinated needs to occur. Many of the same services coordinated for heterosexual people are needed for GLBTQ people; the question is when does someone need more specialized services? Explore this question with the group and brainstorm some possible factors to consider when linking youth with services.

### 3:05 – 3:15: Monitoring Services

Facilitate discussion about the importance of getting feedback from the person participating in services and the service provider about the effectiveness of services. Ask participants in the group to share experiences that they have had in regards to coordinating and monitoring services for GLBTQ individuals, and what has worked, and what could have been done more effectively.

**Trainer's Note:** The intent of sharing is to help participants see how they can set up GLBTQ individuals with services that can be successful. Time should not be spent belaboring mis-matched services that people have experienced, but should explore how it could be identified earlier on in the process that the individual and service providers are not going to work well together; or how to set services up for success from the beginning.

### 3:15 – 3:45: Disclosure & Issues of Personal Privacy

#### **Possible Activity:**

1. Should I Tell?

### 3:45 – 4:00: Wrap-up & Evaluation

Spend a few moments encouraging participants to advocate for a GLBTQ affirming atmosphere within their organizations and discuss ways that this can be achieved.

Ask participants to complete the evaluation forms before departing.