



SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS



INTRODUCTION

This guide offers a comprehensive narrative on how foster care and adoption agencies can more effectively welcome, support, and collaborate with LGBTQ+ prospective parents.



GROUNDING IN BEST PRACTICE

Drawing from professional standards and lived experience, this guide provides an in-depth understanding of the values, practices, and structures that allow agencies to build equitable and affirming experiences for all families.

VISIBLE SIGNS

Make sure you have representation of diverse families, visual cues of affirmation, and nondiscrimination signs posted.



AFFIRMING INTERACTIONS

First impressions set the tone. Use correct pronouns, avoid "sir/ma'am," and explicitly welcome all families.



IMPROVE CAPACITY

All staff should be trained on working with LGBTQ+ parents and family members. Likewise, general training should include scenarios where LGBTQ+ parents, youth, or family members are represented with realistic family structures and transition related scenarios.



RECOGNIZE STRENGTHS



LGBTQ+ adults often have personal experience navigating identity, building resilience, forming chosen families, and overcoming bias, all strengths that can help young people grow with strong connections.



ENSURE EQUAL TREATMENT IN HOME STUDIES, LICENSING, AND PLACEMENT DECISIONS.

Assess parents based on caregiving capacity, not identity. Monitor for implicit or explicit bias from evaluators or home study writers. Do not use gender identity or transition history as criteria for parenting suitability.

USE THE TERMS THE FAMILY USES TO DESCRIBE THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS.



This could be mama, papa, zaza, boppa, nomi, or anything else they have decided as a family. Ask parents how they describe their family roles and use their language. Ensure records, forms, and digital systems have nonbinary-inclusive gender fields. When mistakes are made, be sure to make corrections promptly.



RESPECT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY REGARDING TRANSITION STATUS OR MEDICAL HISTORY.

Do not disclose a caregiver's transgender or nonbinary identity to other families, schools, or service providers unless the parent chooses to share it.

Avoid invasive or irrelevant questions (e.g., "Are you currently taking hormones?" "Have you had gender affirming surgeries?" or anything else concerning their body.)

ENSURE PLACEMENT MATCHING AVOIDS DISCRIMINATORY EXCLUSION.

Do not avoid placing children with transgender or nonbinary foster parents based on:

- other adults' discomfort
- community intimidation
- stereotypes about gender or sexuality.

Frame placements based on safety, stability, and attachment needs.



CENTER PARTNERSHIP AND TRUST-BUILDING IN CASEWORK PRACTICE.

- Ask: "What support would be helpful for you as a parent right now?"
- Validate strengths and protective parenting practices already in place.
- Ask about support networks and ask if they would like to be connected to other parents or social support groups.

For more information on how to support LGBTQ+ foster and adoptive parents, reach out to the [National SOGIE Center](#).