

Six Easy Do's and Don'ts to Affirm LGBTQ Youth

This quick tip-sheet provides six easy things to do and to *not* do in order to affirm LGBTQ youth. Provide this resource to anyone who works with LGBTQ youth and put these tips into practice!

6 Easy Do's	6 Easy Don't's
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remember that LGBTQ youth are youth first and want what all youth want. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Love, affirmation, friends, to belong, to be accepted, etc. 2. Make yourself a short list of (intersectional!) resources that you can use to connect your LGBTQ youth to affirming community and services (Google is your friend, here). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Find local or national resources that align with the youth's intersectional identities. Some examples: HRC resources; Familias Por La Diversidad; LGBTQ AAPI resources, etc. 3. Listen to understand, rather than to be understood. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g., "Tell me more about what that is like for you?" 4. Ensure that all those working with your youth is trained in Basic SOGIE (build your own intervention skills). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g., "We don't use that word anymore. The correct term is _____"; "This youth uses they/them pronouns – please update your records and use those pronouns going forward." 5. Help the youth garner tools to strengthen their innate resilience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g., Mindfulness, journaling, talking to others, humor, breathing exercises, etc. 6. Share stories and role models of LGBTQ youth being successful – they are survivors not victims. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Google things like queer music icons; transgender women in history; Black gay men who made a difference; famous lesbians, LGBTQ Asian and Pacific Islanders. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use language that assumes the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ i.e., Got a boyfriend? Use of pronouns before the youth tells you what theirs' are; assume that family is only blood relatives – who in your life is family for you? 2. Assume that one's LGBTQ identity is the only one that matters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All your youth's intersectional identities impact their experiences in the world. Don't focus on one to the exclusion of others: The child is Black and gay; Asian and lesbian and disabled; Latinx and transgender, etc. 3. Let your fatigue or the weight of your caseload become an excuse for not going the distance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "I didn't have time to look that up, sorry" can be easily replaced with, "I didn't have time to look that up –let's do it right now together." 4. Forget that everyone has biases. It is our responsibility as child welfare professionals to ensure that our personal beliefs and biases do not get in the way of providing culturally competent and affirming services to all of our families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Read, watch inclusive media, nurture relationships with LGBTQ people, and participate in LGBTQ community activities. 5. Escalate conflict with a young person. Use your own emotional regulation and de-escalation skills to help the youth work through their anger and distress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remember that when trauma gets triggered, a youth's responses are coming from fear and their own neurological systems. Staying calm and centered can help the young person calm and center themselves. 6. Give up. Years of broken promises and trust can take time, patience, and continued caring to overcome. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A child needs love most at the moments they are the most unlovable.