INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE
The purpose of this lesson is for participants to gain a foundational understanding of the terms and concepts related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE); normative adolescent development; and the “coming out” process for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. Other lessons in this curriculum will expand on these concepts, but this lesson is intended as a primer of SOGIE terminology and concepts. It is aimed at creating a basic and uniform level of competency in these areas for all participants.

OBJECTIVES
Participants will:

• Examine and distinguish the concepts of SOGIE

• Acquire relevant terminology for discussing the concepts of SOGIE

• Deconstruct myths and stereotypes about LGBT youth

• Learn the process by which children and adolescents develop individual identity, including SOGIE

• Learn about the process through which many youth disclose their SOGIE (“coming out”)

• Discuss how others’ responses to a youth’s coming out may enhance positive and healthy development, or contribute to negative health, behavioral health, and developmental outcomes

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE
All juvenile justice providers, advocates, and personnel (e.g. anyone working in the juvenile delinquency system, such as judges, referees, magistrates, prosecutors, probation officers, defenders, detention and secure facility staff, court staff or personnel, facility caseworkers, social workers, mental health professionals, corrections personnel, forensic evaluators, policy advocates, etc.)
ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME NEEDED
2 hours 10 minutes

TRAINING MATERIALS
• SOGIE Scale
• Short Definition List
• Individual SOGIE terms to be posted around the room
• Individual definitions to pass out to individuals
• Index cards
• Fill-in-the-blank SOGIE charts
• Coming Out Stars activity and red, blue, orange, and purple colored paper cut into five-pointed stars
• Flipchart paper or white board and markers
• Video and Internet capability

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
• The Equity Project, Optional Tool: Reteaching Gender and Sexuality, YouTube (Oct. 6, 2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slwgAUAX1sw&index=3&list=PLOKb5A8WSHvSTH3YnEAAfiIbB_Ron-WSDU (used with permission from the Reteaching Gender and Sexuality Project).
• The Equity Project, SOGIE Glossary (2014).
LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson overview is intended to be a simple road map for trainers to understand what the lesson covers, which sections are interactive, and how long each section is estimated to last. It should serve as a guide for highlighting key points, as well as a resource for trainers to decide whether they are capable of delivering the lesson, and whether the lesson is appropriate for the intended audience. Trainers may also find it a useful tool for keeping track of time and flow of the lesson as they deliver it.

I. Introduction (10 minutes)
The trainer will introduce himself or herself to the participants, review the lesson objectives, and establish the ground rules for the training.

II. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE): What are they? (1 hour)
The trainer will familiarize participants with each of the distinct concepts of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, including common terminology. The trainer should convey to participants that having a common understanding of terms and concepts is essential to this training; however, the challenge with SOGIE terminology is that it continues to evolve and may differ based on culture, region, and generation. There can also be disagreement within the LGBT community on the precise definition of some terms. All competent professionals need to be flexible with terminology when working with youth and should understand that they may need to adapt their language or learn new terms. This understanding, however, can only be attained with a firm grasp of the underlying concepts this ever-evolving terminology describes.

A. Understanding SOGIE and Related Terminology (5 minutes)
Participants will consider concepts and terms related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

B. SOGIE Scale (15 minutes)
The trainer will use teaching notes and the SOGIE Scale as a visual aid to further explain the concepts of sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, and will further define the terms transgender and gender non-conforming.

C. SOGIE Terms and Definitions (40 minutes)
Participants will have the opportunity to put their new knowledge into practice through interactive activities using SOGIE terminology. Participants will also learn additional relevant terminology.

• Activity: Matching Terms with Definitions. The trainer will post terms around the room and pass out definitions that participants must match to the corresponding term. After the activity is complete, participants will read aloud the terms and definitions. The trainer will either confirm that the match is correct, or if incorrect, ask volunteers to find the right definition.

• Activity: Fill in the Blank 1. The trainer will post a chart with the terms sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The trainer will give four volunteers a card with a term on it and will ask each volunteer to place his or her card under the corresponding heading.
• **Activity: Fill in the Blank 2.** The trainer will post another chart with the same headings of *sex, gender, and sexual orientation.* This chart will have sub-headings under each. The trainer will pass out 18 cards with different terms to participants, who must then place each card under the correct headings.

After the activities are completed, the trainer will facilitate a discussion about changing terminology, perceived negative terms, and the use of different terms in different communities.

**III. Common Myths (10 minutes)**
The trainer will review common myths about LGBT people using a true/false exercise.

• **Activity: True/False.** The trainer will share statements about LGBT youth, asking participants to answer whether each statement is true or false. The trainer will provide the answers and relevant research.

After the activity, the trainer will facilitate a short discussion with participants about any other common myths about LGBT youth they may have heard.

The trainer will very briefly review basic tenets of adolescent development. The purpose of this section is to highlight the fact that while all adolescents go through identity development (including about their SOGIE), LGBT youth may have to cope with additional stigma from society while going through this normative development process.

**IV. Coming Out (40 minutes)**
The trainer will share research on the process of coming out and engage participants in an interactive exercise and brainstorming to explore how youth might feel about coming out, why they may or may not come out, and what kind of reactions they may experience from others.

• **Activity: Coming Out Stars (20 minutes).** The trainer will facilitate an activity in which each participant receives either a red, blue, orange, or purple five-pointed star. The trainer will instruct participants to write the following on each point of the star: a friend they are close to, a community they belong to, a family member, the job they would most like to have, and a hope or dream. The trainer will then read out loud different scenarios that require participants with certain color stars to fold over or tear off different points. The teaching notes for debriefing the activity should help participants better understand the feelings of acceptance or rejection a young person may face when he or she comes out. It is important to note that the coming out process is different for all individuals.

**A. Feelings Associated with Coming Out (10 minutes)**
The trainer should lead an interactive discussion on the feelings LGBT youth experience when they anticipate coming out.

**B. Reactions of Others to Youth Coming Out (10 minutes)**
The trainer will note that until now, the lesson has focused on the internal feelings of youth during the coming out process. In this section, the trainer will facilitate a brainstorming discussion about how others might react when a youth comes out, and the responsibility of adult juvenile justice professionals for creating a space for youth to feel safe expressing their identities.
V. Wrap-Up (10 minutes)
The trainer will end the lesson with time for questions and an activity. The trainer may also share additional resources and provide an overview of the rest of the Toward Equity curriculum.

- **Activity: Head Heart Step.** Participants have the opportunity to share one fact they learned, one value or guiding principle that is important to their working with LGBT youth, and one concrete action step they will take after the training.
FACILITATION NOTES

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

After introducing himself or herself to participants, the trainer should engage in a general introduction of the lesson, reviewing the purpose and objectives for the lesson with participants.

Some trainers may choose to start the session with the video “Re-teaching Gender & Sexuality,” accessible via The Equity Project website. This video (which runs 2 min., 47 sec.) shows youth with diverse identities explaining how their experiences and sense of themselves differs from traditional notions of sexuality and gender. This video powerfully articulates the need to expand traditional definitions of gender and sexuality. For some more conservative groups or groups that are not used to input from youth, this video may seem confrontational or jarring. The trainer should pre-screen the video and decide whether it is an appropriate starting point for the intended audience.

II. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE): What are they? (1 hour)

A. Understanding SOGIE and Related Terminology

Start by explaining that participants are going to consider various terms associated with SOGIE—sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Elicit from the participants their understanding of these terms and provide actual definitions, using the following notes and materials to aid in explaining the concepts.

B. SOGIE Scale

ACTIVITY

Hand out and review the SOGIE Scale. The purpose of this visual is to explain and distinguish gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, and sex assigned at birth. Provide participants with a handout copy of the image or have it projected for all to see. Review the image, using the discussion points that follow as a guide. This is a good opportunity to explain that these dimensions of identity exist in every human being, and there is considerable variation within each dimension.

SOGIE SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Sex Assigned at Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intersex</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracted to Women</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracted to Men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This chart is adapted from http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/spectrum and http://www.gendersanity.com/diagram.html.
• **Sex**: Assigned at birth, a biological construct based primarily on physical attributes such as chromosomes, external and internal genital and reproductive anatomy, and hormones.

• **Gender Identity**: A person’s internal identification or self-image as male, female, something in between, or outside of the male/female binary. Everyone has a gender identity. A person’s gender identity may or may not be consistent with his or her sex assigned at birth.
  - No one else can determine another person’s gender identity.

• **Transgender** describes a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not match.
  - *Trans* is often used as shorthand for transgender.
  - A **transgender boy or transgender man** is someone who was assigned a female sex at birth but whose gender identity is male. He understands himself to be male and lives, or desires to live, as a boy and, later, a man.
  - A **transgender girl or transgender woman** is someone who was assigned a male sex at birth but whose gender identity is female. She understands herself to be female and lives, or desires to live, as a girl and, later, a woman.
  - A transgender person may know their gender identity at a very young age, as early as two or three years old. Some children, with supportive parents and adults, may start to express that gender identity—through clothing, hairstyles, chosen names and pronouns, or even taking hormone blockers when they begin puberty. Other transgender people may not do any of these things until they are adults.
  - The medical community often refers to individuals who wish to alter their bodies to align with their gender identities as **transsexuals**. *Transsexual* is not a term that is used very often among youth or by transgender community members.
  - Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual, just as cisgender people, whose gender identity and assigned sex are congruent, may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual.

• **Gender Expression**: How individuals communicate their gender to others. People express and interpret gender through hairstyles, clothing, physical expression and mannerisms, physical alterations of their body, and by choosing a name that reflects their own idea of gender identity.
  - Gender expression can be fluid or even situational (*e.g.*, expressing gender differently when at work or visiting with family than with friends).
  - All people communicate their gender identity in a way that feels comfortable to them.

• **Gender Non-Conforming**: A person who does not subscribe to the gender expression or roles imposed by society. Similar terms include: *gender creative, genderfluid, gender variant*, and *pangender*. One example is a girl or woman who, in the past, may have been referred to as a “tomboy.”
  - Most transgender people are NOT gender non-conforming. For example, when viewed according to her affirmed sex as female, a transgender girl who wears dresses is gender conforming.

• **Sexual Orientation**: An attraction to others that is shaped at an early age (usually by about the age of ten). Sexual orientation falls on a spectrum that ranges from exclusive attraction to only men or only women, to varying degrees of attraction to both men and women, to no attraction to either men or women. People who are not attracted to either men or women are often referred to as *asexual*. 
Attraction Reflection Exercise: What do we mean by “attraction”? Ask participants to think about what happens to them, physically and emotionally, when they see someone they find attractive. Brainstorm examples so people can come up with a concrete list. Possible examples include:

- Hands start to sweat
- Heart beats faster
- It is hard to concentrate on other things
- Thinking about that person, even if they are not around
- Butterflies in the stomach

Explain that attraction is the same regardless of the person's sexual orientation. Straight people and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have these same kinds of physical and emotional reactions when they see people to whom they are attracted.

Sexual Behavior (or sexual activity): Differs from sexual orientation and does not determine a person's sexual orientation.

- People who identify as heterosexual may have sexual experiences with people of the same gender. Similarly, people who identify as gay or lesbian may have sexual experiences with individuals of a different gender.

These four scales (Sex Assigned at Birth, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation) are independent of one another. Cultural expectations are that men/boys occupy the extreme left ends of all of the scales and that women/girls occupy the right ends. However, in reality, a person may occupy different parts of each scale. Thus, a person with a male sex assigned at birth could be attracted to men or could have a female gender identity, feminine gender expression, or any combination thereof. A person whose sex assigned at birth is female could identify as a woman, have a more masculine gender expression, and be attracted to women, etc.

Additional Visual Aid: Trainers may wish to find copies of pictures of celebrities from across the SOGIE spectrum to make this point more vividly.

Act Like a Lady/Act Like a Man: An alternative exercise some trainers may find useful is to have participants work in small groups. Each group can be assigned a topic: either “Act Like a Lady” or “Act Like a Man.” The groups will work to brainstorm ideas on a flipchart or white board of what acts, activities, or beliefs one would expect under the assigned topic heading. After five minutes, the groups should post their papers around the room, and the trainer can review the concepts with the participants, noting commonalities that influence our social construct of gender. The trainer should then ask participants a series of questions that may include:

- What happens if someone steps outside of this box?
- If a woman were to do something from the “Act Like a Man” lists or were to fail to do some of the things from the “Act Like a Lady” list, what would be the reaction?
- How might gender-based expectations be affected by a person's religion, culture, race, or age?

Facilitate a conversation about how these social constructs may either ostracize those who step outside of their assigned “box” or force others to stay within their box, even though that is not who they truly are. Societal forces can be very powerful and can also be damaging to young people who do not feel like they “fit in.”
**C. SOGIE Terms and Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY: MATCHING TERMS WITH DEFINITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post each of the SOGIE terms around the room. Give a definition (without the term) to each of the participants, and ask the participants to stand by the word that corresponds with their definition. This activity gets people on their feet and gets them thinking about the definitions as much as the terminology. Alternatively, if there is a large group of participants, instead of posting the terms around the room, the trainer may choose to pass out the terms to participants. The trainer can then ask those with definitions to find the person holding the corresponding terms. This makes the exercise interactive and encourages group work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Term Summary Recap:**

After participants have found their matching terms and definitions, they should take turns stating the word and reading the definition. Confirm that they are correct. If the answer is incorrect, ask if anyone knows the correct term. If no one knows the answer, read aloud and explain the correct answer.

**Short Definition List**

**Ally:** Describes a person who confronts and challenges heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexual privilege in herself or himself and others.

**Bisexual:** Describes a person who is attracted to both men and women.

**Cisgender:** Describes a person whose gender identity matches his or her sex assigned at birth.

**Coming Out:** Describes the act or process of voluntarily disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Gay:** Describes a person who is attracted to individuals of the same gender. While historically used to refer specifically to men, it is often used to refer to women attracted to other women, as well.

**Gender:** A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex assigned at birth, it is often closely related to the role that a person plays or is expected to play in society.

**Gender Expression:** Describes how individuals communicate their gender to others. People express and interpret gender through hairstyles, clothing, physical expression and mannerisms, physical alterations of their body, or by choosing a name that reflects their own idea of gender identity.

**Gender Identity:** A person's internal identification or self-image as male, female, something in between, or outside of the male/female binary. Everyone has a gender identity. One's gender identity may or may not be consistent with one's sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Non-Conforming (GNC):** Describes a person who does not subscribe to gender expression or roles imposed by society. Similar terms include: gender creative, gender fluid, gender variant, genderqueer, and pangender. One example would be a girl or woman who, in the past, may have been referred to as a “tomboy.”
ACTIVITY: MATCHING TERMS WITH DEFINITIONS (CONT.)

Heterosexuality: Describes a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to individuals of the opposite sex.

Homophobia: The irrational hatred and fear of lesbian or gay people, or disapproval of other sexual orientations, regardless of motive. Homophobia includes prejudice, intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence against people on the basis of their gay or lesbian identity. It occurs on personal, institutional, and societal levels, and is closely linked with transphobia and biphobia. Internalized homophobia is the fear and self-hate of one’s own gay or lesbian identity, which can occur for individuals who have been conditioned throughout childhood with negative ideas about sexual orientations other than heterosexuality.

Intersex: Describes a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered “typical” for either males or females. [Note: Hermaphrodite is an offensive and out-of-date term for an intersex person.]

“In the Closet”: Refers to a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex person who chooses not to disclose his or her sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity to friends, family, co-workers, or society. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet.” For example, a person can be “out” in his or her social life, but “in the closet” at work or with family. Also known as “Down-low” or “D/L.”

Lesbian: Describes a woman who is attracted to other women.

LGBT: An acronym used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, or the community as a whole. There are many other variations or extensions of the LGBT/GLBT acronym that include initials to represent terms such as questioning, queer, intersex, allied and two-spirited. This curriculum uses the acronym “LGBT” in the broadest sense possible. While there are many other acronyms that reflect a more nuanced understanding of the breadth of identities that exist within the SOGIE spectrum (e.g., LGBTQQIAA2-S), the choice to use “LGBT” was made for the sake of brevity and uniformity. Because terminology is constantly evolving and because certain groups may gravitate to certain terms and abbreviations over others, it is difficult to come to a commonly agreed-upon acronym that reflects all perspectives. The Equity Project’s use of “LGBT” is intended to be as inclusive of all other identities as possible, unless otherwise specified (e.g., with regard to research that focuses on particular demographics).

Queer: An umbrella term used to refer to all LGBT people; the term can be a political statement as well as an identity, seeking to expand upon limited sexual and gender-based categories. For some, “queer” has a negative connotation, given its historical use as a pejorative term. Many LGBT people, however, have reclaimed the word and now use it in a positive light. Many people use the term “queer” because other terms do not accurately describe them.

Questioning: People who are unsure of, or in the process of, discovering, their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
**ACTIVITY: MATCHING TERMS WITH DEFINITIONS** (CONT.)

**Sex:** Assigned at birth, a biological construct based primarily on physical attributes such as chromosomes, external and internal genital and reproductive anatomy, and hormones.

**Sexual Orientation:** An attraction to others that is shaped at an early age (usually by about the age of ten). Sexual orientation falls on a spectrum that ranges from attraction to only men or only women, to varying degrees of attraction to both men and women, to attraction to neither men nor women.

**Transgender:** Describes a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not match.

**Two Spirit:** A term used in some Native American communities for persons who identify with gender roles of both men and women, and/or are considered a separate or third gender.

Be clear to participants that we discuss definitions so that we have a common understanding of terms, which is essential to having conversations about SOGIE. The challenge with SOGIE terminology is that it is ever evolving, and it can be both cultural and generational. There can also be disagreement within the LGBT community on the precise definition of some of these terms. More importantly, youth may have new terms or use some of these terms in a different way. All competent professionals need to be flexible with terminology when working with youth and should understand that they may need to adapt their language for some children or may need to learn new terms. In this regard, SOGIE terminology is the same as all language: context, culture, age, and experience matter. **It is okay to make mistakes!** Cultural competence does not require a perfect score on a terminology quiz. Rather, it is a process that occurs over time and requires an open mind and a willingness to learn.

**ACTIVITY: FILL-IN-THE-BLANK**

Post the following chart where everyone can see it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Pass out an index card to each of any four volunteers, each card with one of the following terms on it:
  - Biology
  - Identity
  - Expression
  - Attraction

- Ask participants who received cards to place theirs on the chart under the appropriate category.
**ACTIVITY: FILL-IN-THE-BLANK (CONT.)**

- Help participants work through their thinking on this until the chart correctly reflects what is below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Then pass out cards with the following 18 terms on them. Some of these terms may be familiar to the participants; others will not be.
  - Lesbian
  - Gay
  - Bisexual
  - Heterosexual
  - Asexual
  - Man
  - Woman
  - Two Spirit
  - Transgender
  - Queer
  - Genderqueer
  - Masculine
  - Feminine
  - Androgynous
  - Gender Non-Conforming
  - Male
  - Female
  - Intersex
ACTIVITY: FILL-IN-THE-BLANK (CONT.)

• Ask each participant who receives a card to give his or her understanding of the term’s definition and to then place it on the chart in the proper place. If they place it under “Gender,” be clear whether it is gender identity or gender expression. When a term is unclear to participants, the trainer should provide the definition that is included in the SOGIE Glossary that accompanies this lesson. The complete chart should look as follows, when the exercise is over:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersex</td>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>Transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Spirit</td>
<td>Two Spirit</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgynous</td>
<td>Androgynous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Non-Conforming</td>
<td>Gender Non-Conforming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>Queer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After participants are done, facilitate a short reflective discussion about the terms, using the prompts that follow:

• Were any of these terms new?
• Are any of these terms confusing?
• Has anyone ever heard others use these terms incorrectly?
• Has anyone ever heard some of these terms used as an insult or derogatorily?

When discussing SOGIE issues or talking with LGBT people, one should be conscious of potentially offensive terminology and use each person’s preferred gender pronoun. For example, when talking to a child whose sex assigned at birth was female but who identifies as male, one should follow the youth’s lead and use the male gender pronouns he/him/his.
Participants may raise questions about “negative” or perceived negative terms. If so, address these terms using the following discussion points as a guide:

- LGBT communities, like other marginalized communities, have developed different words to refer to themselves over time.

- Some LGBT people may use words to refer to themselves that are considered offensive by others.

- There is a debate within the LGBT community over whether it is appropriate even for LGBT people to use these terms. Regardless of that internal community debate, it is never appropriate for a non-LGBT person to use these terms, as it will virtually always be seen as a slur or insult.

- Different LGBT sub-communities may use different words to describe themselves.
  - For example, “queer” may be offensive to some older LGBT people, as it was considered a derogatory term for many years. Others may not be offended by it, because many have chosen to “reclaim” the word to rid it of its negative connotation. Additionally, some groups use “queer” to signify a political or activist movement aimed at confronting homophobia. The word “homosexual” is also widely disfavored because of its historical association with mental illness.

- The Short Definition List used in this lesson gives an overview of common terms that LGBT people use and is meant to be a general guide to give users terms to appropriately and respectfully discuss SOGIE. The SOGIE Glossary, available in the Additional Resources, is meant to provide participants with additional information; however, no glossary can include every potential word people might use to describe themselves, especially since new terms are still emerging, and definitions of terms may evolve over time. For more information on terminology see Toward Equity: Lesson Three – Enhancing Communication and Building Trust with LGBT Youth, and Lesson Six – Respecting and Supporting Transgender Youth.

III. Common Myths (10 minutes)

**ACTIVITY: TRUE/FALSE**

- Tell participants they are going to discuss some common myths about SOGIE and LGBT youth.

- The trainer will share some common ideas and ask participants whether they think each statement is true or false.

- Participants should consider whether any of the beliefs are commonly shared in their community and what other commonly held beliefs have not yet been identified.

- Footnotes have been provided in case trainers are asked to verify particular points, but they are not intended as part of the explanation, given that this could overcomplicate the exercise.
ACTIVITY: TRUE/FALSE (CONT.)

True or False? Few, if any, youth in juvenile detention are LGBT.
**False:** Approximately 20% of youth in juvenile detention facilities are LGBT,\(^2\) compared to approximately 5%-7% in the general population.\(^3\) Additionally, the data show that LGBT youth are more likely to enter juvenile detention for status offenses such as running away, truancy, and violations of probation.

**Toward Equity: Lesson Four – Reducing Risk and Promoting Protection** provides much more information on the data and typical pathways for LGBT youth entering the juvenile justice system.

**True or False?** By virtue of their age, youth cannot know they are LGBT.
**False:** Individuals become aware of their sexual orientation and gender identity at very young ages. Recent studies show the average age at which gay and lesbian teenagers first self-identify has dramatically decreased over the past several decades.\(^4\) Research shows the average age of coming out in 2011 was 16 years old, compared to 20-22 years old in the 1980s.\(^5\) While this is the average age of coming out, children have an understanding of their sexual orientation much earlier, usually by the age of ten, and most children have an understanding of their gender identity by age three.

True or False? Being transgender is different from being gay.
**True:** Transgender describes someone whose gender identity is incongruent with his or her sex assigned at birth; it is different from being gay, which is a sexual orientation.\(^6\)

**True or False?** Sexual orientation and gender identity are matters of personal choice, so youth can choose not to be LGBT.
**False:** Sexual orientation and gender identity are deep-seated, inherent aspects of personal identity; attempts to change either are both futile and harmful to youth.\(^7\) According to the American Psychiatric Association, “There is no published scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of ‘reparative therapy’ as a treatment to change one’s sexual orientation....More importantly, altering sexual orientation is not an appropriate goal of psychiatric treatment...”

---


\(^3\) Andrew Burwick et al., *Identifying and Serving LGBTQ Youth: Case Studies of Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Grantees, Mathematica Policy Research* (2014), http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/14/lgbt-rhy/rpt_LGBTQ_RHY.pdf ("[T]he National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that 7.4 percent of boys and 5.3 percent of girls in grades 7–12 reported same-sex romantic attraction, and results of a recent nationally representative survey of U.S. adults indicate that approximately 3.4 percent identify as LGBTQ.” (citation omitted)).


\(^6\) Refer participants back to the SOGIE Chart and definitions from earlier in the lesson, if necessary.

ACTIVITY: TRUE/FALSE (CONT.)

True or False? Transgender youth are just “acting out” and trying to get attention through gender non-conforming clothing, hairstyle, and name choices.

False: Most transgender youth are gender-conforming once they are able to express their affirmed gender. The medical and mental health fields recognize that when transgender youth experience incongruence between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity, the appropriate, medically accepted response is to allow youth to express their core gender identity. Suppression of these behaviors can have severely negative effects on a youth’s mental health.\(^8\)

True or False? LGBT youth are mentally ill and sexually predatory.

False: Over 35 years of objective scientific research shows that LGBT identities fall within the range of normative development and are neither associated with any mental or emotional disorders, nor caused by prior sexual abuse or trauma.\(^9\) While transgender youth may be diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria, which is listed in the DSM-5, this diagnosis is not associated with mental illness. The term gender dysphoria relates to emotional distress that people may experience when their gender identity is not congruent with their sex assigned at birth. Not all transgender youth experience gender dysphoria. Those who do may receive medical assistance (such as hormone blockers or hormone replacement therapy) that prevents physical changes that may cause distress, or that aligns their bodies with the gender with which they identify. This is called medical transition. Some youth will not receive any medical intervention, but may socially transition, expressing their authentic gender through clothing, hairstyle, name, and gender pronoun.

True or False? People’s gender expression always reflects their gender identity.

False/It Depends: Not always. A person who identifies as female may present a more masculine appearance. Likewise, a person who identifies as male may present a more feminine appearance. And sometimes people choose not to express their authentic gender. For example, a person with an assigned sex of female who identifies as male may still express a female identity and live as a girl to stay “in the closet” or conform to societal pressure. This is especially true in detention and commitment environments, where issues of physical safety or short-term convenience may be the driving factors. The key take-away is that you cannot make assumptions about a person’s gender identity based solely on that person’s gender expression.

Ask participants whether they can think of any other common myths or stereotypes about LGBT youth, and facilitate a discussion.

Ask participants to raise their hands when their answer is yes, or for volunteers to answer the following questions:

- Has anyone ever worked with or does anyone currently work with youth who identify as LGBT?
- If anyone knows he or she has worked with LGBT youth, how did he or she know these youth were LGBT? (e.g., they told me; they told someone else; they told me about their partners, etc.)
- Have you ever worked with youth who you thought were LGBT?
- What made you think they were LGBT? Fact? Myth? Assumption?


After a few people have had the opportunity to share, tell participants that they are now going to explore the coming out process in greater detail.

**IV. Coming Out (40 minutes)**

The trainer should explain that coming out is the process of disclosing one’s sexual orientation or gender identity to others. Because most people in our society are presumed to be heterosexual and cisgender, coming out is not a one-time life event; it is a lifelong process that is continuously repeated. Heterosexual and cisgender family members or allies of LGBT persons may also experience a coming out of their own, when and if they decide to disclose to others that they have friends or relatives who are LGBT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY: “COMING OUT” STARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of this activity is for participants to gain a better understanding of the coming out process and recognize that this process is different for every individual. It may also help participants empathize with the challenges that often accompany the coming out process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials Needed: Blue, Purple, Red, and Orange paper stars, and pen/pencils for each participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time: About 20 minutes, depending on size of group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of group: Any</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let each person pick either a **BLUE**, **ORANGE**, **RED**, or **PURPLE** star, and then read the following to them:

Imagine that this star represents your world, with you in the center and the things or people most important to you at each point of the star. So we’ll begin by writing your name in the center of the star, making it your very own star! Then, pick a point of the star. Choose a friend who is very close to you, someone you care about very much—a best friend or a close friend, it doesn’t matter. Write his or her name on this point of the star.

Next, think of a community that you belong to. It could be a religious community, your neighborhood, a fraternity or sorority, or just a group of friends. Write the name of this group that you are a part of on the next point of the star, moving clockwise.

Now, think of a specific family member, someone that you have always turned to for advice, or maybe who knows how to cheer you up when you’re sad—a mother, father, aunt, or uncle…any family member who has made a significant impact upon your life. Please write their name on the next point of the star.
ACTIVITY: “COMING OUT” STARS (CONT.)

What job would you most like to have? It could be anything from President of the United States to dentist—whatever your career aspiration is, write it on the next point.

Last, what are some of your hopes and dreams? Maybe you want to be a millionaire; maybe you want the perfect family. Think of a few of your hopes and dreams and write them on the last point of your star.

Have everyone stand up in a circle. Explain that each person is now gay or lesbian, and each is about to begin his or her coming out process. Tell them that they cannot talk for the rest of this activity. The trainer then reads the following to the participants:

You decide that it will be easiest to tell your friends first, since they have always been there for you in the past, and you feel they need to know.

- If you have a BLUE star, your friends have no problem with it. They have suspected it for some time now and thank you for being honest with them. Luckily, your friends act no differently toward you and accept you for who you are.

- If you have an ORANGE or PURPLE star, your friends are kind of hesitant. They are a little irritated that you have waited so long to tell them, but you are confident that soon they will understand that being gay or lesbian is just a part of who you are...you just need to give them some time. Please fold back this side of your star.

- If you have a RED star, you are met with anger and disgust. Your friends, who have been by your side in the past, tell you that being gay or lesbian is wrong and they can't associate with you anymore. If you have a red star, please tear off this side and drop it to the ground; these friends are no longer a part of your lives.

With most of you having such good luck with your friends, you decide that your family probably deserves to know. You turn to your closest family member first, so that it will be a little easier.

- If you have a PURPLE star, the conversation does not go exactly how you planned. Several questions are asked as to how this could have happened, but after some lengthy discussion, this person who is close to you seems a little more at ease with it. Fold this side of your star back, as he or she will be an ally, but only with time.

- If you have a BLUE star, this family member embraces you. He or she is proud that you have decided to come out and lets you know that he or she will always be there to support you.

- If you have an ORANGE or RED star, your family member rejects the thought of being related to a person who is gay or lesbian. As with some of your friends, he or she is disgusted, and some of you are thrown out of your house or even disowned. You are now part of the 40% of homeless youth who identify as gay or lesbian. If you have an orange or red star, please tear off this side and drop it to the ground.

---

ACTIVITY: “COMING OUT” STARS (CONT.)

Having told your friends and family, the wheels have started to turn, and soon members of your community begin to become aware of your sexual orientation.

- If you have a **PURPLE** or **BLUE** star, your sexual orientation is accepted by your community. They continue to embrace you like anyone else, and together you celebrate the growing diversity in your community.

- If you have an **ORANGE** star, you are met with a mixed response. Some accept you, and some don't know what to think. You remain a part of the community and, with time, will fit in as you once did. If you have an orange star, please fold back this side.

- If you have a **RED** star, your community reacts with hatred. They tell you that someone like you doesn't belong in their community. Those who had supported you in your times of need no longer speak to you or acknowledge you. If you have a red star, tear this side off and drop it to the ground.

You have heard that rumors have started circulating at work regarding your sexual orientation. In the past, you have made it a point to confront these rumors as soon as they begin, but now you're not sure if that will do more harm than good. But, unfortunately, you don't have the chance.

- If you have a **BLUE** star, your coworkers begin to approach you and let you know that they have heard the rumors and that they don't care; they will support you. Your bosses react the same way, letting you know that you do good work, and that is all that matters.

- If you have a **PURPLE** star, your workplace has become quite interesting. Everyone seems to think that you are gay or lesbian, even though you haven't mentioned it to anyone or confirmed any of the rumors. Some people speak to you less often, but the environment has not seemed to change too drastically. If you have a purple star, please fold back this side.

- If you have a **RED** or **ORANGE** star, you continue to work as though nothing is happening, ignoring the rumors that have spread throughout your workplace. One day, you come in to find that your office has been packed up. You are called into your boss's office, and she explains that you are being fired. When you ask why, she tells you that lately your work has been less than satisfactory and that she had to make some cutbacks in your area. If you have a red or orange star, please tear off this side and drop it to the ground.

Now…your future lies ahead of you as a gay man or lesbian. Your hopes and dreams, and your wishes for the perfect life…for some of you, these are all that remain.

- If you have a **PURPLE**, **BLUE**, or **ORANGE** star, these hopes and dreams are what keep you going. Most of you have encountered some sort of rejection since beginning your coming out process, but you have managed to continue to live a happy and healthy life. Your personal hopes and dreams become a reality.

- If you have a **RED** star, you fall into despair. You have been met with rejection after rejection, and you find it impossible to accomplish your lifelong goals without the support and love of your friends and family. You become depressed, and with nowhere else to turn, many of you begin to abuse drugs and alcohol. Eventually, you feel that your life is no longer worth living. If you have a red star, please tear it up and drop the pieces to the ground. You are now part of the group of suicide victims who are gay or lesbian.

Source: Jeff Pierce, University of Southern California
ACTIVITY: “COMING OUT” STARS (CONT.)

Activity Debrief:
- Begin by asking participants how that activity felt. If they give a one-word answer (e.g., “sad”), ask them why and to explain further. Some common responses include:
  - Sad, depressed (from the color stars that were completely or mostly rejected)
  - Lucky (from those with all or most points on their stars intact)
  - Hopeful (from those that still have one or two points left)
- After a few participants have had the opportunity to share, ask them to imagine a young person going through those experiences and reflect silently for a few minutes.
- Point out to participants that in their role as a juvenile justice professional, they are often the first adult this young person may have contact with after going through all of those different types of rejection, and this young person is expected to trust the participants.
- Hold up one of the ripped-up stars, and point out that there are many youth like this in the juvenile justice system.
- Finally, ask participants what they may be able to do to put the youth at ease and/or show they can be trusted with the youth’s coming out.

While all adolescents go through the development process, many adults working within the juvenile justice system have little or no understanding of what normative adolescent development encompasses. Therefore, it is important for trainers and participants to become familiar with key areas of adolescent development, such as identity development, moral development, decision-making skills, physical development, and the social maturation process, as well as external environmental and social factors, as all of these facets of development will help participants put a youth’s behavior into a developmental context. When discussing SOGIE and the coming out process in particular, it is important that participants review general adolescent development concepts to better understand how these concepts may impact a youth’s behavior and contextualize the experiences of LGBT youth. While all youth go through adolescent development, LGBT youth may additionally have to cope with stigma from society about their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Some youth may be exploring or questioning their identity, while others may know they are LGBT but fear negative reactions of sharing that information with family, friends, or others.

Explain some basic concepts of adolescent development that are important to understand with respect to SOGIE:
- Being LGBT in a society that stigmatizes LGBT identities is an extra burden on top of the other facets of adolescent development that all youth experience. LGBT youth in the juvenile justice system may also experience stigma based on race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background, or based on any combination of multiple marginalized identities.
• All adolescents develop at different rates. Development is a non-linear process. Comparing one specific child’s development to another’s is problematic. Adolescence is a time of identity development, which includes developing a sense of autonomy and a sense of how one fits within a community. Part of this identity development also includes how an adolescent relates to others in a sexual or romantic relationship. It is normal for all adolescents to examine their identity and sexuality, both internally and with respect to how it affects their standing in the community.

Those wishing for more detailed adolescent development training should visit the National Juvenile Defender Center website at http://www.njdc.info to request training on developmental issues or a free copy of the MacArthur Foundation’s Toward Developmentally Appropriate Practice: A Juvenile Court Training Curriculum.

A. Feelings Associated with Coming Out

Lead an interactive discussion on the feelings many LGBT youth experience when they come out. You may want to record some of the responses on a white board or flipchart paper, so the ideas remain visible throughout the discussions that follow.

Possible answers reflecting common feelings a young person may have include:

• Fear
  ◦ Ask participants what it is specifically that young people may fear about coming out. Examples include:
    • rejection
    • gossip
    • violence
    • loss of relationships and friendships
    • being kicked out of the house
    • not having financial support for food, clothing, or school

• Happiness
  ◦ Ask participants what it is about coming out that causes young people to experience happiness. Some examples include:
    • being honest
    • being able to openly date people they are attracted to
    • finding support
    • agency over their own decision
    • being able to express their true identity

After the brainstorming is complete, facilitate a discussion on coming out using the following notes:

• Coming out (particularly during adolescence) can allow a person to develop as a whole individual and empower him or her.

---

Research has shown that coming out promotes self-esteem and decreases negative outcomes, and that “exploration, expression, and integration of identity are crucial parts of positive adolescent development.”12

Some youth feel it is important to be honest with themselves and others about who they truly are.

Some children are already perceived as LGBT and, therefore, do not feel a need or ability to hide their identity.

However, the goal of supporting LGBT youth and youth perceived as LGBT is not to make them come out.

There is a big difference between a young person choosing to come out on his or her own and a young person being “found out” or “outed” by someone else. Such outing of a young person can be devastating to the youth.

Coming out is a personal choice and an ongoing process.

Just as there are many reasons that youth choose to come out, there are a lot of reasons youth may not feel safe or ready to come out.

Some youth may understand on some level that they are LGBT, but are struggling with that knowledge for religious, familial, or social reasons. For example, some youth may be struggling with what they perceive to be conflicting identities, such as being gay and being Christian. Until youth can resolve this struggle for themselves, they may not be comfortable coming out, which could require explaining that dual identity to others.

Juvenile justice professionals should find ways to convey to youth that they are trustworthy and supportive, so that youth feel safe coming out to them at their own pace and in their own way.

---

B. Reactions of Others to Youth Coming Out

Note that until this point, the lesson has focused on the internal feelings of the young person coming out. Ask participants to create a list of possible reactions from adults that youth may receive when coming out. Write down answers on a white board or flipchart. Some examples of possible responses:

- happiness
- fear
- shock
- disbelief
- discomfort
- silence
- confusion
- joy
- wondering why the person “came out”
- supportiveness
- flattered
- honored
- anger
- disgust

Share with participants that creating an inclusive organizational culture is one of the most critical components of ensuring that youth feel safe.13

End this section by asking participants to brainstorm concrete steps they can take to make youth feel safe. Examples may include:

- be open-minded
- put up rainbow stickers or inclusive photos signaling a safe space
- listen
- use gender-neutral language
- ask questions
- admit mistakes
- seek out resources
- educate ourselves
- raise awareness

End the discussion by reiterating how imperative it is that juvenile justice professionals do everything they can to create inclusive, safe spaces for all youth to express their identities.

---

13 Id. at 9.
V. Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY: HEAD HEART STEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On a flipchart or white board, draw a large circle (head), a large heart below the circle, and two legs with feet, below the heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask participants to think about one fact they learned. Write responses for people who wish to share this fact in the circle representing a head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask participants to think about one value or guiding principle they heard that feels important when it comes to LGBT youth. Write responses for people who wish to share their value/principle in the heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask participants to share one manageable and concrete action step they will take in their jurisdiction after this training. Write responses for people who wish to share this step in the legs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

End the lesson with time for questions; ask participants to share one thing they learned; share any additional resources; and tell participants where they might be able to turn for more information (e.g., local chapters of PFLAG, local LGBT education and advocacy groups, and the Equity Project). Trainers may also provide an overview of the rest of *Toward Equity*, if appropriate, either to encourage more training on this subject or to preview what is to come for audiences that are already committed to more lessons.