



Webinar: Creating Inclusive Spaces for the LGBTQ+ Community in Newcomer Services

June 25, 2024, 1:00 – 2:15 PM ET

Transcript

Introduction

Rob Callus: All right, welcome, welcome, welcome. We are so glad you're here. Welcome to today's webinar by Switchboard, a one-stop resource hub for refugee service providers. Today's webinar is entitled Creating Inclusive Spaces for the LGBTQ+ Community in Newcomer Services. We're so glad you're here. We're going to get started, and first I'm going to introduce myself.

Today's Speakers

RC: My name is Rob Callus. I am a training officer with the Switchboard team. I have a focus on community integration, and I will be today's facilitator. Really grateful to be able to uplift our really talented and excellent speakers here today. Here on the screen, you can see the four main speakers we have, and I'm going to walk through quick bios for each of them.

First, we have Max. Max is a consultant for the Episcopal Migration Ministries Rainbow Initiative and a visiting scholar at Clark University. He has over a decade of experience working at the intersection of immigration and LGBTQ+ status. He has held leadership roles in organizations such as the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, Refugee Council USA, and the US Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Next, we have Dr. Anita Fábos, an anthropologist who studies displacement and forced migration, focusing on how displaced people organize their mobile lives. As the Convener of the Integration and Belonging Hub at Clark University, she examines refugee and migrant integration policies, emphasizing urban sustainability and multi-sited belonging. She has conducted research with diasporic Sudanese Muslims and other forced migrants in the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

Next, we have Al Green. Al has been the ministry director of the LGBT Asylum Task Force at Hadwen Park Congregational Church, UCC, for over six years. He has assisted hundreds of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers in finding safety, housing, employment, and in navigating the asylum process. Under his leadership, the task force has tripled in size and expanded its services significantly.

Last but not least, we have Karin Ferraz, a Program Officer at the Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange or CORE. Karin is a certified intercultural trainer with over a decade of experience. Previously, they were a crisis counselor trainer for an LGBTQ+ crisis line and a receptionist and placement case manager. Karin holds a master's degree in social and cultural psychology and has researched the well-being of queer migrants in the southern US. They immigrated from Brazil in 2020.

On this slide, I also want to take a moment to acknowledge just the multitude of partners we have for today's webinar. The Rainbow Initiative is where Max is coming from, so really grateful for their participation here and their strong partnership. Al is coming from the LGBT Asylum Task Force, which does really, really great work up in Massachusetts. The Clark University and the Integration and Belonging Hub that Dr. Fábos started, really



grateful for their expertise. I want to highlight two other organizational partners that are in the background of today's call.

They will be here in order to support us with the Q&A. I just want to make sure that you all know what expertise they're bringing to the table here. First, InReach is a trans-led tech nonprofit working towards increasing resource access for the LGBTQ+ community through the first open-source platform connecting LGBTQ+ people facing persecution or discrimination with safe and independently verified resources. Think really big, like high-level community resource mapping for LGBTQ+ folks.

Also with us, we have Oasis Legal Network. Oasis has provided quality, holistic, and trauma-informed legal and social services to low-income LGBTQ+ community members for the past 35 years. Really grateful for their expertise and their presence on today's webinar.

Learning Objectives

RC: Let's go over our learning objectives briefly before we begin. By the end of this session, we're hoping that all participants in this call will be able to one, examine the cultural and interpersonal dynamics of welcoming LGBTQ+ newcomers using an intersectional lens.

When I say intersectional, we're referring to the idea that our identities of race, religion, class, sexuality, and so on are all connected and influence each other. Including in how we look at structures of power and discrimination. Our second objective, by the end of the session, you'll be able to recognize how creating LGBTQ+-friendly spaces and implementing inclusive policies contribute to cultivating a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ newcomers and everyone involved in supporting them.

Our final objective, we hope you'll be able to apply actionable strategies to support LGBTQ+ newcomers in your own client services context. We want to emphasize that political protections and polarization do affect the cultural and interpersonal dynamics mentioned in objective one and across this presentation. We want to acknowledge that parts of this conversation are also connected to policy and politics, and we'll be focusing on best practices for navigating newcomer services in these contexts.

We also want to acknowledge that some of the concepts in today's webinar may be challenging to some folks. We encourage you to attend the session with an open mind, and we assure you that content developed for this webinar has been created by resettlement experts with lived experience. We hope you will stay with us on these concepts to honor these experiences fully. Let's move into hearing a little bit more about who's in the room with us today.

Poll Questions

Which of the following best describes your role?

RC: We want to get to know you all as our participants so that we can make sure that our training here is really strong and tailored to your needs. We're going to start with a Slido poll. Those of you who have joined Switchboard webinars know that we are a big fan of engagement. In order to participate in this Slido poll, you can scan the QR code at the top left of the screen, or join at slido.com and put in the code that's there below, 3438919. This first poll is asking, which of the following best describes your role?

There are quite a few choices there. We'd like to see where y'all are coming from in order to make sure that—like I said, we know who's in the room. Thank you to the almost 30 folks who have filled it out so far. We've got a lot of folks who are in the resettlement or newcomer services agency space. Really happy to see some folks in management positions or leadership roles. Really, really grateful for your presence here, especially acknowledging that your leadership has direct impacts on the outcomes and lives of LGBTQ+ newcomers.



We love to see a good spread of other folks as well. Happy to see a good 50% almost of folks in the room are folks working directly with newcomers. This should be really, really helpful for all in attendance. Yes, just really glad you're here.

What words or phrases come to mind when you think about a newcomer services organization being LGBTQ+ friendly?

RC: We've got a couple more polls before we get into our content for today's. This is our second one. This is a word cloud response. What words or phrases come to mind when you think about a newcomer services organization being LGBTQ+ friendly?

This think word association, when you think LGBTQ+ friendly, what do you think? Given that this is a word cloud, if you put the same response as someone else, that response will get a little bit bigger. If you see something up there that you like, feel free to enter the same thing as well. I'm loving some of the words I'm seeing, especially some of these bigger ones. Inclusive is certainly a central theme. We also have that in the title. It's good to see that we're all aligned in what this means.

I see a couple notes about discretion, about confidentiality. A newcomer services agency that's LGBTQ+ friendly is one that protects its clients in that way. I see a big focus on respect and kindness. See a couple that are getting at this idea of remaining non-judgmental and open. These are really, really good, and I think a really key one that I'm seeing also is knowledgeable. That's one of the reasons that y'all are here is to build your own knowledge base and capacity for welcoming. These are great. For the sake of time, we'll go to our last Slido before we get into our content.

What would you say are the potential benefits and impacts of being more open, inclusive, affirming, and welcoming in a newcomer services context?

RC: What would you say are the tangible potential benefits and impacts of being more open, affirming, inclusive, and welcoming in a newcomer services context? Think about when you achieve that goal of becoming inclusive and LGBTQ+ friendly, what are the impacts? What's the result of that? Think about the why.

Saving lives. That's a great one. Equitable access to care. We're backing up our commitments to supporting folks holistically. We're helping heal trauma. We're building the strength of our own community by supporting the needs of those who are vulnerable. These are really, really great answers. Walking the walk. I really appreciate that. I think a lot of today's webinar will take us from a space of just talking about what we should do and moving into some really actionable, applicable practices that we can put into place. Great.

These are awesome, friends. Really, really grateful. Thank you for reflecting alongside us as we begin this webinar. I think this is going to be really excellent as a way to ground us in our conversation today. Thank you so much for participating in this engagement.

That will not be the last Slido. Do keep your smartphones handy. That's the one time an instructor or a teacher will tell you to keep your phones handy.

1. An Affirming Approach in Resettling LGBTQ+ Newcomers

RC: We're going to get started with our first objective where we're going to be outlining an affirming approach in resettling LGBTQ+ newcomers. In order to get us started in this, excuse me, a sense of belonging is essential for all humans. This is particularly true both for the LGBTQ+ community and for new arrivals to the U.S.



Those who belong to both identity groups must have even more carefully considered welcoming practices. In this section, we're going to ground ourselves in the context of what it means to cultivate belonging for LGBTQ+ newcomers, holding space for and honoring the intersection of multiple identities. With that, I'd like to turn it over to our first speaker for today, Dr. Anita Fábos, to walk us through how we're going to begin cultivating an affirming approach in your own resettlement context. Welcome, Anita.

A Positive View of LGBTQ+ Newcomers

Anita Fábos: Thank you so much, Rob. Again, I'm Anita Fábos, and I convene the Integration and Belonging Hub at Clark University. It's really lovely to be with all of you today. Let's start off with this quote from the affirming space training program at the University of Richmond Student Center for Equity and Inclusion. An affirming approach is based in a positive view of LGBTQ+ people, identities, and relationships. It addresses the negative impacts of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression on the lives of LGBTQ+ people.

Lastly, it treats LGBTQ+ people as the experts of their lives. For our work together to craft and maintain welcoming and inclusive environments, we do need to be sure that we can in fact offer a high level of welcome at the outset. We'll be sharing with you today some welcoming ideas and practices to put into action, not just words—I think Rob mentioned that as well—so as to avoid placing LGBTQ+ newcomers at risk. In this section, we will move through the three parts of this quote that are essential to an affirming approach and what this looks like in the context of resettlement.

Rob's also dropping a couple of links to resources into the chat for you. The University of Richmond piece and a guide to LGBT refugee resettlement guidelines organization self-assessment. I'll start us off on the first part of the quote, an affirming approach is based in a positive view of LGBTQ+ people, identities, and relationships. Let's unpack this idea a little bit. A positive view is a recognition that LGBTQ+ refugees and newcomers, as well as staff and volunteers, should be viewed as whole and complex individuals.

With diverse life circumstances, cultural attitudes, and ways of labeling and understanding LGBTQ+ in the world. Many of us will be able to draw upon our existing expertise of learning about the particular circumstances of each person we're trying to help. In the case of LGBTQ+ newcomers, a positive open-minded view involves understanding the diverse life circumstances of our clients, such as the wide range of social and economic backgrounds that shape our clients' lives.

For example, they may have rural, urban, or a mix of origins, come from a range of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds in their country of origin, and represent a wide array of economic circumstances. They will certainly manifest various levels of education, from university-educated folks to vocational or secondary-level education, to folks who are non-literate. These educational variations may not map onto our assumptions about LGBTQ+ attitudes or experiences.

Also, there may be profound differences in religious commitment, which can animate LGBTQ+ newcomers' wishes for finding faith-based communities in different ways. We will notice a wide variety of what people's family structures look like. For example, LGBTQ+ newcomers may or may not have children. They may be partnered, married, or single. In short, each individual's background presents an intersection of multiple experiences and characteristics that give us a chance to go beyond compartmentalizing LGBTQ+ newcomers and our fellow staff and volunteer colleagues as well.

More on intersectionality from Max in a little while. Regarding how to address cultural attitudes toward LGBTQ+, here we can bring out our understanding of culture as a complex concept. Even within particular cultural groups, there can be a lot of diversity in terms of attitudes and action. For example, staff and volunteers working with LGBTQ+ newcomer clients from countries with anti-homosexuality legislation may presume that their clients will not feel safe mixing with other members of their national or ethnic group.

Taking the lead from clients about their own assessment of their community is more useful than jumping to conclusions one way or the other. Additionally, we can take a positive and open-minded approach to



understanding how the ways of labeling and understanding LGBTQ+ may be different for people from different language and cultural groups. Our LGBTQ+ newcomer clients and co-ethnics may use different terminologies or commonly use terms that can carry different shades of meaning.

Even among native speakers of English from the U.S., there is a lot of diversity in how we refer to LGBTQ+ people and how people would define the terms that they use. Here Rob is dropping a resource into the chat that may be helpful in this regard. I'd like to raise an important point here that not all staff and volunteers will feel the same connection to every client. This is true of all newcomer individuals and groups who we work with in refugee resettlement.

At the same time, it's important for staff and volunteers to recognize that we have a responsibility to work appropriately with all clients. Again, this is not unique to work with LGBTQ+ clients. To this last point, a positive view of LGBTQ+ people, identities, and relationships can include taking a not negative stance. For the not-quite-sure crowd, affirming can also mean just getting out of the way to make space for others to be in more actively supportive and positive roles. Next slide, I think. Thank you.

A Positive View in Practice

AF: Let's talk a little bit more about what developing a positive view means in practice. First, we can establish organizational policies for non-discrimination with clear enforcement protocols. Max will speak more about this too. Second, we can offer comprehensive staff and volunteer education and provide resources for ongoing learning. Here again, a positive view can tap into everyone's need to feel a sense of belonging by exploring mechanisms to reduce othering.

Third, we can actively work towards the representation of LGBTQ+ individuals, ideally with lived experience of forced displacement in decision-making roles without tokenizing. Hear a word about tokenizing, that is, placing people from marginalized communities in such roles for the optics, like we are so inclusive, or to be compliant with DEI standards or regulations. Even well-intentioned top-down representation can leave LGBTQ+ newcomers with few meaningful ways to be effective or feel empowered in whatever role they are in.

This is generally considered inauthentic inclusion. What are some genuine approaches to take to ensure that LGBTQ+ newcomers, or really any kinds of newcomers can be involved in decision-making roles? We can, for example, recruit LGBTQ+ clients and community members to serve in leadership in shaping the framework. For example, boards, advisory committees, document review, search committees, trainings, evaluation committees, et cetera.

We can ask LGBTQ+ clients and community members for their ideas about how to improve and take a co-creation stance in devising solutions to problems identified. We can check in regularly about how or whether folks feel welcome and try to learn more about other meanings and forms of welcome that might help support genuine inclusion. Now I'm going to hand it over to Max, who will share about the next part of an affirming approach.

Intersectional Acknowledgement

Max Niedzwiecki: Thanks, Anita. As Rob introduced me at the beginning, my name is Max Niedzwiecki. I'm with EMM's Rainbow Initiative, and I use he/him pronouns. I'm going to be talking about the second aspect of what we mean when we're talking about an approach being affirming. That is that it addresses the negative impacts of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression on the lives of LGBTQ+ people. We can move to the next slide. Great. In talking about this aspect, it's useful to look to use an intersectional framework or lens.

Rob and Anita have already talked a little bit about what this means. What we mean here is that it's important to consider all of someone's characteristics when you're talking, especially about the hardships that they might face. This is true of LGBTQ+ newcomers and of all newcomers and of all people, really. For example, when



you're talking about or considering the marginalization, discrimination, and oppression that one of your clients might be encountering. It's important not to just think about them as having one characteristic.

For example, they might be trans. They might be of African ancestry. They might be limited English proficient, have many, many other characteristics. It's important not to privilege or just think about one of those characteristics, but to think about them in combination. How they combine to create an experience that's unique to that particular person. It's also important, particularly when you're working with LGBTQ+ newcomers, to consider that they're very likely to have experienced trauma. Often this trauma is the result of experiences that they have had within their families, within their communities.

That trauma is something that needs to be considered and addressed in your service to them. This trauma can also lead to a lot of shame and secrecy and social isolation, whereas most newcomers to the United States or to any country tend to rely quite heavily upon their families and their ethnic communities. Their religious organizations, their people who speak their same language to rely on these others for support. Often that's not the case when we're considering LGBTQ+ newcomers.

Of course, this is not always the case, but there is a risk that these folks will have struggles with social isolation and need extra support to deal with that social isolation. Another characteristic to consider, and Anita touched on this earlier, that the way we talk about LGBTQ+ people, what it means to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or other. These are terms that we have a lot of range of meaning for in the English language, and that's also the case in other languages. Communicating about LGBTQ+ people and issues and concerns across cultures and across language groups can be complex.

Reducing Negative Impacts in Practice

MN: Now that I've talked a little bit about the theoretical aspects of what it means to address the negative aspects of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression faced by LGBTQ+ newcomers. I'll talk a little bit about the more practical aspects, what you can do within your agency or within your life to help address these negative impacts.

The first point is that you can plan to address discrimination in housing, workplace, medical care, community life, et cetera, if and when they occur. Of course, you want to be prepared to the greatest extent you can before there's some crisis or there's some issue to address. As Rob mentioned, we do have folks from Oasis Legal Services online today to answer your questions about this in greater detail. Another important point to keep in mind is that you need to take extra care with confidentiality.

You often find with LGBTQ+ people who are native-born in the United States and native English speakers, and every other person, including LGBTQ+ newcomers, that we often will come out selectively. A person, a client, might want to come out to you as their caseworker, but not come out to other staff within the organization. They might not want to come out to their families, or they might want to come out just to their sister, but not to other people in their community.

You can put together all the potential combinations there. The point is that it's very important to respect everybody's choices in terms of confidentiality. This has important implications for data management that, again, we can address in more detail in the question and answer section if you would like to do that. Another important practical step that you can take is to assess and address their potential social isolation, which I mentioned earlier. One of the ways that you can help to address their social isolation is to partner with LGBTQ+ organizations.

I'll just say that as is true with any developing partners, with any other organization, of course, you want to be careful about defining roles clearly and making sure that confidentiality of your clients is respected. Also, when you're talking about developing partnerships with any organization that isn't specifically focused on immigration or working with people from other countries, there might be a learning curve as well. Part of your



role might be to help these partner organizations to understand LGBTQ+ newcomers specifically. Now I'm going to hand the microphone over to AI to talk about the third characteristic of an affirming approach.

Empowering LGBTQ+ Newcomers

AI Green: Thank you, Max. AI Green of the LGBT Asylum Task Force. Lastly, as Max mentioned, an affirming approach treats LGBTQ+ people as the experts of their lives. Oftentimes as folks doing this work, for various reasons, we'll sit in our planning groups, strategizing how it is that our groups will function. We'll look at the resources that are available internally, as well as within the community.

We imagine how it is that LGBTQ+ people who are serving or who we are serving will interact with us. These visions aren't always in line with what is best for LGBTQ+ newcomers, or what they believe is in their own best interest. Failure to respect their wishes can lead to a less than ideal interaction and go against our affirming efforts. Next slide, please. We talk about how it is that we can empower LGBTQ+ newcomers. One of which is to create ample space for self-determination and disclosure.

We want to make sure that folks are able to utilize the pronouns and have agency as it relates to coming out, similar to what Max had mentioned previously. Second, we want to protect the confidentiality and the personal information as it relates to clients' requests. We want to make sure that. Thirdly, provide access to comprehensive services with partner organizations. A lot of folks will need access to services that you might necessarily be able to provide within your entity.

You want to make sure that you're forming relationships with other agencies that can provide support that LGBTQ+ newcomers will need and be able to facilitate through cross-referrals to those services. Next slide.

LGBTQ+ Newcomers as Experts

AG: How do we put this all into practice? What does it look like to allow space for LGBTQ+ newcomers to act as experts in their own lives? We can do this through making sure that our client management databases, the language used by staff is in support of that.

We can create an internal culture of being open-minded and offering an allowing for expression of gender identity through opportunities for learning. One example of that that we utilize within the task force and our current organization at Hadwen Park Church is we have a monthly gender roundtable discussion for our LGBTQ+ newcomers. The wider community and allies as well to talk about meaningful topics that are on the minds of folks. There are opportunities for learning and for offering community and support.

We want to make sure that the medical needs of LGBTQ+ newcomers are being addressed. We want to, like I mentioned earlier, offering opportunities for referrals to different organizations that will meet the specific needs that folks might have. Whether it is in the area of gender affirmation or HIV plus support and treatment. We want to make sure that whatever the needs that folks have are being addressed. Then also, thirdly, the legal needs that folks might have in terms of updating their gender names and documents and navigating that system.

One of the partners from Oasis Legal will be available to answer some questions during the Q&A. When we want to, just as important as being affirming is adequately preparing LGBTQ+ newcomers for life in the wider community. Not every entity will be affirming and this can hamper their transition to life here. We want to make sure that they are fully understanding of the realities outside of your agency or your group. Let them know that there is discrimination that they're likely to face upon being out or just in general in the community.

We want to be able to have legal support and have those frank discussions as well to support LGBTQ+ newcomers.



Poll Question

Based on what you've seen in this section or practices you employ in your own context, what cultural and interpersonal dynamics might you need to consider when implementing affirming approaches with LGBTQ+ newcomers?

AG: Now we are going to jump into another Slido. Based on what you've seen in this section or practices you employ in your own context, what cultural and interpersonal dynamics might you need to consider when implementing affirming approaches when resettling LGBTQ+ newcomers? Take your phones out again, and you have an opportunity to contribute in that way.

RC: Alright. These are some really good responses coming in. Thank you guys so much for filling these out. Really good to see some of the takeaways y'all are walking away from this really rich first section. I just love that you guys are adding so much to the conversation in terms of promoting agency and honoring choices here. Really good. I got some folks typing, but like I said, really, really good to see y'all with such actionable ideas for how to proceed and actionize or operationalize some of the things that we talked about in objective one.

That top one there about mutual learning, I really want to highlight that one as well. There's opportunity for exchange across all levels of working in the community here. Looking good on this Slido. I think we can proceed. We're moving on to our next section and we're going to have, I think AI, are you going to take us into our next section?

AG: Yes. Now that we've covered the services to LGBTQ+ newcomers, we're going to section two, Making Newcomer Services Spaces Responsive to the LGBTQ+ Community. I believe Max will be starting us off.

RC: Before we do so, sorry to interrupt you, Max. Just want to remind everyone, please feel free to use the Q&A box. It's there for you and we'll be answering things as we go throughout the presentation. If we don't answer them, we may be saving it for the end. Let me turn it over more formally to Max. Thank you.

2. Making Newcomers Services Spaces Responsive to the LGBTQ+ Community

MN: Thank you, Rob. Thank you, AI. Now we're moving into the part of the discussion where we have talked about what it means to be affirming. We're going to assume here that we feel we can offer a high level of service to LGBTQ+ newcomers. How do we make that welcome known? How do we demonstrate that welcome?

Visual Markers of Inclusivity and Welcome

MN: First, I want to talk about visual markers and other markers that we can implement within our agencies and around our offices, and in our work environment, basically. One really simple thing to do is to put up pride flags and rainbows. It's true that not everybody will necessarily know what that means or take the same meaning from it. It's also true that it will mean something. It'll mean a great deal to some people. That's one thing that you can do. Another thing that you can do is you can have name tags with your pronouns. When you have a meeting, when you meet people, you can just as a matter of course, take on the habit of saying what your pronouns are. Max, use he/him pronouns.

I see a question came through asking about, is it okay to skip asking about pronouns with populations who have not progressed to that point yet? What I'll say is that there's no need to force any of your clients to do anything of the sort, that's my view. You can do a lot by demonstrating a welcome and demonstrating the



normality of just naming your pronoun. Other people, your clients, for example, can follow suit if that is something that they would feel comfortable doing, if that's something that they want to do. Another idea that you can implement within your organization is to put up posters and other sorts of visual markers that promote welcome. You'll see on your screen here a poster that expresses welcome in rainbow colors and in lots of different languages. Rob has dropped a link to that. You can post that up for people. Again, this is a way to express welcome without putting anybody on the spot, which, it wouldn't be respectful.

Another idea is to identify and name, in association with your posters and your other visual markers, to name a point person and processes for following through with clients who self-identify. This would be a staff member or maybe more than one staff member who have a particular interest in serving LGBTQ+ newcomers and particular skills and depth of knowledge that would be useful. The idea would be that your clients could contact this person if they want to talk about LGBTQ+ welcome or being LGBTQ+. Also, the other staff within the agency would be able to go to this person for education and for discussion and also to refer client questions and client issues to this person. Those are all things that you can do within your agency.

External Communication Strategies

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Celebrating Pride in Public Events

AG: Thanks, Max. In continuing what Max was saying, right, another way of making our spaces responsive to the community is taking a public stance in support of the community in various ways. One of the ways is to celebrate Pride in public events. Pride month is in June in many places. It's not in every and so whenever it is that your area is celebrating Pride, be a part of those activities. If you can, not just within your particular city or town, but travel to others and offer a presence because oftentimes, especially in the religious sphere, there isn't representation of affirming congregations and spaces within those areas.



You want to make sure that you are in support and issuing statements or supporting the events that some of them are listed here. World Refugee Day, which is on June 20th, as well as the Trans Days of Visibility on March 31st and Trans Day of Remembrance, which is on November 20th. You want to also make sure that you're celebrating Pride every month, just in June or whenever it is that your area is celebrating it. The community exists outside of those months or those weeks and is in need of affirmation and welcoming and support outside of just that period.

You certainly do not want to be an entity that rainbow-washes, right, and just ticks off for the sake of saying that you are in support of the community. You want to put that into tangible efforts year-round because the needs certainly exist outside of Pride. Next slide, please.

Working in Contexts with Limited LGBTQ+ Support

AG: Next, we'll be talking about working in context with LGBTQ or limited LGBTQ+ support. As I mentioned in the first section that oftentimes the support might not necessarily be available, either internally within your organization or within the community, but here are some steps that you can take to offer some support. You want to offer supports at an individual level. You can organize or refer to other service groups or folks in the community for emotional support or even virtually throughout the country, if it's not available within your space.

If you can, outside of that, we move up to creating safe spaces where LGBTQ newcomers can freely express their identities. I had mentioned the gender roundtable discussions that we have at our spot where folks are able to freely express themselves. Next, engage the community. Do you want to promote inclusivity in your community through visibility and allyship while protecting the LGBTQ+ people? We've spoken briefly about a number of ways in which you can do that previously. You want reform, right? You want to collaborate with those coalitions and LGBTQ+ rights groups in offering training and offering advocacy at a higher level so as to change the environment within which folks are operating. Next, we'll be transitioning to Anita, who will be leading us in some reflections.

Poll Question

What other ways can you make your organization more welcoming to LGBTQ+ newcomers, staff, and volunteers?

AF: Thank you, AI. Here we're talking about our capacity for welcome. Ask yourself and reflect. My organization wants to welcome LGBTQ+ newcomers, but do we have the capacity? We need to be sure that we can offer a high level of welcome before we proclaim that to be the case. To do otherwise is to place LGBTQ+ newcomers at risk. I think we all know this, but in seeking out opportunities to cultivate greater capacity for welcome, we encourage implementing some of the strategies suggested in this section.

There are a number of other ways to prepare our organizations as well. For example, inviting a third party trainer to conduct anti-bias training for staff members, volunteers, or other community members. Connecting with a local LGBTQ+ community organization and learning more about the kinds of work they do. Investing in community engagement work that better incorporates voices from the LGBTQ community and organizations to meaningfully align our organizations with welcoming and affirming ways to respond to various situations, which we'll be discussing in the next section. Rob is also dropping some guidance and a couple of supplemental resources from ORR in the chat for folks.

You're welcome to pop your own questions in the chat for our partners at InReach to help out with. I think we have a Slido, another Slido, for you to share your thoughts. The question reads, What other ways can you make your organization more welcoming to LGBTQ+ newcomers, staff, and volunteers? We saw some of the great observations about the things that you are thinking that you could do. What posters.



Great. Training for staff, all staff. Advocate for training, that's great. I like be alert to tokenizing. Accountability, that's a really important point. Being open about our own queer identity, that can be a very good modeling. Inclusive, using pronouns, I think those are some of the really basic and key areas where we can make a difference. Training during onboarding, very nice. As these filter in, maybe I will hand over to Rob, who is going to move us on to the third section. Rob, would you like to take this? Rob, I'm sorry, Karin will also be part of part three. Thank you.

RC: Thank you so much, Anita. I also want to affirm as part of this Slido, I see such a great mix of both visual and tangible actions and also just sort of more policy, organizational actions to take. I really want to affirm you guys, everyone who's participating here in this Slido for just the diversity and the variety of kinds of responses here. We can go to our final section now.

3. Navigating Challenges in Cultivating Belonging for LGBTQ+ Newcomer Services

RC: Our third section, if you'll recall from our learning objectives, has a lot to do with sort of applying some of these pieces that we've discussed in objectives one and two. We'll be discussing how to navigate challenges and cultivating belonging for LGBTQ+ newcomer services. We'll be looking at how to apply some of these best practices through going through some case scenarios together. As we go through this section, I will read a case scenario. We will then have a Slido poll asking how you might respond to the case scenario. Then Karin, who has joined us as one of our speakers, will talk us through some other possible ideas, some of which you may already hit on during the Slido, but just to give us some more holistic best practices.

Case Scenario 1: Alex and the Local LGBTQ+ Center

RC: Let's get ready for our first case scenario about Alex and the local LGBTQ+ center. You are a caseworker at a local resettlement agency. One of your clients, Alex, is a newly out lesbian who has shared with you that she's been grappling with feelings of isolation and depression related to forming meaningful connections. After consulting with Alex, you refer her to a local LGBTQ+ center in hopes of providing her with a supportive community and resources.

However, when Alex returns to you several weeks later, she expresses that the feelings of isolation and depression persist. You check in with Alex about her experience at the center, and she reveals that she did not feel comfortable there, but she is hesitant to elaborate further, saying only, I'm not sure that they are the people I want to be friends with.

Poll Question

How would you proceed with navigating this situation with Alex and her local LGBTQ+ center?

RC: How might you, as Alex's caseworker, proceed with navigating this situation? How might you respond? What are some action steps you may take? I'd like to acknowledge that there are multiple things you can do here, so just think about some of the first things that come to mind in terms of how you might address this situation and support Alex with her depression and isolation that she's experiencing, and possibly make a more effective referral.

All right, looking at virtual supports, possibly if the LGBTQ+ center wasn't working, is there another more virtual community that might work? Try somewhere else. Clarify. I like the one that says apologizing. Tell her you're sorry, except that, maybe there was some gaps in dropping the ball on your end. Reaching out to the org,



asking more directly about what she needs. Karin, are you seeing any other good answers coming in on the Slido?

KF: Yes, I also saw a couple about referring to mental health support. I think that's super important as well, especially if you are in communication with somewhere that, has the capacity and understanding of dealing with someone that has those multiple identities in this case.

RC: Yes, absolutely. I think there might be, bigger barriers at play if, just looping into a community might not be sufficient. There might be barriers into feeling more comfortable there. Mental health support is a really good option, of course. All right, great responses, folks. All right, well, we're going to take it to our next slide and talk about some of these. Karin, take it away.

KF: Yes, so we already saw a lot of different, amazing ideas with taking into consideration the intersectionality of the multiple identities that we will encounter

when we're serving newcomers that have LGBTQ identities as well. One thing we can do is avoid the assumption that a client does want a referral to an LGBTQ center. That's something that you can do by waiting for them to request it or making sure that you're offering other options as well in conjunction with that option. If your agency has capacity or maybe you have volunteers that are interested, you should consider accompanying the client for a first visit. You can also see what that space feels like as well.

Another option is forming strategic partnerships with LGBTQ centers. As with this example, maybe just like sending someone to an LGBT center without the understanding that they do have the skills that are required to welcome them can be a little bit challenging. You could co-host events with an LGBT-focused organization, for example, for World Refugee Day or for Pride event. You should not assume that every LGBTQ-focused organization does have that knowledge.

You can help each other by sharing in the knowledge and skills. You could also plan events at your own agency in support of LGBTQ community. As the other speakers mentioned, that's something that shouldn't only happen during Pride Month. You should want to do that in a consistent basis. Then also, if you do refer clients, make sure that you're following up instead of waiting for them to report back to you with their experience. Back to you, Rob.

RC: Thank you, Karin. Yes, just some ideas. We said, there are a lot of ways to handle those situations. It's going to depend for each client. I hope some of those ideas can be supportive for you.

Case Scenario 2: Luke and a Transgender Client

RC: Let's move into our second case scenario for today about Luke and a transgender client. You are a clinical therapist who supervises a team of community navigators as part of a refugee health promotion program. One of your navigators, Luke, receives a new client who he learns is transgender during their intake process. Luke proceeds with the rest of the intake but requests a meeting with you soon after.

At the start of the meeting, he says, "I want to serve our clients well, but I am afraid that I cannot support anyone in the LGBTQ+ community because of my religious beliefs." Your other navigators have fairly full caseloads, so you were hoping that Luke could receive this client, but you are now worried about the care the client would receive with him.

Poll Question

How would you address this situation of Luke not wanting to serve transgender clients?



RC: Real tough one. Imagine you're that supervisor and Luke is your direct report. How would you address the situation with Luke not wanting to serve transgender clients? You can pull out those smartphones again and respond using the QR code at the top or again at slido.com using the code.

KF: I see some responses coming in about explore more about the reasoning behind this, assign the client to someone else, a safer caseworker, explain the responsibility of the agency of not discriminating against clients. That balance between making sure the space is safe for clients but also respecting the needs of your staff as well. Require training. Yes, that is something also that can be helpful in terms of avoiding that from happening if that's a conversation that is happening before the situation occurs. Remind Luke about the responsibility to clients and the mission of the agency.

Make sure you have policies around equity and non-discrimination. Awesome. Yes, reiterate that there is a professional responsibility to provide unbiased care. Cool. Yes, there's a lot of super important things coming through. I like the numbers on the top. How many times the word client was mentioned. Definitely make sure you're the numbers on the top. How many times the word client was mentioned. Definitely making sure that we can provide that safer space for our clients. I think we can go to the next slide now.

This is something also that popped up in the Q&A. It's a very definitely sensitive topic. When addressing LGBTQ discrimination with your staff, it's important to consider this a conflict of interest. You may have a conversation or discussion about how this belief or this attitude is making it not possible to provide the best service for the client. It's also important to have clear guidance on non-discrimination and also the expectations around service delivery. It is helpful in that manner to have a professional code of ethics and you don't have to do that from scratch.

You can use other frameworks that fit your context and work off of them. For example, social workers code of ethics or for medical providers, et cetera. Making sure that is established when people are hired in. Have an open and honest conversation with your staff about their ability to keep the space safe. Also, make sure that you're following up with the client, checking in on their experience and make sure that their case is not interrupted and they're still getting services. Awesome.

Case Scenario 3: Julian and a Safety Incident

RC: All right, thanks Karin for those great ideas. Yes, I think just really good insights from folks in the room. We're going to jump to our third case scenario for today's training. This is about Julian and a safety incident.

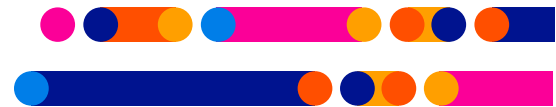
You work on a refugee youth mentoring program and have developed close bonds with one client in particular named Julian, a 17-year-old asylee from Kenya. One day he comes to your office when he is supposed to be in school. He seems distressed and you notice some bruising on his arm and shoulder. You ask what is wrong and he opens up about an incident at home.

He says, "My mother's boyfriend got very angry with me yesterday. He found a flyer in my backpack from the counselor's office about the LGBTQ+ club at school." Julian had previously shared with you about being attracted to other boys but he is still questioning. He begs you not to tell anyone about what happened at home but you feel like you have to do something.

Poll Question

What should your next steps be to address Julian's safety incident related to questioning his sexuality?

RC: Let's respond. What is that something that you have to do? What should your next steps be in order to address Julian's safety incident related to questioning his sexuality? That's right, I am so grateful that first



response came in. Mandatory reporting. Those of you who are Switchboard fans probably maybe have seen or participated in a webinar earlier this year about mandatory reporting. Absolutely, y'all hit the nail on the head on that one. Apologies.

All right, these are great responses. I'm loving seeing so much attention towards the mandatory reporting. Feel free to think about in addition to that, what are some other considerations that you might make in doing a report? What are action steps that you can do? Feel free to continue adding those to the Slido as well. Karin, you seeing any other responses worth highlighting and uplifting?

KF: Yes, also another one that came in is ensuring that the minor is safe and also explaining being transparent with the reporting that's going to happen and the reasoning behind it. You want to ensure that they are safe. Also, creating a safety plan for future incidents. That's also super important in a lot of situations, unfortunately. It takes a lot of time for a case to happen. Creating that safety plan with someone that they feel safe with is something that could be very helpful.

RC: Yes, I love that theme of transparency, creating agency where you can. All right, it looks like our responses have slowed down. Maybe let's transition to some of our best practices here.

KF: Awesome, so whenever you're in the situation where you might have to be a mandatory reporter or create a report, as we mentioned already, and some responses came in, make sure that you maintain as much transparency as possible at all times. One way you can do that is inform the client about your reporting responsibilities. You should do that before you ask them to provide detailed information. In that way, they are better informed of what the possible consequences are.

They understand that by sharing information with you, there is that risk of reporting. We want them to have agency in that situation. Don't promise any confidentiality, but do not tell any family members, especially

if they are the ones perpetuating harm, like in this situation. Make sure you keep the circle of knowledge tight, so only talk to people who actually need to know about this, about the situation. Promote client choice and agency as much as possible. Also, make sure that you case-note carefully with relevant details only, especially if there are people that don't need access to the information that will have access to case notes, in this case. Yes, that's it for our cases.

RC: Awesome, thank you Karin for walking us through those. Really great best practices, and again, just want to uplift and highlight the experience that's in the room. Those Slido responses were like, really nailed it, like I said. Thank you so much for that.

Q&A Panel

RC: We're now at the end of our prepared content for today's webinar, but we do have a number of questions that have been coming in via the Q&A box, and so I want to start by addressing some of the ones that are more common themes that are coming through, or ones that have a little bit more complexity to them.

I want to start with one that came in, and I think I want to direct this one to Karin first, but then anyone else on the call, or our speakers who feels so called to address it, feel free. Here's the question.

[What are the most effective methods to educate the newcomer community about the LGBTQ+ community? Are there specific resources or approaches that have proven successful in raising awareness and fostering understanding? I want to ask, like I said, Karin, as someone who works for the Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange, what best practices here, what resources or approaches would you recommend?](#)



KF: I think the first thing that comes to mind is definitely bringing up that topic in cultural orientation sessions, presenting it as part of your settling in the United States, and this is information that you should know and that will help you. Also, you should never assume that there are no LGBT people in the community that you're serving in your cultural orientation sessions. By creating an inclusive environment within your cultural orientation sessions in your agency, you're also modeling and creating that expectation.

For example, we talked a lot about pronouns and if you are sharing your pronouns, you don't have to ask people to do it, but that creates a culture where this is something that is expected and welcome. You don't have to do specific LGBTQ competency training with newcomers, unless there is a need and a demand, and that's always really cool. It's something that you can implement throughout your cultural orientation sessions, making sure that they are as inclusive as possible. That will be helpful not only for the LGBTQ clients that you have, but just in general of making your space more welcoming and safe for folks. I'd love to hear if anyone else has other ideas.

RC: Yes, any other speakers want to add anything to that in terms of sort of this piece of sharing more comprehensive communication with newcomers about the LGBTQ+ community?

MN: I'll just say that amen to what Karin has said. Also, this is a really exciting time in this work in the sense that there's so much to do, and so I think more specifically targeted cultural orientation materials that are intended to be used with various kinds of audiences would be really welcome, really important. I hope to see that come in the future.

RC: Absolutely, thank you, Max. All right, I'm going to move on to one other question that came through that we feel like would be good to answer live. It's a bit related.

What are the best practices that newcomers can adopt to show respect and improve communication with LGBTQ+ community members? I want to also ask this question and add a little bit to it myself, just to say that how can newcomer services agencies better interact and create space for and communication with LGBTQ+ community members themselves? Any guidelines or strategies that we can share with our clients in terms of better communication, more effective communication with the LGBTQ+ community?

RC: I might actually, if I can put you on the spot a little bit for this, AI, could I have you answer this about outreach to directly to the LGBTQ+ community?

AG: Certainly. In many spaces or many communities, you'll have a private organization that you could partner with and offer support there. I think within your own organization and the folks, the clients that you're interacting with, a lot of it we spoke about earlier, just making sure there's space for folks to fully express themselves. If they're having certain issues that they can talk about, just make sure that overall, they feel welcome and affirmed in your community that you're hosting.

RC: Great, thank you so much, AI. Anyone else of our speakers want to add a little bit to that? All right, well, yes, and I think a lot of our stuff in Objective 2 sort of hits on some of those ideas in terms of what our own communication looks like. A lot of the things that we talked about in terms of communication to the community or to folks on social media, a lot of those best practices will translate as well just through a different context sort of aspect. Keep some of those best practices in mind because a lot of it does center on creating agency for folks within the LGBTQ+ community to sort of dictate how they want to be referred to, how we want to be referred to, and how we want to relate. Thank you so much for these questions.

Conclusion



RC: I wish we had time for the other few that we have in the open question pool, but know that we're really grateful for what we have been able to cover today. We're going to close out today's webinar now, and I just want to say thank you again for participating. As was mentioned at the beginning in our little intro slides and animations, we do really value feedback on our learning opportunities. Please take a moment just to scan the QR code on the screen using your smartphone, or you can click the link in the chat.

It's a six-question survey. Should take 60 seconds, probably even less than a minute to respond. Just, yes, if you have any thoughts in terms of how this webinar experience was for you, please feel free to share them with us. I will also be sending this link in a follow-up email, which will be chock-full of a lot of other things as well. Yes, please take a moment to fill this out. Alright, and as you continue filling that out, I want to leave you guys with a couple other things.

Reviewing Learning Objectives

RC: One, I want to just reiterate our learning objectives. We hope you are now able to examine the cultural and interpersonal dynamics of welcoming LGBTQ+ newcomers, using that intersectional lens. We hope that you are able to recognize how creating LGBTQ+ friendly spaces and implementing inclusive policies contributes to cultivating a welcoming environment. We hope you're able to apply some of these actionable strategies to support LGBTQ+ newcomers in your own client services context.

Recommended Resources

RC: Last but not least, we've been dropping a lot of really great resources throughout in the chat from our partners and others. These are just some of them here that we also want to uplift highly. Specifically, definitely we want to shout out InReach. That third one, that podcast is really full of some good ideas and good strategies. We will be sending not only these that are on the slide in a follow-up email, but there will also be a short document, listing links to all of our partners' websites and resources, as well as a bunch of other things relevant to today's session.

Stay Connected

RC: Last but not least, I just want to say thank you again for participating in today's webinar, and we hope you'll stay connected with Switchboard. If you have additional questions on anything that we've talked about today or anything relevant to serving the LGBTQ+ community and newcomer services, feel free to reach out to us via email, or you can go to our website. If you're looking for additional technical assistance and training on this topic, you could submit a technical assistance request. We provide free technical assistance for folks serving ORR-eligible populations.

Yes, if you thought anything here was interesting and you're looking for a way to apply this more directly in your own context, like I said, feel free to fill out that TA request or email us. We're also on social media. Feel free to follow us there and sign up for our newsletter so that you can stay up-to-date on future learning opportunities like this one. I also want to plug that we've got one more really great webinar in our Pride Suite, as we've been calling it, our series on serving LGBTQ+ newcomers that will be happening in July, relevant to serving the LGBTQ+ community with unaccompanied refugee minors. Those who are working in context with youth and foster parents within ORR services, definitely keep an eye out for that one. Just want to say thank you again for participating and we hope you have a great day.

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