



JUNE 25, 2024

Creating Inclusive Spaces

for the LGBTQ+ Community in
Newcomer Services

switchboard
connecting resettlement experts

*In partnership with Episcopal Migration
Ministries' Rainbow Initiative*



Today's Speakers



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Welcoming Our Partners for Today's Webinar



**THE RAINBOW
INITIATIVE**



inreach



Learning Objectives



By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1

EXAMINE

the cultural and interpersonal dynamics of welcoming LGBTQ+ newcomers, using an intersectional lens

2

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

3

APPLY

actionable strategies to support LGBTQ+ newcomers in your own client services context

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Which of the following best describes your role?

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

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



1

An Affirming Approach in Resettling LGBTQ+ Newcomers

Cultural, Interpersonal, and Organizational Dynamics



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.

The “Affirming Space” Training Program

University of Richmond Student Center for
Equity and Inclusion



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A Positive View of LGBTQ+ Newcomers

Recognizes and negotiates the diversity of:

- LGBTQ+ refugees and newcomers
- Staff and volunteers

In terms of their:

- Life circumstances
- Cultural attitudes toward LGBTQ+
- Ways of labeling and understanding LGBTQ+





A Positive View in Practice



Organizational policies for nondiscrimination with clear enforcement protocols



Comprehensive staff and volunteer education, resources for ongoing learning



Representation of LGBTQ+ individuals (ideally with lived experience of forced displacement) in decision-making roles—without tokenizing



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Intersectional Acknowledgement

of LGBTQ+ Newcomers' Experiences



**Marginalization,
discrimination, and
oppression**



**Social isolation,
shame, and secrecy**

**Widespread
experiences of
trauma**

**Complex communication
of support needs across
diverse communities**



Reducing Negative Impacts in Practice

- Plan to address discrimination in housing, workplace, medical care, community life, etc.
- Take extra care with confidentiality
- Assess and address potential social isolation
- Partner with local LGBTQ+ organizations, developing those relationships with care



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Empowering LGBTQ+ Newcomers



- Create ample space for self-determination and disclosure
- Protect confidentiality, personal information, and beyond based on specific client requests
- Provide access to comprehensive services with partner organizations



LGBTQ+ Newcomers as Experts

in Their Own Lives in Practice



Involve newcomers in setting their own priorities:

- Self-identification, pronouns, gender identity
- Medical needs (e.g., transgender clients)
- Legal needs

Support clients in being realistic about their priorities:

- Realities of life in broader community
- Discrimination they will likely face due to being “out”

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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?



2


Making Newcomer Services Spaces Responsive to the LGBTQ+ Community

Physical Spaces, Communications, and
Community Engagement

Visual Markers of Inclusivity and Welcome

- Pride flags, rainbows
- Name tags with pronouns
- Posters promoting welcome
- Point person and processes for following through with clients who self-identify

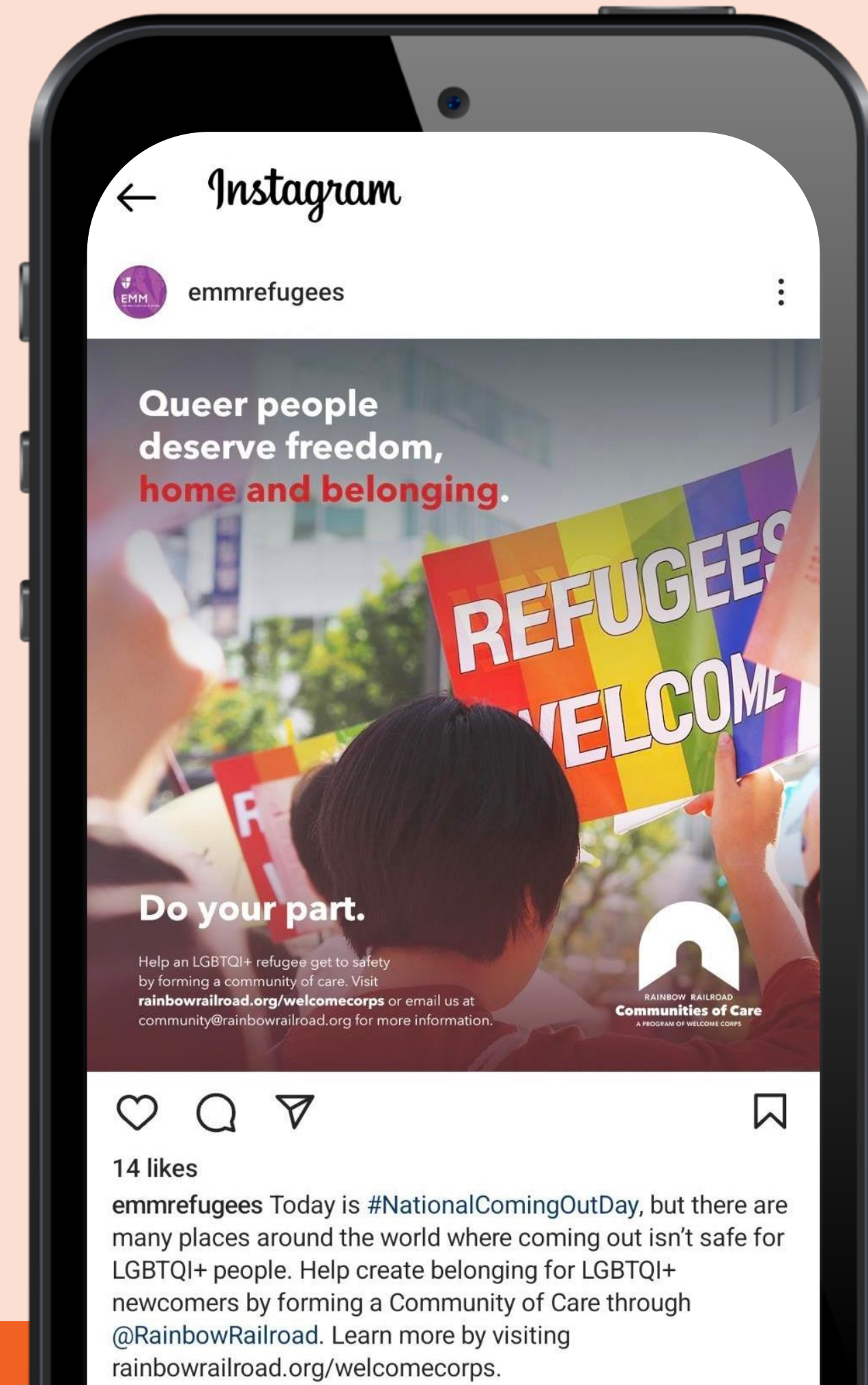
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Organization for Refuge,
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www.oraminternational.org

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External Communication Strategies

- Include LGBTQ+ considerations in communications and style guides
- Promote inclusivity through social media posts
- Share public statements of solidarity in the event of LGBTQ+-based hate crimes
- Be vocal about important LGBTQ+ causes and events

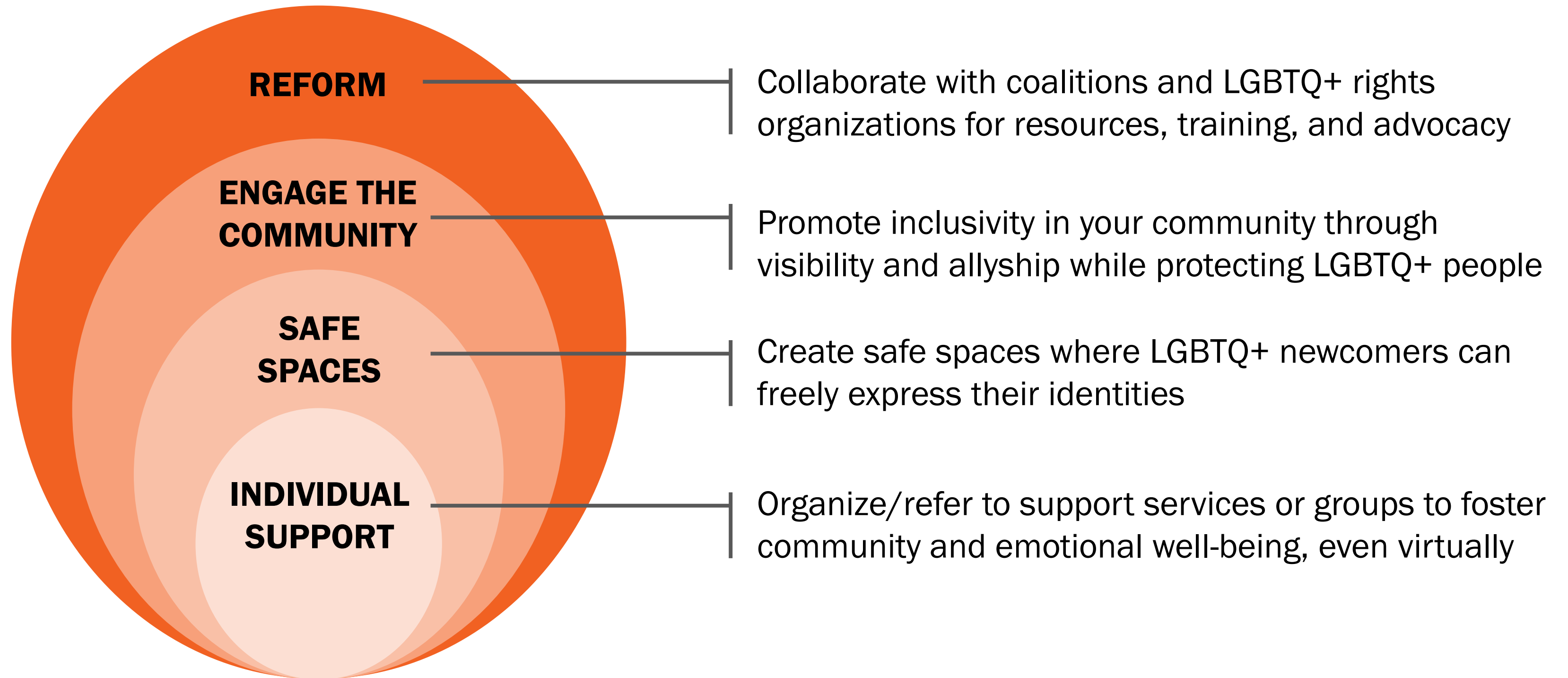




Celebrating Pride in Public Events

- Pride Month in June
- World Refugee Day (June 20)
- Trans Day of Visibility (March 31) and Remembrance (November 20)
- Celebrate Pride every month, not just in June!

Working in Contexts with Limited LGBTQ+ Support





**Ask yourself
and reflect:**

My organization wants to welcome LGBTQ+ newcomers, but do we have the capacity?

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

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.



3

Navigating Challenges in Cultivating Belonging for LGBTQ+ Newcomer Services

Actionable Strategies to Employ in Your Own
Newcomer Services Context

Case Scenario 1: 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 LGBTQ+ 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 people I want to be friends with."

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



Multiple Identities and Intersectionality

- Avoid assuming a client wants a referral to an LGBTQ+ center
- Strongly consider accompanying the client for a first visit
- Form strategic partnerships with LGBTQ+ centers
- Plan events at your own agency in support of LGBTQ+ community
- Follow up on referrals instead of waiting for clients to report back



Case Scenario 2: 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.

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

Addressing LGBTQ+ Discrimination

- Consider this a conflict of interest
- Have clear guidance on non-discrimination and expectations around service delivery
- Have an open, honest conversation with your staff member about their ability to keep the space safe
- Follow up with the client, check in on their experience, ensure their case is not interrupted



Case Scenario 3: 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.

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

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Mandatory Reporting with LGBTQ+ Community

- Maintain transparency at all times
- Do not promise confidentiality but absolutely do not tell family members, as they are perpetrating harm
- Keep circle of knowledge tight
- Promote client choice and agency as much as possible
- Case-note carefully with relevant details only





Questions?

Type your questions in the **Q&A** 



Help us help you!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat!

- Short, 5-question survey
- Takes less than 60 seconds to complete
- Helps us improve our training and technical assistance



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Recommended Resources

- **Archived Webinar:** [Understanding and Serving LGBTQ+ Newcomers](#)
- **Initiative:** [The Rainbow Initiative](#), Episcopal Migration Ministries
- **Podcast:** [Serving LGBTQ+ Newcomers](#), with InReach
- **Toolkit:** [Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression \(SOGIE\) Toolkit](#), ORAM
- **Guide:** [LGBT Refugee Resettlement Guidelines: Organization Self-Assessment](#), Heartland Alliance





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