



# Webinar: LGBTQ+ Responsive URM Programs and Services

July 9, 2024, 2:00 – 3:15 PM ET

Transcript

## Introduction

**Rob Callus:** Hello, and welcome to today's webinar brought to you by Switchboard, a one-stop resource hub for newcomer service providers. I'm Rob Callus. I'm a training officer on the Switchboard team, and I am so glad to welcome you to today's session entitled LGBTQ+ Responsive URM Programs and Services. We hope our opening sequence was clear in terms of how you can engage in today's content. If you have questions, please submit them through the Q&A feature in Zoom. We will respond to them as they come in. Please keep an eye on the chat for resources that we'll drop throughout the training today relevant to today's content. Finally, the slides and recording will be sent out to all registered participants tomorrow and will also be found on our website, [SwitchboardTA.org](http://SwitchboardTA.org).

## Today's Facilitator

**RC:** Without further ado, I'd like to introduce today's speaker and facilitator. We have Claire Hopkins, who uses she and her pronouns. Claire is a training officer with Switchboard with a focus on child and family services. Prior to joining Switchboard, she worked for nearly four years in resettlement with Unaccompanied Refugee Minors, or URMs, and unaccompanied children, UCs. She recruited and trained foster parents who reflected the diverse cultures and identities of youth being welcomed into West Michigan. Additionally, she co-led their first LGBTQ+ inclusion committee and advocated for inclusive organizational policies and URM and UC service delivery. Prior to this, she provided support and advocacy services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Through this work, she created and facilitated the community's first LGBTQ+ survivor support group for teens. Claire holds a bachelor of science in psychology from Grand Valley State University. We are so lucky to have her on today's webinar.

## Learning Objectives

**RC:** We're going to now talk briefly about our learning objectives for today's webinar, of which there are four. We hope by the end of this session, you will be able to identify the unique risks and challenges to LGBTQ+ individuals, focusing on URMs. Two, develop strategies to foster inclusivity, address biases, and enforce anti-discrimination policies to create a safe and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ URMs in organizations and service delivery. Three, use approaches that provide LGBTQ+-friendly placements, including staff and foster parent training, recruitment, and retention. Four, apply actionable steps to ensure safe, supportive environments for LGBTQ+ URMs in your service delivery.

**RC:** We want to also highlight that some of the concepts in today's session may be new or challenging to participants in this webinar. We encourage all to attend this 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 those experiences. Again, any questions you have, feel free to put them in the Q&A, and we will respond to them to the best of our ability. Without further ado, I'd like to turn it over to Claire Hopkins herself. Welcome, Claire.

## 1. Identifying Risks and Challenges to LGBTQ+ Individuals and Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URMs)

**Claire Hopkins:** Thank you so much, Rob, for the beginning information and that great introduction. I am so excited to be hosting our third webinar in what Switchboard is calling our Pride Suite. As Rob mentioned, our first learning objective is to identify risks and challenges to LGBTQ+ folks, specifically URMs. Before doing that, I want to quickly cover the LGBTQ+ acronym [that] will be used and referred to in this webinar. I recognize that there definitely are other definitions out there and other letters, and some may identify with a different acronym. However, for uniformity, Switchboard has defined LGBTQ+ as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and the plus as an umbrella term.

**CH:** Another acronym that you may hear me use throughout this webinar and used in previous webinars is SOGIE or SOGIE. This stands for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. There are lots of changes in language, and we want to stay current with what we're using, but we do also want our peers and service providers to feel comfortable using the language. This eliminates any misguided attempts to say the LGBTQ acronym and say "LGBT, I don't know or whatever," and sometimes that can come off dismissive. Again, for uniformity, we've chosen LGBTQ+ for our Pride Suite materials, and that's what you'll hear throughout this webinar. We're not going to go into detailed terminology on LGBTQ, but I do welcome you to check out our previous webinars, as these have been meant to build on one another.

### Ground Rules

**CH:** To start our time today, let's review some of the ground rules to refer to. When you find yourself maybe questioning what or how to welcome LGBTQ+ URMs, you can always come back to these ground rules.

**CH:** We encourage you to remember why we are all here, why we're in resettlement. We're all here to serve all refugees equitably and respectfully. We encourage you to stay curious and open, as well as learn and connect with others. Maintain professionalism regarding different cultural or religious backgrounds. Of course, be kind to yourself. We all fall into different levels of experience in this topic, and we're all committed to staying and continuing learning. We want to extend that kindness to ourselves, as well as with our staff that we're working with.

### Every LGBTQ+ Story Is Unique

**CH:** Furthermore, as we use those ground rules, let's take a moment to reflect and recognize that every LGBTQ+ story is unique. Just like you are providing services for other folks or URMs in your program, and you're providing them in a client-centered, unique manner, this is the same practice that we encourage you to use when representing and serving LGBTQ+ folks. We know that every newcomer's experience in this community is different. It's going to be shaped by their stories, their own personhood, and we always want to go deeper to get to know that person and their experience.



## Cultural Sensitivity and Terminology

**CH:** Next we'll talk about the importance of acknowledging that different cultures are going to have so many different norms. They're going to have different concepts and terminology for various SOGIEs, so sexual orientation, gender identity, and expressions. The acronym that I explained and covered in the beginning of this that we're going to [use] is common and widely known most in U.S. and Western cultures. Although those terms allow us all as service providers to connect and speak the same language, it's also really important that this may not be the same language that URM's are using in this community.

**CH:** They may not be familiar; they may not even have heard of these acronyms, and they also can be a triggering space, especially if their home country or community has stigmatized or discriminated against different LGBTQ identities. We can use these common terms and acronyms to be able to communicate with our other providers. We can also use these terms to help educate URM's about what we use here in the U.S. We don't want to impose our own values or views or expectations of using them, but it's helpful that they have this information so that they can know what other folks are referring to in this community.

## The "Gender Unicorn": A Visualization of SOGIE

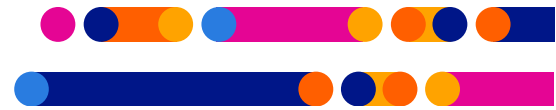
**CH:** A really great way to view SOGIE is through the use of this gender unicorn. Some of you may be familiar with a gender-bread person. This was introduced in our first webinar, actually, so I encourage you to check that out and learn a little bit about that as well. We view that as a 101. Here's what has been used to explain SOGIE. Now there's this new adaption and visual of SOGIE called the gender unicorn. Starting with how we might use the gender unicorn when we're working with URM's in the LGBTQ+ community, or even working with training foster parents or other staff. Let's walk through how to utilize this.

**CH:** The rainbow here is referring to gender identity. Gender identity is how folks internally view themselves. We all have a gender identity, even if we identify as cisgender, meaning that our identity matches the sex assigned at birth, we still have an opportunity to reflect on our gender identity. Whereas gender expression is going to be how you express your gender identity. You may see folks doing this through clothing, body shape, voice, makeup, really anything that is there to express how they identify.

**CH:** Next, sex assigned at birth or the chromosome on the gender unicorn. This is the assignment of male, female, intersex or any other sex.

**CH:** Finally, the gender unicorn provides two examples of attraction. I want to note that this does not capture all of the different types of attraction. What we see here is examples of physical attraction for the orange heart. This refers to someone's sexual orientation, whereas emotional attraction refers to someone's romantic or emotional orientation.

**CH:** These can be really effective visuals when you're trying to meet folks where they're at. Say they have not explored SOGIE before, what it means, and how important it is to use, or youth may benefit from having a visual. This is a tool that you can keep coming back to. We're going to drop in the chat how you can learn more. There's some coloring books that are attached to that. It's translated into some other languages as well. It's a really solid resource.



## Unique Factors in URM Service Delivery

**CH:** Moving on from that, now that we have our ground rules, we've briefly covered terminology and we've reviewed cultural sensitivity, let's start diving into making this content specific to URM service delivery. Some of you may recognize this slide if you attended the URM certificate course, and we're going to start by briefly reflecting on the layers that make URM service delivery so unique. I think we all know that this could be its own presentation or webinar just to touch on the uniqueness of our world. For sake of time, I'm going to quickly touch on these factors and then we're going to keep layering.

**CH:** First, being an unaccompanied minor, this alone is unique. This is different than any other foster care system. Folks have traveled from another country on their own. They've survived trauma, witnessed violence. At the same time, they're adolescents. Compiling this layer on top of surviving their journeys from one country to another, facing discrimination, violence, and then adding onto that that you're a minor while this is happening is a huge unique factor and thing to keep in mind.

**CH:** On top of that, we'll move into talking about cultural differences as well as recognizing language access. These two factors, of course, are unique factors for any resettlement, not just URMs, but we know that those play a significant role in how we provide effective and equitable service delivery for youth.

## Unique Factors in LGBTQ+ URM Service Delivery

**CH:** Based on those unique factors alone, now we are adding on the complexity and the identities of LGBTQ+ folks. Some of the things that make this specific, while keeping in mind all of those other layers, the first one is speaking on risks... to increased risk of violence.

**CH:** We know that camps and shelters can be very dangerous spaces. URMs may have to identify and self-disclose that they're being persecuted against for their SOGIE. This can put them at risk of being out to face violence. It may put them at risk of not having a support system... et cetera. This is just another added layer of the violence they've probably experienced or witnessed prior to traveling and then also while arriving into a camp or a shelter.

**CH:** Following that is youth have to constantly assess, they have to become familiar with and adapt to what the levels of acceptance and tolerance are in the communities that they're in. We're going to think about the acceptance or tolerance in a little bit at countries of origin. We have to be mindful of if they've traveled to a second country, and then we have to be mindful of a resettlement community. This is exhausting to have to continue reevaluating how safe someone is and process that through on their own.

**CH:** Layered on top of this is the complexity between betrayal and isolation. Not only are URMs being betrayed by their government for those that identify in the LGBTQ+ community, but they may also have been ostracized and facing isolation due to their own family's values and community values that are not supportive. There's times that URMs have disclosed in my previous work that they have this feeling of being surveilled when they were in their country of origin because they didn't want someone to report that they were a member of this community and then face violence that would either lead to criminalization or other challenges. This is going to lead to that decreased social acceptance. It's going to impact their developmental growth.

**CH:** Finally, we'll talk about the layer of access to health care. I think we can all probably agree that access to health care, even as someone who grew up in the U.S., is challenging. Now when we add on all these layers of



being a minor, having to go through being a minor and being unaccompanied, being a minor in a foster home or in a group home, we have the layer of advocating for consent or navigating and learning the difference between medical systems in the country of origin and the United States. Then we also have to think through what is the access in the community that we are serving? What kind of gender-affirming care is available for you?

## LGBTQ+ URM Representation

**CH:** Let's talk about some of the LGBTQ+ URM representation that we see. I want to take a moment to provide a disclaimer about this slide. The content that you're seeing on this slide only represents youth that have been in URM care with a Global Refuge partner. This is only one partner that we gathered data from. It's also only between the timeframe of October 2022 to May 2024.

**CH:** This information is also only based off of referral information, as they're not able to track updates on minors after they enter or leave care. With these things in mind, it does leave a lot of room for curiosity of the numbers that we're missing and the data that we're missing. I also don't have sexual orientation represented here, as it was only begun tracking for the past two years. Out of these graphs, this is data that represents 44 unaccompanied refugee minors, 44 human beings that may be in your care that have self-identified in this LGBTQ+ community.

**CH:** This number is out of almost 1,500. I want to take a second to really humanize that number because it may seem like it's a very small number; however, this is less than two years of data. This is only from a specific age group, which is 14 to 22 years old. We know that folks may not have felt safe to self-disclose, or they are in their exploration and have not come to identification of their SOGIE yet. However, although this number is small, we don't know which one of the 44 unaccompanied refugee minors are in your program or on your caseload. We really need to treat this data like it could be anyone that you're working with.

## LGBTQ+ URM Representation: Example: Guinea

**CH:** Let's look at an example of one of the countries that we were seeing and are seeing LGBTQ+ URMs referred from. This slide helps us gather an idea of what URMs may face in their country of origin. It also helps us visualize the added layers and unique risks that we talked about that LGBTQ+ URMs experience. This is from the ILGA World Database. What we see in Guinea is that consensual same-sex sexual acts are illegal. We see that criminalization: there's a maximum of three years in prison as well as a fine.

**CH:** In Guinea, they also do not have protection against discrimination for health, education, employment, housing, as well as a no-hate-crime law. There's not a lot of protection for folks. I encourage you as you're welcoming youth that identify in this community to check out this database, take a look and see what their laws are in the country they're arriving from, what discrimination looks like. This will help you have a better understanding of the holistic view of the URM that you're working with, and it will help you identify how you can effectively adjust how they will benefit and impact into their new community.

## The majority of LGBTQ+ young people consider or attempt suicide.

**CH:** Following this, we're going to review some of the data for LGBTQ+ young folks. This is taken from The Trevor Project, which if you're not familiar with, is an awesome resource for support when you're working with



the LGBTQ+ community, when you're training foster parents. We'll drop in the chat that link for you to be able to access that as well.

**CH:** I specifically picked two different categories to view these trends and data on. First, we're talking about age group here, and I picked these ones because the ages that are reflected in this data represent a lot of the ages that we see in referrals. We know that the rates that considered or attempted suicide among LGBTQ people by age are over almost 50% of ages 13 to 17 have considered and close to 20% have attempted. This is something that helps us, again, have an understanding of the heightened risk that they're at, and the risk that they may consider or be exposed to suicidality.

**CH:** We'll next look at the race and ethnicity portion of this data. This also tells us there is a high representation of youth of color. Although this is not data that's reflective specifically of URMs, we can look and see that the Hispanic and Latinx community is one of the highest percentages for folks who have considered suicide. We see Middle Eastern and Northern African, and these identities can be relayed back to the referrals that we see as well. Not only does this data help us be mindful and intentional about our sensitivity towards serving LGBTQ+ youth, it also reminds us how important it is to make sure that we're using more than one approach. We're incorporating trauma-informed [care], and we're also including that piece of cultural humility.

### **Discrimination based on immigration status increases suicide attempt odds by over 2.5 times in first-generation LGBTQ+ youth.**

**CH:** You'll see this data reflected in the next slide as well. This is another example of how different levels of trauma and discrimination increase the risk of suicide for youth. Here The Trevor Project shows us that discrimination based on immigration status increases suicide attempt odds by over 2.5 times in first-generation LGBTQ+ youth. Again, this validates and affirms that service delivery must be culturally relevant as well as gender-affirming so that we can meet all of the needs of youth identities and hopefully reduce these statistics.

### **Over half of LGBTQ+ young people experience symptoms of anxiety or depression.**

**CH:** We'll also look into mental health. Over half of LGBTQ+ young people experience symptoms of anxiety or depression. We see that 70% experience symptoms of anxiety in the ages of 13 to 24, almost 70% for 18 to 24. These are really important numbers to be mindful of so that we can be able to implement mental health services and make sure that we're providing as much resources as needed to benefit the youth's experience.

### **The majority of LGBTQ+ young people who are enrolled reported negative experiences in school.**

**CH:** To close out this section, I wanted to end on data that LGBTQ folks have experienced at school. If we think back to the different layers of what makes URMs so unique, one of the things that we can probably all think about and agree with is that youth have challenges in school. They don't have a long history of formal education. They are arriving with a lot of incredible work skills and tools that they have... and they think they can implement them here to start making money. We're telling them they need to go to school first to be able to do that.

**CH:** Just that alone is a challenge. When we add on the identity of an LGBTQ+ person, we see that they have experienced verbal harassment because folks thought they were LGBTQ+. There's a high number of folks that disclose that they're not able to dress in the way that they identify with or express themselves. Then you can



see on the rest of this that there's a high rate for experiencing unwanted sexual contact, being disciplined more harshly. There's still that discrimination and that violence that folks are facing here as they arrive as well.

## 2. Developing Strategies to Foster Inclusivity: Addressing Biases and Enforcing Anti-Discrimination Policies

### Strategies to Foster Inclusivity

**CH:** All right, now that we have set the tone for looking at the uniqueness, the risks that LGBTQ+ folks face in URM services, let's talk about strategies for how you all can foster inclusivity. These strategies are ideal strategies. We do not expect you to leave implementing them all right away. Some of you may already have implemented some, which is awesome. We also recognize that with these strategies, you'll have to take it back to your organization and implement your own consideration of the community that you're in, the culture that's there, what your agency, how they are framing inclusivity, and any other contextual factors.

**CH:** If you want any additional context, ORR recently released a policy letter in June, which addresses the topic of grant recipient requirements and considerations for ensuring equity within ORR programming and services. This link, if you're not familiar with it, we'll drop that in the chat as well. The strategies that we're talking about here that we'll go into more detail are reflective of what's in the policy letter as well.

**CH:** I'm going to invite my wonderful colleague, Rob, to help us out with this next slide. One of the first strategies that we want to use is to set and maintain an inclusive tone. Over to you, Rob, to help out reading this case scenario.

### Setting the Tone: Case Scenario – Abdi

**RC:** Thanks, Claire. Our hope is that case scenarios like this throughout our webinar will be really helpful for you all in getting an idea of how you might be able to implement these same sorts of strategies yourself. If we could go to the next slide. This is a case scenario featuring our character, Abdi, for today.

**RC:** When Abdi walked into the resettlement agency to meet his caseworker for the first time, he and his foster mom noticed that staff have pronouns on their name tags. During the meeting, the caseworker asked Abdi if he would like to share his pronouns and confirm his chosen name. When leaving, Abdi also noticed a colorful sign that said, "You Are Safe Here" in multiple languages.

### Discussion Question

**RC:** Now we want to turn this over to you guys using Slido, which is a favorite of Switchboard's. If you've joined our webinars before, you know Slido is a live polling platform. You can scan the QR code at the top left or go to [slido.com](https://slido.com) and put in the code right there to answer this question together as participants here in this webinar. In response to Abdi's case scenario,

What are some additional ways you might ensure the tone of your interactions and your organization's environment are welcoming, inclusive, safe, and affirming?





**RC:** As we saw in the case scenario, Abdi witnessed the use of posters with "You Are Safe Here" in multiple languages, and also saw the caseworker ask about pronouns and wearing them on name tags. What are some other ways you might ensure the tone of your interactions are welcoming, inclusive, safe, and affirming?

**RC:** Great. That's a huge one at first, is not only introducing yourself with your pronouns, but also being committed to gendering people correctly, using the correct gender with folks, the gender that they've asked to be referenced as.

**RC:** Yes, creating an invitation to say, "Hey, what might your pronouns be?" Not necessarily creating a requirement, but showing by yourself initially, like this is part of my experience. This is part of how I want to be welcoming. I invite you to do the same. We can see a couple other people typing. You can submit multiple answers. Really appreciate all of these thoughts from y'all. Ensuring intake paperwork reflects gender identity, not sex assigned at birth. Right. Making sure that your forms and your intake forms have everything in such a way that you can be clear about the ways that people want to be referred to that's most accurate to their experiences.

**RC:** Yes, I really like this piece about inviting folks to express. We have so much in mind in terms of what we're supposed to assume and what we're supposed to do. Often one of the best things we can do is just ask and create space for curiosity there. Strengths-based language when discussing LGBTQ+ clients. Feeling really coming from a place of empowerment. Yes, we want to acknowledge the challenges, but we also want to acknowledge the great strengths and gifts that folks with diverse SOGIE may bring into their cases.

**RC:** Yes, explaining what pronouns are. It's an opportunity for us to provide some sort of cultural orientation. If someone's confused as to why that's happening, providing an explanation in a nonjudgmental way, just to share where you're coming from, can be really helpful.

**RC:** Yes, I really like this top one, apologize and move on if you make a mistake. It's really important not to center ourselves as someone who might be learning. If we make a mistake, if we spend too much time focusing on that, that doesn't really center the person with whom we're trying to honor. Apologize, move forward, and again, go back to that commitment of referring to people by the genders that they have asked for. All right. These are really great responses. Really appreciate these. Claire, what do you think? How do some of these responses look to you?

## Language Matters

**CH:** I love it. Thank you so much, Rob, for facilitating that. Thanks, everyone, for sharing those really insightful ways of setting the tone. This is perfect because it reflects our next slide that is going to talk about language mattering and how it matters in our service delivery. Some of the things that you brought up are going to be reflective on these slides coming up, which is really exciting that y'all are already thinking this way.

**CH:** The first thing we'll talk about with language matters is being mindful of cultural considerations around LGBTQ+ terms. I think someone wrote, "Explaining what pronouns are." Absolutely. We talked in the beginning that LGBTQ+ terms may not be consistent in other countries or other languages. Being mindful of that and finding creative ways around it. Including pronouns in introductions and using accurate pronouns and chosen name. This was in the Slido as well, which is awesome, y'all.





**CH:** We will make mistakes. There will be a time where you use the wrong pronoun or are not using chosen name. I really loved that someone submitted the apologizing because we're all going to have those mistakes, but what matters is what we do after that mistake. "I'm so sorry. I meant to say 'he.' I'll continue working on that next time."

**CH:** Someone also provided the importance of inclusive documentation. Yes, going through and maybe you have someone review from an external source that can go through and see what materials are missing. Is there language around SOGIE that's missing? Is it consistent through all of your paperwork? I also want to acknowledge that that's a large thing to do. Again, with that opener that I stated, these are ideal strategies and they take time.

**CH:** Then, lastly, using gender-neutral language. This is something that you can start practicing right away—using “partner” instead of “husband,” “wife,” “girlfriend,” or “boyfriend,” and potentially using “foster parent” instead of “foster mom” or “foster dad.” I also liked to use “foster home” instead of “foster family” because families can look different to everyone. I received feedback that using that felt like for some folks that only heterosexual married folks with kids could be foster parents. This just opens up more opportunity for folks to come along in your journey of inclusivity and support URMs.

## Physical Environment Considerations

**CH:** Next, we'll talk about how you can make physical environments inclusive. Again, these are some incremental steps that you can take towards making physical environments inclusive. They take time. Some of them may take approval and they may take lots of conversation.

**CH:** The first is having gender-inclusive bathroom options. This may not be something you can do if you don't have a single-stall bathroom, but what are some ways you can work around that? Let's be creative. Here are some examples that we're going to drop in the chat of different bathroom signages that you can put up. Instead of labeling male and female bathroom or using the icons that represent those, you instead include what the plumbing is in that bathroom. Maybe you provide sanitary needs and products in each bathroom if they're not individual.

**CH:** Making sure that you have representation of LGBTQ+ folks on your marketing materials, on your flyers. Making sure that you are encouraging and providing space for staff to freely express their gender identities. When we have staff that feel that safe, that is going to blend to the youth that are in our care to feel that safe, to express their gender identities as well.

**CH:** Furthermore, going into that inclusive signage. Having posters up, having community resources up, having and making those visible in multiple languages. Translating "You Are Safe Here" into several languages. Last but not least, a consideration you could do is offer pronouns for visitors, name tags, staff badges, include them in email signatures. This allows the community... Maybe you have volunteers coming in, foster parents coming in. This allows you to expand setting the tone of inclusivity past just your own staff and to everyone in the community that is there to support you.

## Anti-Discrimination Policies and Environments

**CH:** The next thing we'll talk about for facilitating and maintaining inclusive environments and fostering inclusivity is anti-discrimination policies. I mentioned that policy letter that ORR just released. Do you know



what that policy is? Have you reviewed it? If you have an anti-discrimination policy, is it in line with this policy letter? Have you consulted and looked into what your state and funders' policies are? Have you considered creating environments and an organization culture that welcomes questions and values continued education?

**CH:** I think something that we really talk a lot about is that this is not an end. “We got a discrimination policy and so now we're inclusive.” That's an awesome step, but you have to be committed to learning about the new trends and the new things that are happening to be able to constantly be implementing those for your staff and your community.

**CH:** This idea of “calling up” staff or calling in staff is a lot more; it's not a shame-based versus calling out staff, because, again, we're going to make mistakes. If you are hearing discriminatory language, you can provide an opportunity for conversation with the individual and create a space where they can learn, and you potentially share different language that they can use.

### Personal Biases

**CH:** Then finally, we want to make sure that we're consistently upholding that diversity, equity, and inclusion in our service delivery with colleagues, with anyone that we're interacting with. Personal biases: I want to take a second to recognize how important anti-bias training is in a lot of our different work in URM service delivery. This can be a really awesome way to start if you're looking for a training or something to use with your staff or with foster parents for their training needs, is implementing anti-bias training.

**CH:** We'll walk through a little bit of what that looks like. First step is acknowledging that everyone has a bias. We all have different values and different norms for what we view religion as, for SOGIE, for substance use, for all different things in life. We want to acknowledge them. Then following that, it's important that we reflect on it. We're asking ourselves, is this impacting my ability to create an equitable opportunity and engage with youth? Am I treating one youth a different way than the other? Reflecting on that. Then if you are, reframing it. Taking the time to say, "Yes, there's my bias. I'm going to talk this through with a supervisor. I'm going to talk it through with myself to see how I can reframe to still ensure I'm providing equitable and inclusive services," which is what the last encouragement is.

### How Biases May Present in LGBTQ+ Responsive Services

**CH:** Let's take a look at how bias may present in LGBTQ-responsive services. These are just some examples of how biases towards the LGBTQ+ community may present and may impact URMs. These biases affect that tone that we talked about setting, and they don't ensure welcome and affirming services for youth.

**CH:** For example, one of the things that you may have heard or may experience is, “Why are we needing to talk about finding an affirming home... URM foster home for a Muslim female? Muslims aren't lesbians, so she can go anywhere.” And that's a bias that is actually not accurate. LGBTQ+ folks exist in all communities, and so for this example, you would have to use that compounded layer of how are you going to meet their cultural and religious needs as well as respect and affirm their SOGIE.

### Positive Impacts of Inclusivity

**CH:** When we do all of these things, when we set the tone, when we implement training, when we create physical environments that are safe and affirming, and we have anti-discrimination policies, we see these



positive impacts. We know that there's a decreased risk of suicide when youth are being welcomed into families that are affirming, that use their chosen name, use accurate pronouns. We see a decreased risk of suicide when they have access to gender-neutral bathrooms and gender-affirming clothing.

**CH:** We also see lower suicidal ideation and behavior simply by using the youth's chosen name. We see improved mental health, and furthermore, we see that more youth are willing to participate in mental health. It's hard enough to get folks to attend the therapy sessions that URMs may be required to attend because they're teens, because mental health may be viewed differently in their country and their culture. When we add on the risk factor that folks face with receiving gender-affirming mental health services, that can increase as well. All of this increases a sense of belonging. We see positive behaviors. We see increased positive attitudes, as well as more success in academic performance.

### **LGBTQ+ young people described what a world would look like where all LGBTQ+ people are accepted.**

**CH:** To wrap this section up of our learning objective, I wanted to include something from The Trevor Project, their survey that they did. They had asked LGBTQ+ young people to describe what a world would look like where all LGBTQ+ people are accepted. These are some of their answers.

**CH:** Able. It's such a simple, four-letter word, but "able." That can be related to so many things. Able to attend school, able to be safe, able to make friends, able to have access to care. Different, free, easier, not afraid, can come out. These are all incredibly positive things that folks can feel and will feel by us doing the work to implement inclusive practices.

## **3. LGBTQ+ Friendly Approaches for Placements, and Staff and Foster Parent Recruitment, Training, and Retention**

### **Ask yourself...**

**CH:** All right, moving to learning objective number three. Now that we've discussed strategies to foster inclusivity, let's apply them. I want to start first with a reflection. I encourage you to come back to this slide when you find yourself wondering, "I don't know where to start. I've forgotten about how to implement inclusive approaches," or when you are trying to find a placement for youth, you can start by reviewing these questions with yourself.

**CH:** Does my organization have a public stance on LGBTQ+ acceptance? Regardless of that stance, what is the organization's reputation in the community? Both of those previous ones that I've read off, those are for... those can help you if you're trying to recruit for foster parents. Maybe your organization doesn't have a stance, but maybe the reputation knows that your program is a safe space to become licensed.

**CH:** Do you have the training and education that's ongoing for staff, for foster parents as well? You can think smaller scale: "What is the acceptance culture of my program?" This is helpful too, if you may not have... so maybe that your organization doesn't have these policies in place, but the culture of your program does. There are ways to implement this inclusivity. Do you have current LGBTQ+ staff in foster parent representation? This of course is not asking you to go ask folks, but do folks feel free enough to express that? If, like I said, as their



staff do and your foster parents do, you may as well. Back to that paperwork. Does your paperwork and marketing include SOGIE and anti-discrimination language?

### Inclusive Tone at the Organizational Level

**CH:** After reflecting on those questions, you can start to move into the next steps. We want to make sure that we're setting an inclusive tone at the entire organization level. Some of you may have the power to incorporate these—maybe you're a manager or supervisor position—whereas some of you may have the power to bring these up as suggestions or ideas in your supervision.

**CH:** Starting right at the beginning, it's so important that we're hiring intentionally. We're using inclusive language in job descriptions. We're asking questions in interviews that will prompt answers regarding the applicant's awareness or education on affirming practices, inclusivity, et cetera, and then implementing those trainings.

**CH:** Keep it consistent, keep it frequent, and keep it updated. This holds us all accountable for that continued learning, and it also sets the tone of what your program values and expects from those who are a part of it. Making sure that you use those voices and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ folks in your content creation, as well as training delivery, while also being mindful not to tokenize individuals. Not going to the same case manager or foster parent who identify in the community and asking them to do this delivery for you every time.

### Discussion Question

**CH:** I'm going to pause here. We're going to open up another Slido. Folks, you can go back to [slido.com](https://slido.com) and type in the number here or scan [the] QR code. I'm curious,

#### What challenges have you encountered while implementing LGBTQ+ services?

**CH:** Awesome, I see folks typing. This can be a tricky question. I appreciate everyone's thinking towards what these challenges have been and being willing to share that. Finding interpretation for non-English speakers. Absolutely. Also finding interpretation that is interpreting these LGBTQ+ terminologies in a culturally relevant way.

**CH:** Other community organizations and churches not supporting. Yes, it's really hard to do this work. This is work that takes time and takes change. You may have some really solid relationships with other partners, and it can be hard for transitions in any part of life. I absolutely validate that.

**CH:** Yes, we know that a lot of our organizations are faith-based, and there may be components that come from that. I encourage folks to look at that policy letter and see how that might support you in that stance as well. Language barriers, personal biases. Yes, absolutely. Continuing with biases, that religious bias and lack of knowledge. Yes, this is, again, we're all on different spectrums of learning this work. It can be hard when we are in a different space than maybe others.

**CH:** Yes, those state laws, anti-trans state laws, that's hugely impactful. That's where that creativity and that “ask yourself” reflection is hopefully helpful to say, “How can we move around what's happening in the larger scale and still ensure that we have safety in our program and make it a little bit of a smaller scale?”



**CH:** Thank you so much for sharing those. Those are really common examples I've heard brought up. I hope that that serves at least as a bit of validation for you all that this is not one person going through any challenges that you've had while implementing this work. I'll make sure to ensure you in a few slides later that you absolutely are capable of doing this work.

### Cultural Considerations and Norms for Trainings

**CH:** Let's check out some of the cultural considerations and norms for trainings if you're going to implement them. First, we want to be mindful of that compounded discrimination that folks are facing. Be considerate on the impact of [youth] having to adapt... to learn if their SOGIE is safe in different environments. Again, we talked about how this could mean how their SOGIE was or was not safe or tolerated in country of origin to their new community. It can also be, what does it look like in the school setting, in the foster home, in the group home, between case management and therapists? There's a lot of different energy put into trying to decide if someone is safe or not.

**CH:** Then we also see that gender non-conforming URMs, these folks may be targeted or harassed for their perceived SOGIE. This just reminds us that we cannot make assumptions about someone's gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. There's cultures, for example, that may grow their hair longer or may wear makeup depending on gender identities and whatnot. It's really important that we're doing a thorough awareness of the person in front of us that we're serving and make sure that we are implementing these considerations and norms into trainings.

### Creating LGBTQ+ Friendly Placements

**CH:** We've done an assessment, we've reflected on how important tone is, talked about training ideas. Now let's jump into creating LGBTQ friendly placements.

### LGBTQ+ Friendly Group and Independent Living Homes

**CH:** We'll start by talking about group homes and independent living homes. It's important to, when you're welcoming new folks into your group home or independent living home, is to take a scan and address the inclusive nature of the home. We know that there's going to be a mixture of cultures and beliefs from both staff and current youth. It's important to be mindful and think about that with youth coming from other cultures. They may be coming from countries that have criminalization towards the LGBTQ+ community, and some youth may identify with that value. We need to think through how we're modeling inclusivity as staff and processing how we can create a welcoming environment for all identities and all URMs.

**CH:** When we do this, it is extremely important that we do not out anyone. If you're welcoming somebody that you know identifies and their referral in the LGBTQ+ community, we're not going to state that to the group home or the independent living home youth that are there. How we can view that is that we're going to state that inclusivity is a part of our program and bullying is not tolerated. This will help to reduce stigma and feelings of isolation from those being welcomed, which leads to not isolating. We don't want to isolate any URMs, but it's important that we bring specific attention to trans youth.

**CH:** For any different activities that are taking place, we encourage you to not leave any individual out of those opportunities, making sure that the groups that you're running and the resources that are available are accessible and equitable to each youth. Some may have some valid fears or bias towards it might be risky or



uncomfortable for trans folks to share rooms with one another. This is where we encourage you to create that safe space that allows for questions. You can address that prior to youth entering the home, and you can also make sure that that youth has a mentor in the group home.

**CH:** You also want to make sure that we are educating youth what LGBTQ+ acceptance and norms look like locally, statewide, and federally. A lot of youth may feel that they're now completely safe and that the U.S. is completely tolerant. We know that there's a variety of beliefs and acceptance. It's important to set folks up for safety so that we can prioritize how they go about expressing their gender, discussing it, and what resources are available.

### Creating LGBTQ+ Friendly Foster Homes

**CH:** Next, we'll talk about foster homes. Again, I'm going to ask y'all to think back to that reflection that we did, and that will help you think through recruitment, and it will help you think through training of current foster parents, as well as maintaining those foster parents.

**CH:** When we ask ourselves, for example, "Does my organization have a stance on LGBTQ acceptance?" or "What is the organization's representation?" this can help determine what community education and awareness is needed, and it can also determine which groups to either reconnect with and potentially repair relationships, maintain those relationships, or find new spaces.

**CH:** I also encourage you to think creatively about "What does affirming community spaces mean?" There are so many spaces out there, whether it is hair salons, coffee shops, restaurants, affirming churches. There are a lot of different resources that you can start to think about. "Where can I find spaces that are affirming that I can connect with?" We're going to drop a few of those resources in the chat as well.

**CH:** Expand upon what your recruitment efforts have been, and check out some of the areas that you may have been missing out on to see if you can foster a relationship with somebody in those areas to recruit for foster parents.

**CH:** You can also use those areas to host trainings. Maintaining that tone of, "We're going to utilize and support LGBTQ+ owned businesses for our training for foster parents," and starting to slowly make that trust available to have access to partner with them, either for supporting youth or recruiting in general.

**CH:** Through this, you want to make sure that you're appealing to your target audience. By this, I mean that one example that someone shared in the Slido, if you need to apologize for anything that has happened in the past or how they may view the organization, this is your opportunity to be humble, to validate, and to explore creative ways to build a new connection. You want to be authentic and appreciative of the support or service that these spaces are offering. You want to be able to adapt your marketing materials. For example, you may not bring flyers that have verses on them to a Pride center that you're trying to create and maintain a relationship with.

**CH:** Friendly plug and reminder that these things don't happen overnight, especially for recruiting foster parents and building communication. We will have a separate webinar on recruiting foster homes coming up on August 20th. If anybody is interested and inspired by learning more about that, that's a great place to sign up for once we have that out.



## Retaining LGBTQ+ Friendly Foster Homes

**CH:** Retaining foster homes. When we think about navigating through... if you are going to release a new stance of inclusivity, navigating through those positive and negative reactions from foster parents, making sure that you identify a staff member that those foster parents can go to process their feelings on potentially recruiting LGBTQ+ folks or allies. Also not assuming that just because someone identifies in the LGBTQ+ community that they're comfortable with welcoming youth from there. In my previous programming, there was an example of a gay couple who was uncomfortable with welcoming a trans youth because they did not have the education behind how to support that. It's important to not just make those assumptions and to dive deeper into your placements to see what education is needed and what support is needed to retain foster homes.

**CH:** Finally, making sure that you're using that client-centered approach to help build community and support for URMs, doing check-ins, see how things are working. Maybe you need to refer out or advocate for different benefits for LGBTQ+ folks to have that support and community.

## What if I have conflicting ethical, cultural, or religious beliefs myself?

**CH:** I mentioned that you may come across this feeling of, "What if I have my own conflicting in ethical, cultural, and religious beliefs myself?" You can simply refer back to our ground rules and remain curious, remain open, be kind to yourself, extend that to others, maintain a commitment to serving all URMs equitably, extend the kindness to yourself and others, avoid referring out if the service that you have internally is beneficial for the youth.

**CH:** For example, if you are uncomfortable or someone is uncomfortable with licensing an LGBTQ+ family, we want to make sure that we're not missing out on an opportunity to welcome a youth into care based on someone's personal beliefs. You can go to your supervisor to process through these conflicts, and you can also reach out to Switchboard. We can provide one-on-one consults; we can provide tailored private trainings to your staff. We'll drop in the chat how to fill out a TA request if this is something that would be helpful for you.

## "I am not an expert; I am not ready to serve LGBTQ+ clients."

**CH:** Finally, you may be asking yourself or telling yourself, "I'm not an expert; I am not ready to serve LGBTQ+ clients." I want to echo the vulnerability that I mentioned to embrace earlier. I have had this thought. I think we are all constantly hoping to continue learning and do better, and we might not have all the skills. "I'm not an expert, so I can't do it well." The truth is that you can. As an ethical and thoughtful either case manager or service provider, you're ready to work with LGBTQ+ clients. You're not going to get everything right, but I know that we can all commit to listening to our clients, commit to asking questions and learning, affirm the support that's provided to clients, and be honest about your learning curve.

**CH:** There's no reason to try and guess, or to use the right language. You can say things like, "I'm still learning this. Could you please remind me of your chosen name or what you would like to participate in outside of school? Are you open to going to Pride events or is that something that maybe you're not interested in?" Ask questions, and then reach out to experts and referrals for specialized gender-affirming care, anything legally related or mental health referrals. Back over to Rob for another case scenario.





## Case Scenario: Foster Parent Training

**RC:** All right. Thanks, Claire. You're really crushing this content, grateful for you there. We're going to jump into another case scenario here—this one on foster parent training. It will be followed up by a Slido question, so do get those smartphones ready. Here is the case scenario.

**RC:** Your program is licensing a group of Congolese community members. You inform the group that today you will be going over LGBTQ+ topics. Several members expressed that this is viewed as a sin in their community and ask to skip this section of the training. Now let's get to our Slido and answer the following question.

### Discussion Question

How might you explain the importance of covering the LGBTQ+ training topic while being empathetic of the cultural and religious values of the community that you're working with?

**RC:** Excuse me, so just friendly reminder that you can scan the QR code at the top left of the screen or go to slido.com and think about a response in this situation. Feels important to cover this topic, but how do you do so in a way that's empathetic and respectful of cultural and religious values that this community holds dear?

**RC:** See some people responding already, really appreciate y'all. I really like this. We're a little biased here. We appreciate that gender unicorn, but yes, that's a great starting place. Finding ways in which you can connect right in the middle and being more creative in this approach of, excuse me, how to be able to have a conversation about this in a way that feels sort of unitive where you're able to meet in the middle, and something like an image like that, like the gender unicorn can be really helpful as a starting point.

**RC:** Yes, have individual conversations to talk through what the fears are to learning about this. I think that can also be really helpful in preparing folks that you're working with. If you have a point of contact in one of these groups that you're working with, saying, "Hey, this is a topic that we're going to be discussing. Any considerations that I need? How can we do this in a way that feels supportive for everyone in the room while also being sure that we cover the essential topics to cover?" I think that that's important. Finding champions and allies in the conversation can be really helpful.

**RC:** Yes, just coming at this from a point of, especially even some of the stuff that's in that, or our policy letter, this is about supporting folks equally and equitably. The foster parent training is not trying to change your religious values necessarily, but we are trying to make sure that folks get the services that they are entitled to.

**RC:** Integration and belonging will be more complete and meaningful if you're prepared to confront the diversity here. Yes, I think it's an opportunity, like Claire mentioned before, calling in and calling up, welcoming people into that opportunity.

**RC:** This one, regardless of cultural expectations, these kids exist and they need our help. These kids aren't going anywhere. The needs aren't going anywhere. They're in need of support. LGBTQ+ people exist everywhere. Really appreciate that. Just to say that one of those bias questions earlier. This isn't something that doesn't exist in some places versus others. We're not asking folks to change values, but we're looking for ways to support these youth.



**RC:** Claire, what do you think about some of these answers? Do you feel like there are good responses in navigating this situation?

**CH:** I do. I think these are great responses. It's a tricky area, but I see a lot of implementing the things that we've talked about in this webinar to be utilized in this training. Thank you all for sharing.

### Suggested Perspectives

**CH:** This leads to our last slide of this section, which is suggested perspectives. This can be helpful to think about. What is your goal? We can even use this for the Slido. Is this to get the family or the cohort or staff member to know everything about the LGBTQ+ community? Is your goal to offer education in a way that reaches your audience and ultimately reduces harm and elevates safety for LGBTQ+ URMs?

**CH:** You may find yourself frustrated, and that's okay, but what we have to commit to doing is using these frameworks of reflection to decide how we can move forward with making sure that we are creating safety for every LGBTQ+ URM.

## 4. Ensuring Safe, Supportive Environments for LGBTQ+ URMs in Service Delivery

### Balance and Intersectionality

**CH:** Finally, we'll wrap up with our first learning objective, or excuse me, our first learning objective, our fourth learning objective, which is ensuring safe and supportive environments. We want to end by talking about the importance and also the trickiness of balance and intersectionality. This is a reminder that as you are ensuring those safe and supportive environments, that we are not viewing someone's entire identity based on their SOGIE. Youth are coming with other skills, other interests, other values, other layers that make up their identities that we don't want to forget.

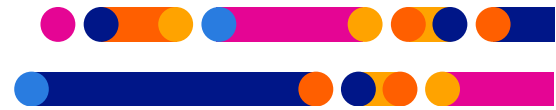
**CH:** While you're balancing all of that, we remind you to stay strengths-based and client-centered. We also remind you, as you've heard me say several times, to ask questions. Find a person that you feel comfortable going to and asking questions. You all should also be able to embrace welcoming those questions as well and making sure that we're providing spaces that do create that balance, that allow intersectionality to exist.

### Discussion Question

**CH:** We've wrapped up here. We're coming to the end of our webinar, and we've covered so much material. I am curious if folks would be able to whip out your camera one more time. We'll end on this Slido and then have some time at the end potentially for Q&A, depending on how long this goes.

[What ideas might you take from this webinar to implement in your service delivery for LGBTQ+ URMs?](#)

**CH:** Implementing that anti-bias training. Absolutely. Anything else that folks might take away? We may reflect back to setting the tone, thinking about how we are creating inclusive environments through our placements with either at group homes or with foster parents.



**CH:** Being more intentional with language and asking preference in pronouns. Absolutely. Even when in meetings or discussing cases. Then using pronouns, too, solid tip is practicing. If you are using a pronoun for someone that you may not be familiar with communicating, something as simple as standing in front of a mirror and watching yourself say it over and over and using that in different sentences. All of the resource maps. It's okay that you're not an expert but willing to learn, wonderful. Awesome. Thank you all so much for participating in these Slidos, and we're going to close with some final details.

## Conclusion

**RC:** Thank you so much, Claire. I will say for the sake of time, we are going to have to just go ahead with our closing. We do have our Q&A open still for a couple more minutes if anyone wants to submit one of those, but we will also have continued webinars on this topic. We hope you guys will sign up for our newsletter so you can stay up to date on those. Do be sure to submit technical assistance requests directly to Switchboard at the link that was dropped earlier if you have more specific questions about how Switchboard can be supportive to you in your URM program service delivery. We're going to go ahead and close out today's webinar. Go to the next slide, please.

## Feedback Survey

**RC:** We'd like to ask for your help. If you can drop the link into the chat, one of our folks here. Thank you so much, Maya. Our programs at Switchboard really depend on great feedback and strong feedback from our learners and our participants like you, so we'd be really grateful if you could take just a little bit of time to scan the QR code on the screen or to click the link in the chat. If you would fill out that form, it takes about 60 seconds and it does a great deal to help us improve our future training and technical assistance. If you had feelings about how this webinar today went, please fill that out here. It is anonymous and essential for our programs to improve.

## Recommended Resources and Reviewing Learning Objectives

**RC:** All right. You'll also see in our chat we've dropped a bunch more resources. There have been a ton of great resources in this webinar, many of which you'll be able to access after we send out the slides for this webinar tomorrow. We've also dropped those in the chat, and they're here on the screen, some really great resources that Claire was able to share with us. We hope that you'll find these really useful, and you'll be able to refer back to them in bringing back some of these strategies and best practices to your own newcomer services contacts.

**RC:** We hope you were able to have accomplished all the things that we set out to do thanks to Claire's guiding us through this roadmap and agenda of our learning objectives.

## Stay Connected

**RC:** Last but not least, we just want to say thank you so much for your attendance for today's webinar. We're so excited to be able to provide technical assistance and training on topics like this at the unique intersection of URM programming and the LGBTQ+ community. It's really a gift to be able to do so. Please stay tuned for more resources from us on this topic and the others. You can stay connected with us in a number of ways at



Switchboard. You can go to our website, [SwitchboardTA.org](http://SwitchboardTA.org), and submit technical requests. Thank you so much. Have a great day.

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