LGBTQ SUPPLEMENT

TO THE
ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE FOR MENTORING

January 2019

Big Brothers Big Sisters. OF AMERICA

MENTOR
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

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ABOUT THIS SUPPLEMENT

In 2016, BBBSA began piloting a capacity-building initiative to develop awareness training, support the formation of new partnerships, and intentionally provide services for LGBTQQ youth to its network of more than 270 Affiliates around the United States. Through this innovative initiative, BBBSA sought to address many of the barriers that have traditionally prevented LGBTQQ youth from being served more effectively by youth mentoring programs.

There is a growing recognition in the mentoring field that the failure to provide thoughtful, responsive, and inclusive programming leaves LGBTQQ youth at risk for additional harm each time they receive services from ill-prepared staff and incompatible mentors.

Many of the recommendations in this supplement have been informed by site visits, staff trainings, and extensive procedural changes made at 20 local BBBSA Affiliates across the country. Many direct examples of the changes these sites have made to their policies, procedures, staff development, and communications are provided throughout this supplement.

To build on lessons learned and insights from the national initiative, BBBSA approached MENTOR about co-developing a supplementary resource to the standard *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*™ on serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively. This supplement is the result of that collaboration, and BBBSA and MENTOR present this final product to the mentoring field, made possible with funding from the Altria Group.

INTRODUCTION

The LGBTQ Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™ responds to a long-standing call to extend the reach and quality of mentoring relationships to one of our nation's most underserved, marginalized, and vulnerable populations—youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ).[1] As a well-documented body of research has noted, large numbers of LGBTQQ youth are growing up at a deficit—facing difficult odds due to day-to-day experiences with societal stigma, victimization, bias, and rejection.[2] Given such a landscape, there is a need for caring adults, advocates, and mentors now more than ever. Unfortunately, only a small number of formal mentoring programs across the country are currently providing mission-driven services that speak directly to the unique needs and safety concerns of this population.[3]

Importantly, a growing body of research and practitioner-piloted practices also caution that mentoring services for LGBTQQ youth may require additional levels of awareness, program capacity, and advocacy. Such findings indicate that a business-as-usual approach to recruitment, screening, training, matching, case management, and evaluation may expose LGBTQQ youth to additional risks and the potential for long-term harm at a time when these young people are most in need of care, advocacy, and having someone in their corner.

As a response to these concerns and as a part of a shared commitment by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) and MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) to improve mentoring services to all children and youth across the country, *the LGBTQ Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* offers step-by-step operations guidance to develop safer, more affirming, and responsive mentoring relationships for LGBTQQ youth.

About the Terminology Used in this Supplement

The authors of this supplement have chosen to use the acronym LGBTQQ youth as an umbrella term that is inclusive of diverse spectrums of sexual orientations and gender identities in young people. This acronym includes (but is not limited to) young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. In addition, there is an important need to highlight early experiences with sexual minority and gender minority identity development during the time that many children and youth participate in youth mentoring programs. Because of the importance of how this experience parallels time in the care of mentoring program staff, the authors have also included questioning as part of this acronym.

For adults, the acronym LGBTQ is used. This acronym includes (but is not limited to) adults who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Although many individuals may still navigate through various phases of sexual identity or gender identity development throughout adulthood, the age most often associated with questioning has trended lower and is now much more closely associated with the period of adolescence (see the work of Cass;[4] McCarn and Fassinger;[5] D'Aughelli[6]). To learn more about the use of key terms, concepts, and language within this supplement, please see the glossary in this section.

Getting Started: A Glossary of Acronyms, Terms, and Definitions

Understanding the following terms, definitions, and language can be helpful in working effectively with the LGBTQ community. Many of these terms are used throughout this supplement.

Ally: A person who is not LGBTQ but shows support for LGBTQ people and promotes equality in a variety of ways.

Androgynous: A term used to describe someone who identifies and/or presents as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

Asexual: A term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction.

Biphobia: Prejudice, fear, or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

Bisexual: A person emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Butch: Commonly used to refer to masculinity displayed by a female but can also refer to masculinity displayed by a male.

Cisgender: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with that typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Cisnormative: The assumption that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to transidentities or people.

Closeted: A term used to describe an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.

> Definitions adapted, with permission, from Human Rights Campaign and the training materials offered through their All Children – All Families project: https://www.hrc.org/resources/all-children-all-families-about-the-initiative

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual-orientation or gender identity and begins to disclose that identity to others. The concept is used more in relationship to sexual orientation but can be applied to gender identity—though the process differs significantly between SO and GI.

Cultural Competence: The ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Culturally competent organizations should have a defined set of values and principles and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.

Femme: A term used to describe someone who exhibits notably feminine traits, most often (but not always) referring to a lesbian, bisexual, or queer woman.

Gay: A term used to describe a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Gender Binary: A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

Gender Dysphoria: Describes the distress that a person may experience when perceived as a gender that does not match their gender identity, or from physical characteristics that don't match their gender identity. Many transgender people experience gender dysphoria at some point in their lives, although taking steps to affirm one's gender identity can reduce or eliminate it. In the most recent version of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Gender Dysphoria is also the formal diagnosis applied to transgender people seeking mental health support for their transition.

Gender-Expansive: A term that conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the gender binary system. Sometimes used to describe young people who are comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and don't conform to stereotypes that people hold for their sex.

Gender Expression: External appearance of one's gender, usually shown through behavior, clothing, haircut, or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender History: Information related to a transgender or non-binary person's sex, name, and pronouns assigned at birth, as well as aspects of their past social, legal, and/or medical transitions.

Gender Identity: One's internal sense of being male, female, a blend of both, or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Role: This is the set of expectations and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Every culture and community has its own expectations about how men/boys and women/girls should behave, and these expectations often shift over time.

Gender Nonconforming: A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that aligns to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Gender Fluid: Refers to being unconfined by one single gender identity and able to identify with neither, both and/or other gender(s) (in regards to the masculine/feminine gender binary), at different points in time.

Genderqueer: Genderqueer people typically reject static categories of gender and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as genderqueer may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender Transition: The process by which some people strive to more closely align their gender identity with their outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns, and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo medical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions. There are also legal aspects to transitioning (e.g., changing gender marker on birth certificate).

Heterosexism: The attitude that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation. Often takes the form of ignoring LGBQ people. For example: a form that only lists "mother" and "father."

Heterosexual: A term used to describe people whose emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions are to people of another gender. Also: straight

Heteronormative: The assumption of heterosexuality as the default sexual orientation instead of one of many possibilities, and that the preferred relationship is between two people of "opposite" genders.

Homophobia: The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, people who are attracted to people of the same gender.

Homosexual: Outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay people. Gay and/or lesbian are more commonly accepted terms to describe people who are attracted to members of the same gender.

Internalized Homophobia: Negative attitudes that a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer person may adopt about their own sexual orientation after receiving stigmatizing messages from their culture.

Intersex: An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, while in others they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.

Lesbian: A term used to describe a woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted primarily to other women.

LGBTQ: An abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning.

Lifestyle: Inaccurate term that many LGBTQ people find offensive. Avoid using this term because just as there is no one straight or non-LGBTQ lifestyle, there is no one LGBTQ lifestyle.

Living Openly: A state in which LGBTQ people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or transgender status—where and when it feels appropriate to them.

Non-Binary: An adjective referring to any person whose gender identity is neither male nor female.

Outing: Exposing someone's LGBTQ identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety, or religious community and family relationships.

Pansexual: Describes someone who has the potential for sexual attraction to people of any gender.

Queer: This term can be used as an umbrella term for LGBT, to express a rejection of other gender and sexual orientation labels, or to describe sexual attraction to people of more than one gender. Historically, queer has been used as a negative term for LGBTQ people. Some people still find the term offensive while others have embraced the term. It should be used carefully.

Questioning: A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Same-Gender Loving: A term some prefer to use instead of LGBQ to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender. This term is especially common among African Americans.

Sex: A category, usually either male or female, assigned based on physiological characteristics including chromosomes, sex hormone levels, and genitalia.

Sexual Identity: This is how we perceive and what we call ourselves. Such labels include lesbian, gay, bisexual, bi, queer, questioning, heterosexual, straight, and others. Sexual identity (how we define ourselves) and sexual behavior can be chosen, unlike sexual orientation which cannot.

Sexual Orientation: A person's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to other people.

Sexual Preference: A term sometimes used to mean the same thing as sexual orientation. Many LGBQ people find this term to be offensive because it implies that their sexual orientation is a choice.

Sexuality: How one experiences and expresses one's self as a sexual being.

SOGIE: An abbreviation combining sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, that has become one of the main reference terms to describe the LGBT community.

Transgender: A term used to describe people whose gender identity does not match expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender experience does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, trans people may be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, etc.

Transphobia: The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people.

Transsexual: A term used to describe people whose gender identity does not conform to their sex assigned at birth and who often seek medical treatment to bring their body and gender identity into alignment. In most cases, the term transgender is more appropriate.

Experiences of LGBTQQ Youth

An estimated 3.2 million youth—approximately 7 percent of all 8- to 18-year-olds in the United States—are LGBTQQ.[7] Although many of these youth have access to positive support systems and families that love and accept them, research shows that more than half experience one or more factors that place them at risk of not developing into healthy adults.[8] Documented risk factors include:

- **Stigma and bias.** LGBTQQ youth are often exposed to messaging that marginalizes, "others," and stigmatizes them. Over the last several years, for example, nearly 20 states have attempted to codify laws that would allow discrimination against LGBTQ people.[9] A 2016 law in Tennessee, for example, makes it legal for counselors to deny mental health services to LGBTQ patients—including youth who may be struggling with depression—based on sincerely held beliefs.[10] In Mississippi, a law that went into effect in 2017 states that "male (man) or female (woman) refer to an individual's immutable biological sex as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at time of birth" and that the state government cannot discriminate against any individual who denies services, accommodations, counseling, employment, and housing to transgender people based on religious beliefs.[11] These examples highlight patterns of homophobia and transphobic messaging that can easily be internalized by LGBTQQ youth who are hearing that their well-being, safety, and future may be at risk if they share their truth with others.

- **Victimization and bullying.** In school settings, a number of studies have documented the scale of victimization and bullying experienced by LGBTQQ students. In a study conducted by GLSEN of 10,258 respondents from 3,085 unique school districts,[12] large numbers of students described experiencing hostile school climates: 56.7% felt unsafe at school (because of their sexual orientation); 31.8% missed at least one day of school; 85% experienced verbal harassment from peers; and 56% reported hearing homophobic remarks from staff/teachers at least once during the school year.

- **Parent and family rejection.** Parent and family acceptance is an important indicator for LGBTQQ youth well-being. A recent study by the Human Rights Campaign[13] indicated that two-thirds of LGBTQQ youth have heard their families make negative comments about LGBTQ people. LGBTQQ youth who experience family rejection are 8.4 times more likely to report a suicide attempt; 5.9 times more likely to describe high levels of depression; and 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs.[14]

- **Homelessness.** LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ young adults had a 120 percent higher risk of reporting homelessness compared to youth who identified as heterosexual and cisgender.[15] In addition, up to 40 percent of all youth who experience homelessness are believed to be LGBTQQ.[16]

- **Child welfare systems.** In one study that examined the child welfare system, nearly 20 percent of youth placed in out-of-home care were LGBTQQ.[17] Additionally, research has noted that many LGBTQQ youth report experiencing violence and harassment in group placements due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.[18]

• **Juvenile justice involvement.** LGBTQQ youth are estimated to comprise 13 to 15 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system.[19] Many juvenile justice systems also appear to be ill-prepared to protect the safety of LGBTQQ youth in their care, with reports of staff even trying to convert or punish LGBTQQ youth because they were viewed as "deviant" and in need of being changed.[20]

• **Depression, suicide, and risk-taking behaviors.** According to a study by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than 40 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students considered suicide, 60 percent of LGB students reported feelings of hopelessness, and LGB students were five times more likely to report using illegal drugs than their straight peers.[21]

• **Increased risks for transgender youth.** Research on the experiences of transgender individuals often depict significantly greater risks than for their lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers. For example, a recent survey on the experiences of transgender students found that 54 percent had been verbally harassed, 24 percent had been physically attacked, and 13 percent had been sexually assaulted because they were transgender. Over 15 percent of respondents who experienced such severe mistreatment and victimization left school as a result.[22]

LGBTQQ Youth Lack Access to High-Quality Mentoring

LGBTQQ youth face significant risks and challenges that often require additional attention and support from caring adults and advocates. Unfortunately, only a limited number of steps have been taken by the youth mentoring field to extend the reach and benefits of mentoring to this population. As of 2013,

less than five mentoring programs out of nearly 5,000 provided intentional mentoring services to LGBTQQ youth.[23] More recently, MENTOR's 2016 survey of youth mentoring programs found that as few as 6 percent of the nation's mentees were estimated to be LGBTQQ, with the majority of programs indicating they did not possess knowledge of their mentee's sexual orientation or gender identity or did not track such information in their programs.[24]

In close association with these findings, a growing body of research has begun to identify potential barriers that prevent LGBTQQ youth from accessing services.[25] Notably, many agencies require LGBTQQ youth to "come out" and self-label, which could alienate questioning youth who are not ready to disclose such information. Such requirements may also leave young people vulnerable to family rejection—especially when parent/guardian consent is required for a child's participation in the program.

Another barrier is that many providers do not have adequate knowledge of LGBTQQ affirmative practices. For example, staff may not be familiar with appropriate resources to support LGBTQQ youth and may lack awareness of basic terminology and concepts. Lastly, many agencies may lack policies and clear guidance for how to protect youth confidentiality and to ensure their safety.

These barriers often keep LGBTQQ youth from receiving the guidance and support they need. One report estimated that 89 percent of at-risk LGBTQQ youth grow up without the benefit of a structured mentoring relationship, and that 37 percent of them grow up without a mentor of any kind.[26] Both of these percentages are higher than reported in other research about the prevalence of mentoring across all youth.[27]

A recent review of the research on mentoring LGBTQQ youth[28] noted, however, that there is emerging evidence of potential (but tenuous) shifts toward proactively seeking and engaging LGBTQQ youth in mentoring programs—a shift being driven in large part by funders. For example, in 2015 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) released a solicitation to fund mentoring programming for underserved populations of youth, explicitly including LGBTQQ youth. In both FY 2016 and FY 2017, OJJDP also identified LGBTQQ youth as a special target population for funding of their National Mentoring Program awards.

Corporations and foundations have also started playing a more significant and intentional role in meeting this challenge. In 2016, BBBSA received funding from The Altria Group to pilot inclusive practices and professional development opportunities to help its affiliates welcome and serve LGBTQQ youth more effectively. Through this pilot, BBBSA supports mentoring services which address research demonstrating that LGBTQQ youth engage in risky behaviors including tobacco use at higher rates than non-LGBTQQ youth. This initiative is described in more detail in the "About this Supplement" section back on page 2.

Research on Mentoring LGBTQQ Youth

As research on mentoring LGBTQQ youth is still in its infancy, few studies offer clarity on the unique benefits of mentoring for LGBTQQ youth or have quantified the impact of mentoring on the social, emotional, and physical well-being of LGBTQQ youth.

Although additional inquiry is needed, a recent population review from the National Mentoring Resource Center noted several barriers to conducting research in this space.[29] These barriers include: 1) difficulty securing large enough sample sizes of LGBTQQ youth within mentoring programs to conduct rigorous research; 2) requirements for youth to be out in order to participate in LGBTQQ-focused inquiry; and 3) ethical considerations when seeking parent/guardian consent.

Given these challenges and caveats, available literature offers some early insights into ways LGBTQQ youth are able to access and benefit from mentoring relationships. The most comprehensive review to date[30] concluded, in part, that:

• In-person mentoring relationships may serve an important protective role for LGBTQQ youth, helping them to confront challenges such as lack of acceptance from peers and parents; however, available research is too limited to offer more than tentative and very preliminary support for this possibility.

• Informal mentoring relationships with adults may promote positive educational outcomes among LGBTQQ youth.

• Some sub-populations of LGBTQQ youth—including youth of color, gender nonconforming youth, transgender youth, youth at earlier phases of identity development, and youth involved with the juvenile justice or foster care systems—may experience intersections of risks that hinder their development of trust, which is seen as the foundation of high-quality, effective mentoring relationships.

- Mentors who take youth-centered approaches (those that place the young person's needs and goals first) that are inclusive of the experiences and needs of LGBTQQ youth may foster greater benefits.

- Ensuring the quality of mentoring relationships for LGBTQQ youth may necessitate the use of mentor-youth matching criteria that are inclusive of—but not limited to—shared sexual orientation and gender identity/expression between youth and mentors.

- Mentors appear well-positioned to offer ongoing support that can attune to the needs of youth as they navigate through phases of exploring, accepting, and sharing their identity with others.

- Mentors who take advocacy roles may be able to offer emotional, informational, and interpersonal support for LGBTQQ youth in ways that provide protection from risks associated with stigma and victimization.

- Youth-serving agencies with inclusive programming and safe climates appear to offer additional levels of protection for LGBTQQ youth against risks, such as depression, that can lead to suicide.

Much of the advice and guidance offered to programs in this supplement draws on this research, as well as from a working group consisting of leaders in the field with experience providing mentoring services to LGBTQQ youth.

DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SUPPLEMENT

This supplement was supported by several key steps and activities:

• An extensive **literature search** that expanded on the one conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice's National Mentoring Resource Center as part of their evidence review, *Mentoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Gender Nonconforming Youth*. That review identified four journal articles and reports that examined mentoring for LGBTQQ youth. For this supplement, we reviewed additional scholarly articles and research reports released since 2017. The findings of this research informed many of the recommended practices contained here.

• Assessing the **alignment of the current *Elements*** with the practices developed in the BBBSA initiative. Many of the best practices for serving LGBTQQ youth or creating inclusive youth service environments and positive volunteer experiences are covered in the basic Benchmarks and Enhancements of the *Elements* as simply being cornerstone youth development practices that benefit all young people and their mentors. However, in creating this supplement, the BBBSA-developed agency readiness assessment tool was used to compare practices to the baseline practices suggested in the *Elements*, noting where more clarity or nuance was needed to better serve LGBTQQ youth or where there was a gap in practice recommendations that needed to be filled via this supplement.

• Soliciting recommendations and refinements from a **working group** of practitioners, researchers, and advocates in the LGBTQQ youth services space. This group was invaluable to getting the recommendations in this supplement right in terms of nuance and usefulness to the field. Each member of the group brought their unique perspective and professional experience to bear on the question of what really matters when providing mentors to LGBTQQ youth. The group met four times to generate ideas and respond to drafts of the recommendations, with final approval of the recommendations completing the process in the final meeting. BBBSA and MENTOR thank the working group for their contributions to this supplement. Case study profiles of many of their organizations are offered throughout this guide to illustrate what the recommended practices of this resource look like in real program settings. BBBSA and MENTOR hope that other mentoring organizations are inspired by the examples offered by these leaders in the field.

Craig Bowman

Common Ground Consulting

For more than 25 years, Craig Bowman and his firm, Common Ground Consulting, LLC™ have been providing strategic consulting services for community-based, national, and international social profit organizations. As a leading social sector futurist, Craig has spent his career developing a philosophy of leadership that harnesses passion and trust as a bridge between human potential and social responsibility. His client portfolio includes more than 200 organizations, 25 foundations and consulting firms, 17 government departments and agencies, and students, faculty, and administrators from more than 225 colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. He has worked in 31 countries on five continents. As a results-focused professional, Craig has served as a trainer, advocate, activist, coach, and public policy strategist. From 1994-2007, he served first as the Executive Director of SMYAL, which was DC's only LGBTQ-serving youth organization at that time, and then as the Executive Director of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC), the nation's only LGBTQ youth social justice organization.

Nia Clark

Independent Consultant/Trainer

As a transgender youth of color who spent most of her childhood in foster care, Nia Clark consistently struggled to find acceptance and support from the adults around her. While most would understandably distance themselves from such rejection and intolerance, Nia has spent more than a decade changing the system from within as a child welfare consultant, nonprofit trainer, and LGBTQ youth advocate. From 2015–2017, Nia was the Mentoring Coordinator at LifeWorks, the youth development and mentorship program at the Los Angeles LGBT Center. In her role, she matched more than 200 LGBTQ+ youth with adult mentors. Nia is currently a trainer for the Human Rights Campaign's All Children – All Families Project, an initiative that provides a framework for child welfare agencies to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for queer youth by improving their policies and practices. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) enlisted her help in launching a national pilot project to provide more inclusive mentoring services and resources to thousands of LGBTQ youth across America. She has trained staff at more than 20 BBBS sites, including Seattle, Denver, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Washington, DC. Nia is a social work major at California State University, Los Angeles. She plans to obtain her MSW and become a social work professor, so she can continue teaching adults to affirm and support LGBTQ youth in systems of care.

Alison Delpercio

Children, Youth and Families Program, Human Rights Campaign Foundation

Through innovative training and direct consultation with schools, child welfare agencies and other service providers, the Children, Youth and Families Program creates welcoming, affirming and supportive environments for LGBTQ prospective parents, LGBTQ-led families and LGBTQ youth. The HRC Foundation is working to open the hearts and minds of people on the front lines of family welfare—teachers, social workers, parent advocates, pediatricians, child welfare professionals and more—so that instead of being mistreated or merely tolerated, LGBTQ youth and families are truly welcomed and made to feel like they belong. Thanks to generous Foundation partners, the HRC Foundation's Children, Youth and Families Program provides comprehensive professional training, program consulting, technical assistance and ongoing support, through game-changing initiatives including All Children - All Families, Welcoming Schools, Time to THRIVE, and Youth and Campus Engagement.

Mary Fox

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware has been serving Delaware youth and families since 1964, with the firm belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed. The agency is committed to providing high-quality, safe, and effective mentoring services for all youth in Delaware facing adversity. In 2017, a CDC study on Youth Risk Behavior reported that 13 percent of Delaware high school students self-identified as LGBTQ and faced significant stressors that put them at greater risk for depression, high-risk behaviors, and suicide. These students were almost twice as likely as non-LGBTQ youth to report not having an adult to talk to about personal problems. The urgent need for a program specifically created for LGBTQ youth was clear and in 2012, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware set out on a one-year pilot project to develop a targeted mentoring program serving LGBTQ youth. Since then, the program continues to evolve, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware proudly serves LGBTQ youth through both one-on-one and group mentoring. To learn more about their programs, including the LGBTQ Mentoring Program, visit www.bbbsde.org.

Larry Holodak and Daniel Sprehe

The Fellowship Initiative, JPMorgan Chase

The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) provides intensive academic and leadership training to help young men of color from economically-distressed communities complete their high school educations and better prepare them to excel in colleges and universities. TFI is part of the firm's broader ongoing efforts to provide adults and young people with the education, skills and resources that contribute to greater economic mobility.

To date, more than 200 JPMorgan Chase employees have worked with TFI Fellows as Mentors, coaches, role models, speakers, or volunteers in various capacities. Since its launch in 2010, the program has been expanded and will recruit new classes of Fellows in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and New York.

Jolynn Kenney

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound (BBBSPS) believes all young people can achieve success in life, yet many face obstacles like poverty, discrimination, and family instability. Their goal is to help children develop the resilience and determination necessary to surmount barriers, and they do so by linking them with strong, supportive mentors in one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.

BBBSPS began embracing LGBTQ mentors in the 1990s, and in 2002, that acceptance was reflected nationally when Big Brothers Big Sisters of America banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 2016, with input from community stakeholders, BBBSPS and four sister agencies began revamping policies and procedures to prioritize inclusion. These changes will soon roll out nationwide.

Amid the systemic change, BBBSPS continues to prioritize one-to-one relationships that make life better for youth facing adversity in their community. More than 70 LGBTQ mentors, youth, and parents currently participate in their programs, and they hope to welcome more in the years to come.

Lisa Kenney

Gender Spectrum

Gender Spectrum is a leading national nonprofit focused on gender and youth and working to create gender-sensitive and inclusive environments, so all children and young people can develop their full, true selves. They provide education, training, resources, and support to parents and families, educators and other youth-serving professionals, young people, faith leaders, corporations and institutions, and others. Their online groups and programs are accessible sources of accurate, up-to-date information on gender, youth, parenting, and professional development. Their annual conference is the country's oldest and largest gathering exclusively for families with transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive children and teens. As a society, we cannot afford to lose the innovation, creativity, and authenticity of our youth that occurs when they are forced into rigid gender stereotypes. Gender Spectrum envisions a world in which all children feel loved and supported in their gender and are free to be who they are. Learn more at www.genderspectrum.org or contact them at info@genderspectrum.org.

Robin McHaelen

True Colors

In 2018, True Colors is celebrating its 25th anniversary in working to create a world in which youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities are valued and affirmed. Their programs include the production of the country's largest LGBTQ youth issues conference; a public/private partnership focused on policy and programming with Connecticut's Departments of Children and Families as well as the Court Support Services (which is responsible for juvenile justice in Connecticut); cultural competency training, with more than 5,000 youth-serving professionals annually; youth leadership programming in school-based settings; and Connecticut's only mentoring program for LGBTQ youth. True Colors is one of the only LGBTQ mentoring programs in the country to specialize in providing mentoring services for LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care including foster care, group homes, residential treatment facilities, and detention centers, and they have been doing so since 2005.

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES

Dr. Ryan Watson

University of Connecticut

Dr. Ryan J. Watson is an Assistant Professor in the department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Connecticut. He explores risk and protective factors for vulnerable adolescents pertaining to health (e.g., substance use experiences, HIV, and mental health) with a focus on interpersonal relationships. Dr. Watson situates himself as a mixed-methods interdisciplinary family scientist and draws from life course and developmental frameworks. To further advance the scholarship of interpersonal relationships and sexual minority youth, Dr. Watson has used both population-based and nonprobability data sets from the United States, Norway, and Canada to examine how social support (friends, teachers, and parents) may attenuate the impact of risk factors such as victimization, homophobia, and stigma on well-being. He continues to research how social support provides a foundation for achievement and healthy outcomes for vulnerable youth. In addition, Dr. Watson has led a qualitative study that explores the motivations and outcomes for "hooking up" among sexual and gender minority populations. His work explores the ways in which the use of different platforms to initiate and engage in hookups differs by sexual orientation subgroups.

Dr. Torie Weiston-Serdan

Youth Mentoring Action Network

The Youth Mentoring Action Network (YMAN) was founded in 2007 with the mission of leveraging the power of mentoring to create a more equitable and just society for young people. Founded by two veteran educators who understand the importance of making solid connections with young people, YMAN recognizes that young people are at their best when their voices are heard, and they feel fully supported. YMAN helps mentoring and youth development organizations be more effective in working with marginalized youth populations, such as LGBTQ youth, Black youth, Latinx youth, immigrant youth, and low-income youth. To learn more, please visit www.yman.org.

Dr. Chris White

(formerly of) Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (GSA Network)

Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a next-generation LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains queer, transgender, and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities. GSA is an intergenerational, multiracial organization that utilizes a youth-focused model to empower youth, encourage youth voices to be an integral part of the decision-making process in schools and communities, affirm the importance of youth/adult partnerships, and specifically focus on racial and gender justice. They utilize this model to encourage schools to protect and expand access to GSA clubs, create LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, provide training on parental and family acceptance, and create supportive school and community environments. When schools implement these practices, all students report feeling safer and more supported, less name-calling and discrimination, and greater school connectedness.

REFLECTIONS AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

There are a few key ideas for mentoring programs to consider while reading through the rest of this guide and embarking on a journey that ensures more LGBTQQ youth receive mentoring services.

• The work of making key changes in order to provide affirmative, inclusive, safe mentoring services to LGBTQQ youth facing adversity requires a deep commitment to improvement. Program improvement can only occur when the program possesses the humility to admit that services can be improved and when the program leadership makes a purposeful effort to change.

• Many of the BBBSA Affiliates participating in the LGBTQ Mentoring Initiative faced challenges in implementing changes in practice, or even with staff engagement, that resulted in tough conversations within the agency. We encourage all programs to consider how improved services for LGBTQQ youth fits into the mission and vision of the mentoring program more broadly.

• Mentoring programs are not in this alone—there are organizations in almost every community that can help mentoring programs get professional development for staff or volunteers, assess current efforts, or offer LGBTQ mentors and mentees opportunities to get involved in other activities that enrich the mentoring experience. In fact, one of the sets of recommendations in the next section focuses on partnerships and engagements with LGBTQ organizations, which may be essential to serving these youth well.

• Serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively will likely translate into serving all mentees better. One of the major themes of this supplement is that of intersectionality, the notion that no individual is solely defined by just one trait and that the combination of traits we each possess work together to make us stronger. Readers will likely note that many of the practices recommended here—gathering better information at intake, respecting the confidentiality and identity of youth, considering policy changes that can allow for better matching, improving outreach and partnerships—could easily be applied to other marginalized groups of youth and to segments of the adult community that are underutilized as mentors. We encourage programs to think about how they can apply these recommendations to more groups, if not all the youth they serve.

Using this guide

Readers should note that this guide serves as only a supplement to the full *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™.* It is intended to provide additional guidance and nuance to the items found in the full *Elements,* and references Benchmarks and Enhancements described more fully in that document. Here we mostly cover the Benchmarks and Enhancements that we felt needed additional recommendations for serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively. However, mentoring programs are still encouraged to implement all of the Benchmarks (and as many Enhancements as possible, when appropriate) from the entire set of Standards in the *Elements.* Readers are encouraged to also have a copy of the full *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* on hand as they review this guide so that they can have access to the full complement of practices that MENTOR recommends they use to guide their work.

The guide is divided into three major sections:

1. Program Design and Management

   This section offers a starting point for mentoring programs that want to improve their inclusion of LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors and ensure that they are reducing the harm they may inadvertently do when engaging LGBTQ clients and stakeholders. This section emphasizes recommendations for the critical step of assessing a program's current work with LGBTQ populations and responding to gaps and weaknesses with policy and procedural changes that can have a lasting impact on quality improvement.

2. Standards of Practice for Serving LGBTQQ Youth and Their Mentors

   This section covers the six core Standards of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*™. Specific recommendations for better serving LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors (and allies) are offered around Benchmarks and Enhancements related to:
   • Recruiting
   • Screening
   • Training
   • Matching and Initiation
   • Monitoring and Support
   • Closure

3. Program Evaluation

   This section offers tips for mentoring practitioners on how they can strengthen their program evaluation strategies around the services they provide LGBTQQ youth and the outcomes these youth derive from the program.

Throughout each of these sections, readers will find case study examples of these practices in action from our working group members and the Affiliates that participated in BBBSA's national initiative. The authors of this guide hope these real-life examples help other practitioners better understand and implement innovations in their programs.

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PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

The following recommendations offer suggested practices for mentoring organizations to ensure that their organizational climate, program services, and staff members are well positioned to effectively serve LGBTQQ youth and the broader LGBTQ community.

Program Values and Commitment

❏ Program commits to intentionally providing inclusive, affirming, and safe mentoring services to LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors.

❏ This commitment—often embedded in an agency's overall mission to provide services to all youth in its community—is tied to a formalized process of continually improving and ensuring that programming reflects the unique experiences of LGBTQQ youth, and their parents/guardians, as well as LGBTQ mentors, staff, allies, and others in the program and community. Such a process must include:

- Ongoing assessment of how the program can be more inclusive and welcoming and a recognition and mind-set that there are always areas for improvement. This assessment process should include:
    - An authentic and candid review of the program's historical interactions with and experiences serving members of the LGBTQ community.
    - A comprehensive assessment of the organizational readiness of the program to serve the LGBTQ community effectively, including examining program leadership (board members, executive team, etc.) and staff

members' ability to work effectively with LGBTQQ youth, LGBTQ mentors, and other stakeholders.

- A commitment to safely serving LGBTQQ youth and working effectively with LGBTQ participants, even if this requires ending relationships with staff members, prospective mentors, board members, donors, other stakeholders, and even youth participants whose views, behaviors, and attitudes are incompatible with this commitment.

- Honoring and taking seriously the voices and experiences of LGBTQQ youth, supportive parents/guardians of LGBTQQ youth, and mentors and other caring adult allies in their feedback about how the program is serving LGBTQQ youth.

- A willingness to maintain program principles of inclusiveness, even in the face of pressure from funders, policymakers, or community members to change their work with LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors in unproductive ways.

- A general adherence and commitment to the ethical principles detailed in the fourth edition of *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, which take on critical importance with respect to serving LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ adults:
    - Promote the welfare and safety of the young person.
    - Be trustworthy and responsible.
    - Act with integrity.
    - Promote justice for young people.
    - Respect the young person's rights and dignity.
    - Honor youth and family voice in designing and delivering services.
    - Strive for equity, cultural responsiveness, and positive social change.

Policies and Procedures

❏ Program nondiscrimination policies are explicitly inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression for all youth, parents/guardians, mentors, staff, and other stakeholders.

❏ Program policies—especially in site-based mentoring programs—include anti-bullying language that specifically mentions bullying related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and are applied to youth and adult participants and stakeholders. Such policies are prominently displayed or shared so that they are well known by all participants and staff.

❏ Program policies and procedures provide guidance on how program staff and mentors will talk with parents/guardians about a mentee's sexuality and how they will respond to youth who come out or transition during their time in the program.

❏ Program policies and procedures provide guidance on how program staff and mentors will talk with parents/guardians about a mentee's sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and how they will respond to youth who experience changes in their orientation, identity, and expression during their time in the program.

❏ Program develops and implements a confidentiality policy that protects information related to the LGBTQQ profile of youth during intake and throughout their time in the programs, especially guaranteeing the protection of information that can impact the safety and well-being of youth who are transitioning. This includes policies about what information regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is shared (or not) with parents/guardians and other key individuals in the young person's life.

❏ Program defines practices related to the potential fluidity of LGBTQQ youth, including how the program will update records over time given changes in sexual orientation, and/or gender identity and expression.

❏ Program records (e.g., intake forms or evaluation instruments) are inclusive of diverse LGBTQ populations (i.e., personal gender pronouns, preferred name, etc.).

❏ Program intake procedures allow for the program to gather information from mentors and mentees about their own sexual orientation and gender identity/expression to assist with making effective matches or supporting the young person during their time in the program.

Program Leadership

❏ Program seeks and retains board and staff members representative of diverse LGBTQ populations, as well as allies who can further support the program's work with LGBTQ individuals.

Staff Development and Training

❏ Program assesses current staff knowledge about and experience working with LGBTQQ youth and adults and may consider requesting the support of staff members who have extensive knowledge of, or experience with, LGBTQQ youth or the LGTBQ community in designing future training content.

❏ Program staff is trained on critical information related to LGBTQQ youth:

- Definitions related to sexual orientation (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.).

- Definitions related to gender identity/expression (e.g., transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, etc.).

- Demographics of LGBTQQ youth, including the estimated numbers of LGBTQQ youth at the national or state and local levels.

- Risk factors for LGBTQQ youth at home and at school/in the community, including research that documents heightened experiences with homelessness, juvenile justice involvement, victimization, and bullying, as well as deficits in accessing developmental assets often associated with growing into a healthy adulthood.

- The intersectionality of LGBTQQ youth with race, ethnicity, poverty, geography, and other demographic characteristics, as well as how intersectionality can magnify youth risk factors.

- Common sexual behaviors among youth and youth attitudes about sex and identity (including LGBTQQ youth) and how these behaviors and attitudes may differ based on generation.

- Resiliency and protective factors for LGBTQQ youth.

- Other relevant theories and research applicable to serving LGBTQQ youth, such as processes of healthy identity development, the importance of creating a safe and affirming program climate, and/or principles of trauma-informed care.

❏ **All staff are also trained on attitudes, skills, and procedural activities that will allow them to serve LGBTQQ youth and adults effectively, including:**

- The importance of getting to know each mentee and their unique strengths, challenges, and areas for potential growth and not assuming that being LGBTQQ is inherently determinative of any level of risk or specific negative behaviors or experiences.

- Barriers to trust that LGBTQQ youth may face when participating in mentoring relationships.

- Exploring their own biases (conscious or unconscious), attitudes, and levels of comfort regarding serving LGBTQ individuals and how to recognize when these factors can lead to negative interactions, even unintentionally.

- Understanding the coming out process for LGBTQQ youth, including uniquely experienced developmental milestones for understanding, accepting, and sharing an LGBTQ identity, handling disclosures, understanding youth choices and concerns related to being out, and how to provide support over time during critical moments and changes in identity and expression.

- Avoiding countertransference of one's own experiences as an LGBTQQ youth or young adult onto the mentee.

- Managing known information about out status of mentees, which should be articulated in the program's confidentiality policy. These policies should ideally respect mentees' desires around confidentiality and disclosure of information. This can be especially critical for youth whose parents or guardians might not be receptive to changes in their status and for youth who may not be out in all parts of their lives.

- Responding nonjudgmentally and with empathy to mentees' disclosures about risky or unhealthy behaviors (e.g., sex practices, substance abuse, skipping school, etc.) and engaging in meaningful discussions about such behaviors.

- Skills for working effectively day-to-day with LGBTQQ youth and adults, such as respectful use of personal pronouns and affirming language to use with parents/guardians of LGBTQQ youth.

- Awareness of how the intersecting identities of LGBTQQ youth (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) impact their individual experiences and the support they will, in turn, need from their mentors and the program as a whole.

- Boundary setting and other relationship skills that can prevent misunderstandings (e.g., not shaming a young person for having same-sex romantic feelings; helping to channel mentor/mentee boundary setting conversations into strategies to help the mentee identify traits and characteristics of healthy, age-appropriate, and respectful relationships).

- Handling circumstances where parents or guardians of LGBTQQ youth express negative reactions to their child's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (or changes or disclosures that happen during their time in the program).

- Local referral resources for the health, safety, and well-being of diverse groups of LGBTQQ youth.

❏ **Staff are trained on how to communicate effectively with LGBTQQ youth, volunteers, parents/guardians, and community members during recruitment, enrollment/intake, and match support.**

❏ **Staff training involves role-plays, scenario-based discussions, and other opportunities to practice reactions to situations and learn effective ways of responding and ensuring youth safety and confidentiality is prioritized.**

Community Partnerships and Advocacy

❏ **Program establishes partnerships with local, regional, and, when appropriate, national organizations serving the LGBTQ community. These partnerships can be beneficial in a number of ways, such as recruiting mentors and mentees, providing supplemental program activities and learning opportunities, and facilitating referrals to other services to help support mentors, mentees, and families.**

❏ **Program participates in national and local LGBTQ awareness campaigns and events, such as Pride, No Name-Calling Week, Transgender Awareness Week, National Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and others.**

❏ **Program encourages staff participation in local and/or national professional development opportunities to raise awareness of strategies for supporting LGBTQQ youth.**

Program Improvement Processes

❏ **Program intentionally provides LGBTQQ youth (and, if appropriate, LGBTQ mentors) with an opportunity to have a voice in programming and provide feedback on feelings of safety and inclusion in the program.**

❑ **Program provides LGBTQQ youth (and, if appropriate, LGBTQ mentors) with an opportunity to, either annually or as part of a consistent cycle, review the program's:**

- Recruitment materials and the online presence of the program.

- Screening materials and processes.

- Training curricula and other teaching materials.

- Matching procedures and the criteria considered for LGBTQQ youth.

- Procedures for checking in with matches and offering ongoing support.

- Closure practices, including the connection to additional mentors outside of the program.

- Data collection and evaluation instruments and procedures.

Physical Space

The program's physical space provides access to safe facilities for transgender and gender expansive youth, volunteers, and families, such as gender-neutral bathrooms, changing areas, or other public accommodations.

Signals of Inclusivity

After addressing organizational considerations related to program values and commitment, program leadership, policies and procedures, staff development and training, community partnerships and advocacy, program improvement processes, and the program's physical space, the program displays the following signals of inclusivity:

❑ **Safe zone posters, brochures and handouts, poster boards for campaigns, and other visual cues affirming that the agency is a welcoming place for LGBTQQ youth and that youth and their families will receive appropriate services.**

❑ **Language or visuals on the organization's website affirming that the organization is a welcoming place for LGBTQQ youth (e.g., rainbow flag, transgender flag).**

SAFE
RESPECT dignity
IDENTITY
trust UNDERSTANDING
acceptance
love ORIENTATION
community
gender

DISCUSSION

Developing a program culture and set of mentoring policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of LGBTQQ youth requires considerable commitment and proactive planning, as well as meaningful engagement by program leadership, funders, staff members, and other stakeholders. Making sure that a mentoring program is not only welcoming and inclusive of the LGBTQ community but also able to respond effectively to the challenges LGBTQQ youth face can involve some difficult conversations and a need for authentic self-reflection. Thus, this section addresses key organizational values and how those values will be operationalized in both policy and in the day-to-day activities of the program.

Much of this work starts with an assessment of how the agency is currently doing in serving LGBTQQ youth and engaging members of the LGBTQ community as mentors, funders, and partners in the work. Based on this initial assessment programs can then move to making improvements to their day-to-day practices and communication based on their level of readiness for change in this area. The recommended practices in the remainder of this section can help a program's overarching philosophy, infrastructure, and personnel effectively serve LGBTQQ youth and the broader LGBTQ community.

Program Values and Philosophy

Most youth-serving organizations, including mentoring programs, have a mission or values statement that outlines in broad terms what they hope to achieve for young people and the positive environment they hope to create. Unfortunately, we know that in spite of these stated values, the experiences of LGBTQQ youth within these programs often fall far below the standard set on paper. Despite possessing inclusive mission and values statements, the majority of mentoring programs today are still not intentionally creating safe and affirming services for LGBTQQ youth in their care.

Thus, the first step in serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively is recognizing that all youth-serving organizations likely have opportunities for improvement in this area and that there needs to be a strong commitment to identifying and addressing service gaps or negative aspects of how LGBTQQ youth (and LGBTQ mentors) participate in and benefit from the program. A continuous improvement mind-set can help programs start making progress no matter where on the spectrum of inclusive services they currently fall. Some agencies may find they have a lot of work to do, while others will take some pride in finding they have already embraced many of the practices recommended in this guide. What matters most is that programs boldly make a commitment to intentionally providing safe, responsive, and affirming mentoring services for

LGBTQQ youth. That is a mind-set and a reflection of organizational values that are nonnegotiable in this work.

There are several steps that a program can take to operationalize its commitment to serving LGBTQQ youth better. Perhaps the most important ones suggested here have to do with assessing the current landscape of the program. This ideally begins by listening to the LGBTQQ youth already being served by the program and perhaps reaching out to alumni to hear their experiences of their time in the program. Gathering feedback from current mentors and the families of youth will also be valuable in letting program leadership know how their organization's services are perceived and areas where they can improve. Anonymous online surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with these participants can all yield actionable information.

It should be noted, however, that investigating the historical and current experiences of participants, as well as the perspectives of staff, funders, board members, and other stakeholders, may lead to some challenging conversations and circumstances. Many programs will feel uncomfortable discussing the more painful or problematic attitudes or actions that are revealed by an honest appraisal like this. It can be helpful if these assessments are led by a neutral third party that can gather information without judgment or bias and then lead a process by which the findings and needed changes are discussed without bringing their own agenda to the conversation. The evaluation process implemented by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America described in

the Introduction used external facilitators to gather information and lead discussions about how to approach improvements, something that helped each BBBS Affiliate honestly assess its efforts to date and think creatively about solutions without fear of judgment.*

Some programs may face difficult decisions after conducting an assessment of their work with the LGBTQ community. This process may bring to light differences between the organization's values and level of commitment in this area, and the opinions of funders, board members, or even staff members who feel differently about LGBTQQ youth or the LGBTQ community more generally.

We strongly encourage programs to make choices that support their commitment to serving the LGBTQ community, even if it means parting ways with longtime stakeholders, staff, or supporters.

The ethical principles included in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* are there to guide you through tough decisions where values seem to be in conflict. Programs are encouraged to avoid working with individuals or institutions who may create a less safe or even harmful environments and experiences for LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors. There is no place in this work for individuals who do not respect rights and dignity for all, and who, through their

beliefs, words, and actions, cannot promote the welfare of, or justice for, LGBTQQ youth.

Policies and Procedures

While the fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* offers several examples of the types of policies that mentoring programs should have in place and share with participants, there are a few additional recommendations that can help mentoring programs support LGBTQQ youth better and increase participants' safety.

Several of the recommendations in this section relate to the program's confidentiality policy and the way that programs gather, protect, and, when appropriate, share information about LGBTQQ disclosures of mentees. Programs will want to pay particular attention to:

- **The information collected at intake.** We recommend that programs collect information about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (commonly referred to by the acronym SOGIE) when prospective mentees enter the program. Programs may also want to consider collecting this information from prospective mentors as well. This information can be invaluable in making sure that program staff and mentors are aware of the unique preferences, circumstances, and needs of mentees, helping with everything from ensuring the use of personal pronouns when conversing with youth to knowing which community resources or supports might further enhance the mentoring experience. It can also provide critical information

*Contact the BBBSA national office to learn more about the assessment tool used in their LGBTQ initiative or inquire about access for your organization.

about mentors to youth they are matched with, and even support program evaluation by allowing the program to examine differential outcomes for youth based on their demographic profile. However, there is a lot to consider before an agency begins collecting SOGIE data. The Human Rights Campaign offers a comprehensive guide, _SOGIE Data Collection_,[1] which begins with a robust chapter on assessing readiness to collect this information, including some questions to ask staff about their readiness and capacity to gather and protect this information and their motivations for doing so.

- **How information will be updated and maintained.** Policies should also govern how changes will be made to program records if young people come out as a sexual minority or disclose additional information about their gender identity. It is highly likely that a program serving adolescents will need to update its records based on how youth want to be addressed. Having policies and processes in place for keeping this information up to date and known by key staff will help the program meet the needs and preferences of young people throughout their time in the program.

- **How information will be protected and who has access to it (and how).** Confidentiality policies often detail what information is protected by the program, who can access it, and when and how it is shared with others beyond critical staff. These policies are especially important in terms of honoring the wishes of LGBTQQ youth about who is aware of their sexual orientation or gender

identity, recognizing that they may be "out" to some individuals but not others, including their own parents/guardians or their mentor. Mentoring programs should have written policies that clearly describe the limited situations in which information regarding a child's disclosure is shared with a parent/guardian and others. Keep in mind that being LGBTQQ—in and of itself—is not a situation covered by statewide legal mandatory reporting requirements. However, sharing this information may actually place a child at risk and could potentially cause harm to the child. The organization Family Builders by Adoption offers an excellent resource for professionals on crafting guidelines and policies for the collection, use, and disclosure of SOGIE information in youth-serving organizations. In general, it recommends that programs consider disclosure of SOGIE information through this lens:

"Child welfare professionals should regard children as the principle owners of information related to their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and should actively involve them in decisions related to any disclosure of this information."[2]

The guide also recommends documenting the rationale for any disclosure and ensuring compliance with state and local laws and court orders.

In addition to policies and procedures around SOGIE data and confidentiality, programs might also want to examine their anti-bullying policies and make sure that they specifically mention bullying behaviors directed toward mentees who are LGBTQQ.

Programs often assume that a blanket anti-bullying policy inherently covers LGBTQQ youth adequately, but there is value in spelling out exactly which groups are protected so that everyone is clear on where behavioral lines are drawn.

Research in school contexts has found that schools with comprehensive anti-bullying policies (i.e., those that explicitly include LGBTQQ youth) are more likely to have lower rates of victimization for LGBTQQ students and higher levels of reporting homophobic harassment.[3] A strong and comprehensive anti-bullying policy can go a long way toward improving the day-to-day experiences of youth in an organizational context.

Lastly, we recommend that matching policies also clearly articulate the role that SOGIE data, both of youth and prospective mentors, will be used in the matching process. While this information is likely to be one of many factors considered when making a match, explicitly stating that this information has value to the organization in trying to find just the

right fit to meet a youth's needs may be a welcome signal to LGBTQQ youth and their parents/guardians and for LGBTQ volunteers.

For one example of how a local mentoring program manages the confidentiality of their SOGIE data while also using it to make stronger matches, see the case study on BBBS of Puget Sound in the sidebar.

Program Leadership

We encourage programs to make use of the LGBTQ voices on the staff and in leadership when making the types of changes recommended in this supplement, as well as to, on an ongoing basis, ensure that LGBTQ adults are actively recruited for and placed into a variety of roles in the organization. Programs should get a sense of the allies they already have in this work, and, if their representation is low, some active and targeted recruitment may be in order.

Organizations can expect, based on the experiences of the BBBSA pilot project, that change around issues of inclusiveness for LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors can often move slower than some staff or clients would like. But those staff members who are committed to making positive changes should continue to insist that program leadership proceed on a path toward inclusivity and that they take the experiences of these youth seriously when making program improvements.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound updated its policies and procedures in 2016 to ensure that all program materials are reflective of the agency's commitment to serving LGBTQQ youth and fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all. In an effort to best meet the needs of Littles and their families, BBBS of Puget Sound asks parents/caregivers for their preferences regarding a potential mentor's background, including the mentor's race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Some caregivers enroll their LGBTQ-identified child into the program because they have particular goals—whether they want the young person to feel more comfortable in their identity, have positive role models that reflect the young person's SOGIE, or just connect with a supportive adult who can relate to their experiences—and our recently refreshed intake form encourages those preferences to be shared and prioritized. The parent/caregiver application also includes a checkbox indicating whether the family would like to learn more about BBBS of Puget Sound's LGBTQQ programming.

Littles are also given the opportunity to share information about their identity and about their preferences for their potential Big's identity. The updated intake form includes a fill-in-the-blank field for "gender" rather than the previous drop-down menu of prescribed options. During the intake process, Littles are asked about their romantic relationship (if they have one) and what they would like their Bigs to be like. These open-ended questions allow space for Littles to discuss their sexual orientation and gender identity if they wish, without being asked directly about a topic they may not be ready to address.

BBBS of Puget Sound also asks mentors to sign a confidentiality agreement that contains policies and procedural guidance around sharing information about the match. The agreement states:

"As a volunteer Big Brother or Big Sister, I understand that personal information about the Little I am matched with, and/or his/her family, should be held in confidence. I understand that this confidentiality policy does not include my case manager or others on the Big Brothers Big Sisters agency staff who I might speak with regarding any circumstances of my match. Information that I share with people I know will be limited to information about the types of activities that my Little and I do together and will not reveal personal information that my Little shares with me. When speaking to people I know about my Little, I will only use his/her first name and will not identify where my Little lives."

The confidentiality agreement goes on to discuss policies and procedures around reporting abuse and neglect. BBBS of Puget Sound has found that confidentiality is a critical component to building positive relationships. If a Big discloses private information about a Little, the Little may become hesitant to share further personal information and may pull away from the relationship. Furthermore, disclosing information about a young person's identity may leave him or her vulnerable to harassment or abuse at school and at home. The confidentiality agreement is meant to prevent mentors from doing harm by disclosing personal information.

BBBS of Puget Sound is getting ready to undergo another revision of these policies and procedures to ensure they are as inclusive as possible. The revised material will include anti-bullying policies and specify that program participants should maintain confidentiality in the event that a young person comes out. These updates will be made in collaboration with LGBTQQ youth and mentors who participate in the program.

Staff Development and Training

Once a program has assessed its existing level of knowledge and expertise related to serving LGBTQQ youth, they should develop a plan for further stakeholder training (staff, board, etc.) and ongoing professional development. An organization may discover that some of its staff members are already quite knowledgeable on ways to help LGBTQQ youth and are willing to help train others. It may also find a lack of internal knowledge and decide to partner with a local organization to facilitate initial and ongoing training. Regardless of where a program starts, ongoing professional development will be needed to ensure that the program reflects current thinking and practices in a cultural landscape that is changing constantly.

Each program will have specific needs based on its goals, but all programs should address two key topics, both of which are explained in much more detail in the "Training" section on page 51:

- **Information about LGBTQQ youth and their experiences.** A solid understanding of the demographics, definitions, intersectionality, and risk and protective factors of LGBTQQ youth will go a long way toward supporting inclusivity in day-to-day services. This training should cover the types of challenges LGBTQQ youth face in their everyday environments, including school and home, as well as theoretical frameworks that can help clarify what types of support are needed (e.g., trauma-informed care). This training, however, should also make it clear that each LGBTQQ young person

will likely present a unique blend of strengths, challenges, and life experiences and that staff and mentors must not view all LGBTQQ youth through the same "higher risk" lens. Some LGBTQQ youth may be navigating the choppy waters of adolescence quite well, while others may be facing myriad challenges. Some research[4] suggests that when adults place an overemphasis on risk, they may inadvertently increase feelings of stigma for LGBTQQ youth by labeling them as inherently risky or as victims.

- **Strategies and skills for working effectively with LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors and other adults.** There are some general skills, actions, and understandings that can help all program staff better support LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors and parents/guardians. A good starting point in this training is an exploration of staff members' individual biases and comfort in working with LGBTQ individuals and how those biases might lead to challenges in their work or misunderstandings that could be harmful to participants or the program.

Another key training topic, for both mentors and staff, is the barriers that LGBTQQ youth can face in forming close bonds with their mentors or other caring adults in the program. There is a strong thread in the literature on mentoring higher risk youth that details the challenges that youth who have experienced trauma or unhealthy relationships can have in building trust and opening up to new adults placed in a helping role. This is often perceived by mentors and staff as disinterest in

the relationship, or perhaps the youth not really needing a mentor (e.g., see the seminal *Role of Risk* study[5]). Research on the mentoring relationships of LGBTQQ youth specifically has also emphasized that the initial trust-building process may be slow and that youth may frequently test their mentors to see how they react to certain conversations or scenarios, which may lead to misunderstandings or even a rejection of the potential mentor.[6] When staff and mentors are aware that the relationship-building process may take some time and have some ups and downs, the opportunities for misunderstandings and mentor withdrawal may be reduced.

Staff and mentors will benefit from training that helps them better understand the coming out process and the role that outness plays in different settings of a youth's life.

Many LGBTQQ youth in earlier phases of identity development may feel different and "other" but do not self-identify as part of the LGBTQ community. Other young people, especially those further along in their identity development, may start to disclose more about their sexual orientation or gender identity with people in their lives—often starting with close friends that they trust. Coming out is not a one-time event. It occurs again and again throughout the course of one's lifetime. Each indi-

vidual makes very personal choices about whether they can or want to be out and many times this will be situational—being out in some settings but not others due to concerns about safety, well-being, and rejection.

Whether or not a child labels themselves as LGBTQQ affects many interactions with program staff, including how information is gathered during the intake process and which external supports the youth is referred to based on how their identity is impacting their life and relationships with others. It is important to remember that a youth may not label themselves as LGBTQQ until later in their identity development.

It is also important to note that the risks and opportunities related to being out—a youth's level of "outness"—are unique to each LGBTQQ youth. Research has shown that a youth being out in all areas of their life may experience increased incidents of harassment and victimization (particularly in schools and for youth in rural areas), but they may also gain resiliency and strength, leading to higher self-esteem and lowered depression. Youth who choose to be out in only certain parts of their lives—e.g., sharing their identity with friends but not parents/guardians—appear to face more tension and anxiety than their more open peers. The more staff can learn about outness and how to support youth no matter where they are in their identity development, the better positioned they will be to meet the needs of the young person and to work with the mentor to offer meaningful support.

One final training topic to note is the concept of countertransference, which describes the process of, in this instance, an LGBTQ adult "projecting" their own experience of growing up LGBTQQ or their journey of coming out onto a younger person who is just now going through these experiences themselves. While this form of lived experience can be invaluable in giving youth credible advice and deeper insights into their experiences and paths forward, there is also a risk that the adult will have their view of the young person clouded by the lens of their own experiences or push the mentee to respond to the challenges the way they might have, whether that is in the best interest of the youth or not. Training that touches on counter-transference will help both staff and mentors set and respect some boundaries and take a self-determination mindset into their work with a young person.

These and other training topics are covered much more extensively in the "Training" section, where we address more complicated topics, as well as some training delivery concepts that can support this work (see page 51).

Community Partnerships and Advocacy

There are several compelling reasons to partner with local, regional, and national LGBTQ organizations—advocacy groups, Genders and Sexualities Alliances (GSAs), youth outreach centers, etc.—that can enhance what a youth mentoring program is able to offer young people and their mentors.

- Recruitment of LGBTQ mentors and LGBTQQ mentees.

- Opportunities for matches to participate in LGBTQ community events and national campaigns.

- Content expertise to support staff development and mentor training and provide additional information and learning opportunities to mentees.

- Creation or expansion of cross-program youth groups, including the formation of GSAs in new spaces and contexts.

- A referral network of other service providers and groups for when youth and their families have needs beyond what the mentoring program can provide.

Mentoring programs can think about what they offer that complements the work of other service providers. Depending on a young person's needs, mentors may be uniquely positioned to serve as the "connective tissue" that helps keep them engaged in critical educational, clinical, or vocational supports and making sure they maximize and add to the "web of support" that keeps them on a path to long-term success. Building connections that lead to other caring peer and adult relationships is an action noted in the research literature as being particularly valuable to LGBTQQ youth.

Two examples of how local programs have partnered with local LGBTQ organizations to strengthen their capacity are presented in the profiles that follow on the work of BBBS Services, Inc. of Richmond and BBBS of Middle Tennessee.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc. (Richmond, VA), approaches their work mentoring LGBTQQ youth with a growth mind-set. The agency recognizes that mentoring LGBTQQ youth with intentionality requires subject matter expertise, so they have developed partnerships with local organizations that specialize in serving the LGBTQ community and can provide that support. One valuable partner is Side by Side, an organization dedicated to creating supportive communities for Virginia's LGBTQQ youth. Side by Side helps to ensure that BBBS Services, Inc.'s policies and procedures, trainings, recruitment strategies, and overall program practices foster an environment where all young people feel supported, safe, and affirmed in their identities.

BBBS Services, Inc., launched their partnership by inviting Side by Side to attend a staff meeting, where staff could be vulnerable and honest in discussing their current framework for mentoring LGBTQQ youth and how they hoped to improve their practices. After this session, Side by Side developed both staff trainings and mentor trainings that focused on how to create inclusive cultures. Trainings reviewed inclusivity language, confidentiality, additional services that exist in the community, and how to navigate a young person's coming out process. The trainings were important educational experiences for staff and mentors alike, some of whom were older community members who had not previously volunteered directly with youth and were not aware of today's SOGIE landscape. One Enrollment Specialist, who moved into the mentoring space as a second career after working in the tobacco industry, is now able to effectively communicate with parents/guardians about their child being transgender and the different local services that exist.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., has also benefitted from Side by Side's connections in the community. Over the years, Side by Side has curated a comprehensive list of local resources and services that support the LGBTQ community, which they have shared with Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc. Program staff and Bigs are now better equipped to provide Littles and their families with knowledgeable referrals to local professionals, including counselors who specialize in working with LGBTQQ youth, a local PFLAG chapter, and youth support groups. Side by Side hosts their own groups for LGBTQQ youth, which some Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., Littles attend.

Another emerging partnership opportunity for Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., and Side by Side is mentor recruitment. In the summer of 2018, the two organizations partnered with local companies to facilitate recruitment events together for the first time. Side by Side has built valuable relationships with local companies, many of which have employee resource groups for LGBTQ employees. Since Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., and Side by Side offer different types of volunteer engagements (Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., looks for long-term, consistent Bigs, while Side by Side recruits short-term volunteers), the two organizations will join the employee resource groups to describe their volunteer opportunities and recruit members from the LGBTQ community.

Effectively serving LGBTQQ youth requires intentional planning and thoughtful reflection, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee has found that engaging local experts can have a significant impact on how this work is conceptualized and implemented. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee is located in Nashville, Tennessee, near Vanderbilt University and the University's Office of LGBTQI Initiatives, which works with local organizations to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues and facilitates trainings on how to effectively serve the LGBTQ community. Recognizing that they were early in their development of intentionally serving LGBTQQ youth, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee reached out to the Office of LGBTQI Initiatives at Vanderbilt to explore partnership opportunities.

The Office of LGBTQI Initiatives has been a valuable thought partner in assessing how the agency is currently serving LGBTQQ youth and how it can be more effective in serving this population. The partnership has supported the "organizational coming out process," during which Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee has articulated and communicated its commitment to serving LGBTQQ youth with stakeholders and begun reflecting on how to build a more inclusive organizational culture. Though this honest reflection can be difficult, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee has approached the process with a mind-set of continual improvement, learning, and growth.

The Office of LGBTQI Initiatives has facilitated separate trainings for staff and mentors that focus on how adults can be effective allies and create a space where youth are empowered to be brave in their identities. The trainings review basic definitions, the bias and adversity that the LGBTQ community faces, and what it means to be a sexual minority. Participants explore how to use that knowledge to create an openness with young people and receive Littles in an affirming and supportive presence. The Office of LGBTQI Initiatives has also worked with staff on understanding their own privilege and implicit biases, and how those can influence their work with Bigs and Littles.

Program Improvement Processes

Soliciting and listening to the voices of LBGTQ participants is an important process that can highlight issues previously unseen to program staff, as well as provide valuable information that can lead to program improvements. But this need not be a one-time activity. Programs are encouraged to periodically reach out to LGBTQQ youth and their parents/guardians, as well as LGBTQ mentors and allies, to get feedback on an ongoing basis.

Specifically, these groups can be helpful in two areas for periodic review:

- **Gauging perceptions of safety and inclusion in the program.** LGBTQ participants may perceive the program, its staff, its events, and its communications differently than those staff or participants who do not identify as LGBTQ, and it is important to ensure they feel empowered to share these perceptions, which may help increase safety and inclusion.

- **Reviewing policies, procedures, and public-facing materials.** Many mentoring programs update or review their policies and other program documentation on an annual or other regular basis. This process should include a review by LGBTQ participants to solicit their suggestions for improvements, particularly on the messages that are conveyed to the broader world through the program's website, recruitment language, and print materials, such as application forms or FAQ handouts.

As with many of the recommendations in this section, the intentionality of making sure such reviews are done, and that these diverse perspectives are heard and acknowledged, is a matter of conscious effort more than anything. Programs are well served to formalize this review process and to actively court LGBTQ participants to serve in this role when the time comes. Organizations such as the Forum for Youth Investment offer a wealth of resources (such as their *Building Effective Youth Councils* guide[10]) that can help programs determine how and when to incorporate youth voices. Another good resource for mentoring programs is *Critical Mentoring: A Practical Guide*[11], which offers extensive advice about how to follow the lead of youth in designing services that are responsive to the needs of marginalized communities, including LGBTQQ youth.

Physical Space

Physical space not only concerns what is on walls, but also what happens behind them. For several years, some parts of the country have been engaged in a stigmatizing political debate about what constitutes ethical and appropriate access to bathrooms and other gender-specific public facilities. This is a debate that mentoring programs can easily avoid while making all feel welcome in their buildings. Mentoring programs should make sure that they have facilities that can be accessed by all participants regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Offering gender-neutral bathrooms and changing facilities is one of the simplest solutions to many of these concerns, but all aspects of facilities should be reviewed to see if they are welcoming or

offer any safety risks. Although originally written for public school settings, the *Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Policy Guidance* resource[12] by the District of Columbia school district offers some tips for ensuring that facilities and other program infrastructure are supportive of LGBTQQ youth.

Signals of Inclusivity and Online Presence

This set of recommendations is placed last in this section to connote that programs cannot effectively embrace and serve LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors in their work by simply putting up some visual cues. Inclusive and responsive services are felt deeply by participants, and cosmetic changes to a program's website, talking points, or office walls is unlikely to convey that sense of belonging if that is the extent of the change. Programs should view improvements to their office environment and online presence as somewhat of an advanced step in this process, not an end unto itself.

That being said, visually signaling that the program is a welcoming and safe one is extremely important. Research suggests that even small gestures like "Safe Zone" posters can have a huge impact on how LGBTQQ youth view adults around them and who they identify as potential mentors or supports.[13] Studies of school climate[14] have found many positive benefits (e.g., greater sense of belonging, feeling safer) to youth from visual and other nonverbal signals that the environment they are in is safe and respectful and that any negative experiences will be addressed. These benefits certainly extend to other spaces where adult-youth and youth-youth interactions take place, such as mentoring programs.

As noted previously, asking LGBTQ participants for their perspectives on how elements like website language can be improved is an excellent starting point.

A good example of how to offer some visual representations of program inclusiveness can be found in the side bar about BBBS of Santa Cruz County.

EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION:
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County

Websites often provide volunteers, young people, and parents/guardians/families with their first impression of an organization, so Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County believes it is important that its website reflects the organization's and community's values, goals, and priorities. One of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County's priorities is creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all Bigs, Littles, and their families, which is demonstrated through their TransMentoring Program. The TransMentoring program matches young transgender people with transgender mentors who can foster a sense of belonging in general, as well as within the trans community; relate to Littles' experiences; and help navigate difficult situations and questions.

The agency updated its website in 2016 to recruit Littles and Bigs for the TransMentoring program and to signify that its program is welcoming to everyone. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County invited stakeholders, including a representative from the Queer Youth Task Force of Santa Cruz County and members of the trans community, to review the website and make recommendations for how the agency could signify its commitment to fostering an inclusive culture.

The website's homepage was updated to showcase the rainbow flag (symbolic of the LGBTQ community) and the Transgender Pride Flag. The website also contains a link to the TransMentoring program page, where individuals can learn about the program model and how to get involved. Finally, both the Big and Little applications were updated to include fields for the applicant's personal pronoun.

Since its inception, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County has had a nondiscrimination policy and has served the LGBTQ community, but intentionally updating the program material with these symbols emphasized its commitment to inclusion. The flags encouraged families, volunteers, donors, and young people to participate in the program when they may have previously questioned whether they would be welcomed. These changes were free of cost and took little time, yet they made a powerful statement that all young people and adults belong in the program. To learn more and view the program's website, visit www.santacruzmentor.org.

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[13] Mulcahy et al., 2016.

[14] Kosciw et al., 2012.

RECRUITMENT

B.1.3 Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program offers a written mentor volunteer "job" description that is inclusive of knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with being an ally/advocate to diverse populations of youth, including LGBTQQ youth, as well as noting that the program is committed to serving these youth and enforcing nondiscrimination laws or policies.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program engages in volunteer outreach to LGBTQ community groups, including corporate affinity groups, community centers, and places of faith.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program engages in targeted outreach to LGBTQ adults who may bring valuable lived experience to the mentoring role when matched with LGBTQQ youth.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program uses inclusive and welcoming language for mentors on their website, in recruitment brochures, and in other marketing materials.

Mentee Recruitment

B.1.6 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Written mentee roles and responsibilities are inclusive of participation in a program that values young people from all backgrounds, including LGBTQQ youth.

B.1.7 Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program uses inclusive and welcoming language for mentees on their website, in recruitment brochures, and in other marketing materials.

LGBTQ Enhancement: Program uses defined outreach strategies to LGBTQQ youth-serving organizations to recruit mentees.

Justification

The fourth edition of *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*™ offers general guidance for recruitment actions that mentoring programs should take to locate and secure mentors and mentees that most closely align with stated program values and services. Guidance presented in this chapter offers justification for additional outreach activities that can be used to affirm and welcome the participation of LGBTQQ youth, LGBTQ adults, and allies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE, AFFIRMING, AND WELCOMING MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

Given the risks and struggles experienced by many LGBTQQ youth, agencies hold an ethical and professional responsibility to ensure the safety of their services before conducting outreach to the LGBTQ community. Making sure all staff have been trained and are culturally competent, reviewing and updating policies, and understanding referrals and resources of importance to the LGBTQ community are just some of the steps needed to make sure that no additional harm comes to young people in a mentoring agency's

care. Once mentoring programs have done the necessary internal work, they can then begin to communicate more broadly that they are welcoming, safe, inclusive, and prepared to offer services to the LGBTQ community.

FOR MENTORS

Inclusive messaging helps to dispel concerns that potential LGBTQ mentors might have about volunteering with a mentoring program. Historical discrimination of the LGBTQ community and the lack of national workplace protections for LGBTQ people leave many to question whether they are truly welcome as mentors. Importantly, many mentoring and youth serving programs recently possessed policies which explicitly excluded LGBTQ adults from serving as mentors or otherwise participating in the program.

In addition, with a few exceptions for state workers and those living under protections from local ordinances, LGBTQ people can still be fired due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the majority of states (as of August 2018): Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.[1] In fact, 16 states recently petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to be able retain current laws that would allow discrimination of LGBT employees.[2] Given ongoing patterns of discrimination and fears of how personal information will be used, many LGBTQ individuals have valid concerns about whether or not they can

trust a mentoring program's request for volunteers. Unless otherwise specified, the default assumption held by many LGBTQ volunteers is that they are not welcome and will be rejected.

Because of these fears, mentoring programs must specifically signal to the LGBTQ community that they belong, are needed, and can play a valued role that makes a difference in a child's life. Messaging—such as prominently displayed nondiscrimination policies, affirmation statements of inclusion of the LGBTQ community, and visual cues such as the rainbow flag and the trans pride flag (see case study example of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County, page 38)—helps dispel potential fears of rejection and gives LGBTQ volunteers clear signs that they, too, will be welcome and valued as mentors.

In addition, messaging that intentionally affirms LGBTQ participation in a mentoring program can also alert community members who are not supportive of LGBTQ youth that they should self-select not to apply as volunteers. Signaling to prospective volunteers that transphobic, biphobic, and homophobic beliefs are not shared by the organization offer additional levels of protection for LGBTQQ youth who could be harmed by their presence in the program.

FOR YOUTH

Inclusive and affirming messaging is also important for LGBTQQ youth looking to access support from mentoring relationships. For example, many LGBTQQ youth served by mentoring programs may still be in earlier phases of exploring their identity and may not have disclosed their sexual orientation and/or gender

identity to others, including their parents, before being matched. For these young people, such cues give them an important first sign that they will be in a safe place to be who they are at a time when they may feel most isolated and alone. Such messaging, along with carefully worded and inclusive intake questions, let LGBTQQ youth know that they are welcome to participate and will be matched with a caring mentor.

In addition, many LGBTQQ youth who are out will look for inclusive messaging before signing up as a participant in a program. Many of these young people may have already experienced victimization and bias in a number of other settings. For example, many LGBTQQ youth report hearing slurs from teachers and staff at schools,[3] and there is a growing body of research documenting extremely difficult situations in juvenile justice[4] and child welfare systems[5] for this population. Given that most LGBTQQ youth are likely to have had at least one previous negative experience with an adult who was supposed to offer support, symbols of inclusion can offer a powerful reminder that there are people and services they can still rely on.

Mentor Recruitment

In general, effective recruitment strategies are designed to attract and engage target audiences whose skills and motivations best match the goals and structure of the mentoring program (Benchmark 1.3). Typically, these efforts include messaging that conveys eligibility criteria, program expectations, and realistic depictions of mentoring relationships. Given the many risks that LGBTQQ youth face during adolescence, special consideration must be given—program-wide—

to which volunteers are recruited and matched with these young people.

A case example from True Colors offers a closer look at how one agency incorporated a written job description to help clearly articulate eligibility requirements and program expectations (see sidebar). Importantly, the job description at True Colors really helped to ensure that only the most committed volunteers moved forward in the process to be mentors. Such an approach limited LGBTQQ youth exposure to volunteers who were not able to meet advocacy and relationship expectations.

Mentoring programs should also update eligibility criteria to include the selection of volunteers who may be uniquely able to empathize, bond with, and offer responsive support to LGBTQQ youth. For example, programs may want to specifically target volunteers with lived experience as part of the LGBTQ community. Mentors who have navigated through the difficulty of understanding, sharing, and accepting their "otherness" may have a powerful part to play in the life of a young person who is also going through the same experience. Many LGBTQ mentors also want to give back to their community—especially feeling compelled to share their knowledge, insights, and resources with younger generations just beginning the lifelong process of coming out and learning more about their place in the world. Such individuals can be great role models for identity development, resilience, and strategies for overcoming stigma and bias. However, as discussed in in the "Matching" section of this supplement, this should not be the sole criteria used for matching LGBTQQ youth.

True Colors has found that setting accurate expectations for the program experience is a critical component to building thriving relationships. When True Colors' mentoring program first launched in 2005, they had a waiting list of mentees and were eager to recruit volunteers. Program staff would emphasize the positive aspects of mentoring and soften the challenges, so as not to deter much-needed mentors. Although this resulted in successful mentor recruitment, True Colors found that those early mentors and mentees were not adequately prepared for the mentoring experience, and the matches were often short.

True Colors developed written job descriptions for both mentors and mentees as a way to set accurate expectations for what the mentoring experience entails. The youth job description includes age requirements, consent to program policies, participation in the orientation session, and identification as LGBTQQ. The mentor job description has a list of nine requirements for volunteers, including age, completion of the application process, a signed confidentiality agreement, agreement to meet in-person with the mentee at least four times per month, agreement to adhere to program documentation protocols, participation in the Facebook group, attendance at group functions, agreement to serve as a mentor for at least one year, and possession of mentor traits such as a sense of humor, serving as a positive role model, and strong decision-making skills.

These job descriptions ensure that program participants understand what they are committing to and have accurate expectations for the match. Program staff also honestly describe the challenges that mentors frequently experience and the importance of consistency and unwavering support. Many LGBTQQ youth who are also systems-involved have faced abandonment because of their identity, and True Colors is diligent about preventing mentees from experiencing further rejection. These early, honest conversations and the position descriptions are designed to prevent mentees from being matched with volunteers who are not willing to overcome adversity in the mentoring relationship or cannot resolutely commit to the full program duration. Those who cannot adhere to the expectations listed in the position description cannot become mentors.

Although the position descriptions may reduce recruitment numbers, they help ensure that mentors who do sign up fully understand and agree to the program commitment. True Colors has seen a remarkable difference in the matches' longevity since the position descriptions were created. Mentors and youth are better informed about the commitment and prepared for the match, which has resulted in far fewer early match closures.

Allies—especially those allies who have LGBTQ family members and friends and/or a strong commitment to social justice for LGBTQ people—are also well positioned to serve as mentors to LGBTQQ youth.

Allies can potentially offer additional perspectives of belonging and compassion to young people. Allies may also be well suited to serve as a conduit of information to family members, helping to dispel myths about LGBTQ people while also offering additional resources and advocacy to the family as a whole.

Outreach to potential volunteers who possess these shared values, backgrounds, and motivations can take different forms. Many mentoring programs will want to establish partnerships with local LGBTQ community organizations, LGBTQ-friendly churches, and LGBTQ corporate employee resource groups, and to increase their visibility during community-wide events like Pride. For example, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound's approach to outreach is to build relationships within the LGBTQ community from a variety of these sources (see sidebar).

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound actively recruits mentors from LBGTQ affinity groups at large, local corporations as a targeted approach to recruiting mentors who reflect the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity represented in the agency's Little population. Connecting with affinity groups at large companies is a strong recruitment approach because affinity groups are often searching for opportunities to contribute to the community, both through funding or service opportunities. For organizations striving to recruit mentors with a specific interest or diversify their mentor pool to better reflect the population being served, affinity groups provide a promising opportunity to do so.

In 2017, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound facilitated two recruitment events with Microsoft's LGBTQ employee resource group, GLEAM (Gay and Lesbian Employees at Microsoft), including a Lunch and Learn and a national webinar. Making connections with large companies can be difficult, but several members of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound's Young Professional Council work at Microsoft and were able to make the introduction. During these events, program staff presented their usual volunteer pitch, then discussed how this was an opportunity for LGBTQ volunteers to give back to the community and support youth who are LGBTQQ. Of the 15 employees who joined the Lunch and Learn, 5 became mentors.

Recruiting through affinity groups is not Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound's only innovative approach to recruitment—the agency also rents a booth during Seattle's Pride events in June to recruit both LGBTQ Bigs and Littles. Staff describe the program to those who stop by and explicitly share that the agency is welcoming to the LGBTQ community. This emphasis on inclusion is necessary. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound has found that some LGBTQ adults believe that youth-serving organizations do not perceive them as positive role models for young people. Articulating that BBBS of Puget Sound is specifically recruiting members from the LGBTQ community and is a welcoming, inclusive environment for all can dispel those misconceptions and provide adults with the encouragement needed to sign up.

Mentee Recruitment

Intersectionality is a key concept that is central to effective LGBTQQ youth recruitment. Intersectionality, as a framework, notes that sexual orientation and gender identity are only two parts of a much larger self. Race, culture, and ethnicity, among many more features, are also defining ways in which a young LGBTQQ person experiences the world.

Importantly, the majority of LGBTQQ youth growing up today are non-White[6] and may be exposed to differing levels of stigma, bias, and struggle based on the intersection of their backgrounds. Youth who are experiencing homophobia, poverty, and racism, for example, appear to have increased levels of risk than their White and cisgender peers.[7] In addition, many LGBTQQ youth may also be exposed to real deficits caused by other factors in their lives, including experiences with homelessness, parent rejection, delinquency, and victimization in school. Given this diversity among LGBTQQ youth, recruitment efforts of LGBTQQ mentees must not only speak to sexual orientation and gender identity, but also to a young person's broader identity, background, and need for mentoring. The majority of mentoring programs are already well positioned to provide services to young people facing adversity and challenges. However, as detailed in this supplement, additional care and intention is also critically important when sponsoring relationships for LGBTQQ youth.

Building relationships with community organizations and partners is a cornerstone of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware's approach to mentee recruitment. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware stays actively involved in the local community, with program staff cultivating relationships with LGBTQQ youth-serving organizations and staying abreast of local issues affecting LGBTQ adults and youth. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware's intentional approach to community engagement has helped the agency build a reputation as a valuable resource for LGBTQQ youth and resulted in more mentee referrals.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware receives mentee referrals from a variety of community partners, including schools. The agency has a close partnership with the many school-based Genders & Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) in Delaware. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware recruits, screens, trains, and provides support to community volunteers who are placed at GSAs in middle and high schools across the state. Volunteers may choose to mentor in group settings during GSA sessions and/or through one-to-one matches. The agency also engages local community members by inviting guest speakers to attend GSA sessions and share their stories. Guest speakers have represented a diverse array of professions, ages, races, orientations, and identities. Some young people are inspired by this exposure to different stories and become Littles to further develop relationships with adults who can relate to their experiences.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware has developed relationships with school principals, teachers, and counselors who are aware of the program's services and can refer youth to become Littles. Program staff attend meetings for the School-Based Health Center Community Advisory Board, which is part of Christiana Care Health System's effort to offer wellness centers in schools. Program staff are able to connect with school-based social workers who work directly with youth and can recommend mentoring as a valuable form of support.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware also works with the local LGBTQ community outside of schools. Program staff connect with community organizations that focus on serving LGBTQQ youth and their parents, such as PFLAG, youth therapeutic groups, and Parents of Trans Kids Delaware. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware has found that recruiting youth from these groups can be even more fruitful than recruiting from schools, as individuals participating in these groups have an out child (or are out themselves) and are already accessing resources to support the young person. Program staff also participate in a Facebook group for Delaware's LGBTQ community that frequently discusses resources and services for LGBTQ adults and youth. The Facebook group has provided a platform for program staff to deepen their knowledge of external resources for Bigs and Littles, and it has enabled program staff to share information about how Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware provides youth with affirming and safe mentoring opportunities. These virtual and in-person relationships have raised the community's awareness of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware and built the Affiliate's reputation as a local expert in serving LGBTQQ youth.

Given the role of intersectionality in the lives of LGBTQQ youth, mentoring programs should explore a number of differing ways to conduct outreach and recruitment efforts.

Updates to general recruitment that use inclusive language and visible cues that welcome LGBTQ people can be important. In addition, programs may also want to form partnerships with organizations that specifically offer services to LGBTQQ youth. The example in the sidebar of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware highlights how a close partnership between a mentoring program and school Genders & Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) can yield new mentoring opportunities for youth who are LGBTQQ.

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SCREENING

B.2.1 Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program eligibility criteria ensure selected mentors do not exhibit homophobic/biphobic/transphobic behavior, especially given the potential to be matched with a youth who may not be out yet. Prospective mentors who display this behavior are screened out during the intake process or removed from the program if such behavior is discovered after the match has begun.

B.2.3 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program interview contains questions or scenario examples intended to assess compatibility in working with LGBTQQ youth or surface homophobic/biphobic/transphobic beliefs.

B.2.8 Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program eligibility criteria allow for the nonacceptance of youth who exhibit homophobic/biphobic/transphobic behavior, especially in programs where youth will be interacting with one another during their time in the program. Prospective mentees who display this behavior may be screened out during the intake process if the circumstances are severe enough to warrant it, or may be removed from the program later if such behavior is observed after the mentee has begun participating in the program.

Justification

While a program's targeted recruitment efforts can bring a good mix of potential mentors to their doors, it is really the screening process that ensures mentors are both safe and suitable for working with youth. The recommendations offered in this section can help ensure that all of the adults serving in the mentoring role, regardless of their mentee's identity, will bring healthy attitudes and beliefs about LGBTQQ youth and that they can be a positive influence for all young people in the program.

This starts with making sure that the program's nondiscrimination policies and inclusive mission are reflected in mentor eligibility criteria **(Benchmark 2.1).** Essentially, any prospective mentors who exhibit homophobia or similar bigotry must be screened out of the program. Regardless of the likelihood that they would be directly matched with an out young person, they still are exhibiting attitudes (and likely subsequent behaviors) that are incompatible with the program's inclusive vision for its services. Many youth who are not out would be harmed by working with a mentor who, openly or otherwise, was critical of LGBTQ populations. Similarly, it might be harmful for these mentors to interact with other matches at group events or program-wide celebrations. Screening adults with these beliefs out of the program is likely a safer option than hoping these attitudes and beliefs do not become "an issue." Research in related fields, such as education, have cited just how

prevalent negative views of LGBTQQ youth can be among adults—and the harm they can do in their institutions. One study found that 56 percent of students reported hearing *homophobic remarks from teachers and other school staff* in the last year.[1] This illustrates that even environments that are supposed to be supportive of young people can become incredibly harmful for some youth when homophobia is allowed to go unchecked. Mentoring programs are encouraged to prevent adults who might cause similar damage from progressing to the matching stage.

One way of discovering a prospective mentor's negative beliefs about LGBTQQ youth is to include questions and/or scenario-based examples in the mentor interview process **(Benchmark 2.3)**. Programs should ensure that the interview process incorporates questions that will reveal red flags about discriminatory views.

While individuals with negative personal views of LGBTQ people may be reluctant to admit that they hold those beliefs, they may struggle to respond positively when asked about scenarios in which they would be working with an LGBTQQ mentee such as:

- How would they feel about being matched with an LGBTQQ youth?
- How would they respond if their mentee came out to them?
- How might they react if their mentee was acting in a homophobic or bigoted manor toward other youth in a group activity?
- What would they say if their mentee used homophobic language during a conversation?
- What might they say to their mentee if they found out they were physically assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?
- How would they feel about working with same-sex parents or guardians of their mentee?

While many potential mentors might struggle to give a perfect, nuanced answer on the spot to these scenarios, those who hold truly negative views of LGBTQ people might have difficulty articulating reasonable, empathetic answers. Staff can then ask follow-up questions to discover if there are, in fact, deeply held attitudes that would disqualify that individual from the program.

A good example of an interview process that not only exposes negative biases but also supports efforts of inclusivity and being welcoming of the LGBTQ community is provided here from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound leverages the volunteer interview as an opportunity to assess whether a prospective mentor could foster a safe and affirming environment for youth of all identities. Staff begin the interview with all parties stating their pronouns and use inclusive language throughout ("Are you married or in a committed partnership?" rather than "Do you have a husband or wife?"). This allows space for prospective mentors to introduce their own identities and prevents staff from making assumptions that result in mentors feeling marginalized.

During the interview, a staff member asks the prospective volunteer a series of questions regarding identity and who the mentor would be comfortable working with. These questions are presented alongside other questions about identity, such as race and religion.

Questions include:

1) How do you identify in terms of sexual orientation?

2) Would you be comfortable working with a Little or family members who may have a sexual orientation different than your own? (Why or why not?)

3) Would you be comfortable working with a family or Little who identifies as a different gender/gender fluid?

The volunteer's responses help inform the matching process, but they are also used as a method of screening. Some prospective volunteers have responded to these questions with homophobic or transphobic comments that clearly demonstrated the volunteer would not support LGBTQQ youth ("I would tell a young person that if he were born a boy, he's a boy"). These mentors are screened out of the program. Many other responses are more nuanced ("I am uneducated about LGBTQQ identities and currently do not feel equipped to support an LGBTQQ youth"). If Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound staff note any potential red flags or are uncomfortable with certain responses, they meet with their colleagues to debrief and decide whether this person would be supportive to youth of all identities. If the team decides a prospective mentor could not support an LGBTQQ youth, that person does not move forward to the matching process.

While not listed as a formal recommendation here, the reference check process **(B.2.5)** is another opportunity to assess how mentors feel about LGBTQQ youth. Friends and family of the individual might be more willing, when asked, to indicate that a prospective mentor would struggle to work with an LGBTQQ youth or that they hold views that are incompatible with the program's commitment to inclusiveness.

It can be difficult for programs to reject prospective mentors. Certainly, many programs over the years have allowed mentors with bigoted views to serve youth, hoping that those views never come up or become a problem. But the potential for harm that results from that approach stands in contrast to the ethical principles argued for in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* noted earlier in this supplement. Mentoring a child is a privilege, not an inherent right. Mentoring programs must be safe for all youth. This means accepting only those adults who have the heart, the empathy, and the morality to work with the full spectrum of young people enrolled in the program.

Mentee Screening

Young people themselves may also exhibit homophobic/biphobic/transphobic behavior, and this situation can be just as challenging as when mentors or prospective mentors display that behavior. Research indicates that many young people express homophobic and similarly bigoted remarks to their peers on a regular basis.[2] The good news is that these types of remarks have been declining in school settings for over a decade (except for negative remarks about gender expression, which seem to be holding steady).[3] A mentoring program can expect that many of the youth who come through their door will at least make occasional remarks around their peers that qualify as homophobic/biphobic/transphobic. This may not mean that they harbor beliefs at a deep level about their LGBTQQ peers—some of this may be unfortunate youth slang—but some youth may embrace those negative beliefs.

Mentoring programs will need to think carefully about how to handle situations in which a mentee has expressed negative views or used offensive or noninclusive language during the intake process. While the program must prioritize safety and inclusiveness for all, the reality is that the mentoring program might be a great opportunity for the young person in question to be exposed to LGBTQQ peers and healthier group interactions that can improve their views and behaviors related to the LGBTQ community. A mentor might be a credible messenger who can redirect homophobic behaviors and enlighten youth as to the damaging effects their words can have.

On the other hand, and especially in group mentoring programs, allowing homophobic or similarly bigoted youth to harm others in the program may recreate the negative environment LGBTQQ youth commonly find elsewhere. Programs are encouraged to reach out to parents or others when they learn that youth are using language or expressing views that are not compatible with the values of the program. These youth may be screened out if it seems that the issues are beyond what the program might be able to positively address and that the safety and well-being of other participants would be compromised. But programs are also encouraged to be careful about rejecting otherwise eligible young people from the program as their services may be a critical opportunity to educate and reverse a developing mind away from hate and ignorance. As with mentors, it may be helpful to differentiate between those attitudes or behaviors that are automatic disqualifiers **(B.2.8)** and those that may simply warrant discussion and clarification of behavioral and language expectations in the program.

SCREENING REFERENCES

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[2]Kosciw et al., 2016.

[3]Kosciw et al., 2016.

TRAINING

Mentor Training

B.3.2 Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics (see *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*™ for full listing of training topics):

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** When applicable and appropriate, prospective mentors are trained, ideally pre-match but early in their experience at the very least, on key information related to LGBTQ experiences:

  - Definitions related to sexual orientation (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.).

  - Definitions related to gender identity/expression (e.g., transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, etc.).

  - Demographics of LGBTQQ youth, including the estimated numbers of LGBTQQ at the national or state and local levels.

  - Risk factors for LGBTQQ youth at home and at school/in the community, including research that documents heightened experiences with homelessness, juvenile justice involvement, victimization, and bullying, as well as deficits in accessing developmental assets often associated with growing into a healthy adulthood.

  - The intersectionality of LGBTQQ youth with race, ethnicity, poverty, geography, and other demographic characteristics, as well as how intersectionality can magnify youth risk factors.

  - Common sexual behaviors among youth and youth attitudes about sex and identity (including LGBTQQ youth) and how these behaviors and attitudes may differ based on generation.

  - Resiliency and protective factors for LGBTQQ youth.

  - Other relevant theories and research applicable to serving LGBTQQ youth, such as processes of healthy identity development, the importance of creating a safe and affirming program climate, and/or principles of trauma-informed care.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Prospective (and current, if needed) mentors of LGBTQQ youth are further trained, ideally pre-match, on key skills and perspectives that will allow them to effectively mentor LGBTQQ youth, including:

  - The importance of getting to know each mentee and their unique strengths, challenges, and areas for potential growth and not assuming that their LGBTQQ status is inherently determinative of any level of risk or specific negative behaviors or experiences.

  - Barriers to trust that LGBTQQ youth may face when participating in mentoring relationships.

  - Exploring their own biases (conscious or unconscious), their attitudes, and their levels of comfort regarding serving LGBTQ individuals and how to recognize when these factors can lead to negative interactions, even unintentionally.

  - Understanding the coming out process for LGBTQQ youth, including uniquely experienced developmental milestones for understanding, accepting, and sharing an LGBTQ identity, handling sudden disclosures, understanding youth choices and concerns related to being out and how to

provide support over time during critical moments and changes in identity and expression.

- Avoiding countertransference of one's own experiences as an LGBTQQ youth or young adult onto the mentee.

- Managing known information about out status of mentees, which should be articulated in the program's confidentiality policy. These policies should ideally respect mentees' desires around confidentiality and disclosure of information. This can be especially critical for youth whose parents or guardians might not be receptive to changes in their status and for youth who may not be out in all parts of their lives.

- Responding nonjudgmentally and with empathy to mentee disclosures about risky or unhealthy behaviors (e.g., sex practices, substance abuse, skipping school, etc.) and engaging in meaningful discussions about such behaviors.

- Skills for working effectively day-to-day with LGBTQQ youth and adults, such as respectful use of personal pronouns and affirming language to use with parents/guardians of LGBTQQ youth.

- Awareness of how the intersecting identities of LGBTQQ youth (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) impact their individual experiences and the support they will, in turn, need from their mentors and the program as a whole.

- Boundary setting and other relationship skills that can prevent misunderstandings (e.g., not shaming a young person for having same-sex romantic feelings; helping to channel mentor/mentee boundary setting conversations into strategies to help the mentee identify traits and characteristics of healthy, age-appropriate, and respectful relationships).

- Handling circumstances where parents or guardians of LGBTQQ youth express negative reactions to their child's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (or changes or disclosures that happen during their time in the program).

- Local referral resources for the health, safety, and well-being of diverse groups of LGBTQQ youth.

(new) LGBTQ Enhancement: Mentor training, ideally pre-match, utilizes role-playing exercises and other training techniques that allow mentors to practice positive, nonjudgmental responses to sudden disclosures about the youth's identity, behaviors, or challenges (e.g., coming out to the mentor, revealing drug use, reporting victimization, etc.). This training should also reinforce information learned about confidentiality policies and respecting youth preferences around disclosure of information.

Justification

In general, pre-match training should provide tools, resources, and guidance to build mentor confidence and self-efficacy. Pre-match training often clarifies program and relationship expectations, gives concrete "how to" examples, and provides useful resources for volunteers to build and sustain high-qual-

ity relationships with their mentees. Importantly, a central goal of such training is to familiarize mentors with the experiences, needs, and backgrounds of all young people served by the agency—which also includes youth who are LGBTQQ.

At a minimum, effective pre-match training activities must begin with adherence to all training benchmarks described in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, 4th edition. In this supplement, we recommend additional training content that can help bring empathy, advocacy, skill development, and resource awareness to volunteers who will be building relationships with LGBTQQ youth. This section parallels training guidance for staff described at the start of this supplemental resource (see page 22).

PROVIDE MENTORS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT LGBTQQ YOUTH

As a starting point, all volunteers should be trained to understand the extent and range of diversity within the LGBTQ community as well as key concepts, definitions, and terminology for sexual and gender minority youth. Knowledge of these fundamentals can later be used to bring individualized, responsive, and youth-centered approaches to mentoring relationships.

LGBTQ people are often grouped together due to shared experiences with marginalization, stigma, and societal bias. However, there are also critical differences within this community. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual youth, for example, have defining experiences uniquely rooted in attraction, sexual identity, and sexual orientation. Transgender

youth, in comparison, tend to have developmental experiences that speak more to the journey and milestones associated with gender identity. Mentors, program staff, and others working with this population must be able to recognize and respond to specific and unique differences among subgroups of LGBTQQ youth—especially given the required social, emotional, and informational support that may be needed by each individual young person.

Mentors matched with gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, for example, would likely benefit from learning more about the coming out process and phases of sexual minority identity development.

In these matches, the mentor could benefit from knowledge of milestones that are associated with coming out, including average ages for "feeling different," "self-labeling" as gay or lesbian, and disclosing for the first time—all of which are likely to occur during the time when most mentoring services are provided. Mentors should also be able to recognize that coming out is something that happens across a lifetime and that daily and situational decisions of outness will likely be made by their mentees—often as a result of safety concerns, feelings of vulnerability, and/or fears of being rejected. Understanding this unique developmental experience— and its implications and tensions— can help volunteers better understand motivations behind mentee actions and behaviors. In addition, such awareness can help volunteers recognize the importance of confidentiality

regarding disclosures and its role in establishing and maintaining trust in the relationship.

Mentors matched with transgender youth should receive information about experiences and milestones that often occur during gender identity formation and gender consolidation (the process of melding one's various identities and "selves" into a coherent, healthy view of self). Mentors should understand the difference between sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and gender perception. In addition, mentors may also have questions about social, emotional, legal, and medical transitions that may be of importance to youth in their care—even if such transitions may not occur during the relationship, or ever for the youth. Lastly, mentors should be given insight into the importance of honoring their mentees by using the mentee's personal pronoun and chosen name. Such information can help volunteers become familiar with key milestones, challenges, and experiences that could happen during the match.

Agencies looking for an easy-to-understand visual depiction of differences between sexual orientation and gender identity may want to consider using either the "Gender Unicorn" or the "Gender Bread Person" as a training resource for their mentors. Further, a growing body of online materials is available from the Human Rights Campaign, Gender Spectrum, GSA Network, and the other LGBTQ working group members that contributed to the development of this guide.

Research on the lived experiences of LGBTQQ youth is another critical component of pre-match training.

For example, previewing research on such things as school bullying,[1] homelessness,[2] parent and family rejection,[3] juvenile justice[4] and child welfare system involvement,[5] depression,[6] suicidal ideation,[7] and risk-taking behavior[8] can help mentors begin to identify potential areas in which their mentees may be struggling and to identify behaviors they can take to offer protection and support.

This intersectionality is another important area to cover during pre-match training. Every person holds intersecting lenses through which they view the world and are viewed by the world. LGBTQQ youth experience their adolescence, in part, based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

In addition, LGBTQQ youth also engage in their day-to-day through other, very personal touchpoints. These include experiences based on race, class, ethnicity, culture, family support, geographic location, and spirituality. Such intersections are seen to potentially magnify existing risks or offer pathways toward resilience.

The strongest mentoring relationships span across intersections of a child's background, giving mentors multiple entry points to connect.

In addition, mentors that are most aware of the risks and opportunities found in each part of a child's life appear best positioned to attune to these circumstances and offer personalized emotional, informational, and advocacy routes of support that the young person can take toward growing into a positive and healthy adult.

REVIEW STRATEGIES FOR VOLUNTEERS TO EFFECTIVELY BUILD AND SUSTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH LGBTQQ YOUTH

Given the importance of empathy in high-quality mentoring relationships, pre-match training should offer time for mentors working with LGBTQQ youth to reflect on their own experiences with bias, "otherness," and difference. Many mentors—like many LGBTQQ youth—have felt different or like an outsider at some point in their lives. They may have experienced rejection, loss, and trauma. Cultivating an awareness of such feelings—and helping volunteers recognize their importance in working with young people from different backgrounds—offers critical personal insights for volunteers matched with LGBTQQ youth (and those who have experienced marginalization based on difference). Visualization activities that help volunteers think through how they felt during a time when they did not fit in may be a helpful starting point. Such activities can help volunteers to become more aware of feelings, behaviors, and experiences that are often part of the landscape for many LGBTQQ youth.

Mentors can also benefit from activities that help them to personalize the coming out experience. For example, an activity called "Coming Out Stars" offers a simulated look at the impact of coming out and being rejected by close friends, family members, and the community due to being gay or lesbian. Such an activity can be especially powerful for allies that are matched with LGBTQQ youth.

In addition to empathy and awareness building activities, pre-match training should also include content that can help familiarize mentors with steps they can take to ensure the safety and well-being of LGBTQQ youth in their care. For example, mentors should be trained on the importance of taking a youth-centered approach in their relationship. This type of approach focuses on the developmental needs of the child, especially regarding identity. For example, a mentor who suspects that their mentee is LGBTQQ should never force their mentee to come out. When an individual is forced to disclose feelings they may not be ready to share, there is the potential for psychological distress and tension. Instead, mentors should be encouraged to establish an inclusive and safe space and tone within their relationship—letting LGBTQQ youth know that they will be respected and cared for, and that they will not face rejection when (or if) they choose to come out. A youth-centered approach also follows the young person through their coming out experience—helping to target resources, support, and advocacy that is responsive (and not presumptive) to the needs of their mentee.

Mentors should also receive clear guidance on working with parents/guardians—especially those who may not be supportive of their child's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The Family Acceptance Project has numerous resources that can help guide volunteers around language to use when talking to unsupportive parents/guardians. These tips include: meeting the family where they are, offering the family respectful language when talking about sexual orientation and gender identity, letting parents and caregivers share their story, and educating parents and caregivers on not just how rejecting behaviors affect their LGBTQQ child, but also on how supportive and accepting be-

haviors can affect their LGBTQQ child. Giving mentors resources and tools to have such conversations will help them respond to or prevent one of the most notable entry points into struggle for LGBTQQ youth—parent/guardian and family rejection.

Given the scale of stigma, victimization, and challenges that many LGBTQQ youth experience, mentors working with this population may find themselves struggling when they see their mentee engage in risky behaviors. The default response for most volunteers is to try to help their mentee understand where such behaviors are coming from and to identify other, more appropriate behaviors. Mentors who are prescriptive or judgmental may find that they lose their connection with their mentees. Therefore, they should receive more intensive support from the mentoring program to advise/guide them to respectfully advocate, model, and leverage trust formed in the relationship so that their mentee knows they are cared for and understand healthier options. Similarly, mentors should also participate in additional training on setting boundaries in their relationship to ensure they are able to offer support as a caring adult instead of as a counselor. Mandatory reporting requirements must also be highlighted for both the mentor and the mentee.

UTILIZE PRE-MATCH TRAINING TECHNIQUES TO HELP BUILD MENTOR CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY TO PRACTICE POSITIVE, NONJUDGMENTAL RESPONSES DURING CRITICAL MOMENTS

Mentors often worry about saying the "wrong" thing when they are working with LGBTQQ youth—especially in critical moments. Ideally, pre-match training should consist of opportunities for volunteers to

discuss and practice appropriate ways to respond to different scenarios involving their mentees (and how to make things right with mentees when a mentor uses wrong terminology).

Role-playing activities can be powerful tools during pre-match training—especially if they are coupled with program suggestions, how-to guides, and feedback. Such scenarios can range from helping the volunteer explore how to respond to their mentee coming out for the first time to handling more nuanced and difficult experiences such as bullying, risky behaviors, truancy, and homelessness. Each of these role-playing activities should also have staff discussions highlighting policies along with a preview of local resources that are available to help the mentor offer support.

In addition, reflection activities can be powerful ways to help mentors examine their own biases and to better understand how they can prevent transference of their own "coming out" experience onto their mentees. Giving opportunities for volunteers to talk through generational differences in coming out, as well as steps they can take to remain focused on their mentees' individual journey, can further help create a youth-centered approach to their relationship.

LifeWorks at the Los Angeles LGBT Center offers an important case example (see sidebar) of the structure and topics of pre-match training for mentors working with LGBTQQ youth. This example includes insights into the content and strategies used by staff to increase mentor confidence and prepare them for the match.

LifeWorks required prospective mentors to attend full-day trainings before they were matched with mentees. LifeWorks conducted these trainings on Saturdays or Sundays, giving potential mentors the opportunity to demonstrate that they could make room in their lives and prioritize a young person. Trainings also served as a last step in the application and screening process. Mentors had to demonstrate that they could fully commit to attending the training and engage in activities throughout.

The training was divided into three sections: 1) programming, 2) LGBTQQ youth 101, and 3) mentoring practices. The first prong of the training focused on the programming and services LifeWorks offered. The second section focused on ensuring that mentors, who were of varying ages, education levels, and professions, had a comprehensive understanding of how SOGIE looks today for youth. To make these sessions more engaging and authentic, LifeWorks incorporated videos of young people talking to adults about their sexuality and gender identity and expression. The videos served as conversation starters for how the SOGIE experience is different today and what that means for youth-adult partnerships. Program participants also discussed some of the challenges and trauma that youth are facing today by looking at statistics, including research from the Family Acceptance Project®.

The last portion of the day focused on mentoring and emphasized the importance of empathy. LifeWorks peppered several exercises that required mentors to demonstrate their level of empathy toward each other, including an exercise called "Life Maps." The Life Map exercise requires mentors to list and highlight the successes and challenges they have faced since infancy, with an emphasis on their coming out experience. Mentors use crayons, markers, pastels, stickers, and stamps to draw a "map" of their lives and present the finished product to the group. This activity provided LifeWorks with insight into potential mentors' ability to be vulnerable and communicate sensitive topics. If a mentor could not openly discuss their coming out process, it was an indicator that this person may not be comfortable or equipped to lead these types of conversations with a young person.

The training also included case studies and role-playing activities to prepare mentors to address challenging, real-life situations when they arose throughout the match. The capstone of the training was an activity adapted from Human Rights Campaign (HRC) called "Deer in the Headlights," a role-playing exercise in which participants have to listen, assess, and respond to real-life situations that involve LGBTQQ youth and/or the LGBTQ community. Participants assumed the actor roles of mentor and mentee. The "mentee" read a quote or situation, and the "mentor" had to apply learning concepts throughout the day and respond immediately. Topics included handling discussions related to coming out as transgender, disclosures of risky behaviors, such as drug use or unprotected sex, and suicidal thoughts, as well as responding to situations like mentees asking for money. The trainer paused the exercise as the mentor responded, so the full group could provide feedback on the mentor's reaction, body language, and wording. When these situations arise in real life, mentors may not have time to think through their responses, yet their reactions will leave a lasting imprint on the mentee. "Deer in the Headlights" enables mentors to practice and condition themselves to respond in an affirmative and supportive manner.

The training activities were informational yet also deeply personal. Mentors were asked to relive difficult experiences and act out delicate situations. Though it could be challenging, after the training, mentors were better prepared, more informed, better equipped to address issues that may arise, and connected with a group of staff and mentors who could be called upon for support.

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MATCHING AND INITIATION

B.4.1 Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** The matching criteria considered by the staff includes parent/guardian, youth, and mentor preferences related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Matching policies and procedures address the potential for matching mentors and youth based on similar shared orientation and/or gender identity/expression, among other criteria (e.g., mentor's ability to serve as an ally).

B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Because of the potentially elevated risk to LGBTQQ youth from a failed or quickly terminated match, programs provide ample time during an initial introductory meeting for the mentor, mentee, and the youth's parent or guardian to spend time together to assess the "fit" and comfort level of the potential match before formally committing to the relationship.

E.4.2 Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Given the potentially elevated risks for LGBTQQ youth if they are rejected by their mentor or otherwise have a short-term,

negative mentoring experience, program allows matches some time to get to know one another in a group format for a period of time before committing to a matched one-to-one relationship.

Justification

Making the right matches between mentors and youth is one of the most important aspects of managing a mentoring program, but also one that is fraught with potential complications and unforeseen challenges.

It can be challenging to find the right "fit" between a youth and adult on paper— let alone to get parental consent and buy-in for the match, followed by arranging an initial meeting that allows the relationship to get a positive start with all participants on the same page. Making these kinds of ideal matches is both art and science and requires a lot of nuance and hard-earned expertise. Issues related to the sexual orientation and gender identity of both mentors and youth participants can further complicate this process and, if not handled properly, can leave volunteers and young people feeling rejected, or worse. The recommendations in this section are intended to help programs incorporate youth and mentor sexual orientation and gender identity and expression when considering criteria and initiating matches, while also setting the stage for those matches to get started on a positive, conflict-free note.

Regardless of the specific strategies used to make matches, we encourage all programs to allow (in their policies and procedures) for the matching of adults and youth based on shared orientation and/or gender identity and gender expression **(Benchmark B.4.1)**. While shared orientation or gender identity may not always be the most important criteria in matching a particular youth with a particular mentor, for young people who are still navigating through their coming out process having an adult mentor who has had the same developmental experiences can be highly desired. Shared life events (or milestones) can offer a range of benefits that speak to unique identity development experiences often associated with being LGBTQQ.[1]

The lived experience of an LGBTQ mentor may be an invaluable asset to a young person who is in the midst of discovering who they are, especially for those youth who may be wrestling with feelings of disenfranchisement or feeling socially withdrawn, and are navigating ways to successfully integrate their identity into society (or out of social isolation). These mentors can share advice about their own coming out experiences and, through role modeling and advocacy, assist mentees to reframe negative self-talk (e.g., internalized homophobia) into language and beliefs that reflect new, and more positive ways of seeing their future.[2] In addition, these mentors can serve as advocates within mentees' families, helping parents/guardians and siblings visualize encouraging futures that are accessible to their mentees[3] and learn more positive ways of seeing themselves within the context of the LGBTQ

community.[4] Such mentors may also be able to attune to the changing needs of their mentees, helping, over time, to support mentees through various phases of identity development. Matching LGBTQQ youth with LGBTQ adults is especially important for adolescent mentees, who research indicates may gravitate more toward relationships with adults who they know have critical information that can help them with their specific needs. We encourage programs to allow these matches when relevant.

It is worth noting, however, that shared orientation or gender identity/expression is only one of the many criteria programs should consider when making matches. Ensuring a good fit in terms of interests and passions, compatible meeting times, mentor skills and youth areas of need, and personality traits (e.g., shared sense of humor) is similarly important. Adult allies—mentors with similar backgrounds, interests, and a commitment to the LGBTQ community—could be well-positioned to build a close relationship and serve in an advocacy role. In contrast, adults and youth who share a similar orientation, but little else, may not enjoy a successful match. We encourage programs to consider all relevant criteria when making match decisions.

Also worth noting is that some LGBTQ adults might not be a good fit to be matched with LGBTQQ youth if they are still navigating through their own coming out experiences. When working with LGBTQ mentors, program staff should ask questions related to the mentor's own journey to becoming an adult who is out and note when a mentor seems to still be wrestling with questions and the circumstances

of their own orientation and identity. Such mentors may not be in the best position to help a young person navigate these life stages (critical moments) themselves and may potentially struggle with projecting their own circumstances onto the young person, rather than honoring where the youth is in their own coming out experience.

Lastly, agencies should ensure that matching policies and criteria are based on gender identity and not on sex assigned at birth. Many programs unintentionally limit pools of volunteers available to meet the needs of transgender children based on fears and concerns regarding cross-gender matching. These historic policies—reflecting outdated assumptions about gender—may impede the ability of the agency to provide the best possible match for a transgender mentee. Given that the vast majority of volunteers and youth identify as cisgender, expanding match criteria to focus on gender identity will likely have a minimal impact on program services.

In summary, we strongly encourage programs to allow for same gender/orientation/identity matching of adults and youth but recognize that those shared traits are only one of many important factors when considering the criteria for successful matching.

Participant Preferences

Participants, particularly parents/guardians, often indicate specific mentor preferences (criteria) that can result in challenges for program staff. Some youth, or their parents or guardians, may express preferences not to be matched with an LGBTQ mentor. Mentors may, in turn, express disappointment

at not being matched with an out youth with whom they can share advice about LGBTQ issues. Even in situations where an out youth is recommended to be matched with an LGBTQ mentor, parents and guardians may still express a desire for a different mentor, hoping that a mentor might change their child's orientation or identification. These types of situations will require more thoughtful and individualized conversations that should highlight the agency's commitment to serving the LGBTQ community. These are opportunities for program staff to engage parents/guardians in dialogues to gain more clarity and meaning, to share information about safety, screening, and the LGBTQ community, and to share the agency's policy of inclusion—which is to serve all populations, including LGBTQQ youth.

Benchmark 4.2 encourages programs to arrange an initial meeting between the mentor, mentee, and the mentee's parent or guardian where they can get to know each other and express any concerns about the potential match. This is often where these types of orientation/identity/expression concerns can arise. One way of mitigating any surprises at that initial meeting is suggested in **Enhancement 4.3** of the *Elements*, which recommends sharing information about the potential match before the first meeting via phone or email so that participants are aware of and/or provided full background information about each other prior to the initial meeting.

We encourage programs to plan and schedule these initial meetings to have enough time—perhaps even a few hours in duration—to adequately frame the potential match and sort through any challenges

that arise, regardless of what information is shared prior to the session. In this way, program staff can share vital information about why they are suggesting this match. This will also allow the mentor and youth to spend time getting to know one another—as well as allowing the same for the mentor and the parent or guardian—so that everyone involved feels comfortable. The program may want to provide an activity, such as completing and discussing life maps (see later in this section for a case study example of life maps), personality questionnaires, and/or goal-setting worksheets, to give the participants a fun and interactive way to learn about one another.

When issues related to participant sexual orientation or gender identity/expression arise, we encourage programs to use these situations as teachable moments.

For parents or caregivers with concerns about matching their child with an LGBTQ mentor, program staff can reiterate the safety-related procedures of the program, note the many other criteria that determined the suggestion of this particular match, and reiterate that they feel this LGBTQ individual will be an excellent role model and asset for their child. As discussed above, it can be helpful to get clarity from the parent/guardian about their concerns—in many instances, some areas of uncertainty can be clarified by providing more rationale and reiterating all the steps the staff perform to

make the match decisions and to ensure the safety of all involved.

For LGBTQ mentors who were eager to mentor a youth whose LGBTQQ journey reminds them of their own, program staff can reiterate that all young people in the program have needs and that mentor selection is based on the potential to respond to the unique needs of each child. In this case, the program staff can also remind the volunteer of the importance of selecting mentors based on many criteria, including shared interests, temperament, and background; and that special care is taken to ensure participants are committed to the program and potential matches have the right chemistry before creating mentoring relationships.

However, if one of the parties involved feels that this is not the right match, the program staff should honor that feedback and pursue a different match. While these incidents may be uncomfortable, it is important to remember that matches that are established against a participant's preferences are ill-positioned to succeed in the long term. Honoring the participant's voice takes precedence over other concerns.

MINIMIZING POTENTIAL REJECTION BY EASING INTO THE MATCH

Another strategy for successful matches involving LGBTQQ youth is to allow time for participants to get to know one another before progressing into the formal matching stage. One such strategy is already suggested in **Enhancement 4.2** of the current

Elements: Hosting a "getting to know you" mixer between all the youth and adult participants in a cohort where they can interact, learn a bit about personal histories and interests, and then suggest potential matches with whom they think they might find success. Many mentoring programs find this approach to yield strong matches that have already found a bit of a "spark."

We recommend an alternative that can minimize the rejection that LGBTQQ youth might face if a match is established too quickly and closes prematurely. This strategy may also potentially strengthen the match by grounding it in participant preference. Many programs working with LGBTQQ youth begin with a group mentoring approach—many adults and youth engaged in group activities and discussions—that can highlight similarities of personality and

common interests. These programs then allow one-to-one matches to develop after a period of time, but only when the mentor and young person feel that strong connection and request the match together. This matching strategy holds great promise not only for LGBTQQ youth, but also for programs serving other groups that may have heightened concerns over early match terminations.

To illustrate a few of these group-to-dyad approaches that can allow mentees to ease into a stronger relationship, see the case studies on the innovative approaches of JP Morgan Chase's Fellowship Initiative and True Colors. Both represent careful, considered approaches to ensuring that youth find the right fit and level of comfort.

A mentoring relationship's success is oftentimes determined by the strength and longevity of the mentor-mentee match, so JPMorgan Chase's The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) takes special care to ensure participants, LGBTQ or otherwise, are committed to the program and potential matches have chemistry before creating mentoring relationships. TFI is an intensive three-year college and career readiness program that brings Fellows together three Saturdays a month for leadership development, academic enrichment, team building, and mentoring opportunities. Some participants realize soon after beginning the program that the commitment is too intensive for their schedules and lifestyles, and they elect to leave the program early. Program staff create matches six months into the program to identify the best possible mentor matches and ensure that only participants who are dedicated to engaging in the full program duration are matched in mentoring relationships. This matching approach creates more long-lasting relationships and diminishes the number of Fellows who feel disappointed or abandoned by a mentor who leaves the relationship early.

Creating matches six months into the program provides staff with an opportunity to better gauge participants' interests, personalities, needs, and chemistry with potential mentors. Program staff host a few opportunities throughout the first six months for Fellows and mentors to interact and assess connections. Mentors are invited to attend a community service day, where participants go into elementary schools and deliver presentations to students, as well as certain Saturday sessions with Fellows. Mentors also help judge a "soap box" competition, where Fellows each deliver a two-minute speech on a topic or issue they care about. Mentors use rubrics to score presentations and have time to socialize with Fellows following the competition. These events allow Fellows and mentors to interact with each other and contemplate their own preferences for matches. Fellows and mentors are encouraged to communicate their preferences with the TFI Director if they identify someone they'd like to be matched with.

The six-month timeframe allows program staff a longer window to build relationships with Fellows and gather information to make matches. Some Fellows are quick to open up and share their stories upon entering the program, while others take longer to reveal who they are. Over the six months, program staff learn about Fellows' personalities, family backgrounds, social and emotional needs, and academic performance. TFI strives to match Fellows with mentors who have complementary skill sets that can help Fellows succeed in college, the workforce, and beyond. If a Fellow is struggling with written and verbal communication, he may be matched with someone who has particularly strong communication skills. It is often difficult to gauge where Fellows are struggling and how they could best be supported—taking the time to develop relationships with each Fellow helps program staff with the learning process. This approach is especially promising for programs that work with young people who need more intensive support that mentors may not be equipped to provide, as it allows staff to start to address those issues before matches are made.

After six months, program staff gather to brainstorm potential matches. Staff review questionnaires filled out by Fellows and mentors that include questions about where mentors went to school, what their hobbies are, why they want to mentor, and what Fellows are looking to gain from their mentoring experience (networking opportunities, general support, career guidance, etc.). This information is combined with staff's personal knowledge of participants' personalities, family backgrounds, interests, needs, and preferences to make matches. This thoughtful and intentional approach to matching ensures that Fellows are paired with individuals who are best equipped to support them.

True Colors requires that all mentors start in a group mentoring setting before transitioning to a one-to-one relationship. This practice began early in True Colors' program development when the Agency had a long mentee waitlist and not enough prospective volunteers to fill the gap. True Colors still wanted to engage the young people on their waitlist in their community, so they established group mentoring opportunities that both one-to-one matches and young people on the waitlist could participate in and began recruiting a new segment of mentors who could serve a lighter commitment. Group mentors would provide young people with transportation to group mentoring events and participate in activities, with no expectation of becoming a one-to-one mentor.

As the group mentoring program progressed, relationships between young people and mentors began to develop organically over regular chats in the car or conversations during social activities. Many mentors who anticipated that they couldn't commit to a one-to-one match (a much more intensive time-commitment—one-to-one matches are in contact at least four times per month, whereas group mentors participate just once or twice a month) developed deep connections with a young person, prompting them to want to dedicate more time to the program. Mentors and young people would share their preferences with the mentoring program's Director. If the mentor and young person agreed, the group mentor could transition to a one-to-one mentor and the young person would be taken off the waitlist.

True Colors realized over time that these matches seemed to be more compatible. They cultivated relationships more quickly and these matches lasted longer than matches that did not self-select in this way. Youth and mentors could suggest their own matches based on chemistry and shared interests, some of which True Colors would not have identified through applications. Because mentors and young people had already developed positive relationships, there was little guesswork around whether the match would get along and thrive for the long term. The group mentoring experience also provided matches with a solid foundation that enabled them to establish trust and develop bonds quicker.

The practice was so successful that True Colors now requires that all mentors begin in a group setting. Mentors still provide young people with transportation to group mentoring events and socialize during the activities. Many mentors find that the more flexible and less time-intensive commitment is better aligned with their lifestyle, so they remain group mentors. Others know from the beginning that they would like to become one-to-one mentors and transition into matches after serving as a group mentor for three months. These different mentoring opportunities broaden the potential pool of volunteers and enable True Colors to engage more mentors with varying capacities, interests, and levels of availability.

MATCHING AND INITIATION REFERENCES

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MONITORING AND SUPPORT

B.5.9 Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Mentor handbook or other match support literature includes referral information to LGBTQ and LGBTQ-friendly resources and organizations.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program considers offering in-person (or online) support groups to mentors working with LGBTQQ youth so that they can share effective strategies, offer tips on overcoming specific challenges, get referrals to other community organizations, and receive and provide support for this often challenging work.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program considers offering in-person or online discussion groups to mentors and youth on topics relevant to the LGBTQ community as a supplement to program activities or training, allowing mentors and youth to deepen their knowledge or share their perspectives on topics that arise in their relationship.

- **(new) LGBTQ Benchmark:** When appropriate, the program provides enhanced support to mentors of youth who have experienced rejection or estrangement from their family and friends, including offering strategies or tools that can help them navigate rebuilding positive family and peer connections.

E.5.2 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and/or offers information about activities that matches might wish to participate in together.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program offers group activities for LGBTQQ youth (e.g., peer sharing, engaging in social justice activities).

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program offers opportunities for LGBTQQ youth to build safe and supportive peer connections while in the program (gay-straight alliance types of programming).

(new) LGBTQ Enhancement: When relevant and appropriate, program offers opportunities for mentors and mentees, either through the program or in partnership with other community organizations, to engage in leadership opportunities, community-building initiatives, and local political engagement activities.

Justification

Supporting matches as they progress over time—with ongoing training, referrals to other resources, and relationship advice and troubleshooting—is essential to achieving the close, rewarding, and long-lasting relationships that can drive outcomes for mentoring programs. Every mentoring relationship has challenges along the way (as with any human relationship) and those formed between LGBTQQ youth and their mentors may face some additional challenges that mentoring programs will want to be prepared to address. Here we offer recommendations—beyond those generally recommended in the *Elements*—for supporting LGBTQQ mentees, their mentors, and their families.

ONGOING MENTOR SUPPORT

Regardless of whether mentors are matched with youth who are out or not in the program context, mentor handbooks and similar handouts and tip sheets from trainings should address how all mentors can be inclusive and welcoming of LGBTQ issues when working with youth. The "Training" section of this guide offers more detailed explanations of the many topics mentors will need to know, but mentor handbooks should include the following guidance:

- Using respectful language related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

- Addressing homophobic or other bigoted behavior or attitudes from the mentee.

- Handling situations where the young person comes out to the mentor.

- Maintaining confidentiality and handling disclosures.

- Dealing with situations where the mentee is estranged from their family or other supports as a result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

According to one study,[1] almost 40 percent of all LGBTQ individuals first told a friend or family member about their identity between the ages of 10 and 19—the range that most youth mentoring programs serve. Mentors can also expect instances in which mentees may feel more comfortable confiding in them than in their own parents/guardians. The same study found that about one third of LGBTQ

adults had not shared information about their sexual orientation with their parents, whereas 86 percent of them had told a close friend.[2] A separate study examining who LGBTQQ youth turned to for support in school settings found that teachers and other adults in the school who were good listeners, open-minded, nonjudgmental, who shared a common interest with them, and who supported other marginalized students were the adults they most trusted in seeking advice and in confiding their orientation or identity. These qualities are the types of traits that we hope to see in all mentors, and they may be especially powerful for youth who are considering disclosing a big aspect of themselves that has, until that point, remained hidden. Thus, all mentors should be prepared for their mentees to share sensitive information and practice how they will respond in these important moments.

Benchmark 5.9 goes far beyond just mentor handbooks and other written materials. One recommendation strongly endorsed by this project's working group is to provide mentors of LGBTQQ youth with an opportunity to meet socially or virtually to discuss how their mentoring relationship is going, the hurdles they have faced (or that their mentee is facing), and how they can best support these young people in their unique journey. This can be a great way to build the mentor's knowledge base, get tips about community resources, and develop a strong cohort of allies and committed mentors for LGBTQQ mentees. Program staff can kick off these groups with some simple logistical planning and conversation starters. Over time, these types of groups can

be led by experienced mentors or other allies from the LGBTQ community.

ONGOING LGBTQQ MENTEE SUPPORT

There are some key ways that mentoring programs can provide additional support and supplemental programming to LGBTQQ youth. As a recommendation under **E.5.2**, many members of this project's working group suggest offering group activities to build strong relationships between all the youth in the program and to connect LGBTQQ youth to a wider network of supportive relationships. This can involve access to discussion groups and online communities (often through the program but also including groups outside of the mentoring agency). For example, LifeWorks (see sidebar) collaborates with many community partners and other programs to establish ongoing internal youth group meetings to discuss critical issues that are important to them (these youth-led groups meet at different frequencies depending on the level of interest around the topic, with some groups meeting weekly, monthly, or a single time for a special topical discussion). This type of programming can be very impactful

EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION:
LifeWorks

LifeWorks offers an array of regular programming, where young people can gather to speak openly about their experiences and participate in fun, age-appropriate activities. These groups provide young people a safe space where they can engage in everyday activities without having to fear judgement or harassment from others. Programs are offered weekly, biweekly, or as one-time engagements and range in topics from martial arts classes to "gaymers" night (for video game enthusiasts) to discussion groups about masculinity and femininity. Some activities focus on identity, while others, like a 5K run or hike, promote personal development and healthy milestones.

LifeWorks' programming features different activities intended for matches, families, and just youth. Life-Works hosts an annual Valentine's Day dance for youth participants, where young people are encouraged to bring a friend, significant other, or attend on their own. These youth-only events help young people acquire and develop social skills that may have been previously impeded by harassment or bullying in cisnormative and heteronormative environments. The "LifeOut" program also provides matches with low- or no-cost activities out in the community every month, including bowling nights and bike rides. These events give program staff an opportunity to check in with matches, assess how relationships are progressing, and offer guidance when matches are in need of support.

These activities enable program participants to socialize and engage in healthy relationships with others their age. Youth can connect with peers who have shared similar experiences, enjoy everyday activities in an affirming environment, and support one another. For many, these are their first experiences surrounded by other LGBTQQ young people, and many begin to see their queerness as a positive attribute as a result.

Gender Spectrum connects young people from around the globe in meaningful peer connections based on shared interests and identities. LGBTQQ youth can participate in a variety of topic-based online discussion groups that encourage young people to discuss the intersections of their identities with supportive peers. Young people can register for topics like navigating gender as a pre-teen, faith and gender, and the intersection of race and gender. Discussion groups typically meet for one hour weekly for four sessions, and participants can join via webcam, phone, or chat. Trained adults facilitate the groups by preparing an opening activity or question, then creating an open space for young people to lead the conversation and connect. For parents, caregivers, and other adult family members, there are separate topic-based discussion groups focused on creating trust with their teen, self-care for parents and caregivers, and navigating a young person's gender within the Christian faith.

The online forum allows young people from all backgrounds, geographic regions, and familial situations to join this supportive community with an element of privacy. Some young people join by phone or chat from settings outside the home (e.g., libraries and parks) so that they can speak openly about their identities without being overheard by family members. The groups also enable individuals from rural and remote areas, where there may not be others who share the same intersectional identity, to congregate with a community of peers. One group included ten participants from seven different states and Argentina, showing participants that they are part of a community bigger than themselves.

These groups foster a sense of belonging and demonstrate that youth with unique, intersectional identities are not alone. Gender Spectrum's surveys show that just knowing these groups exist had a positive effect on the mental wellness of participants. Participants can connect with peers without having to be hyper-vigilant about the language they use or accidentally disclosing something they wanted to keep private. As young people participate in different groups over time, they are exposed to myriad of adult facilitators who reflect the LGBTQ community's diverse interests, stories, and identities. These adults can provide a beacon of hope to participants, who may have never before seen examples of gender expansive adults living successful and happy lives.

for LGBTQQ youth and can allow them another safe space to share their stories and get advice on how to maximize their mentoring relationship.

Gender Spectrum takes an even broader approach: online discussion groups offered to many different subgroups of mentees (recognizing their intersectionality), which connects youth to a much wider group of supportive peers (see sidebar).

Group activities can also involve more intensive community participation (youth engaging in Pride Month activities, for example) or even activism, as well as gay-straight alliance type programming that gets LGBTQQ mentees collectively doing projects in the world with their gay and straight peers.

The sidebar on the work of the GSA Network illustrates the power that comes from organizing LGBTQQ youth and this type of engagement can be a great way to supplement mentoring services with a group peer component. (Note that "GSA" in their organization's case stands for Genders and Sexualities Alliances, but the work is built on the more commonly known framework of gay-straight alliances.)

GSA Network is committed to fostering leadership and advocacy skills and cultivating supportive peer connections through local GSA (Genders & Sexualities Alliance, sometimes called Gay-Straight Alliance) clubs. A GSA club is a student-run club in a high school, middle school, or elementary school setting that connects LGBTQQ and straight students in an effort to create safe spaces to socialize, support each other's sexual orientations and gender identities and expression, and advocate for racial, gender, and LGBTQ justice. Students develop their own mission statements, create agendas and facilitate meetings, and mobilize campaigns. Clubs are formed and led by students and are supported by an adviser, who receives training on the GSA model and how to support LGBTQQ youth.

GSA clubs provide young people with a safe space to socialize with like-minded peers who may have shared similar experiences. Club participants can engage in open conversations about their experiences with romantic relationships, the coming out process, transitioning, or having LGBTQ parents or siblings. This supportive setting allows young people to process their experiences away from students who may not understand or acknowledge their identities. Some advisers maintain a list of mental and sexual health services and make referrals when students need additional support, and other clubs bring in speakers to address prevalent topics. For many GSA club members, the GSA Leadership Summits and camps are their first experience being surrounded by a majority LGBTQ community.

GSA clubs often engage in advocacy efforts in their schools and communities, with students presenting at school assemblies, creating poster campaigns, and participating in national LGBTQ awareness campaigns like GLSEN's Day of Silence. The GSA Network provides students in the clubs with training, resources, and a platform to advocate in their communities. At the annual Queer Youth Advocacy Day, GSA youth activists and adult allies meet with representatives from their districts at California's State Capitol. Students educate policymakers about school safety issues and advocate for laws and policies that will make schools safer. GSA Network helps to prepare students for these meetings by offering leadership trainings, bias awareness activities, storytelling workshops, and other training opportunities. These experiences help young people build leadership skills that equip them to succeed in college and beyond, while also building the next generation of LGBTQ leaders in the United States.

Another way programs can support LGBTQQ youth and their mentoring relationships is to offer referrals to other services or learning opportunities that are beyond the scope of the program itself. In some cases, those services are provided under the auspices of a multiservice agency that also houses the mentoring program. In the example offered by True Colors here, mentoring programs can build a referral network that complements their mentoring work, recognizing that LGBTQQ youth and/or their families may need services that are best handled by organizations with differing expertise areas. This can allow the programs' mentors to focus on the relationship and support the youth in ways that best align with their training and role in the agency.

ENHANCING MATCH ACTIVITIES

While programs can offer these types of ongoing supports and referrals to mentors and youth separately, there are also opportunities for mentors and youth to work together collaboratively on meaningful activities with ongoing support from the program. One new Enhancement introduced here is directly offering, or connecting mentors and youth

True Colors provides systems-involved LGBTQQ youth with comprehensive support, yet the organization occasionally finds that mentees need services beyond what True Colors is able to offer. Over the past 25 years, True Colors has curated a comprehensive list of local organizations in Connecticut serving systems-involved and LGBTQQ youth, so that they can connect youth with additional resources and services as needed. This wide-ranging resource guide is given to youth and mentors and includes information about local clinicians, health care providers, mental health providers, community-based youth groups, parent support groups, community centers, and PFLAG.

The landscape of youth-serving organizations is ever-changing, so True Colors regularly audits the resource guide to ensure programs are still functioning and contact information is up-to-date. Every year, True Colors engages interns (some of whom are college or graduate students, others of whom have participated in the mentoring program themselves) in reviewing the resource guide and updating the information. This drives interns to learn about resources available in the community while supporting the program's operations. The resource guide is updated twice a year in digital form, and once a year in hard copy format.

True Colors program staff use this guide to make referrals to external services, when needed. Mentors will sometimes hear about situations that warrant additional attention and raise these issues to program staff. One mentor recently learned that her mentee was couch surfing (i.e., was homeless and moving from one temporary sleeping arrangement to another) and conveyed this information to staff, who researched and are connecting the young person with local housing services. The resource guide empowers mentors and staff to connect young people with the much-needed support that exists outside the program's purview.

to, opportunities to engage in leadership development opportunities, civic activism, and community change efforts. Mentoring relationships are excellent contexts for fostering youth empowerment and engaging in true youth-adult partnerships that not only deepen the relationship but allow the young person to effect meaningful change in their community.[3]

Mentors can be involved in many of the mentee support activities and events noted above, such as joining discussion groups or supporting the GSA work of the mentees, if programs find that those are the easiest paths to fostering stronger youth-adult partnerships.

MONITORING AND SUPPORT REFERENCES

[1]Pew Research Center. (2013). *A survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, experiences and values in changing times.* Washington, DC: Author.

[2]Pew Research Center, 2013.

[3]Weiston-Serdan, T. (2017). *Critical mentoring: A practical guide.* Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

CLOSURE

B.6.7 and B.6.8 Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors (and mentees and their parents/guardians) that includes the following topics of conversation (see original *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*™ for original listing of closure topics):

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program includes discussion in the closure process that focuses on identity growth during the relationship.

E.6.3 Program staff should provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.

● **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program creates opportunities within mentoring relationships for LGBTQQ youth to learn how to identify and recruit mentors and allies who can serve as positive in-person role models, so that they can grow a larger web of support for their post-mentoring journey.

Justification

While all program participants deserve a program-led closure process that allows for the match to have resolution and opportunities for reflection and ongoing participation (when possible), the reality is that many matches do not have the type of closure experiences that programs articulate as standard practices. One recent study of closure procedures across multiple programs found that more than 60 percent of matches that closed never had a final meeting together to say goodbye and process feelings around the relationship ending, with another 11 percent planning a meeting that subsequently did

not happen.[1] Given LGBTQQ mentees' potential for feelings of rejection and other negative consequences from a match ending, especially if the match ends prematurely, it is critical that mentoring programs give all young people, parents/guardians, and mentors the gift of a well-managed process with the opportunity to say goodbye.

The Benchmarks and Enhancements in the *Elements* related to closure are intended to provide this structure (although it is up to programs to adequately staff this aspect of the program, which can sometimes be overlooked in an effort to quickly rematch a child or move on to recruiting new mentees and mentors). Here we offer a few simple recommendations that can strengthen the closure process and make it more meaningful for LGBTQQ youth and their parents/guardians.

REFLECTING ON IDENTITY GROWTH

The main edition of the *Elements* suggests several topics that should be covered during a mentee's final closure meeting with program staff and/or mentors (e.g., discussing feelings about closure, reflecting on personal growth, and understanding rules around future contact). Here, for LGBTQQ youth, we offer the additional topic of identity development. Forming an identity, a sense of both current self and possible future selves, is considered to be one of the cornerstone pathways through which young people benefit from mentoring,[2] yet rarely are youth given an opportunity to reflect on and express how their identity and sense of self has grown through the program. For young people who may be navigating through

the process of understanding, accepting, and sharing their identity, this may be a time of profound development and change. Even in circumstances where the mentor was not as helpful as hoped, the young person may have learned something about themselves—how they carry themselves in relationships, their values, and their strengths and weaknesses. They may have also achieved a new sense of belonging in the world that they can carry forward from the experience. Programs should make sure that all mentees, including LGBTQQ youth, have a chance to reflect on how they have changed during the match, and how their time in the program has helped them discover, in part, who they truly are.

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT MENTORS

Research suggests that very few LGBTQQ youth have mentors—either naturally or through formal programs—in their lives.[3] Many of these young people will look to social media and popular entertainment, in an attempt to find examples of people with whom they identify. In cases where LGBTQQ youth are *only* able to find remote/inaccessible role models to emulate, outcomes for these young people—as compared to LGBTQQ youth without role models—appear to be more negative.[4] In contrast, LGBTQQ youth with access to natural in-person mentors are able to secure a range of very individualized support, including social, informational, and self-appraisal (positive self-reflection) guidance as the youth moves through phases of identity development and into their adulthood.[5] Such differences in outcomes between youth with in-person role models and those without suggests that mentors, and mentoring pro-

grams, have a responsibility to "pass the torch" to the next set of mentors in their mentee's life. This is essential for ensuring that further support is accessible and becomes integrated into the youth's trajectory moving forward.

Some programs do this very intentionally by referring mentees to other programs when they move along as part of a major life transition (moving to another city or attending college). Others take a more youth-centered approach, teaching mentees to map out areas where they need ongoing support, identify characteristics they want in a mentor, brainstorm lists of potential adults to ask to be mentors, and teach how to ask for and maintain a new mentoring relationship with one or more adults once they are out of the program. Life plans, network maps, and circles of support are common tools programs use to help codify this support network. They often will also practice challenging aspects of entering a new relationship, such as the initial "ask" or how to respond when a new mentor does not respect boundaries. This allows the young person to practice taking the lead in "owning" their future mentoring within the safety of an existing mentoring relationship.

Regardless of the route programs choose, mentors and staff should work together to help each LGBTQQ mentee feel confident and prepared to find additional adult support as they leave the program. For a great example of what this can look like in practice, see the case study below about True Colors' closure process and how they help youth both find internal strengths and access additional resources in the community that will carry them forward.

True Colors prepares mentees for match closure by equipping them with life skills that will support their independence and success after their relationship ends. Throughout the program, True Colors staff and mentors help youth feel more confident about accessing resources and connecting with supportive services and individuals. When mentees need food stamps, housing, or other services, mentors and staff support the young person in identifying and reaching out to the appropriate agencies. Even after the mentoring relationship concludes, True Colors offers a safe and supportive space for young people to come back to. Program staff strive to keep contact with mentees until they are living in safe and stable environments, and mentees are always welcome to return to the office for continued support.

True Colors' mentor and mentee contract states that matches will last for a minimum of one year, yet matches are encouraged to maintain lifelong relationships. After matches have been together for one year, the mentor and mentee meet with the mentoring program Director and determine whether the match should continue for another year. After the second-year anniversary, matches are no longer formally recognized or managed by the program, yet they are encouraged to maintain the relationship on their own. The Director, mentor, and mentee meet at the two-year milestone to discuss what this new relationship will look like moving forward.

CLOSURE REFERENCES

[1]Keller, T. E., & Spencer, R. (2017). "Prediction and Prevention of Premature Closures of Mentoring Relationships: The Study to Analyze Relationships." Final report for Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, grant number 2012-MU-FX-0001. NCJ 251463. Available at https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/grants/251463.pdf

[2]Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[3]Mallory, C., Sears, B., Hasenbush, A., & Susman, A. (2014). *Ensuring access to mentoring programs for LGBTQ youth.* Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Retrieved from http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Access-to-Youth-Mentoring-Programs.pdf

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[5]Torres, R. S., Harper, G. W., Sánchez, B., Fernández, M. I., & Adolescent Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions (2012). Examining natural mentoring relationships (NMRs) among self-identified gay, bisexual, and questioning (GBQ) male youth. *Children and Youth Services Review,* 34, 8–14.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The following recommendations offer ways in which mentoring programs can more effectively serve LGBTQQ youth by tracking and evaluating services provided and specific outcomes.

❏ **Program evaluates the effectiveness of staff training in increasing employees' knowledge about, and skills for working effectively with, LGBTQQ youth.**

❏ **Program evaluates the effectiveness of mentor training in increasing mentors' knowledge about, and skills for working effectively with, LGBTQQ youth.**

❏ **Program considers documenting and tracking outcomes relevant to LGBTQQ youth (e.g., improved feelings of social support or sense of belonging; reductions in gender identity-related stereotype threat or certain risky behaviors), noting that many of these outcomes will be relevant to other youth subgroups as well.**

❏ **Program directly involves LGBTQQ youth in evaluation planning, which honors their input into how success is defined and can facilitate gathering feedback on how well the organization is serving them.**

DISCUSSION

Generally speaking, most youth mentoring programs will not need to change their evaluative practices to examine outcomes that are relevant for LGBTQQ youth. The areas that most programs focus on—academic success, self-esteem and competence, healthy behaviors, acquisition of new skills, improved relationships with others, etc.—are all equally applicable to LGBTQQ youth as with any other group of young people served by the program.

However, there are a few instances where more of a focus on the needs and programmatic outcomes of LGBTQQ youth may be necessary, which are outlined below.

DURING YOUTH INTAKE

As noted in the "Program Design and Management" section of this supplement, programs should proactively gather information about the LGBTQQ status of young people as they enter the program. They may also want to, given the increased victimization and risky behaviors exhibited by LGBTQQ youth, consider assessing each youth's experiences of bullying and harassment, their trauma exposure, their levels of family support, and other aspects of their risks and protective factors. This is likely to be information the program will want to collect on all youth served, but it may be especially helpful in ensuring that LGBTQQ youth are matched with a well-prepared mentor who is able to meet their needs and form a strong relationship.

This information can also be helpful later in explaining differences in the impact of the program for some youth. For example, a program might find that LGBTQQ youth with fewer prior experiences with severe peer bullying, or less rejection from their parents, experienced stronger relationships and better outcomes than their peers who had not been through those experiences prior to joining the program. Conversely, a program might find that these rejected youth benefitted the most from the program, implying that their mentoring relationship was a much-needed source of support and personal growth. Programs that do not have that level of information about each participant are less able to say who the program is best supporting and who might need even more intensive support. Examining these types of moderators can help programs fine-tune

their services (e.g., extra training) and assess what types of mentors are a good fit for particular youth circumstances (e.g., the mentor traits needed to work with a youth experiencing rejection at home).

Programs looking to measure these risks and protective factors may want to start with that particular section of the Measurement Guidance Toolkit, a free online resource developed by the National Mentoring Resource Center. This resource profiles validated, ready–to-use scales that cover many of the additional pieces of background information about a child that might be useful in better supporting LGBTQQ youth. This information could also be useful in interpreting program outcomes and identifying the types of young people who are most benefitting (or not) from the services.

Training Evaluation

Much of the success of working effectively with LGBTQQ youth is grounded in the knowledge and skills of the staff and mentors directly engaging with them. Therefore, programs are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the training offered on this topic. Previous sections of this supplement have suggested the content for these trainings. Evaluations should assess whether the training has increased knowledge and feelings of self-competence in critical knowledge and skills (ideally compared to a pre-training baseline). These evaluations should ideally be completed immediately after a training so that participants can reflect on what they have learned, offer feedback on the training itself, and identify areas where they feel they may need more

help. Programs are also encouraged to follow up with training participants several months after the training to see if they have applied any of the knowledge or skills gained in their work with youth. It can be helpful to understand, for example, that mentors know a lot more about LGBTQQ issues, but that they are having a hard time responding to critical relationship moments or are struggling to offer the right support to mentees who are engaged in a coming out process. These post-training follow-ups can identify areas for increased match support and ensure that the training being offered is actionable and applied directly in the relationships themselves.

EXAMINING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

As noted above, most mentoring programs use a uniform set of outcome measures for all young people in the program; however, one strategy suggested by this project's working group was to make sure that evaluation work involving LGBTQQ youth takes note of the progress of the match on specific issues identified in goal-setting tools, "life plans," or other formalized documents that guide the time the mentor and mentee spend together. Given that LGBTQQ youth face numerous unique challenges that often place them at deficits when growing into a healthy adulthood, it follows that they will also have some very specific issues they want to overcome with a mentor's support or highly individualized goals related to their identity or expression. Programs may want to track this personalized progress toward, and attainment of, youth-specific goals. Most important, this evaluation process might indicate whether the program is meeting the needs of its LGBTQQ mentees.

Mentoring programs solely serving LGBTQQ youth may want to track outcomes that are relevant to that work, including tracking them through periods of transition or in rebounding from negative experiences. Programs that exclusively serve LGBTQQ youth may emphasize outcomes such as:

- Increased knowledge of and connection to the LGBTQ community and resources where they live.
- Improved sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Identity development and improved sense of self.
- Reduced risky behaviors (following up on those measured at entry into the program).
- Decreased bullying and harassment or improved peer relations.
- Improved perceptions of external support or growth in networks of supportive peers and adults.
- Increased perceptions of social competence.
- Improved family support.
- Reduced stereotype threats or other negative self-perceptions related to their LGBTQQ status.

As always, we encourage programs to use only validated and reliable measurement tools, such as those suggested in the Measurement Guidance Toolkit or those provided by evaluation and research partners.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Family Acceptance Project is a research, intervention, education and policy initiative that works to prevent health and mental health risks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children and youth, including suicide, homelessness and HIV – in the context of their families, cultures and faith communities.

GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate Survey Report includes information on LGBTQ middle and high school students' experiences in school settings, which includes findings on victimization, bias, and harassment.

Human Rights Campaign 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report documents current experiences of LGBTQ youth, which includes exposure to risk and experiences with resiliency.

Human Rights Campaign SOGIE Data Collection Guide contains best practices for collecting data on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

National Mentoring Resource Center's Mentoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Gender Nonconforming Youth is a population review that examines research on mentoring effectiveness and outcomes for LGBTQ youth.

PFLAG is a national grassroots organization that seeks to make sure that all people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer are not only valued by society, but take pride in and value themselves.

The Trevor Project Support Center & Helpline Crisis Intervention for LGBT Youth (open 24/7) 1-800-850-8078

The True Colors Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to end homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, creating a world in which young people can be their true selves.

The Williams Institute's Report Ensuring Access to Mentoring Programs for LGBTQ Youth examines inclusive mentor programming and policies for LGBTQ youth.

Trans Student Educational Resources is a youth-led organization dedicated to transforming the educational environment for trans and gender nonconforming students through advocacy and empowerment.

U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention website has data on the health risks of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Exchange Review of the LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative Planning Phase documents the design and planning phase of two cross-sector community partnerships to address and prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness.