

LGBTQ FOSTER YOUTH, CURRICULUM

John Jennings, MSW

California State University, Fresno MSW project

Email: JJMSW89@gmail.com

Phone: (559)639-0336

Thank you
CCASSC members and partners for this
CCASSC stipend

About Me:

- Born Hayward, CA and Raised in Hanford, CA
- Lived in Hanford, Visalia, and Fresno
- Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Fresno Pacific University
- Master's Degree in Social Work from California State University Fresno
- My lived Experience



What prompted interest in this project?

- Lack of education for Child Welfare Workers
- Risk factors that foster youth face
- Insufficient resources, particularly in Rural areas for LGBTQ foster youth

Problem Statement

LGBTQ Foster Youth-Disproportionately overrepresented tied to:

- Parental abandonment
- Runaway activity
- Truancy
- Parent conflict
- (McCormick et al., 2016)

Problem Statement Cont'd

- LGBTQ Youth have increased risk for poor health (CDC, 2019)
- Rural LGBTQ Youth suffer from:
 - *Increased risk of substance abuse*
 - *Homelessness*
 - *Suicide*
 - *School Drop out*
 - *Trauma that led to the child welfare engagement*
 - *Lack of resources*

Purpose of the curriculum

Purpose of the curriculum is to provide CPS workers, and service providers working with LGBT foster youth knowledge of increased risk factors this for this vulnerable population . Understanding the increased risk factors for LGBTQ Foster youth primarily in rural communities will highlight the importance of identifying sexual orientation and gender identity within the foster care system and providing diverse services that meet their unique needs

Lasting Implications LGBTQ Foster youth

- The early reactions to LGBTQ youth have lasting psychological effects that carry on into adulthood. The reactions and interactions of CPS workers and all other stakeholders can drastically change the youth's trajectory
- “Equality means more than passing laws. The struggle is really won in the hearts and minds of the community, where it really counts” – Barbara Gittings (activist)



Definitions

Child Protective Services (CPS)

- **Conceptual.** CPS is a major system of intervention of child abuse and neglect(*Child Protective Services, 2020*).
- **Operational.** For the purpose of this research, CPS will also refer to permanent placement practices of the child welfare system. When discussing CPS workers, the author will be speaking stakeholders involved with the investigation, reunification, and permanent placement of all children involved in the child welfare system. The author utilizes the above definition in this work

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer (LGBTQ)

- **Conceptual.** According to UCSF the acronym LGBTQ stands Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. This is an umbrella term used for the entire LGBTQ community (*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Resource Center*, n.d.).
- **Operational.** For this study, the acronym LGBTQ will be utilized when discussing all sexual minorities. As time and education has progressed more letters have been added to incorporate inclusivity to all sexual minorities. For this study we will utilize the acronym LGBTQ to blanket the entire sexual minority community including those who identify as anything other than heterosexual, and all those who identify as any sex other than that assigned at birth.

Rural

- **Conceptual.** According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2020), the term rural refers to the country, country people or life, or agriculture.
- **Operational.** For this study, rural areas will be referring to conservative areas primarily focused on religious and conservative values. Rural will also be referring to areas where there is a low population.

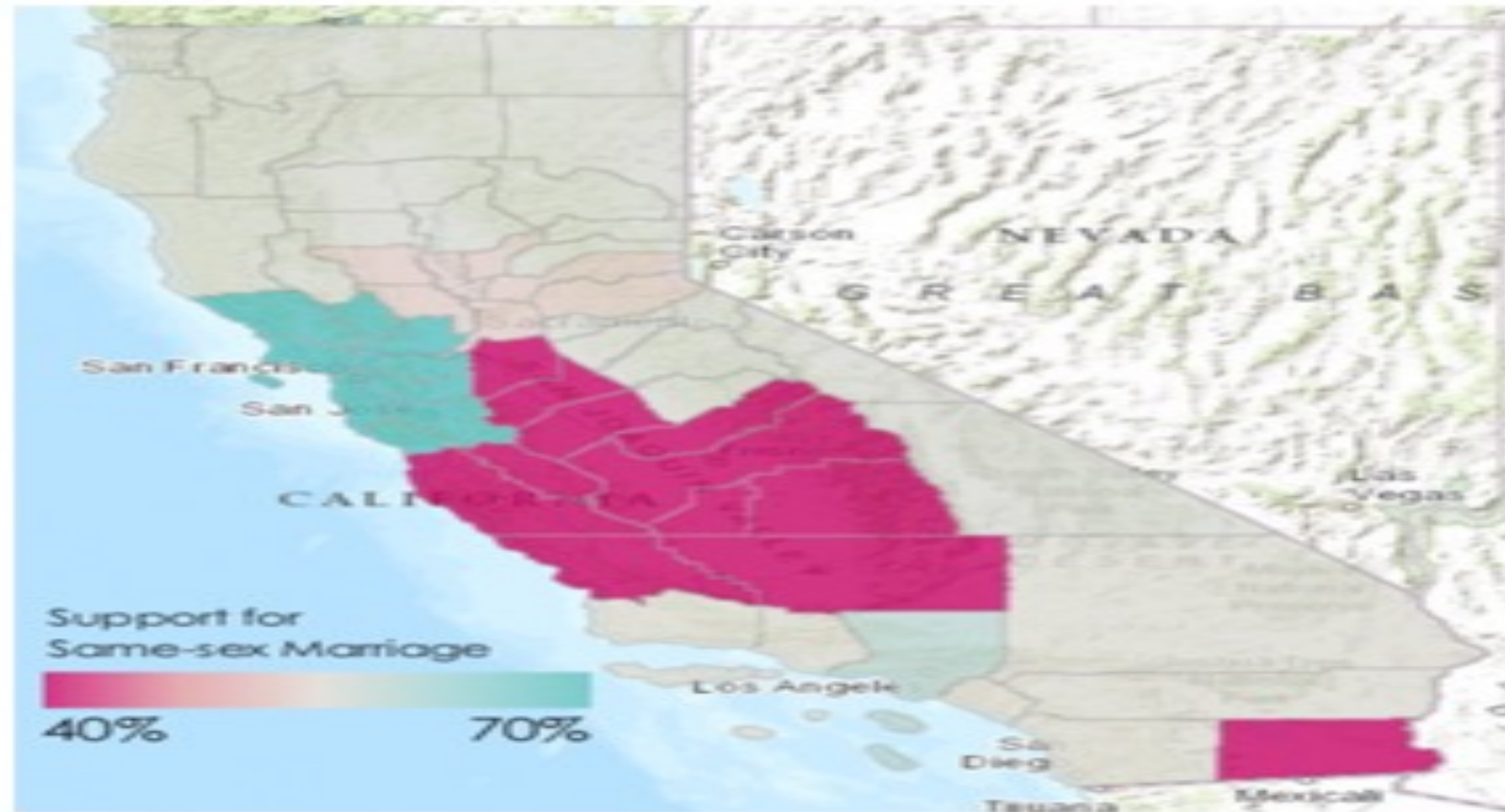
At-Risk

- **Conceptual.** Cambridge Dictionary, (2020) states that the definition of at-risk pertains to being in danger of being harmed or damaged, or of dying.
- **Operational.** For this Curriculum, the term at-risk when speaking about foster youth will pertain to any youth that is in danger of negative outcomes. The goal for children in foster care is to find permanency for them and their abstinence from dangerous or self-injurious behavior. Any foster youth considered at risk for the sake of the curriculum is in danger of not meeting these goals.

Victimization

- Conceptual. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, (2020) states that the term victimization is used to describe a verb meaning to make a victim, or to subject a person to deception or fraud.
- Operational. For the sake of this curriculum the term victimization will refer to the abuse that is suffered by the LGBTQ community. When speaking about the risk for victimization the curriculum will refer to sexual victimization, where LGBTQ youth are forced into sexual acts either for financial or physical gratification. Victimization will refer to physical and emotional abuse that the LGBTQ population is at risk for.

Social Climate



The LGBT Divide in California (January 2016)
THE WILLIAMS INSTITUTE

But what happens when we look at regional differences within California?



In terms of the percentage of LGBT residents living in the regions of California⁴:

- Los Angeles County (31%)
- Southern California (not L.A.) (26%)
- Bay Area (22%)
- Southern/Central Farm (10%)
- Central Valley (6%)
- North and Mountain (4%)

LGBT PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS HAVE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

RURAL AMERICA IS HOME TO MANY LGBT PEOPLE

An estimated 2.9 – 3.8 million LGBT people live in rural communities across the United States. Many LGBT people choose to live in rural areas for the same reasons that non-LGBT people do, including tight-knit communities and a rural way of life.




STRENGTHS, STRUCTURES, AND CHALLENGES: HOW RURAL LIFE AMPLIFIES THE IMPACT OF ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION



INCREASED VISIBILITY
Fewer people in rural communities means any difference is more noticeable.



FEWER ALTERNATIVES
In the face of discrimination, the already limited number of rural service providers can be limited even further.



RIPPLE EFFECTS
When communities are tightly interwoven, rejection and acceptance in one area of life (such as church) can ripple over into others (such as work or school).



LESS SUPPORT STRUCTURE
More social and geographic isolation means less ability to find supportive resources, build supportive community, and endure challenges or discrimination.

IMPACTING MANY AREAS OF LIFE:

-  Family, Faith, & Community
-  Education
-  Employment & Economic Security
-  Housing & Homelessness
-  Public Places & Businesses
-  Health Care
-  Legal System

SOCIAL & POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: RURAL LGBT PEOPLE ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO DISCRIMINATION



LESS SUPPORTIVE PUBLIC OPINION

Rural residents are less likely to know LGBT people and less supportive of LGBT policies. However, many rural residents—especially rural people of color, women, and younger people—support LGBT policies.



FEWER LEGAL AND POLICY PROTECTIONS

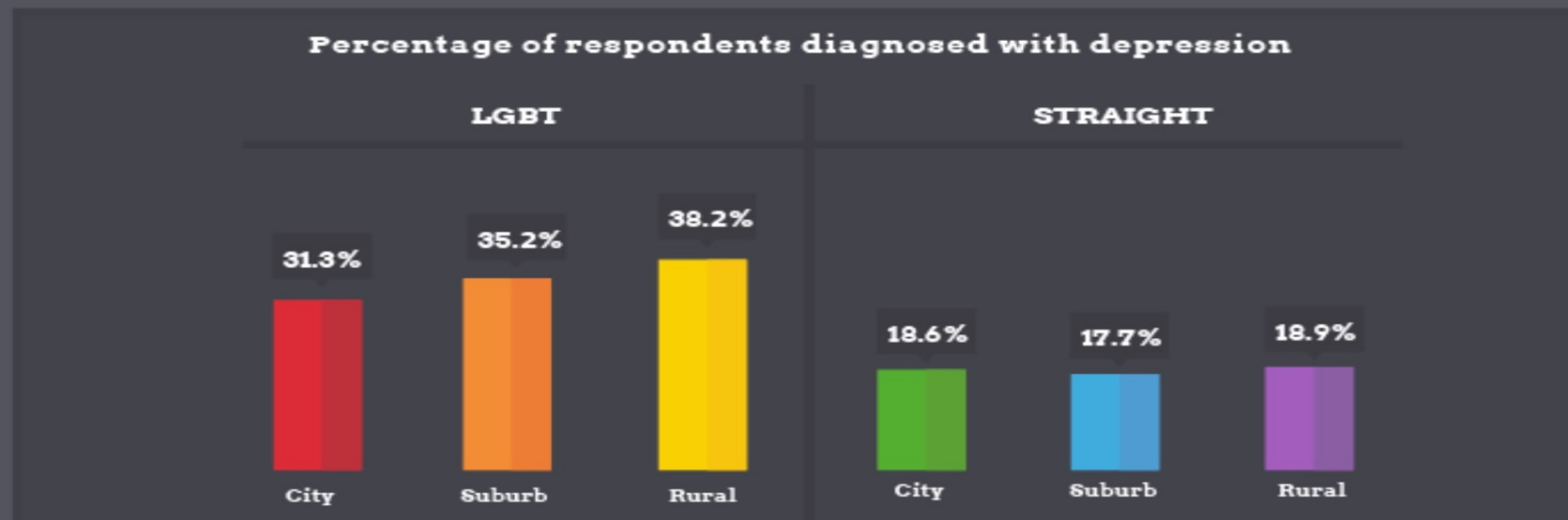
Rural states are less likely to have vital protections and laws for LGBT people. They are also more likely to have harmful, discriminatory laws.



LESS POLITICAL POWER

In rural areas, there are fewer LGBT elected officials, fewer LGBT-supportive resources that can help make political change, and political organizing is more difficult due to geographic isolation and other factors.

Is There More Support For LGBT Americans in Cities, Suburbs, or Rural Areas?



SOURCE: CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2015

For straight Americans, differences in rates of depression between urban, suburban, and rural environments were almost nonexistent, while **for LGBT Americans, their location seemed to play an important role in mental health.** Data show that city living carries a lower risk of depression than rural living (with 31 percent of city dwellers reporting depression, compared with 38 percent of rural residents). Themes of isolation in their surrounding communities were very common among our interviewees.

Closer Look at Increased Risks

- LGBTQ youth are considered at-risk for health disparities, along with increased risk for bullying, dating violence, and suicide.

FAST FACTS: LGB Youth

While many **lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth*** thrive during adolescence, stigma, discrimination, and other factors may put them at increased risk for negative health and life outcomes.



16% experience sexual dating violence

About **one third** are bullied at school



They are **more** likely to have been tested for HIV (13% LGB students vs. 9% heterosexual students)

They are nearly **twice** as likely as other students to use illegal drugs



47% have seriously considered suicide

Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019

Health Discrimination

- LGBTQ populations are at greater risk of healthcare discrimination and are at greater risk of not seeking medical treatment.

- https://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/publications/downloads/whcic-report_when-health-care-isnt-caring.pdf

Table 2: Health care professionals refused to touch me or used excessive precautions

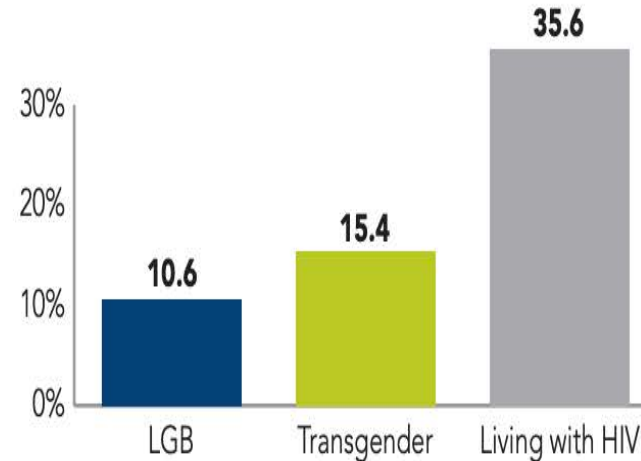


Table 4: Health care professionals blamed me for my health status

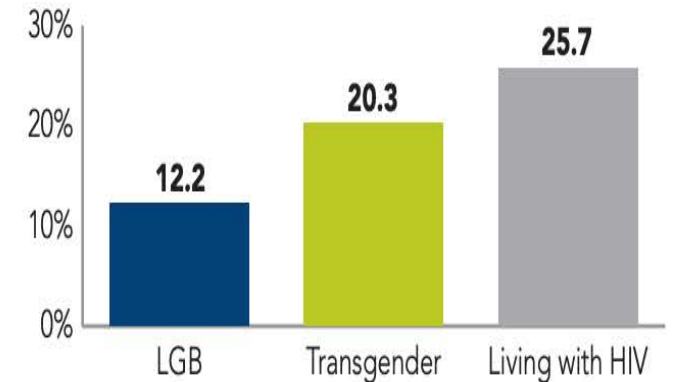


Table 3: Health care professionals used harsh or abusive language

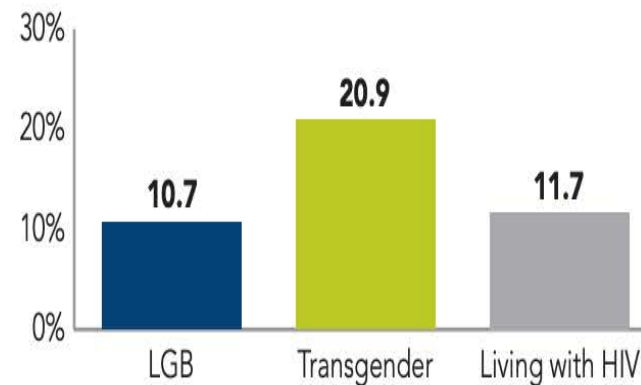
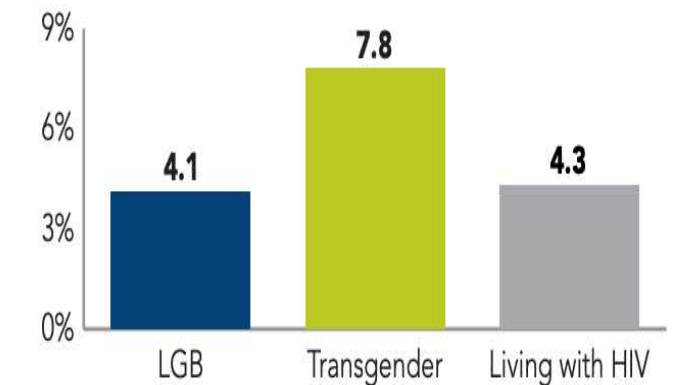


Table 5: Health care professionals were physically rough or abusive



School Bullying

- School bullying can cause many issues for LGBTQ youth. A lot of students feel uncomfortable reporting the bullying, and a lot of school staff are uncomfortable talking to students about the gender or sexual orientation.

LGBT Bullying Statistics

Various surveys conducted by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) have found these results about LGBT students in schools:

