LGBTQ+ Students at the New Community School

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Today’s Agenda

• Information about Side by Side

• Overview of LGBTQ+ Community

• Trends We See Today

• Risk & Protective Factors

• Question & Answer
Information on Side by Side
Since 1991, Side by Side has been Central Virginia’s source of support, education and advocacy for LGBTQ+ youth.

Youth center at 2311 Westwood Ave
Youth Support Groups
(324 Youth)

Richmond:
- LGBTQ+ Youth 14-20
- Transgender Youth 14-20
- Middle School Youth 11-14
- LGBTQ+ Youth of Color 14-20

Charlottesville
- LGBTQ+ Youth 14-20

Petersburg
- Petersburg High Pilot

Community Education
(2,600 Trained Professionals)

Training for
- Schools
- Corporations/Companies
- Government Agencies
- Law Enforcement

Individual Development
- Youth Engaged in Leadership (YEL)
- Youth Drop-In Center
- Counseling Services
- Support for Parents and Families
Overview of LGBTQ+ Community
Identity Spectrum

**BIRTH SEX**
- Male
- Intersex
- Female

**GENDER IDENTITY**
- Man/Boy
- Non-Binary
- Woman/Girl

**GENDER EXPRESSION**
- Masculine
- Androgynous
- Feminine

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**
- To Women
- Bisexual
- To Men
Identity Spectrum

**BIRTH SEX**

Male - Intersex - Female

**Birth Sex** = The biological makeup of an individual’s reproductive anatomy.

**Intersex** = an individual born with reproductive organs or characteristics of both male and female.

*Approximately 1 in every 2,000 births annually*
Gender Identity = Sense of self in terms of belonging to the category boy/man or girl/woman.
Identity Spectrum

BIRTH SEX

Male

Intersex

Non-Binary

Female

GENDER IDENTITY

Cisgender = Gender Identity Aligns with Birth Sex.

Transgender = Gender Identity does not Align with Birth Sex
Identity Spectrum

BIRTH SEX

Male  Intersex  Female

Gender Identity

Man/Boy  Non-Binary  Woman/Girl

Transwoman / Transgirl / MTF
Identity Spectrum

BIRTH SEX

Male
Intersex
Female

GENDER IDENTITY

Man/Boy
Non-Binary
Woman/Girl

Transman / Transboy / FTM
True or False?

Gender Identity typically is set by the age of 3 years old.

ANSWER: **TRUE**

Gender identity is formed very early in life. Typically, wherever an individual identifies at age 3 is how they will continue to identify throughout life.
Key Signs that a Youth may be Transgender

• **Persistent** – continuing firmly in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition.

• **Insistent** – insisting or demanding something; not allowing refusal.

• **Consistent** – acting the same way over time.
Non-Binary = Individuals who do not identify with either category of boy or girl. May prefer to be called a gender neutral name and/or by a gender neutral pronoun (like “they”).
Gender Expression = The way we express our gender, in terms of how we outwardly meet the cultural norms and expectations associated with masculinity or femininity.
GENDER EXPRESSION

Masculine  Androgynous  Feminine
True or False?

Gender Expression is a stronger predictor (than identity or sexuality) for a person’s likelihood of experiencing victimization / bullying.

**ANSWER:** TRUE

Studies have indicated that gender-variant youth are targeted for victimization at 10 times the rate of their peers.

Identity Spectrum

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**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**
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- Bisexual
- To Men
The term “sexual orientation” is mostly talking about:
A. Feelings
B. Behaviors
C. Both

ANSWER: A. Feelings

The best way to describe sexual orientation is in terms of a person’s feelings of attraction.
Identity Spectrum

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

To Women

Bisexual

Bisexual = Being attracted to both men and women.

Pansexual = Attracted to a person regardless of gender. (Allows for more than 2 gender options).

To Men

Asexual = Having no sexual attraction.
Identity Spectrum

THE GENDER BINARY
Identity is Complex & Intersecting

Socio-Economic Status
Race
Religion & Faith
Ethnicity
Age
Ability
Gender & Gender Identity
Sexual Orientation

Source: Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity, (Patton, Renn, Guido, Quaye)
Trends We See Today
Which of the following are true?

A. LGBTQ+ youth in general are coming out at an earlier age today.

B. More transgender people are starting to transition in school during their K-12 years.

C. Society is becoming a more welcoming, open place for LGBTQ+ people overall.

D. Reported depression and suicide among LGBTQ+ youth has remained high over the last 10 years.

E. Instances of violence against transgender people are increasing, particularly among transgender women of color.

All are True
Realities of LGBTQ Youth

• Only 18% of LGBTQ+ students report being taught positive things about LGBTQ+ people in school classes

• LGB youth are 4 times more likely to commit suicide and 42% of transgender people attempt suicide in their lifetime

• 35% of youth experiencing homelessness in Richmond identify as LGBTQ+ compared to LGBTQ+ youth making up 3% of the youth population

• LGBTQ+ youth are twice as likely to be bullied, 3 times more likely to be injured or threatened with a weapon, and 4 times more likely to skip school compared to their heterosexual /cisgender peers

1. The Trevor Project & National Center for Transgender Equality
2. Advocates for Richmond Youth
3. 2015 Massachusetts HS Students Risk Behavior Survey
Risk & Protective Factors
The Most Important Things Family Gives a Young Person

• Love, Support, & Care

• Sense of Belonging, Identity, & Values

• Safety, Shelter, & Basic Needs
3 Most Common Pathways into Risk for LGBTQ+ Youth

**Family Rejection**
Lack of family support can lead to conflict, running away, homelessness

**Isolation**
Lack of social support can lead to low self-esteem and escapist behavior (substance abuse, etc.)

**Harsh Environments**
Victimization can lead to violence, injury, and disengagement that are critical for success in life.
Family Rejection: What does this look like?

Studies show that when families exhibit these behaviors, it drastically increases the risk for mental health problems, including depression and suicidal ideation, among LGBTQ+ youth.

- Excluding youth from family and family activities
- Blocking their access to LGBTQ+ friends, events & resources
- Blaming the child when they are discriminated against because of their identity
- Pressuring the child to be more (or less) masculine or feminine
- Telling the child that God will punish them because they are LGBTQ+
- Telling the child that the family is ashamed of them or that how they look or act will shame the family
- Making the child keep their identity a secret in the family and not letting them talk about it

Adapted from Ryan, 2009 (Family Acceptance Project)
Family Rejection and Mental Health

Lifetime Suicide Attempts for Highly Rejected LGBT Young People
(One or more times)

Level of Family Rejection

Ryan, Family Acceptance Project, 2009
3 Most Common Pathways into Risk for LGBTQ+ Youth

- **Family Acceptance**
- **Isolation**
  - Lack of social support can lead to low self-esteem and escapist behavior (substance abuse, etc.)
- **Harsh Environments**
  - Victimization can lead to violence, injury, and disengagement that are critical for success in life.
3 Most Common Pathways into Risk for LGBTQ+ Youth

- **Family Acceptance**
- **Isolation**
  - Family supports youth at home and connects youth to LGBTQ+ resources
- **Harsh Environments**
  - Victimization can lead to violence, injury, and disengagement that are critical for success in life.
3 Most Common Pathways into Risk for LGBTQ+ Youth

**Family Acceptance**

**Isolation**
Family supports youth at home and connects youth to LGBTQ+ resources

**Harsh Environments**
Family advocates for youth. Youth has increased resilience.
3 Most Common Pathways into Risk for LGBTQ+ Youth

**Isolation**
Family supports youth at home and connects youth to LGBTQ+ resources

**Harsh Environments**
Family advocates for youth. Youth has increased resilience.

**Family Acceptance**
Numerous studies show that **affirming environments create resilient LGBTQ+ youth**

It’s important to know that LGBTQ+ children, adolescents and adults show remarkable resilience to many of the challenges they typically face *IF* they are surrounded by people who affirm who they are.

**The greatest protective factor an LGBTQ+ youth can have = supportive family and friends.**
Five Dimensions of Isolation Among LGBTQ+ Youth

1. **Recognition that self is different:** recognizing that your experience isn’t typical often creates initial feelings of isolation.

2. **Social Isolation:** not able to talk to anyone about their identity.

3. **Emotional Isolation:** feeling separated (emotionally) from important networks, like family.

4. **Cognitive Isolation:** lack of LGBTQ-specific information or role models. Or, much of the information they are exposed to is negative and harmful, and thus only reinforces the feeling of isolation.

5. **Concealment of Identity:** pressures to be “like everyone else” and conform to others’ expectations.

The Value of Affirming School Environments

Studies have show that LGBTQ+ youth in schools with...

- GSA or LGBTQ+ Student Clubs
- School staff who are trained in understanding LGBTQ+ student issues
- Inclusive curriculum
- And comprehensive anti-bully/harassment policies

...have higher average GPAs, miss fewer days of school and score higher on tests of psychological well-being.

Unique Mental Health Needs of Transgender Youth

**Gender Dysphoria**
The distress a person experiences when their assigned sex at birth does not align with their gender identity. Is often linked to body dysphoria.

**Depression**
Transgender youth have higher rates of depression and anxiety, which often stems from being bullied in school, or their gender not being respected. The depression is not the result of being transgender, but how others treat them.
Support as a Spectrum

**HATER**
- Actively discriminate
- Use anti-LGBTQ language
- Commit hate crimes

**TOLERANT**
- “I’m fine with gay people, just don’t flaunt it.”

**ACCEPTING**
- “I don’t see sexuality or gender, I just see people.”

**ALLY**
- Speaks Up against bullying
- Seeks to learn more

**ADVOCATE**
- Speaks OUT in support of LGBTQ+ people
- Seeks to educate others
Questions & Discussion

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