

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression Affirming Key Principles

- It is a good idea to have a LGBTQ+ friendly sticker or button on you, your clipboard, or your computer. It will let them know you are an ally.
- Use gender neutral language.
- Everyone has a Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE).
- Refrain from assuming someone's SOGIE.
- When inquiring about a young person's SOGIE, asking is better than avoiding.
- Incidents involving SOGIE are often invisible and not addressed, so being inquisitive about SOGIE is important.
- Incidents involving SOGIE are more prevalent than not, and may interact with dynamics of power/control, substance abuse and mental illness in the family.
- Not all incidents involve SOGIE, but it is something to keep in mind.
- LGBTQ+ children feel invisible and are often blamed for what happens to them.
- The increased risks faced by LGBTQ-GE+ youth are not inherent to their identities, but stem from the stresses of prejudice, discrimination, rejection, and mistreatment.
- A child who is being abused because of their SOGIE may not feel comfortable "coming out" to you. Be patient and help them feel affirmed.
- Never "out" a child/youth. If SOGIE needs to be discussed with others, ask the child's permission to discuss their SOGIE.

Created in collaboration with Bay Area Academy

familybuilders.org



Tip Sheet Regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression (SOGIE)

To engage a youth around their SOGIE, be inquisitive just as you normally would with any child. Be curious and interested about who they are. Here are some possible statements/questions when engaging a youth around their SOGIE:



- “My name is (...) and my pronouns are (...)”
- “What is your name?”
- “Tell me about yourself.”
 - “If you could be anyone you wanted, who would you be?”
 - “If you could wear anything you wanted to, what would you wear?”
 - “Do you have someone special in your life? Are you dating anyone?”
 - “How do you see yourself in the future?”
 - *If you know you are working with a transgender, gender queer, or gender variant youth and aren't sure how they identify, just ask: “What pronouns would you like me to use when I refer to you?”*
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE:*
 - “Tell me what that means to you?”
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE:* “Who have you told?”
 - “Who else would you like to tell that you have not yet?”
- “Who do you feel you can be yourself with? Who supports you for who you are?”
- “If you could live with anyone, who would you live with?”

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

There are also situations where a parent/caregiver is being supportive of their child's SOGIE, and a third party observes this and reports that the parent/caregiver is being abusive by affirming the child's SOGIE. When assessing for risk/harm/abuse it is essential to understand that affirming or supporting a child's SOGIE is not abuse nor neglect.

FOR MORE INFORMATION REFER TO ACL 19-92

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACLs/2019/19-92.pdf>

INFORMATION

LGBTQ+ and Gender Expansive (GE) children may not feel comfortable talking about their SOGIE as they don't know if you will be affirming.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often shamed and abused because of their SOGIE or perceived SOGIE.

LGBTQ+ and gender expansive (GE) children are often treated differently than their siblings and other children in the home.

Children and youth are also often "kicked out" of their home because of their SOGIE.

A child's SOGIE or perceived SOGIE may create conflicts within the family.

Children placed in out of home care who are or perceived to be LGBTQ+ and gender expansive are often mistreated by staff.

Parents may punish children and youth whose actual or perceived SOGIE is different than their parent's expectations.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to bring their LGBTQ+ friends to the house.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to date (when age & culturally appropriate).

Families come from different backgrounds, cultures and religions which construct their belief system. Some may have strong convictions about gender identity, expression or sexual orientation.

LGBTQ+ youth often avoid school because they are being bullied.

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

What would you like me to know about you?

What is the most important thing to you right now?

If I say something that is not right, please feel free to correct me.

Do you feel safe here? If not, why?

Do your parents support who you are?

Do your parents or siblings call you bad names?

Are you being treated the same way as your siblings? If not, why do you think?

Have you ever been kicked out of your home?

What happened?

Do your parents fight about you? What do they fight about?

Does the staff here treat you the same way as the other children? Do they call you names? Does the staff let other kids call you names or treat you badly?

Are you allowed to wear the clothes, hairstyle and other things that you want? If not, what would you wear if you were allowed?

Can you bring your friends home? If not, why?

What are your family beliefs about dating? (If allowed to date) Can you date who you want?

How does your family's religion or culture influence how they treat you?

Who is supportive of you in your family? In your surroundings? In what way are they being supportive?

Are you being bullied or discriminated against at school?

Tip Sheet Regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression (SOGIE)



To engage a youth around their SOGIE, be inquisitive just as you normally would with any child. Be curious and interested about who they are. Here are some possible statements/questions when engaging a youth around their SOGIE:

- “My name is (...) and my pronouns are (...)”
- “What is your name?”
- “Tell me about yourself?”
- “If you could be anyone you wanted, who would you be?”
- “If you could wear anything you wanted to, what would you wear?”
- “Do you have someone special in your life? Are you dating anyone?”
- “How do you see yourself in the future?”
- *If you know you are working with a transgender, gender queer, or gender variant youth and aren’t sure how they identify, just ask: “What pronouns would you like me to use when I refer to you?”*
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE: “Tell me what that means to you?”*
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE: “Who have you told?” “Who else would you like to tell that you have not yet?”*
- “Who do you feel you can be yourself with? Who supports you for who you are?”
- “If you could live with anyone, who would you live with?”



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

There are also situations where a parent/caregiver is being supportive of their child’s SOGIE, and a third party observes this and reports that the parent/caregiver is being abusive by affirming the child’s SOGIE. When assessing for risk/harm/abuse it is essential to understand that affirming or supporting a child’s SOGIE is not abuse nor neglect.

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INFORMATION

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

LGBTQ+ and Gender Expensive (GE) children may not feel comfortable talking about their SOGIE as they do not know if you will be affirming.

What would you like me to know about you?

What is the most important thing to you right now?

If I say something that is not right, please feel free to correct me.

Do you feel safe here? If not, why?

Do your parents support who you are?

Do your parents or siblings call you bad names?

Are you being treated the same way as your siblings?
If not, why do you think?

Remind them you are a safe person to talk to.

Do you feel safe here? If not, why?

Do your parents support who you are?

Parents may not like to be seen in public or family gatherings with their LGBTQ+ or GE child.

LGBTQ+ and GE children are often treated differently than their siblings and other children in the home.

Do your parents or siblings call you bad names?

Do your parents or anyone ever hit you because they do not support who you are?

Do you get to go out or go to family gatherings?
If not, why not?

Are you being treated the same way as your siblings?
If not, why do you think?

Children and youth are also often "kicked out" of their home because of their SOGIE.

A child's SOGIE or perceived SOGIE may create conflicts within the family.

Children placed in out of home care who are or perceived to be LGBTQ+ and gender expansive are often mistreated by staff.

Have you ever been "kicked out" of your home?
What happened?

Do your parents fight about you?
What do they fight about?

Does the staff here treat you the same way as the other children?

Do they call you names?

Does the staff let other kids call you names or treat you badly?

INFORMATION

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

Parents may punish children and youth whose actual or perceived SOGIE is different than their parent's expectations.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to bring their LGBTQ+ friends to the house.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to date (when age & culturally appropriate).

Are you allowed to wear the clothes, hairstyle, and other things that you want? If not, what would you wear if you were allowed to?

Can you bring your friends home? If not, why?

What are your family beliefs about dating? (If allowed to date) can you date who you want?

Families come from different backgrounds, cultures and religions which construct their belief system. Some may have strong convictions about gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation.

How does your family's religion or culture influence how they treat you?

Who is supportive of you in your family? In your surroundings? In what way are they being supportive?

LGBTQ+ youth often avoid school because they are being bullied.

Are you being bullied or discriminated against at school?

Who advocates for you at school?

Do you have anyone you feel safe with at school?

IT IS NEVER OKAY TO "OUT" A YOUTH.

Ask for permission to discuss the youth's SOGIE with someone else. Explain to the youth why you think someone else needs to know and who will know.

Thank you for trusting me with all this information, my job is to keep you safe. You are being mistreated because of your [insert here sexual orientation or gender identity] and that is not okay. You deserve to be safe.

For me to ensure that you stay safe, I am going to have to write a report but first I want to ask your permission to mention your [insert here sexual orientation or gender identity].

Other than me, the people who will know about your SOGIE are also people who will be safe and supporting of your SOGIE. Those people would include my supervisor, other social workers, and your attorney, and possibly even the judge. How is this for you to hear?

HOTLINE

Tip Sheet Regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)

It is important to have a SOGIE informed lens when receiving a call just like you have a trauma informed lens. If the caller tells you the child/youth's SOGIE, these are some questions to ask:



- How do you know this child's SOGIE?
- Do you believe this child is being harmed because of their SOGIE?
- Does this child have anyone they feel safe with?



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

There are also situations where a parent/caregiver is being supportive of their child's SOGIE, and a third party observes this and reports that the parent/caregiver is being abusive by affirming the child's SOGIE. When assessing for risk/harm/abuse it is essential to understand that affirming or supporting a child's SOGIE is not abuse nor neglect.

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INFORMATION

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

LGBTQ+ and gender expansive (GE) children are often treated differently than their siblings and other children. LGBTQ+ and Gender Expansive (GE) children may not feel comfortable talking about their SOGIE as they don't know if you will be affirming.

Are all the children in the home treated the same or is this child being singled out?

Is the child being punished or shamed?

Is the child being bullied by their peers or siblings?

Does the child's sex assigned at birth match their gender expression?

LGBTQ+ youth report higher rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, risk of suicide, as well as alcohol and drug use.

Is the child showing severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior toward themselves or others as a result of the parents' or caregivers' conduct?

LGBTQ+ and GE youth often run away to protect themselves.

Does this child run away and why?

Is this child allowed in their home? If not, why?

Children and youth are also often "kicked out" of their home because of their SOGIE.

Is the youth allowed to wear what they want in relation to their gender identity, if not, is it because they are experiencing bias, discrimination, or hostility in their placement?

Children placed in out of home care who are or perceived to be LGBTQ+ and GE are often mistreated by staff.

Parents may punish children and youth whose actual or perceived SOGIE is different than their parent's expectations.

Are there family conflicts because of the child's gender expression?

How is each parent responding to the child's SOGIE?

The child's SOGIE may create conflicts within the family.

Are there family conflicts about the child's sexual orientation, gender identity?

Families come from different histories, cultures and religions which construct their belief system. Some may have strong negative convictions about different sexual orientations, gender identities and/or expressions.

How does the family's religion or culture influence how they treat the child?

How does the community respond/support the child's SOGIE?

LGBTQ+ youth often avoid school because they are bullied.

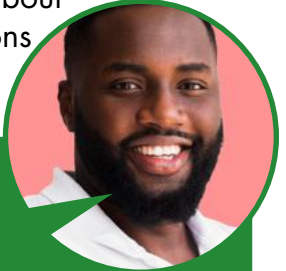
Is the child not going to school because they are bullied or discriminated against by peers, teachers or school employees?

PERMANENCY PLANNING

For LGBTQ+ & Gender Expansive Children & Youth

Tip Sheet Regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression (SOGIE)

To engage a youth around their SOGIE, be inquisitive just as you normally would with any child. Be curious and interested about who they are. Here are some possible statements/questions when engaging a youth around their SOGIE:



- “My name is (...) and my pronouns are (...)”
- “What is your name?”
- “Tell me about yourself.”
- “If you could be anyone you wanted, who would you be?”
- “If you could wear anything you wanted to, what would you wear?”
- “Do you have someone special in your life? Are you dating anyone?”
- “How do you see yourself in the future?”
- *If you know you are working with a transgender, gender queer, or gender variant youth and aren't sure how they identify, just ask: “What pronouns would you like me to use when I refer to you?”*
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE:*
“Tell me what that means to you.”
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE:* “Who have you told?”
“Who else would you like to tell that you have not yet?”
- “Who do you feel you can be yourself with? Who supports you for who you are?”
- “If you could live with anyone, who would you live with?”

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

There are also situations where a parent/caregiver is being supportive of their child's SOGIE, and a third party observes this and reports that the parent/caregiver is being abusive by affirming the child's SOGIE. When assessing for risk/harm/abuse it is essential to understand that affirming or supporting a child's SOGIE is not abuse nor neglect.

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INFORMATION

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

LGBTQ+ and Gender Expansive (GE) children may not feel comfortable talking about their SOGIE as they don't know if you will be affirming.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth may not tell you if they are being mistreated, abused or discriminated against in their own home for fear of being placed somewhere worse.

Remind them you are a safe person to talk to.

What would you like me to know about you?

What is the most important thing to you right now?

If I say something that is not right, please feel free to correct me.

Do you feel safe here? If not, why?

Do you like living here? Do you want to stay here?

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often shamed and abused for who they are or perceived to be.

Caregivers may not like to be seen in public or family gatherings with their LGBTQ+ or GE child.

LGBTQ+ & GE children are often treated differently than their siblings and other children in the home.

Do your caregivers support who you are?

Do your caregivers or other children in your home call you bad names?

Are you being treated the same way as your siblings? If not, why do you think?

Do your caregivers ever fight about you? What do they fight about?

Caregivers may be uncomfortable or afraid for their children and youth whose actual or perceived SOGIE is different than their parent's expectations, particularly if their child expresses themselves in a manner the caregivers do not approve of.

Are you allowed to wear the clothes, hairstyles, and other things that you want?

If you could wear anything you wanted, what would you wear?

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to bring their LGBTQ+ friends to the house.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to date (when age & culturally appropriate).

Families come from different backgrounds, cultures and religions which construct their belief system. Some may have strong convictions about gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation.

Can you bring your friends home? If not, why?

What are your family's beliefs about dating? (If allowed to date) Can you date who you want?

How does your caregiver's religion or culture influence how they treat you?

Who is supportive of you around you or in your community? In what way are they being supportive?

LGBTQ+ youth are often left out of the permanency process.

Who in your life supports you for who you are?

Are there people in your life you wish you could live with?

Do they know about your [insert sexual orientation or gender identity]?

FAMILY MAINTENANCE & REUNIFICATION

Tip Sheet Regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression (SOGIE)

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- “My name is (...) and my pronouns are (...)”
- “What is your name?”
- “Tell me about yourself.”
 - “If you could be anyone you wanted, who would you be?”
- “If you could wear anything you wanted to, what would you wear?”
- “Do you have someone special in your life? Are you dating anyone?”
- “How do you see yourself in the future?”
- *If you know you are working with a transgender, gender-queer, or gender variant youth and aren’t sure how they identify, just ask: “What pronouns would you like me to use when I refer to you?”*
 - *If they tell you about their SOGIE: “Tell me what that means to you.”*
 - *If they tell you about their SOGIE: “Who have you told?” “Who else would you like to tell that you have not yet?”*
- “Who do you feel you can be yourself with? Who supports you for who you are?”
- If you could live with anyone, who would you live with?

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

There are also situations where a parent/caregiver is being supportive of their child’s SOGIE, and a third party observes this and reports that the parent/caregiver is being abusive by affirming the child’s SOGIE. When assessing for risk/harm/abuse it is essential to understand that affirming or supporting a child’s SOGIE is not abuse nor neglect.

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INFORMATION

LGBTQ+ and Gender Expansive (GE) children may not feel comfortable talking about their SOGIE as they don't know if you will be affirming.

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

What would you like me to know about you?

What is the most important thing to you right now?

If I say something that is not right, please feel free to correct me.

Do you feel safe here? If not, why?

Do you like living here? Do you want to stay here?

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often shamed and abused because of their SOGIE or perceived SOGIE.

Parents may not like to be seen in public or family gatherings with their LGBTQ+ or GE child.

LGBTQ+ & GE children are often treated differently than their siblings and other children in the home.

A child's SOGIE or perceived SOGIE may create conflicts within the family.

Do your parents support who you are?

Do your parents or siblings call you bad names?

Do you get to go to family gatherings?
If not, why not?

Are you being treated the same way as your siblings?
If not, why do you think?

Do your caregivers ever fight about you?
What do they fight about?

Parents may be uncomfortable or afraid for their children and youth whose actual or perceived SOGIE is different than their parent's expectations, particularly if their child expresses themselves in a manner the caregivers do not approve of.

Are you allowed to wear the clothes, hairstyles, and other things that you want?

If you could wear anything you wanted, what would you wear?

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to bring their LGBTQ+ friends to the house.

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to date (when age & culturally appropriate).

Families come from different backgrounds, cultures and religions which construct their belief system. Some may have strong convictions about gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation.

Can you bring your friends home? If not, why?

What are your family's beliefs about dating?
(If allowed to date) Can you date who you want?

How does your family's religion or culture influence how they treat you?

Who is supportive of you in your family? In your surroundings? In what way are they being supportive?

INFORMATION

LGBTQ+ youth often avoid school because they are being bullied

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

Are you being bullied or discriminated against at school?

Who advocates for you in school?

Do you have anyone you feel safe with at school?

It is never okay to "out" a youth. Ask for permission to discuss the youth's SOGIE with someone else. Explain to the youth why you think someone else needs to know and who will know.

Thank you for trusting me with all this information, I am here to ensure that you and your family's relationship improves. I would like to talk to your family about SOGIE in general.

Does anyone in your family know about your [insert here sexual orientation or gender identity]?

Do you need help/support telling someone?

INFORMATION

Parents of LGBTQ+ children are often scared for their children because of their SOGIE and how they may be treated.

Parents of LGBTQ+ children often feel grief because their child does not conform to their expectations. This could be related to religion, culture, beliefs in general, or not knowing about SOGIE.

Parents of LGBTQ+ children may also feel guilty as they wonder if they did anything to "make" their child LGBTQ+.

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE PARENTS

Tell me how you feel about your child's SOGIE?

It is normal to feel this way, tell me more about it? What scares you?

Please, tell me about your [insert here: religion, culture, beliefs in general], I want to know more about you?

Most parents feel this way, let me assure you there's nothing you could have done to influence your child's SOGIE.

Parents want the best for their children.

I can see how much you love [insert name]. Let's work together to improve your relationship with them.

Do you need some information and resources about SOGIE?

PERMANENCY PLANNING

For CAREGIVERS of
LGBTQ+ Children & Youth

Tip Sheet Regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression (SOGIE)

To engage a caregiver around their child's SOGIE, be inquisitive just as you normally would any caregiver. Be curious and interested about what is going on in their home and who they are.

- Let them know that whatever feelings they have are normal, and they can process those with you. Let them know that they should not process those feelings with or around their LGBTQ+ or gender expansive child.
- Help the caregiver explore their feelings around SOGIE.
- Engage the caregiver to tell them about the child's strengths.
- Use resources to help them understand the differences between sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

There are also situations where a parent/caregiver is being supportive of their child's SOGIE, and a third party observes this and reports that the parent/caregiver is being abusive by affirming the child's SOGIE. When assessing for risk/harm/abuse it is essential to understand that affirming or supporting a child's SOGIE is not abuse nor neglect.

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INFORMATION

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CAREGIVERS

Caregivers of LGBTQ+ children are often scared for their children because of their SOGIE and how they may be treated.

Tell me how you feel about your child's SOGIE?

It is normal to feel this way, tell me more about it? What scares you?

Please tell me about your [insert here: religion, culture, beliefs], I want to know more about you?

How does your [insert here: religion, culture, beliefs] view LGBTQ+ folks?

Caregivers of LGBTQ+ children often feel grief because their child does not conform to their expectations. This could be related to religion, culture, beliefs in general, or not knowing about SOGIE.

Caregivers want the best for the children in their home and they need more information about SOGIE.

I can see you care about [insert name]. Let's work together to improve your relationship with them. I'd like to give you some information and resources about SOGIE.

Caregivers of LGBTQ+ children may also feel that other children in the home might get negatively "influenced" by the LGBTQ+ child. They may also believe that a child's SOGIE may result in sexual activities with other children in the home.

What are your concerns about the other children in your home?

It is important to know that sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are each separate (refer to gender abacus).

A child's SOGIE is not about sexual behaviors. Age appropriate supervision is for all children in the home.

Caregivers may think that being LGBTQ+ is a choice or that being around other LGBTQ+ peers may "make" the child LGBTQ+.

Just like straight folks cannot be influenced to be straight, LGBTQ+ folks cannot be influenced to be LGBTQ+. It is important for the child's mental health, spirit, and self-esteem to be around peers who are, look or feel the same way they do. Let us find some community resources.

Caregivers may not know that not being affirming may affect a child's mental health and increase suicidal thoughts, AWOLS, seeking relief in drugs, etc.

Did you know that kiddos who are not affirmed are 8x more likely to attempt suicide? More likely to run away, do drugs and end up on the street?

Caregivers may not know how to be affirming.

It is important to treat LGBTQ+ kiddos like any other child in your home. They need support, affection, and to feel good about themselves just like any child.