The Basics: Understanding LGBTQ+ Youth

Ted Lewis, Executive Director
Ted.Lewis@sidebysideva.org
www.sidebysideva.org
Phone: 804-644-4800
Youth Support Line: 888-644-4390
Learning Objectives

1. Increase knowledge of Side by Side resources and services.
2. Increase knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities, terminology, and experiences.
3. Identify common risks and pathways to risk connected to LGBTQ+ youth.
4. Identify best practices and protective factors to support LGBTQ+ youth.
5. Identify resources for future support and education.
Reminders for Our Time Together

1. Open your mind to something new today.
2. Prepare yourself for some difficult statistics and realities of LGBTQ+ youth.
3. Everyone makes mistakes, it’s ok to mess up!
4. Push yourself to ask questions and engage in dialogue.
5. Remember you are not in this alone, we’ve got your back.
Information about Side by Side
Side by Side

• Founded in 1991 as ROSMY

• Dedicated to creating supportive communities where Virginia’s LGBTQ+ youth can define themselves, belong, and flourish.

• Support LGBTQ+ Youth ages 11-20 with some additional services for young adults 18-25
Understanding the LGBTQ+ Community
LGBTQ+

L – Lesbian
G – Gay
B – Bisexual
T – Transgender
Q – Queer and Questioning
Identities Abound (+)

agender, asexual, aromantic, bisexual, demiboy, demigirl, demisexual, gay, gender fluid, genderflux, genderqueer, greysexual, homoflexible, intersex, lesbian, non-binary, neutrois, pansexual, polysexual, transgender
Sex Assignment = Assignment of sex (typically male or female) based solely on external genitalia (penis or vagina).

Intersex = a person whose body does not meet the ideal medical standards of male or female.

*Approximately 1 in every 2,000 births annually
Gender Identity = A person’s personal internal understanding of who they are in regards to gender.
Identity Spectrum

SEX ASSIGNMENT

Male → Intersex → Female

Man/Boy → Intersex → Woman/Girl

Cisgender = Gender Identity Aligns with Sex Assignment.

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

**SEX ASSIGNMENT**

- Male
- Intersex
- Female

**GENDER IDENTITY**

- Man/Boy
- Non-Binary
- Woman/Girl

**Transwoman / Transgirl / MTF**

**Laverne Cox**

- Assigned male at birth
- Identifies as a woman
- Uses she/her pronouns
- Goes by Laverne
Identity Spectrum

SEX ASSIGNMENT

Male
Intersex
Female

GENDER IDENTITY

Man/Boy
Non-Binary
Woman/Girl

Transman / Transboy / FTM

Kylar Broadus

- Assigned female at birth
- Identifies as a man
- Uses he/him pronouns
- Goes by Kylar
Non-Binary = Refers to individuals who do not identity as man or a woman. There are many different terms used by non-binary people to describe their identity.
Non-Binary Identities

Some ways to identify in relation to the binary:

- Between, such as on a spectrum
- Back and forth
- On top of
- Encompassing
- Depending on weather
- Both
- A whole bunch
- Bits of each
- One of them, sometimes
- But also, very importantly:
  - Neither
  - A different gender(s) entirely
  - Not even on the same page dude

This is NOT a complete list! There are actually ONE MILLION BAZILLION ways to do it.
How young is too young to know you’re transgender?

Children understand their own gender identity as young as 3-4 years of age.

By the age of 6, most children’s gender identity is constant and independent of external features.

Persistent / Insistent / Consistent

Kohlberg, 1966
Social vs. Medical Transition

**Social**
- Using a name and pronoun that aligns with their gender identity
- Possibly changing outward appearance (clothing, chest binders, breast forms, etc.)
- Internally and/or publicly claiming a gender different from their sex assignment

**Medical***
- Using hormone blockers to delay puberty
- Using hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Having surgery to alter chest/breasts
- Having surgery to alter internal and/or external reproductive organs

*Medical transition is a conversation for medical professionals only.
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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transboy (Identity)</th>
<th>Tomboy (Expression)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assigned female at birth</td>
<td>• Assigned female at birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Identifies as a boy</strong></td>
<td>• Identifies as a girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Could express himself in any number of ways</td>
<td>• Expresses herself in ways we associate with boys (masculine)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GENDER EXPRESSION

Masculine

Androgynous

Feminine

Ciswomen: Diane Keaton, Gladys Bentley, Janelle Monae, Taraji P. Henson, Portia de Rossi

Transwomen: Eli Erlick, Mara Keisling, Laura Jane Grace, Marsha P. Johnson, Renee Richards, Jazz Jennings
Cismen: Dwayne Johnson, Ricky Martin, Jared Leto, Prince, Jaden Smith, Ezra Miller
Transmen: Chaz Bono, Billy Tipton, Mack, Ian Alexander, Rae Spoon
Key Takeaways:
1. Gender expression does not always align with a person’s gender identity.

2. Youth who express themselves outside the norm are most likely to be targeted with violence or harassment.

3. Feminine men and transgender women, are the most likely group within the LGBTQ+ community to face violence and harassment.
Identity Spectrum

**SEX ASSIGNMENT**
- Male
- Intersex
- Female

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

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

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**
- To Women
- Bisexual
- To Men
The term “sexual orientation” refers to:
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.
How young is too young to know your sexual orientation?

Some youth report having same-gender crushes earlier, but not necessarily the language to describe what they are feeling.

Most youth start to understand same-gender attraction during the onset of puberty, typically middle school years (ages 11-14).
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 then 2 gender options).

To Men

Asexual = Having no sexual attraction.
Identity Spectrum

PLOT YOURSELF

SEX ASSIGNED

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

SEX ASSIGNED
- Male
- Intersex
- Female

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

GENDER EXPRESSION
- Masculine
- Androgynous
- Feminine

SEXUAL ORIENTATION
- To Women
- Bisexual
- To Men

THE GENDER BINARY
Risk Factors
**LGBTQ+ Youth & Risk**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suicide</th>
<th>Self-Harm</th>
<th>Homelessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 3-5 times more likely to attempt suicide</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 3 times more likely to engage in self-harm</td>
<td>Nationally, 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42% of transgender people will attempt suicide in their lifetime</td>
<td>Between 20-45% of transgender people engage in self-harm behavior</td>
<td>In Richmond, 35% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% of youth at Side by Side have seriously considered suicide in the last 6-months</td>
<td>42% of youth at Side by Side report engaging in self-harm behaviors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The Trevor Project, National Center for Trans Equality, Side by Side youth Surveys | Sources: Decamp & Bakken 2016, Pardoe & Trainor 2017, Side by Side Youth Surveys | Sources: The Williams Institute, Advocates for Richmond Youth |
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.

Adapted from Ryan, 2009 (Family Acceptance Project)
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)
Harsh Environment – What does it look like?

• Almost 90% of LGBTQ+ youth hear anti-LGBTQ+ comments regularly at school and 25% hear these remarks from school staff.

• More than ¼ of LGBTQ+ youth report physical harassment in schools.

• Over ½ (63%) of LGBTQ+ youth report discrimination in their schools.

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

GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey
PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO WERE BULLIED AT SCHOOL IN THE PAST YEAR, BY SEXUAL IDENTITY AND BY SEX OF SEXUAL CONTACTS, UNITED STATES, YRBS, 2017

- **Total**: 19.0%
- **Heterosexual**: 17.1%
- **Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual**: 33.0%
- **Not Sure**: 24.3%
- **Opposite Sex Only**: 19.3%
- **Same Sex Only or Both Sexes**: 35.8%
- **No Sexual Contact**: 16.8%
Protective Factors & Best Practices for Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth
Key Protective Factors
What Side by Side knows that works!

1. Trusted and caring adults
2. Knowledgeable community
3. Seeing themselves represented positively in their community
4. Connecting with other LGBTQ+ youth and strong allies
5. Emotional support through coming out process
Using a Trans Youth’s Chosen Name is Suicide Prevention

Transgender youth who were called by their chosen name consistently at school, home, work, and with friends experience...

• 71% fewer symptoms of severe depression,

• 34 decrease in reported thoughts of suicide,

• 65% decrease in suicidal attempts.

Stephen Austin, “Using Chosen Name Reduces Odds of Depression and Suicide in Transgender Youths,” Journal of Adolescent Health, March 2018
The Importance of Gender & Sexuality Alliances

• Allows LGBTQ+ students to feel less isolated and alone.

• Provides education and information to the general student body.

• Students at schools with GSAs report lower anti-LGBTQ+ bullying. (1)

• Having a GSA in a school reduces suicide risk for ALL students. (2)

Resources for Further Education
Build Your Support Network for Parents & Families

Middle School Parent Group
Wednesdays
6:00-7:30pm

Open to parents and family of any age!
Meets 2nd Tuesday of Each Month
6:30-8:30pm

Open to parents and family of trans youth of any age! Meets Thursdays
6:30-8:30pm
Questions & Discussion
remember we’re on your side

Ted Lewis, Executive Director
Ted.Lewis@sidebysideva.org
www.sidebysideva.org
Phone: 804-644-4800
Youth Support Line: 888-644-4390