Screening for the Intersection of Trauma and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SO/GI)

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2019 Charleston Child Trauma Conference
October 17, 2019

A little background information…

Contributing Members of the NCTSN LGBTQ Collaborative Group
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Learning Objectives
At the end of this course, participants will be able to:
1. Learn about the kinds of traumas that disproportionately impact LGBTQ youth.
2. Learn about a new screening tool to assess for sexual orientation, gender identity, and potentially traumatic experiences that LGBTQ youth may experience.
3. Develop a potential action plan for implementing this screening tool in their practice setting.

Disclaimer
*This presentation should not be considered all-inclusive and is only up to date as of October 1, 2019.*

Language and Terminology
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Agender, Allies
- LGBTQIA+

Related to:
- Sexual orientation
- Sex Inclusivity
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
Language & Terminology

Sexual orientation - An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people

Sex - Based on physical anatomy (internal and external) genetics; assigned at birth

Gender identity - Internal sense of being male, female, both, or neither

Gender expression - External means of communicating gender to others (e.g., through clothing, hair, mannerisms, speech, play, social roles)

Transgender - Gender identity does not match assigned birth sex (implies binary)

Cisgender - Gender identity and sex assigned at birth match (implies binary)

The Intersection of Trauma & Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity in Youth

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools

Typical Experiences for LGBTQ Youth at School

59.5% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 44.6% because of their gender expression, and 35.0% because of gender.

34.8% of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, and over a tenth (10.5%) missed four or more days in the past month.

Typical Experiences for LGBTQ Youth at School

Almost all LGBTQ students (98.5%) heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) at school.

95.3% heard other homophobic remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”).

94.0% heard negative remarks about gender expression (not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough”).

87.4% heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people like “transy” or “he/she”.

46.7% of LGBTQ students experienced cyberbullying in the past year at school (GLSEN 2017).
Childhood Victimization of LGBTQ Youth

Victimization based on sexual orientation for LGB Youth

- About 70% have experienced verbal victimization
- Average age this starts is about 13 y.o. with about 72% of incidents beginning at school
- Many with physical victimization rates vary across studies (11-30%)
- 28.9% were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) in the past year (GLSEN 2017 data)
- 11.2% were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) in the past year (GLSEN 2017)

Victimization based on gender identity/expression for Youth

- 59% were verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) in the past year
- 24.4% were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) in the past year
- 11.2% were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) in the past year

Transgender youth report discrimination more than gender conforming youth related to perception of their orientation (although likely inaccurate for this group)

School Staff Support for LGBTQ Youth at School?

55.3% of LGB LGBTQ students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report this incident to school staff most commonly because they doubted that effective intervention would occur or the situation could become worse if reported.

60.4% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response.

56.5% heard homophobic remarks from teachers or school staff and 71.0% heard negative remarks about gender expression from teachers or school staff.

LGBTQ Youth & Specific Risks Regarding Sexual Abuse

- Lack of safe arenas to discuss sexual orientation puts LGBTQ youth at increased risk for sexual abuse and exploitation
- Sex ed curricula often exclude information about same-sex sexual activity
- Providers often do not ask about same-sex attractions or activity
- Fear that disclosing sexual abuse will mean they must disclose their orientation
- Fear/shame that their orientation is what caused abuse by someone of the same sex
- Fear by heterosexual youth that abuse by someone of the same sex means that they are gay, lesbian, or bisexual

Gender nonconformity in children accounts for some of the disparities in abuse = kids who don't look like they "should" tend to experience more verbal, sexual, and physical abuse

Gender nonconformity associated with significantly more symptoms of PTSD and depression as compared even to other LGBTQ youth, especially for males
Effects of Victimization for LGBTQ Youth

LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression:

- Were more likely to have missed school in the past month
- Had lower grade point averages (GPAs) than other students
- Were more likely to have been disciplined at school
- Had higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem
- Were more likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (e.g., college or trade school)

Higher rates of self-harming behaviors (25%) and suicidal ideation (24%) for LGBT youth who reported discrimination based on their perceived sexual orientation status (vs about 6% and 7%, respectively, for those who did not experience discrimination).

Childhood Victimization of LGBTQ Youth & PTSD

Physical abuse, sexual abuse, and rates of PTSD are more prevalent in LGBT youth than heterosexual/cisgender youth.

History of childhood abuse accounts for about 30-50% of PTSD in LGB adults.

Protective Factors for Trauma in Youth

- Intelligence
- Interpersonal skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication skills
- Coping skills
- Autonomy
- A sense of purpose and future
- A special talent or ability
- A sense of self-esteem

Protective Factors for LGBTQ Youth

“Family Acceptance”

- Family acceptance has a protective effect for LGBTQ youth against many threats to well-being including health risks such as depression, HIV infection, drug use, and suicide.
- Dr. Caitlin Ryan, Family Acceptance Project: http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/

The Screener – What it is & what it isn’t

Brief questionnaire designed to be administered separately to youth and their caregiver/s

Respectfully asks for information related to child’s sexual orientation and gender identity

Provides follow up questions to screen for trauma experiences more specific to LGBTQ youth

Not designed to be used as a “stand-alone” tool or to yield diagnosis

Goals for administering screener

- Provide early, effective trauma-focused screening and intervention
- Proactively communicate that sexual orientation and gender identity are important parts of a youth’s identity
- Promote shared language and mutual understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ youth
- Create space for youth and caregivers to ask questions or express concerns related to identity

Access to and ability to locate affirming and knowledgeable treatment providers.
How can it be used?

To augment your intake, engagement and general trauma assessment
To start conversations within your organizations about the importance of including sexual orientation and gender identity in trauma-informed treatment
To inform decision making about how to engage caregivers in trauma treatment

Screener Structure

Youth Version:
Part 1: 4 questions about gender identity (for all youth)
Part 2: 4 questions about sexual orientation (for youth 12+ yrs.)
Part 3: 6 questions about potentially traumatic events prevalent among LGBTQ youth (for youth who identify as LGBTQ)

Caregiver Version:
Part 1: 4 questions about gender identity (for all caregivers)
Part 2: 1 question about sexual orientation (for caregivers of youth 12+ yrs.)
Part 3: 6 questions about potentially traumatic events prevalent among LGBTQ youth (for caregivers of youth who identify as LGBTQ)

Preparing to administer the screener

Ask these questions of ALL youth, not just those you think might be LGBTQ
Consider the youth’s age and cognitive development when asking the questions
Ask youth and caregivers answer questions about SOGI separately to promote honesty and openness
Explain the rationale for why you are asking and how it might benefit them to share
Provide space to ask questions and validate feelings
Share information about confidentiality and informed consent

Safety, Confidentiality & Informed Consent

Before you start working with youth, familiarize yourself with the legal, ethical, and organizational guidelines:
• Who has access (or could have access) to youth’s records?
• What organizational and regulatory policies guide your practice?
• Who are the people who can help you figure this out?

Before documenting information about SOGI, ask youth:
• Talk with youth about who has (potential) access to their records
• How open are they with these people about their SOGI?
• Is there risk of maltreatment or rejection if parent/caregiver were to learn about their identity?
• Do not document without youth’s consent!

Screening Tool for Youth Part 1

Administer without caregivers in the room and explain why you are having the conversation separately.
1. Legal name
2. Name they would like to be called
3. Pronouns
4. Gender identity
5. Sexual orientation
6. Sexual behavior
7. Sexual activity
8. Sexual identity

Screening Tool for Youth Part 2

For all youth who identify as LGBTQ or questioning, focusing on experiences they may have had related to their identity or perceived identity:
1. Sense of safety at home, school, or in community
2. Being bullied at home, school, or in community
3. Physical harassment or abuse at home, school, or in community
4. Sexual mistreatment at home, school, or in community
5. Homelessness or being kicked out
6. Has youth received LGBTQ specific sexual health information?
Screening Tool for Caregivers Part 1

Administer without youth in the room and explain why you are having the conversation separately.

1. Legal name
2. Name child likes to be called
3. Pronouns
4. Gender identity
5. Sexual orientation

Screening Tool for Caregivers Part 2

For caregivers of youth who parent knows (or suspects) identify as LGBTQ or questioning, focusing on experiences they may have had related to their identity or perceived identity:

1. Youth has expressed feeling unsafe at home, school or in community
2. Youth has experienced bullying at home, school or in community
3. Youth has been physically harassed or abused at home, school or in community
4. Youth has experienced sexual mistreatment at home, school or in community

Engaging parents & caregivers

Assess attitudes, cultural and religious values, and knowledge about SOGIE
Assess reactions to child’s SOGIE including presence of rejecting and accepting behaviors
Explore their hopes, dreams and concerns for their child. What do they value?
Ask them to describe how they learned about their child’s SOGI
Use reflective listening skills to validate their concerns

Clinical considerations & next steps

Address any imminent risk or safety concerns
Consider what type of treatment is best for family
Consider best to involve caregivers in treatment or if other forms of support are more appropriate
Connect family to resources in their community

Implementation: Organization or Practice

In a small group, consider
Assess your environment
Determine what confidentiality issues apply
Data and documentation
Administration
Plan for what to do with the information

If you or your agency makes a commitment to use the screener, does your environment communicate that you are open and affirming:

• Pictures
• Magazines
• Gender neutral bathrooms
• Forms

Assess your environment
Determine what confidentiality issues apply
- Familiarity with legal and ethical guidelines for your state
- Communicate those to staff
- Record access
- Information sharing among team members

Data and documentation
- What happens to the raw screening data?
- How are the results documented?
- Does the documentation vary depending on confidentiality and case dynamics?
- Pronoun and preferred name use on documentation
  - How is that communicated to others in the organization?
  - How is it noted in the medical record?

Administration
- Determine and communicate which clients are being screened when
- Reinforce caregivers and child/adolescent separate

Plan for what do with the information
- How do you incorporate into treatment?
- Does it alter/shape your conceptualization?
- How do you communicate to others if appropriate?
- Are there safety issues to address?

Making Your Own Action Plan

Excited to Keep Learning??

- October 23, 2019: Affirming Care for Transgender and Gender Expansive Youth
- November 20, 2019: TF-CBT with LGBTQ Youth
- December 11, 2019: Screening for the Intersection of Trauma and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- TBD: Family Acceptance and LGBTQ Youth in association with Dr. Caitlin Ryan
References


Questions??

Contact Information
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THANK YOU!

Additional Resources (cont’d)

Family Acceptance Project: familyprojectofnc.org
Gender Spectrum (CA) www.genderspectrum.org
GLAAD (national) www.glaad.org/transgender
Legal Resource for Transgender Youth: www.transgenderlawcenter.org
PFLAG: www.pflag.org
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: www.thetaskforce.org
National Center for Transgender Equality: transequality.org
Trans Student Educational Resources www.transstudent.org
The Trevor Project: www.thetreverproject.org
American Psychological Association www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/
The Gender Wheel www.genderwheel.com/

Additional Resources

National Child Traumatic Stress Network www.nctsn.org
Lambda Legal www.lambdalegal.org
Human Rights Campaign www.hrc.org
The Gender Book www.thegenderbook.com
GLSEN www.glsen.org
Trans Student Educational Resources www.transstudent.org
The Trevor Project www.thetreverproject.org
American Psychological Association www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/
The Gender Wheel www.genderwheel.com/

Wrapping Things Up...

Questions??

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THANK YOU!