National Center for Youth Law

Understanding the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of LGBTQIA2S+ Youth

WHAT SERVICES PROVIDERS CAN DO TO BUILD INCLUSIVE SERVICES AND SPACES FOR YOUTH

AUTHORS

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Suggested citation: French Nafekh, E., Ackerman-Brimberg, M., Walker Brown, K., & Contreras, M. (2023). *Understanding the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of LGBTQIA2S+ Youth: What Services Providers Can Do to Build Inclusive Services and Spaces for Youth.* National Center for Youth Law. Los Angeles LGBT Center. Saving Innocence. Young Women's Freedom Center.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are in deep gratitude to our consultants and partners on this project, Ariel Bustamante, Capacity Building Manager, Los Angeles LGBT Center, Jasmine McDonald, Senior Lead Crisis Case Manager, Saving Innocence, Marilyn Perez, Senior Program Manager, Young Women's Freedom Center, and Abigail Richards, Co-Executive Director, Young Women's Freedom Center. Thank you for your thought partnership, creativity, and collaboration throughout the development of this issue brief and for your leadership and co-facilitation of our listening sessions with young people. And thank you for your tireless commitment to supporting and empowering LGBTQIA2S+ young people impacted by CSE.

Special thanks to each of the listening session participants who shared their insights and expertise with us. We are in awe of your wisdom, resilience, and power.

Thank you to Tamar Anna Alexanian, Skadden Fellow, Children's Law Center of California for providing her insight and feedback throughout the development of this issue brief. Thank you to David Perry, Health Data Research Analyst, and Danna Basson, Director, Research and Evaluation, at WestCoast Children's Clinic for their collaboration throughout our efforts to better understand the impact of CSE on boys, trans, and gender non-conforming youth. And thank you to Delaney Hiegert and Dana Matsunami, previous summer law clerks at the National Center for Youth Law, for their significant research contributions to this brief.

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Issue Brief for Service Providers

GOAL: The goal of this issue brief is to empower direct service providers from community-based organizations and public agencies across the country to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth impacted by commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) and sex trafficking. Whether or not your organization has expertise in providing services to LGBTQIA2S+ youth and/or youth impacted by CSE, you are likely to encounter young people with these experiences and identities in your work and community. Here, you can learn about risk factors and vulnerabilities, best practices, and ways to adapt your services to better support youth at this intersection.

WHO AND WHY

Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, Two-Spirit, and all sexual and gender minorities (LGBTQIA2S+ or 2SLGBTQIA+)[1,2] are among those most vulnerable to sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.[3] Yet there is still a widespread lack of services and understanding about how to best support LGBTQIA2S+ youth impacted by CSE.

↗ LEARN MORE AND FIND A GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATED TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER EXPRESSION (SOGIE): SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION GLOSSARY OF TERMS

"TWO-SPIRIT" is a Native American term that refers to a person with both a masculine and feminine spirit.[4] The term is often included in the umbrella acronym LGBTQIA2S+ or 2SLGBTQAI+, but it is "intended to convey a broad array of indigenous gender diverse traditions."[5] And although the term Two-Spirit is used across Indigenous communities, different Tribes may have their own Indigenous words to describe Two-Spirit people in their communities.

WHAT WE KNOW

LGBTQIA2S+ Youth in the Sex Trade

- In a 2016 study of 949 youth involved in the sex trade in six cities across the U.S., nearly half of all youth were LGBTQ (ages 13 to 24).[6] Of these youth, 70% were Black/African American, 12% were white, 8% were multi-racial, 7% were Hispanic/Latino, and 3% identified with an additional race or ethnic category.[7]

  ↗ YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN THE SEX TRADE: A NATIONAL STUDY

- A study from 2014 to 2016 with 641 homeless youth across ten cities in the U.S. and Canada found that 24% of LGBTQ youth were trafficked for sex, compared to 12% of non-LGBTQ youth.[8] While LGBTQ youth comprised only of 19% of respondents, they comprised 36% of those who were sex trafficked and 36% of those involved in the sex trade.[9] The study also found that half of the LGBTQ youth had engaged in the sex trade at some point during their lifetimes.[10]

- A 2018 study with 270 homeless youth in Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Washington D.C. found that although LGBTQ youth comprised only 15% of the youth interviewed, they comprised 39% of those who reported being sex trafficked.[11] Sixty percent of transgender youth reported experiencing sex trafficking.[12]

nearly 50%

OF YOUTH IN THE SEX TRADE IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ

LGBTQ youth are 2x more likely

TO BE SEX TRAFFICKED THAN NON-LGBTQ YOUTH

"I am constantly in awe of how incredible these youth are. They are funny and brilliant. They are passionate and caring. They are resourceful beyond measure. They are so much more than the labels we give them. And, above all, we should all be working to amplify their voices. May we never forget that they are experts and visionaries for ways that the system can – and should – better support them."

-TAMAR ANNA ALEXANIAN, SKADDEN FELLOW, CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER OF CALIFORNIA

VULNERABILITIES & PATHWAYS TO COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience intersections of oppression, which heighten the risk of exploitation

LGBTQIA2S+ youth are disproportionately impacted by the sex trade due to "multiple intersecting social, structural, and economic forces."[13] Below are some of the key drivers of vulnerability for CSE of LGBTQIA2S+ young people.

HOW SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION LEADS TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND NEGATIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES

↗ LGBTQIA+ YOUTH AND EXPERIENCES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A HEALING-CENTERED APPROACH

For LGBTQIA2S+ youth of color, "anti-LGBTQ+ stigma intersects with the negative effects of systemic and individual racism, creating even more vulnerability to homelessness, the sex trade, and other forms of human trafficking."[14] This means that "[i]n addition to homophobia or transphobia, LGBTQ youth of color may encounter racism and discrimination on a daily basis and in various forms that can further complicate their ability to express, explore, and/or manage their LGBTQ identities."[15] This requires community members, programs, housing, public systems, advocates, and partners to understand these intersectional identities and support the youth in meeting their individual needs.

Systemic and individual-level homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism leads to unsafe homes, schools, and communities[16]

Research has found LGBTQ youth experience disproportionately high rates of verbal and physical abuse, parental abuse, sexual abuse, assault at school, and related issues such as missing school, because of fear.[17]

A 2017 survey with over 12,000 youth aged 13-17 across the U.S. found that 48% of LGBTQ youth who were out to their parents say that their **families make them feel bad for being LGBTQ,**[18] and 67% of LGBTQ youth hear their **families make negative comments** about LGBTQ people.[19]

This survey also found that the majority of LGBTQ youth experience **negative and hostile school environments.**[20] Only 26% of LGBTQ youth reported that they always feel safe in the classroom.[21] Seventy three percent of LGBTQ youth have experienced **verbal threats** because of their actual or perceived LGBTQ identity, while 70% have been **bullied at school** because of their sexual orientation.[22]

LGBT youth also report **feeling more isolated from their communities** than their non-LGBT peers.[23] A 2022 survey by the Trevor Project found that nearly **2 in 5 LGBTQ youth reported living in a community that is somewhat or very unaccepting of LGBTQ people.**[24]

This lack of familial, peer, and community acceptance and support has negative impacts on LGBTQIA2S+ youth in nearly all areas of life – often leading to negative mental health outcomes,[25] housing insecurity and homelessness, child welfare and juvenile justice system involvement, difficulty obtaining employment, and barriers accessing social services[26] and adequate health care.[27]

SOURCE: TREVOR PROJECT

Rejection, harassment, or discrimination at home or in placements results in LGBTQIA2S+ youth experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity at high rates

LGBTQIAS+ youth are overrepresented amongst the homeless youth population. A 2017 report found that LGBT youth are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than non-LGBT youth.[28] Service providers estimate that while only 7-10% of the general youth population are LGBTQ, 20-40% of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ.[29]

Youth of color are disproportionately represented amongst LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness.[30] A 2021 report from the Trevor Project found that compared to white LGBTQ youth, **Native/Indigenous youth had more than double the likelihood of experiencing housing instability or homelessness,** with Black, Latinx, and multiracial LGBTQ youth also experiencing homelessness at significantly higher rates.[31]

Family rejection of a youth's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (SOGIE) often leads to running away or getting kicked out of the home and subsequent housing insecurity and homelessness. A 2015 study by the Williams Institute found that the most prevalent factor contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness was being forced out of the home or running away from the home because of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.[32]

Without housing and limited means to meet their basic needs, and when faced with consistent rejection from their homes and communities, LGBTQIA2S+ youth often turn to the sex trade to survive and for acceptance. One study of homeless youth in New York City found **LGBTQ youth were 7-8 times more likely to have traded sex to meet basic needs – also known as "survival sex"** – than their non-LGBTQ peers.[33]

SOURCE: CHAPIN HILL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LGBTQIA2S+ youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system, where they often experience further discrimination and mistreatment

LGBTQIA2S+ youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system.[34] A 2014 study by the Williams Institute looking at LGBTQ youth in Los Angeles through the LA LGBT Center's Rise Program found that there are between **1.5 and 2 times as many LGBTQ youth living in foster care as LGBTQ youth living outside of foster care.**[35] Another study surveying middle and high school students in California indicated that nearly **one in three youth in foster care self-identified as LGBTQ,** as compared to 11.2% of a nationally representative sample of youth.[36]

While LGBTQIA2S+ youth enter foster care for many of the same reasons as their non-LGBTQIA2S+ peers, LGBTQIA2S+ youth have noted the additional trauma they experience for being rejected or mistreated because of their SOGIE.[37] **Once LGBTQIA2S+ youth enter foster care, they often continue to experience the same rejection or mistreatment by the very system that is supposed to protect them.**[38]

1 in 3

YOUTH IN CALIFORNIA'S FOSTER CARE SELF-IDENTIFIED AS LGBTQ

"I was in a foster home with other gay girls who wanted to express themselves as more masculine, but the foster parents wouldn't acknowledge it. They wouldn't buy them the clothes they wanted or allow them to feel comfortable enough to express themselves. Instead, they would see boys' clothing on the floor and accuse them of having boys over."

-EMARA TIMS

"Young people are often pushed into CSE because of foster care. It's about more than just 'housing.' In foster care, young people don't get what they actually need.

-ANONYMOUS

One survey of LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care in New York City found that: **78% were removed or ran away from their foster placements as a result of hostility toward their sexual orientation or gender identity, 100% of those in group homes reported verbal harassment, and 70% reported physical violence in group homes.**[39] The Los Angeles study referenced above found that LGBTQ youth have a higher average number of foster care placements and are more likely to be living in a group home.[40] This additional instability and harassment within the foster care system can cause further harm and lead to worse outcomes.

These experiences of rejection and instability often drive LGBTQIA2S+ youth to leave care, leading to further housing insecurity and homelessness, and sometimes exploitation or criminalization. One study found that 56% of LGBTQ youth in foster care spent time without stable housing because **they felt safer on the streets than in their group or foster home.**[41] And again, with limited options to survive on their own, LGBTQIA2S+ youth are often forced to turn to the sex trade for housing, food, clothing, and sometimes, community with others who have similar identities and lived experiences.

LGBTQIA2S+ youth are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, where they often experience further harm and collateral consequences

LGBTQIA2S+ youth are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.[42] Feeling unsafe at school or at home may lead some LGBTQIA2S+ youth to engage in behaviors that put them at risk of juvenile justice system involvement, such as skipping school, running away, or getting into fights.[43] Research has shown LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to report getting into a fight at school, often due to bullying and harassment, which can lead to referrals by school resource officers to the juvenile justice system.[44]

In addition, higher rates of homelessness also increase the risk that LGBTQIA2S+ youth will become entangled in the juvenile justice system.[45] For example, LGBTQ youth report that they have been apprehended by police for loitering and/or panhandling.[46]

Despite that in over half of U.S. states youth may no longer be arrested for prostitution, involvement in the sex trade still increases interactions with law enforcement and entanglement in the juvenile or criminal legal system for offenses both related (e.g. loitering) and unrelated (e.g. petty theft) to the

sex trade.[47] A 2016 study with youth involved in the sex trade found that 65% of participants reported a prior arrest, 16% reported a prior prostitution arrest, and 11% reported a prostitution arrest in the past year.[48]

Involvement with the juvenile justice system can create collateral consequences which can increase vulnerability to CSE. Survivors have shared that disconnection from community, as well as having a criminal record, often impact whether they can find employment, access housing, receive student loans or other public benefits, and more. These all limit one's ability to support themselves, rendering survival sex and the underground street economy some of the only viable options. Aware of these additional vulnerabilities, traffickers often target young people who are in or returning home from the juvenile justice system.

Employment discrimination based on SOGIE creates economic insecurity

LGBTQIA2S+ youth, particularly transgender and gender non-conforming youth, often struggle to obtain or maintain employment due to discrimination from employers based on their SOGIE.[49] For LGBTQIA2S+ youth who are experiencing homelessness, it may be even more difficult to find employment without having clean clothes, a permanent address, a high school degree, or while under the legal age of employment.[50]

A 2010 study found that despite efforts to find alternative sources of income, few transgender youth were able to secure an initial interview and many reported discrimination based on gender identity and expression.[51] A 2021 report by the Trevor Project found that **more than one in three LGBTQ youth who were employed experienced workplace discrimination,** with transgender and nonbinary youth reporting significantly greater rates of discrimination.[52] This discrimination and lack of safety often causes young people to leave these jobs. Without gainful employment, youth are left with few other options to provide for themselves and their families, making them vulnerable to CSE.

1 in 3

LGBTQ YOUTH WHO WERE EMPLOYED EXPERIENCED WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Transgender and non-binary youth face significant barriers in accessing gender-affirming care

Transgender and non-binary youth also experience barriers to accessing gender-affirming care.[53] Gender-affirming care is age-appropriate care, which may involve social, medical, and legal components – such as hormone therapy and name changes on legal documents – to support people in affirming their gender identity.[54] Research demonstrates that gender-affirming care improves the overall health and well-being of transgender individuals.[55]

Lack of familial support, lack of access to care while in foster care or detention, or the inability to pay for care are common barriers to receiving gender-affirming care. These barriers are growing even more insurmountable as an increasing number of states across the country pass legislation restricting or banning access to gender-affirming care and undermining the rights of LGBTQIA2S+ young people and their families.[56] Without other options for accessing gender-affirming care, transgender and non-binary youth may turn to trading sex to afford the care they need.

RECOGNIZE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES AMONG TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING YOUTH, AND LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL YOUTH

It is important to recognize that "there may be significant differences between risk factors that impact **marginalized sexual orientations** when compared to risk factors impacting **marginalized gender identities and expressions.**"[57] For example, transgender and gender non-conforming youth may experience additional barriers in finding employment due to bias and discrimination, challenges accessing gender-affirming care, higher rates of violence, and lack of community or social support in their lives – which all increase risk of exploitation. In one study of youth involved in the sex trade, a social services staff shared that "for trans female youth, there is a lot of pressure to do this work [in the sex trade], and it is almost a rite of passage for them to 'really be trans.'"[58] Survivors report that they have received, and sometimes internalized, messages from providers, law enforcement and others, that being in the sex trade is a viable option for making money when they can't do so elsewhere. These types of norms and expectations must be acknowledged and challenged among service providers.

The different experiences between transgender and gender non-conforming youth and lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth have **"implications at all stages of response including prevention, identification, and service provision."**[59] Providers must consider and address additional service needs that transgender and gender non-conforming youth may have.

Example: A 17-year-old transgender girl was discharged from a residential facility for refusing to leave the facility for a mandatory outing without a new hair weave.[60] At this facility, "cosmetics were viewed as secondary to the health and safety needs outlined in the services and needs plan," and therefore available a few days after initial intake rather than immediately.[61] While this hierarchy of needs may be reasonable for some cisgender youth, for many transgender youth, access to cosmetics and other hygiene products may be necessary to ensure physical safety and support their mental health, and should be provided immediately.[62]

Example: A trans youth presenting as male requests tampons at a youth drop-in center. Providers should address the need without requiring the young person to explain or justify their request.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Understanding a youth's needs, and attending to them, supports trust and relationship building, which can positively impact the youth's safety, stability, and engagement in programming. Importantly, supporting youth to get their needs met outside of exploitation is a key component of prevention and healing.

BARRIERS TO IDENTIFICATION

There are several barriers to identification of CSE among LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Self-disclosure by the young person should not be required for them to access services and support for CSE or trafficking or any other support – the focus must be on connecting them to services and support, whether or not they disclose exploitation.

Narrowly defining a young person's experience may cause them to disengage or be less open to services

The language providers use to speak with young people about CSE can unintentionally create barriers to their identification as a victim. Many young people do not view their experiences as exploitation or trafficking and do not self-identify as a victim or survivor. Instead, they may refer to their experience as being "in the life" or "the game," engaging in "sex work," being a part of the "underground street economy" or other terminology.

It is important to follow the young person's lead about the terminology they prefer to use – otherwise, they may disengage or be less open to receiving support or services. It is not a provider's job to define a young person's experience – instead, encourage the young person to use the language that feels most comfortable to them. Even if they don't define their experience as trafficking or CSE, they may still benefit from connection to CSE-specific services if there are signs indicating they may be experiencing CSE.

LGBTQIA2S+ youth are perceived to be voluntarily participating in the sex trade, and are mistakenly not seen as victims of CSE

Law enforcement and service providers often assume that LGBTQIA2S+ youth engaging in commercial sex are doing so voluntarily – especially if they do not have a third-party exploiter. For example, in one study in New York City, **law enforcement "did not consider LGBTQ youth to be trafficking victims since they perceived them to be engaging in the commercial sex trade of their own free will, regardless of their age."**[63] Indeed, some even consider the sex trade as a viable option for youth who cannot make money otherwise. However, this perception is false. Survival sex - or trading sex to meet one's own needs - for youth under 18 is trafficking. Under federal law, any person under the age of 18 who trades sex for anything of value is a victim of trafficking – no force, fraud, or involvement by a third party exploiter is necessary.

In addition, research has found that while the **indicators of trafficking are consistent** across the gender spectrum, they are **interpreted differently by providers** depending on the young person's gender identity and providers' biases.[64] While providers may recognize certain characteristics or behaviors as indicators of risk of CSE for cisgender girls, they may not interpret the same indicators as suggesting a risk of CSE

for cisgender boys, transgender, and gender nonconforming youth. This results in these groups of young people being underidentified and receiving less access to services and support.[65]

Fear of being "outed" as LGBTQIA2S+ discourages youth from disclosing CSE

Many LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience shame and stigma surrounding their SOGIE and worry that if they disclose CSE, their sexual orientation or gender identity may be revealed to individuals, including family or providers, with whom they do not feel safe or comfortable sharing that information. In addition, there is often a fear that others will make false assumptions about one's sexual orientation if CSE is revealed – such as that a person is gay if they are being exploited by someone of the same gender, even though data shows that this is not true in many cases.[66] For some young people, the impact of being "outed" can be devastating and harmful such as: being bullied or facing violence at home, school or placement; or being ostracized or forced to leave home or a community, such as a faith-based community. And for some young people, these impacts may seem, and in some cases be, worse than enduring the harm of CSE, which may prolong their exploitation for fear of other options.

Mistrust and fear prevents LGBTQIA2S+ youth from seeking help from law enforcement

LGBTQIA2S+ people in the U.S. experience violence, discrimination, and harassment by law enforcement officers.[67] Studies have found that "LGBTQ people generally face a high incidence of profiling, false arrest, and abusive police encounters,"[68] including for "walking while trans" laws.[69]

A 2015 study of LGBTQ youth, young men who have sex with men (YMSM), and young women who have sex with women (YWSW) engaged in survival sex in New York City, whom were mostly youth of color, found that **"LGBTQ youth of color are often targeted by the police because of their actual or perceived race, sexual orientation, and gender nonconformity, which leads to an overall mistrust and negative attitudes toward law enforcement."**[70] Seventy one percent of participants reported interacting with police at some point in their lives, with 63% sharing that these interactions were negative.[71] Nearly 50% of youth participants reported feeling like the police stopped them due to profiling, rather than actual illegal activity.[72] Most youth reported trying to avoid the police, such as by keeping to themselves, walking the other way, and staying inside or avoiding certain areas.[73]

71%

OF LGBTQ YOUTH WHO ENGAGED IN SURVIVAL SEX IN NYC, REPORTED INTERACTING WITH POLICE

The abuse and harassment LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience at the hands of law enforcement,[74] and feelings of mistrust and fear, prevent LGBTQIA2S+ youth involved in the sex trade from feeling safe and comfortable seeking help from law enforcement, which, again, may prolong their exploitation and/or expose them to more violence and harm. Moreover, in some cases, **law enforcement officers have been found to initiate and participate in sexual exploitation of youth and adults**, including in exchange for protection from arrest or prosecution, further justifying young people's fears about coming forward.[75] The lack of safety that young people experience at the hands of law enforcement is particularly problematic because law enforcement are often the first to encounter and identify young people impacted by CSE. What could be an outlet for help when they really need it, is instead another source of fear and trauma.

Fear of discrimination or judgment from systems, service providers, and healthcare professionals about CSE

LGBTQIA2S+ youth also report negative interactions with public systems (e.g., child welfare and juvenile justice), service providers, and healthcare professionals. LGBTQIA2S+ youth report judgment and harassment by providers who do not affirm their gender identity or sexual orientation, or who even try to define the young person's identity for them. In the 2015 study in New York City referenced above, youth reported "high rates of service denial, as well as violence from breach of confidentiality and unsafe and discriminatory treatment by [service providers and public benefits programs] staff…on the basis of their [SOGIE] and age."[76]

LGBTQIA2S+ youth also report being refused care by providers as a result of bias – **providers sometimes treat LGBTQIA2S+ youth like it is their choice to be involved in the sex trade, and therefore, their fault if they are abused or hurt.** Without a feeling of trust and safety, LGBTQIA2S+ youth do not seek services they need for fear of being further judged or not believed.

Concerns that disclosure will increase violence or control from an abusive partner or trafficker[77]

Like their non-LGBTQIA2S+ peers, LGBTQIA2S+ youth also experience CSE by third parties, including abusive intimate partners and traffickers. The 2015 study in New York City referenced above found that 15% of youth had engaged in commercial sex under the control of a third party trafficker at some point during their involvement in the sex trade.[78] Because of the power and control exploiters often exert,[79] LGBTQIA2S+ youth may fear that disclosing CSE and seeking help will increase violence or control from an abusive partner or trafficker, either to themselves or others. It's also important to recognize that the experiences of youth involved in the sex trade can change over time – "for example, young people might be recruited by an exploiter or pimp but then eventually trade independently to meet their basic needs, or vice versa."[80]

Providers need to be aware of anti-LGBTQIA2S+ bias, which may prevent them from recognizing intimate partner violence and/or trafficking when it happens to an LGBTQIA2S+ young person. For example, a teenage girl may come into a health care center seeking treatment accompanied by an older woman. While this girl may be exhibiting red flags of exploitation by the older woman – such as, appearing anxious, tense, and submissive and deferring to the older woman to speak for her – because they are both women, the provider may not recognize these red flags of intimate partner violence or trafficking.[81]

Fear of reporting to child welfare or criminal justice systems

Youth may be fearful of reporting CSE to a social worker or probation officer, or others like teachers or health care providers, who are mandatory reporters of child abuse,[82] because of the trauma, abuse, and/or harm that many LGBTQIA2S+ have already experienced in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. This negative history with the child welfare system is particularly acute for youth of color, whose families have been and continue to be disproportionately impacted and harmed by the child welfare system.[83] They may fear that disclosure will result in further or deeper involvement in these systems for them and their loved ones – in other words, that they will get in trouble, be separated from their families, or experience other consequences of reporting like reduced employability because of child abuse registries. This fear is also exacerbated by not knowing how the information that they share will be used or protected.[84]

SERVICE NEEDS & SERVICE PROVISION

Many of the service needs for LGBTQIA2S+ youth experiencing CSE overlap with the service needs of all youth experiencing CSE. Within each area outlined below, LGBTQIA2S+ youth need support that affirms their SOGIE and other intersecting identities, recognizes them as individuals, and creates both physical and emotional safety. These services must be trauma-informed and incorporate harm reduction principles. **Importantly, as with all youth, there should not be an exclusive focus on CSE or their LGBTQIA2S+ identity in service provision, but rather a recognition of the youth as a whole person, with unique goals, strengths and needs.**

Service needs for LGBTQIA2S+ youth impacted by CSE include:

- Short-term and long-term affordable, safe housing options
- Health care, including reproductive health care and gender-affirming medical services (such as access to hormones)
- Mental health care
- Financial assistance to meet basic needs, including food, clothing, hygiene products, child care products (such as diapers) and transportation
- Employment and/or education opportunities free of discrimination
- Peer support with LGBTQIA2S+ individuals who have experienced CSE
- Community-based support groups for LGBTQIA2S+ youth impacted by CSE
- Legal advocacy, for example to change name and/or gender markers
- Gender-affirming care for youth of all genders, including access to clothing, cosmetics, and pronoun usage that aligns with the youth's gender identity or expression
- Substance use treatment programs
- Extracurricular activities aligned with interests

"A lot of providers ask if you're gay - I'd like to be asked, 'What are your interests?'"

-EMARA TIMS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDERS

CENTER YOUTH. Because a key aspect of CSE is loss of control and agency over one's own body and choices, it is important for youth impacted by CSE – and all youth – to feel empowered to recognize and voice what they want and need based on their unique circumstances. Youth input is essential both at the individual case level, and in program and policy level discussions. Rather than make assumptions about what youth may want or need, ask them and try your best to make that happen. Youth voice and choice should be integrated into all recommendations below.

↗ LEARN MORE: YOUTH SURVEY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TIP SHEET

Overview of Recommendations

1. Recognize & Address Biases
2. Require Training & Education
3. Engage & Partner with People with Lived Experience
4. Improve Identification & Screening
5. Build Services & Spaces for LGBTQIA2+ Youth
6. Create Safe & Affirming Homes & Placements for LGBTQIA2S+ Youth Impacted by CSE
7. Ensure Representation & Inclusivity in Language, Materials & Staffing
8. Provide Access to Gender-Affirming Health Care
9. Invest in More Research

1. Recognize & Address Biases

- Examine and address your own biases and assumptions toward people with LGBTQIA2S+ identities, both at the system and individual level
- Recognize the importance of a young person's racial, cultural, tribal, and religious identities – and the intersection of these identities with gender and sexual orientation. It is critical to understand a youth's multifaceted perspectives, identities, and experiences and provide individually tailored services. Seek to understand how attitudes and biases vary and impact youth across different cultures and communities
- Recognize and address assumptions about LGBTQIA2S+ youth as they relate to survival sex and notions of choice and control
- Convey a non-judgmental and supportive attitude to all the youth you serve
- Do not assume sexual orientation or gender identity, and do not assume sexual behavior aligns with sexual orientation. Prioritize creating safe spaces for youth to share their SOGIE
- Recognize that youth may feel different levels of comfort in sharing their gender identity or sexual orientation – if the youth decides to share, discuss confidentiality and privacy to make sure they feel comfortable with what, if anything, is shared with others

2. Require Training & Education

- Require robust, comprehensive, ongoing training, coaching, and education about the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ young people
- Offer such training and education to families, caregivers and community-members more broadly to support prevention and identification
- Develop training that centers voices of people with lived experience and provide compensation to those trainers that aligns with level of expertise
- Training should cover topics including appropriate language and terminology, common barriers and challenges LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience, service needs, and best practices for supporting LGBTQIA2S+ young people, particularly those impacted by CSE
- Be familiar with the legal and policy landscape – both federally and locally – especially as it relates to treatment of young people in the commercial sex trade, and LGBTQ+ rights

3. Engage & Partner with People with Lived Experience

- Engage and partner with people (both adults and young people) with lived experience with CSE in all aspects of your organization's work - including direct service provision, program and policy development, communications, and training. This should be done with the understanding that the expertise of folks with lived experience goes beyond the sharing of their story. Avoid tokenization and recognize the importance of including diverse experiences and identities
- Hire individuals with lived experience onto your staff to help build safe spaces and peer support for LGBTQIA2S+ impacted by CSE to connect and be in community with one another. This can include mentoring and other direct services positions, and also leadership, fundraising, policy and communications positions to ensure broad representation
- Provide equitable compensation for all lived experience expertise - whether on an employee or consultant basis - that values lived experience equally to other types of experience, such as education

4. Improve Identification & Screening

- Screen young people of all genders for CSE – screening universally ensures that certain young people are not missed due to common misperceptions about who is and isn't impacted by trafficking[85]
- Incorporate trafficking screening into intake processes for youth of all genders within child welfare, probation, health, and education systems, as well as at runaway and homeless shelters and drop-in centers, and other social services agencies
- Counter the shame and stigma that often prevents LGBTQIA2S+ youth from disclosing abuse by creating safe, non-judgmental spaces for all youth to feel comfortable sharing their experiences. This includes: hiring people with lived experience on staff, and displaying visual imagery such as posters and brochures that are more representative and inclusive, and adjusting language to be more inclusive
- Do not focus on getting the youth to self-disclose or identify abuse or exploitation. The goal of screening and identification is to identify and connect the young person to needed resources to support safety and stability, ultimately shifting power back to the youth

5. Build Services & Spaces for LGBTQIA2+ Youth

- Focus on relationships first. Create opportunities for connection in safe spaces, such as peer support groups for LGBTQIA2S+ youth impacted by CSE to connect and feel community with one another (e.g. within community-based organizations, at group homes, juvenile hall, LGBTQ+ centers, and CSE-specific organizations)

- Create opportunities for connection with LGBTQIA2+ mentors, including survivor mentors, staff members, and people in the community to cultivate a sense of belonging
- Build a well-vetted, LGTBQIA2S+-affirming, and culturally-responsive network of individuals and organizations to which you can refer young people for the service needs outlined above. Accompany youth to any referrals/organizations to ensure they are friendly and inclusive environments if they are new to you. Provide "warm handoffs" directly to vetted staff members at outside agencies
- Focus on connecting youth to supports and services rather than disclosure of SOGIE or CSE. Do not require or expect the youth to disclose their SOGIE or CSE as a prerequisite to connecting them to LGBTQIA2S+ and CSE-specific supports and services
- Do not make assumptions about what services and supports the youth might want – offer them information and empower them to decide what service needs they want to focus on. Shifting power and agency back to the youth is essential
- Uplift Harm Reduction practices. Work with the young person to identify harm reduction practices they can use to reduce the risk of harm they experience in potentially unsafe situations – such as accessing contraception, or identifying a safe person to contact when they are in danger. Don't expect that a young person will stop experiencing CSE once you provide services – instead focus on uplifting practices which may decrease risk over time
- Discuss the limits around disclosure and confidentiality with youth. Be upfront about your own obligations, specifically the limits around disclosure and confidentiality to youth

ABOUT MANDATORY REPORTING

The LGBTQIA Health Education Center has put forth harm reduction guidelines for mandatory reporting, which include clearly explaining to youth their rights and in what situations you would be required to call child protective services, law enforcement, or others. Make clear that youth can access services without disclosure of abuse or exploitation, and involve the youth to the extent they would like to be involved if mandatory reporting is required.[86]

↗ LEARN MORE HERE

↗ LEARN MORE: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES: HARM REDUCTION GUIDANCE SERIES - INTRODUCTION; GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS; GUIDE FOR PROBATION OFFICERS; GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS

6. Create Safe & Affirming Homes and Placements for LGBTQIA2S+ Youth Impacted by CSE

- Develop strategies for engaging with caregivers and community members to increase familial and community support and affirmation of LGBTQIA2S+ youth[87]
- For youth not living at home, ask the youth for and prioritize their housing preferences
    - For example, rather than assuming a trans boy would want to be in a group home designated for males, ask what he wants – he may feel more comfortable or want to be in a girls' home instead
- Ensure policies, intake procedures, and organizational messaging at out-of-home placements and juvenile detention facilities are LGBTQIA2S+ inclusive, specifically:
    - Housing based on the youth's preferences, including units within detention facilities
    - Access to culturally relevant care/services
    - Use of affirming pronouns
    - Access to gender-affirming clothes and hygiene products, and
    - Processes for youth to report discrimination and abuse by staff and other youth
- Ask what kinds of products they want to use and provide individualized options. Don't assume a youth needs or doesn't need certain products (e.g., tampons, hair products) because of how they look. For example: instead of pre-made hygiene bags, provide youth with a bag and allow them to choose the items they need

"Share information about all the services you can offer. Don't try to direct me to what you think I need."

-ANONYMOUS

7. Ensure Representation & Inclusivity in Language, Materials & Staffing

- Evaluate your marketing and outreach materials, website, and online presence to ensure they are inclusive of all gender identities. Use gender-inclusive language and imagery in both external materials as well as programming, training and policy materials to signal inclusion to both staff and youth
- Recognize that not all youth will identify their experiences as CSE or sex trafficking. Some may identify as victims or survivors, while others will not. Empower youth to use the language they identify with when discussing SOGIE and trading sex for anything of value and mirror the language used by youth
    - For example, if a young person refers to their significant other as their partner, use that word too. Or if a young person refers to their experience as "survival sex" or "sex work" use those terms rather than "trafficking."
- Model inclusive language by introducing yourself with your own pronouns, inviting youth to share their pronouns, if they would like to, and using appropriate pronouns if shared[88]
- Use gender-neutral language when asking about relationships. Do not assume the SOGIE of exploiters, traffickers or partners based on the SOGIE of the youth
- Hire staff, mentors, and volunteers who represent the range of identies and diversity of the young people you serve
- Signal acceptance of LGBTQIA2S+ people in physical spaces, such as having a pride flag by your desk to symbolize a welcoming space

"It takes time to rebuild trust. Don't give up on the person - they just might not trust you yet. Spend time with them, take them somewhere, sit and talk to them."

-ANONYMOUS

8. Ensure Youth Have Access to Gender-Affirming Health Care

- Recognize the barriers that many LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience in accessing gender-affirming care, and support youth to overcome those barriers
- Learn about the gender-affirming health care options available for youth in your community, and support youth in accessing them (transportation to/from appointments, making clear what they can access without parental consent)
- Educate youth and caregivers about health care options or providers that offer gender-affirming care, and help identify funding streatms to pay for it

9. Invest in More Research

- Conduct additional research to gain an accurate estimate of the prevalence of LGBTQIA2+ youth impacted by CSE in your community, as well as a deeper understanding regarding vulnerabilities and service needs
- Include youth-centered practices in planning, conducting and disseminating research to ensure that the subjective experiences of young people are used in conjunction with qualitative methods. This may include methods such as surveys, interviews and focus groups as well as youth-led research, using Youth Participatory Action Research principles and processes[89]

Case Studies

GOAL: In this section, you will hear about the experiences of two LGBTQIA2S+ young people impacted by CSE, and learn examples and tips for how community-based organizations can come together to support those youth.

BUILDING BRIDGES TO CREATE LGBTQIA2+ AND CSE-SPECIFIC EMPOWERING CARE

Meet Skylar (she/her)

Skylar is a 16-year-old African American, trans girl. She enjoys spending time with her sister, Brittany. She loves hair and makeup and is interested in attending cosmetology school one day.

At age 14, Skylar, who was assigned male at birth and raised as a boy, shared with her parents that she is a girl and they kicked her out of the house. She experienced homelessness until a teacher called child protective services to report a concern that Skylar was homeless. As a result, she entered foster care and began living at a group home for girls.

While at the group home, staff often misgendered Skylar (calling her "him" instead of "her") and made comments about her gender identity, making her feel unsafe and unwelcome. As a result, Skylar ran away from the group home and couch surfed with friends.

SKYLAR IS NOT ALONE.

- At least 19% of youth in foster care in Los Angeles identify as LGBTQ+, of which over 90% are youth of color.[90]
- LGBTQ+ youth have a higher average number of foster care placements and are more likely to be living in a group home.[91]
- LGBTQ+ youth in Los Angeles reported being treated less well by the child welfare system and were more likely to have been homeless at some point in their life.[92]
- As many as 56% of LGBTQ+ youth in out-of-home care have spent some time without stable housing because they felt safer on the streets than in group or foster homes.[93]

Skylar wanted gender-affirming care,[94] but wasn't sure where to get it. She stopped by the LGBT Youth Center's drop-in center after learning about it online and connected with one of the staff there, Amber. Before addressing gender-affirming care, Amber checked in with Skylar to make sure her basic needs were being met.

CHECK IN ON THEIR FULL RANGE OF NEEDS: Check in about the full range of needs a youth might have. They may come in seeking one type of service, but benefit from others, too:

- Housing
- Health care (including gender-affirming care)
- Mental health care
- Legal services
- Food
- Clothing
- Hygiene products
- Harm reduction and safety planning

Over several weeks, Skylar and Amber develop a relationship with one another. Skylar tells Amber that sometimes she calls some of her regulars to make money. Skylar tells Amber that she is "just doing what she needs to do to pay the bills."

Amber suspects that Skylar is trading sex for money, which is commercial sexual exploitation under the law because of Skylar's age. Because of her concern, she has a discussion with Skylar about how Skylar defines safety, and tools she can use to keep herself safe, also known as "safety planning." She gives Skylar her phone number to call in case Skylar ever feels unsafe or needs anything. Amber tells Skylar that she has a friend, Jasmine (an advocate at Saving Innocence), who might be a helpful person to speak to. Skylar says no, she'd rather not speak to Jasmine.

SAFETY PLANNING: Safety planning is a harm reduction tool that providers can utilize to have conversations with young people about what they identify as safe and tools for keeping safe. It is about reducing potential harm of the situation, rather than expecting them to stop right away. It is about shifting the power back to the young person.

FOLLOW THE YOUTH'S LEAD ON LANGUAGE: Many young people experiencing CSE do not view their experiences as exploitation or trafficking. Here, Amber avoids using those words and follows Skylar's lead about the terminology she uses, as Skylar may disengage or be less open to receiving support or services. It is not our job to define a young person's experiences – encourage them to use the language that feels most comfortable for them. Even if they don't define their experience as trafficking or CSE, they may still benefit from connection to CSE-specific services.

UNDERSTAND STATE REPORTING LAWS: Make sure you understand your state's mandated reporting laws, including who is a mandated reporter. Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation are reportable in many states, including California. Keep in mind the timeframes by when suspicion of abuse should be reported. Be candid with young people about what you would need to report and what you would not.[95]

Skylar tells Amber she's tired of sleeping somewhere different every night. Amber tells Skylar that she can help her find housing. Amber calls an emergency shelter she is familiar with, one she knows would be safe and gender-affirming for Skylar. Amber also connects with Jasmine to explore longer term housing options that serve youth who have experienced CSE.

ENSURE AFFIRMING PROVIDERS: When identifying housing, it is important to ensure providers will be affirming of a young person's sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE). Before referring a young person to a provider, you should do your own vetting. It is also important to accompany the young person to the shelter or placement to further confirm it is a good fit and to ease the transition by providing a "warm handoff."

To support Skylar, Amber continues to meet with her regularly over the next few weeks, developing a stronger relationship and sharing about additional services and support that Skylar might find helpful. Amber shares more information with Skylar about the following services available through the Center: education and employment program, case management services to help navigate systems, and youth groups with peers who share similar experiences.

After getting to know each other better, Amber still believes that Jasmine could be a helpful resource, and asks Skylar again if she would be open to meeting with Jasmine. Skylar is reluctant but agrees. Jasmine offers to meet her at the Center's drop-in center tomorrow, so that Skylar doesn't need to worry about finding transportation to meet Jasmine.

MEETING YOUTH WHERE THEY ARE: It is important that providers offer to meet with the young person at a time and place that is convenient for them, within reason. Give the youth the ability to choose when and where to meet – this shifts power back to them.

The next day, Jasmine meets Amber and Skylar at the Center. Once Skylar appears to be more comfortable with Jasmine, Amber leaves the two of them to connect. Jasmine and Skylar start to build a relationship, and after several weeks, Skylar begins to feel like she can trust Jasmine.

BUILDING OFF BORROWED TRUST: Borrowed trust can be incredibly important when trying to develop relationships with young people. Here, Skylar has built trust with Amber over time, and now, Jasmine can work off of the borrowed trust that Skylar and Amber have to start building a relationship of her own with Skylar.

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER: Keep in mind that building trust is going to look different for every young person. Make sure you focus on getting to know the young person as an individual and learn about their interests. Ask questions unrelated to their SOGIE and to CSE. An important part of building trust is being consistent – if you say you are going to call or do something, do it, and be honest about expectations.

For the next several months, Jasmine provides ongoing case management for Skylar, building a relationship with Skylar through goal setting, connections to resources, and love and support. Jasmine also connects Skylar with a survivor mentor at Saving Innocence, who provides one-on-one mentoring to Skylar. At no point does Jasmine ask Skylar to confirm she is being exploited. This type of disclosure is not required to access services. Jasmine and Amber check in regularly to ensure they are coordinating services and supports.

MULTIPLE PROVIDERS: It is important for multiple providers - here, the Center and Saving Innocence - to be in Skylar's life. They both offer her support in different ways, and in different parts of her life, and offer her a broader community of support, love, and acceptance. It is also important that Amber and Jasmine coordinate their efforts to avoid any strain on the young person. For example, they might each take the lead on a different support or service so that the young person doesn't feel overwhelmed by communicating about the same need to multiple providers.

Jasmine and Skylar continue to build their relationship, and Skylar feels like she can talk to Jasmine about anything. Skylar knows that if she ever feels unsafe, she can call Jasmine and Jasmine will come pick her up.

COLLABORATION IS KEY: It is important for service providers to understand that youth may continue to experience CSE even after they start receiving services. Jasmine supports Skylar, even in times when she continues to see regular customers, by uplifting harm reduction practices and ensuring Skylar knows she can call her whenever she feels unsafe.

Jasmine and Amber have worked together to support Skylar to transition to adulthood. Amber has connected Skylar to gender-affirming care and supported her through her gender transition.[96] She has also connected Skylar to LGBTQ+ youth at the Center with similar lived experiences. Jasmine has helped to reconnect Skylar with her sister, connect regularly with a survivor mentor, and has helped make sure Skylar has enough credits to graduate high school. Amber also helped to identify a cosmetology program, and funding, for Skylar to attend. Skylar is excited about what the future holds for her.

LOS ANGELES LGBT CENTER

The LGBT Youth Center serves youth up to the age of 24 who are currently at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Youth Center offers services in an LGBTQ+ safe and affirming environment and serves as an entry point to assist youth making the transition from homelessness to housing. Services include meals, clothing, support groups, an education program, employment preparation, training and placement program, case management, counseling, crisis shelter and transitional living (TLP). Community-based programs include services for youth at-home, in school, or in systems of care.

SAVING INNOCENCE

Saving Innocence provides critical support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to children and adults who have been commercially sexually exploited. Using a highly relational and collaborative approach, Saving Innocence gives children and adults on-the-ground help by linking youth with survivor mentors, utilizing strategic partnerships with law enforcement, social service providers and schools, and mobilizing communities to prevent abuse and increase neighborhood safety.

A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO ENHANCING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SELF DETERMINATION

Meet Adrianna (she/her)

Adrianna is a 17-year-old Latinx, bisexual girl. She enjoys spending time with her girlfriend, Jen. She also loves playing basketball – her favorite team is the Oakland Warriors. She is very creative and is interested in becoming an artist one day.

At age 15, Adrianna started getting bullied by other kids at school and at her foster home about her sexual orientation. She had tried asking for support from her foster parents, but they told her that maybe this is "just a phase" and she'll "grow out of it." They also said they were "surprised" because she "acted straight." Adrianna was frustrated, hurt, and felt alone.

USE GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE: Providers and caregivers should not make assumptions about a young person's identity – making assumptions can be harmful and traumatizing for the young person. Instead, use gender-neutral language when asking about relationships, celebrate diversity in all forms, and let youth know you are willing to listen and talk about anything. Support their self-expression, and allow youth to participate in activities that interest them, regardless of whether these activities are stereotypically masculine or feminine.[97]

One day when she was being bullied at school, Adrianna got into a fight with another girl who was making fun of her for having a girlfriend. A school resource officer, who was a police officer, arrived and told the other student, who was white, to return to class. He then arrested Adrianna for assault on school grounds and transported her to juvenile hall.

RECOGNIZE THE IMPACT OF INTERSECTIONS OF OPPRESSION: Race/ethnicity and SOGIE often interact to heighten discrimination. LGBTQ+ youth of color face more discrimination, profiling, and violence by law enforcement and the juvenile justice system.[98]

Adrianna's family friend recommended Adrianna connect with Young Women's Freedom Center (YWFC), an organization who had supported her friend throughout her own court process. Adrianna agreed, and Marilyn, a Self-Determination Coordinator from Young Women's Freedom Center, came to meet with Adrianna at juvenile hall.

MEET YOUTH WHERE THEY ARE AT: It is important for providers to meet youth where they are. YWFC does just that – on the streets, in jails and detention centers, and in their neighborhoods and communities. By meeting young people in jails and detention centers, they help bridge the transition back to community. YWFC staff are able to build trust with the young person, get to know them and center their self-determination. They co-create a plan that includes goals and access to holistic support including access and exposure to diverse healing modalities, resource navigation, and economic support.

During Marilyn's intake, Adrianna shares how she had been bullied at school and in her foster care home for having a girlfriend. Adrianna mentions that her girlfriend introduced her to "the life," and sometimes, she sells sex to get cash to pay for things she needs that the foster home won't provide her, like the kind of shampoo she likes. Marilyn responds by asking whether Adrianna feels she needs anything to stay safe, such as a number to call late at night, access to birth control, or anything else. Marilyn doesn't judge Adrianna or ask her to disclose what is happening – she focuses on taking a harm reduction approach to ensure Adrianna is safe and has her basic needs met.

USE HARM REDUCTION to work toward safer options and reduce risk of harm in potentially unsafe situations. For young people impacted by CSE, this approach recognizes the importance of supporting the young person to define and achieve what safety is to them, helping to restore the youth's autonomy and control.

Marilyn writes letters to Adrianna while she is incarcerated at juvenile hall, which solidifies their relationship. Marilyn invites Adrianna to start attending Freedom Circles, a 12-week introductory workshop focused on different topics each week, like harm reduction approaches, healthy relationships and boundaries, and exposure to diverse healing modalities (such as reiki, somatic healing, sound bath meditation, and self-defense), once she returns home. Adrianna will receive a gift card for each Freedom Circle she attends.

EMPOWER WITH ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES: Poverty and economic inequality are driving forces that make young people vulnerable to CSE. Often, young people need a way to meet their needs. By offering young people compensation for participation in their programs, and other economic opportunities, such as paid internships and job training, providers like YWFC can help empower young people with options to support their needs in ways that feel comfortable to them.

After Adrianna returns home, she begins attending Freedom Circles. A few weeks later, Marilyn starts working with Adrianna one-on-one with Self-Determination Advocacy. Through this process, Marilyn meets Adrianna where she is physically, emotionally and socially to support her in building goals and plans rooted in her self-determination and what she wants for herself and her life, moving toward personal transformation. Marilyn asks Adrianna what feels like an important need in her life right now, and Adrianna mentions she really wants to connect with other kids who are also LGBTQ+. She also mentions that she wants to play basketball and do more art.

RESTORE YOUTH AGENCY AND POWER: A key aspect of CSE is loss of control and agency over one's own body and choices. Youth who are system-impacted often have their autonomy further limited by restrictive policies and practices. Empowering young people to use their voices, both in the day to day decisions impacting their lives and at the programming and policy level, is especially important for young people impacted by CSE and/or systems as a means of restoring power and agency. Self-Determination Advocacy is one example of how to center youth voice and power.

DON'T FOCUS ON CSE: Focus on what young people themselves identify as their needs, rather than defining this for them. It's also important to keep in mind that CSE may be only a piece of a young person's experiences – and that there might be more important and urgent needs that the young person wants to address in their life. Focus on those needs and goals that young people identify for themselves.

Marilyn also asks Adrianna what success looks like for her so they can work together to achieve it. Adrianna shares that she just wants to be open about who she is and who she loves without feeling afraid of how people will respond.

YOUTH DEFINE THEIR OWN SUCCESS: Empowering young people who have experienced CSE and/or system involvement to define what success is for them – rather than what anyone else defines as success – can also help build trust. This enables the young person to feel like the provider is really there to support who they are as an individual and what they want and need.

Marilyn focuses on helping Adrianna feel affirmed and accepted for who she is. She connects Adrianna with other staff and young people at YWFC who are LGBTQ+. Marilyn also does outreach to Adrianna's

high school to ask about their basketball program and any creative art programs they offer. Marilyn continues to build her relationship with Adrianna, checking in consistently every week.

COMMUNICATE CONSISTENTLY: It is important to communicate consistently with the young people you support each week. This builds trust, and helps the young person as they navigate big decisions and life changes. Here, Marilyn helps Adrianna set goals and work toward those goals. She also checks in with Adrianna to ask how things are going at home and how she's doing mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Soon, Marilyn invites Adrianna and other young people participating in Freedom Circles to revise the Freedom Circles curriculum.

ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: It is important to engage young people in the process of developing and/or revising your organization's curricula and programming. Curricula and programming should reflect the wants and needs of the young people it aims to support. In addition, this is an important exercise for young people to learn to build professional skills, self-advocacy skills, elevate their voices, and effect change for other young people.

Months later, Adrianna has a group of friends she met through YWFC who are affirming and accepting of her identity. She is playing basketball two times a week at her high school and is taking an art class. She loves hanging out with Marilyn at YWFC, where she feels community with all the people she's met.

After attending Freedom Circles and working with Marilyn, she feels a greater sense of autonomy and confidence, knowing she can pursue the things she cares about and feel supported by those in her community. And soon, she will start her internship program with YWFC, where she hopes to continue to build her advocacy and leadership skills, while earning money to support herself.

Young Women's Freedom Center, for nearly 30 years, has provided support, mentorship, training, employment, and advocacy to young women and trans youth of all genders in California who have grown up in poverty, experienced the juvenile legal and foster care systems, have had to survive living and working on the streets, and who have experienced significant violence in their lives.

Resources

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

- On Our Own: A Survival Guide for Independent LGBTQ Youth - Human Rights Campaign, Time Out Youth, and True Colors Fund
- LGBTQ Resource List - GLAAD
- Staying Safe: Tips for LGBTQ Youth for How to Protect Yourself and Your Community from Human Trafficking - Polaris Project
- Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth of Color - It Gets Better Project
- Lambda Legal, Resources for LGBTQ Youth by State - Lambda Legal

RESOURCES ABOUT SOGIE

- Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression Glossary of Terms - Center of Excellence

RESOURCES ABOUT LGBTQ+ YOUTH

- Growing up LGBT in America - Human Rights Campaign
- 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report - Human Rights Campaign
- Trauma-Informed Care and LGBTQ Youth: Considerations for Advancing Practice With Youth With Trauma Experiences - Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services
- Serving Our Youth 2015: The Needs and Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth Experiencing Homelessness - The Palette Fund, True Colors Fund, UCLA: The Williams Institute

RESOURCES ABOUT LGBTQIA2S+ YOUTH IMPACTED BY CSE

- LGBTQIA+ Youth and Experiences of Human Trafficking: A Healing-Centered Approach - National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center, Futures Without Violence, and Health Partners On IPV + Exploitation

- Overrepresented Yet Overlooked: LGBTQ Survivors of Trafficking and the Imperative for the Nordic Approach to Sex Trafficking Laws in the United States - Cardozo Journal of Equal Rights & Social Justice
- LGBTQ+ Homeless Young Adults and Sex Trafficking Vulnerability - Journal of Human Trafficking
- LGBT Youth, Sex Trafficking, and the Nurse Practitioner's Role - Journal of Pediatric Health Care
- Understanding the Needs of LGBTQ Clients and Their Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Training Community Mental Health Workers - Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services
- LGBTQ Youth and Sex Trafficking: Fact Sheet 2018 - International Organization for Adolescents and Courtney's House
- Sex Trafficking of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth in the United States - Loyola University School of Law Center for the Human Rights of Children
- Locked In: Interactions with the Criminal Justice and Child Welfare Systems for LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Who Engage in Survival Sex - Urban Institute
- Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Engaged in Survival Sex - Urban Institute
- A Transgender Girl's Experience: Sexual Exploitation and Systems Involvement - International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare
- Shining Light: LGBTQ+ Victims of CSEC - Youth Collaboratory
- Sex Trafficking and LGBTQ Youth - Polaris Project

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH-SERVING PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ YOUTH

- Resources for Youth-Serving Professionals - Human Rights Campaign
- Black & LGBTQ: Approaching Intersectional Conversations - The Trevor Project
- Breaking Barriers: Improving Services for LGBTQ Human Trafficking Victims, A Top Ten List for Service Providers and Criminal Justice Professionals - Polaris Project
- Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Students: A Teaching Tolerance Guide - Teaching Tolerance
- Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care - eQuality Project
- Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Young People - The Trevor Project

- The Whole Youth Model: How Collecting Data About Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE) Helps Probation and Youth Courts Build More Authentic Relationships Focused on Improved Well-Being - Ceres Policy Research
- Victim-Centered Approaches: Gender and Sexual Identity - National Sexual Violence Resource Center

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Endnotes

1 Over time, the acronym used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals has evolved to be more inclusive of all sexual and gender minorities and it continues to evolve. Here, we use "LGBTQIA2S+" to be as inclusive as possible, but we recognize that this terminology will continue to evolve over time. Throughout this issue brief, when citing to research, our language reflects the language used in that particular research.

2 For general information on supporting LGBTQIA2S+ youth, visit the resources at the end of this issue brief.

3 For general information on supporting youth impacted by CSE, visit the resources at the end of this issue brief.

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59 Tomasiewicz, *Sex Trafficking of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth*, 4.

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73 Dank et al., *Locked In: Interactions with the Criminal Justice and Child Welfare Systems*, 2.

74 For example, in the New York City study referenced above, "[s]ome youth reported a high degree of violence and abuse by police, including impermissible and unconstitutional searches to assign youth a gender based on anatomy; strip searches in public areas, including in front of other arrestees and multiple officers; restraint by handcuffs leading to bleeding and neuropathy and for excessive periods; refusal to refer to youth using appropriate names and pronouns; and disrespectful remarks about youths' gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation." See ibid., 91.

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