Happy Spring everyone! I hope you are enjoying this time of year and the nice weather we have been having (before the summer heat arrives) and speaking of summer we have some exciting events happening in the next few months.

First, we are hosting our Leadership Development Institute in Tampa, FL on June 1st and 2nd. We invite past leaders, current leaders, and emerging leaders to attend this information--al Institute. This is where we meet to discuss how our past fiscal year has been as an association and individual regions/divisions discuss their success for the year and then we all work together to plan for our next upcoming fiscal year. We include leadership development training and also a lot of time for networking and planning for the upcoming year.

We will be hosting our 3rd Annual Traumatology Symposium on June 8th and 9th in Orlando. We will be hosting this symposium near the 2nd anniversary of The Pulse Tragedy.

Finally, our 69th Annual Convention will be held in Tampa this year on October 5 & 6, pre-convention happening on October 4th. The call for proposals is still open at this time and the deadline to submit to present for an Educational Session or Poster Session is set for May 13th so deadline submit if you have not done so already. We love the diverse topics we get from all of our fellow counselors. More information about these events and all upcoming events can be found on our website www.flacounseling.org.

Since this newsletter’s theme is based on our LGBTQ community, I wanted to take a moment to first and foremost thank our FALGBTIC Division and their leadership for all that they do for our clients and helping to support our Florida community. They have played an intricate role in preparing for our June Symposium in Orlando and so many other amazing events, professional development, etc. throughout the year. Personally, I believe we need to do more to support this population and am ecstatic that we have a division that is doing just that. I will leave you with some quotes that warm my heart:

"We should indeed keep calm in the face of difference, and live our lives in a state of inclusion and wonder at the diversity of humanity." --George Takei

"Openness may not completely disarm prejudice, but it's a good place to start." --Jason Collins, first openly gay athlete in U.S. pro sports

Thank you for all that you do for our profession,
Kristie Knight
FCA President 2017-18
For almost two years, I have had the honor and privilege of counseling an LGBTQ+ adolescent. Through our therapeutic relationship, I have become more and more interested in learning about this population. I admit that I have limited experience counseling LBBTQ+ individuals, but this client has taught me a great deal. And he appreciates my admittance of this not being my expertise and willingness to learn more. When I had the opportunity to attend a training on working with LGBTQ+ and Eating Disorders (which this client has previously suffered from), I leaped at the chance. While attending this training, I first learned of the term affirmative therapy. I was intrigued and eager to learn more. I connected with the presenter afterward and exchanged a few emails with her (she confirmed this was her gender identity during the training). She shared during the training that there is a LGBT Affirmative Psychotherapy Certification and she had completed the process. This training is offered through the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) California Division. I have since also discovered that there are free trainings on LGBTQ+ affirmative counseling through the American Counseling Association (ACA) for members.

Affirmative therapy is an attitude that is crucial for therapists to adopt in working with the LGBTQ+ population (Alessi, Dillon, & Kim, 2015, as cited in Pepping, Lyons, and Morris, 2018). Although our society has become more accepting as a whole in the recent years, LGBTQ+ clients continue to face adversity. LGBTQ+ clients are also more likely to suffer from mental health issues including suicidality and eating disorders than their heterosexual peers. Therapy outcomes with this population are dependent on the clients’ perception of the therapist’s attitudes (King et al., 2007, as cited in Pepping, Lyons, and Morris, 2018).

Heck, Flentje and Cochran (2013) stress that counselors communicate affirmation in the intake interview. I have been recently inquiring about birth sex, gender identity and sexual orientation in my
initial meetings with clients. Clients may hesitate to seek help due to negative experiences with being misgendered by professionals. This has happened to my client several times and I have also made that same mistake after he came out to me as transgender. He informed me that it helps if professionals make attempts to correct this and/or apologize. It is a counselor’s job to help clients feel validated and creating an affirming environment can help foster this. Heck, Flentje and Cochran (2013) also suggest that counselors examine their own biases in working with LGBTQ+ clients and adopt their clients’ language.

When counselors are in training, they learn to not label clients with their diagnosis such as “they are autistic” or “they are so borderline.” This same idea should be applied to working with LGBTQ+ clients. A recent client stated that he does not put a label on his sexual orientation.

In summary, when counseling LGBTQ+ clients, it is imperative that the affirmative therapeutic approach be utilized to help create a safe space. Taking the time to learn about the clients’ gender identity and sexual orientation rather than assuming them can speak volumes to the client. It is similar to the idea of learning about clients’ cultural backgrounds if it differs than yours and can allow the client to access healing as they will perceive your attitude of acceptance.

References

Supporting LGBTQ Students in School Settings
Yu-Ting Tsai
FACAC Graduate Student Representative

As a school counselor who is very close to the LGBTQ+ community, I am well aware of the hardships and difficulties people in the LGBTQ+ community face in a heteronormative society, and how these difficulties especially affect adolescents that are trying to define their identities. My most prevalent concern is how I as a school counselor can affect positive change to help prevent the tragedies that are so horrifically present amongst members of this community. Since school counselors are one of the most important parts of building a school’s culture, we can do a great deal of good for LGBTQ+ students, and I think this article can help all schools develop more inclusive and positive cultures that will benefit all students.

The Importance of a Positive School Climate for LGBTQ+ Student

Studies show that LGBTQ+ teenagers have a lower sense of school belonging than their heterosexual peers (Joyce, 2015), especially lesbian and bisexual female students who are reported having the lowest sense of school belonging. A sense of school belonging is associated with feeling safe at school (Joyce, 2015), and the existence of a school policy prohibiting bullying is associated with increased self-esteem (Kosciw et al., 2013) and a lesser likelihood of attempting suicide (Goodenow et al., 2006). Thus, the reasons why LGBTQ+ students generally report low sense of school belonging may be result from their experiences of perceiving prejudiced in schools (Joyce, 2015).

On the other hand, in the schools that have curricula that support diverse sexual minorities, LGBTQ+ students there experience less victimization and more positive attitude toward their school culture (Kosciw et al., 2013). Researches state that support groups in schools are associated with improved outcomes of less victimization and better educational performance and mental health status for all students.

1 The world view that heterosexuality is the normal and preferred sexual orientation.
The Importance of Teachers for LGBTQ+ Students

Teachers and school counselors can contribute LGBTQ-supporting school settings for kids. Teachers are authoritative roles in classroom settings where they can develop the language of and guide the behavior of students. Supportive teachers can make significant positive influence on LGBTQ+ students. Positive relationships with teachers can be beneficial for LGBTQ+ students. Gastic and Johnson (2009) found that LGBTQ youth are more likely to have teachers instead of peers as mentors, which is associated with future educational attainment (Gastic & Johnson, 2009). Further, students who have teachers who support LGBTQ+ are reported having less suicide attempts, less possibility to be threatened, higher self-esteem, better academic performance, and better attendance (Kosciw et al., 2013).

Student’s Perspectives on LGBTQ+ Curriculum

There are many studies that suggest that an inclusive and culturally sensitive curriculum helps develop equity for all students and decreases discrimination against marginalized populations. All students should have the opportunity to engage meaningfully with LGBTQ+ topics in school. In schools that include LBGTQ+ issues and histories in curriculum most students reported feeling safer and experienced less victimization and homophobic slurs and greater peer acceptance.

Creating Space for Agency

One of the most important aspects in a person’s life is a sense of agency, being able to affect your own life through choices, and a sense of being valued and feeling like your life has meaning (Altobelli, 2017). Discrimination disrupts this agency and causes feelings of negative self-worth and despair. School counselors are in an advantageous position to provide space for agency to occur within their schools and have the responsibility to look beyond their biases for the safety and well-being of all students (Altobelli, 2017). Even if school counselors cannot overcome these biases, we can still contribute to the general sense of equality and fairness in the classroom.
References


Competent and Confident: Strengthening Counselor Education with the LGBTQ Community

Shannon Raikes, M.Ed.
Doctoral Student at Capella University

In our current culture, it might be hard to believe that counselors would exit their Master’s program feeling ill prepared to counsel those in the LGBTQ+ community, but that is exactly what the research shows. With an ever-increasing number of society members now identifying as LGBTQ+, it is highly likely that counselors will encounter a client who is somehow being impacted by this issue. So, as current and future counseling educators, we have to make sure that we are adequately equipping upcoming counselors to address this subject when it arises with clients. Not only that, but to do it in a respectful and client-considerate way.

Some challenges that the LGBTQ+ population face are discrimination, violence, oppression, and higher rates of suicide. When instructing students in the counseling methods for LGBTQ+ individuals, it is important not to minimize these struggles. As an educator, we can help open students’ eyes to their own internal biases, and help them gain self-awareness. Sometimes, our own intrinsic beliefs cloud our perception and impede our ability to embrace a client without judgement. Counselor educators can facilitate the usage of affirmative language and confront any prejudice or phobia they encounter.

Another essential role of a counselor educator is to encourage advocacy. Currently, gender issues and sexual orientation are included in the “multicultural” category. However, some fear that without specific recognition, this community of people will get lost or overlooked. Counselor educators can help to alleviate any ambiguity, and ensure that students are well trained in the unique issues that gender and sexual orientation can bring.

By continuing to shed light on this topic in the educational setting, counselor educators will be a part of positive change to the future of the counseling profession. We have a powerful opportunity to
utilize our platform as a teacher to train up a generation of counselors that will be thoroughly equipped
to counsel the LGBTQ community with competence and confidence.

References

firmative lesbian, gay, and bisexual competencies of counseling and psychology students. Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 42(3), 132-146. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2014.00050.x


Leadership Development Institute (LDI)

June 1-2, 2018
Nova Southeastern University
3632 Queen Palm Drive
Tampa FL 33619

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This year we will focus on our theme, “Counselors Unifying as Leaders, Advocating for Change” We will talk about ways that counselors can come together to impact change within the profession and our communities.

Information and Registration here:
www.flacounseling.org
Please join us for the Florida Counseling Association 2018 Traumatology Symposium: “Resiliency, Leadership, Culturally Responsive Interventions and Social Justice Actions”, to be held June 8-9, 2018 on the campus of Nova Southeastern University, Orlando, Florida. Up to 14 Continuing Education hours available.

The Counseling Program at Nova Southeastern University, Florida Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, Florida Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Issues in Counseling, Florida Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development, Florida Association of Marriage and Family Counseling and the Florida Counseling Association is very excited to launch this critical workforce development initiative.

The Traumatology Symposium will provide an intensive, collaborative training experience to providers, students, educators and leaders across health, education, and social service disciplines, as well as to community members invested in the health of their families, neighborhoods, and cities.

The aim of the symposium is to provide to people across the family system serving sectors and disciplines, foundational trauma training, coupled with interprofessional learning opportunities, to improve health and educational outcomes for children, adolescents, adults and families from all backgrounds and intersections.

Participants will identify, explore, and experience approaches to:

Prevent incidences of trauma for individuals, families and communities;
Addressing complex trauma including the intersectionality of multiple identities;
Mitigate the impact of trauma on individuals, communities, and systems in order to prevent negative social, psychological, educational, and health outcomes, and;
Prevent vicarious trauma to sustain a healthy, vibrant workforce and community

For Questions, please contact: Traumatology Symposium Chair, Dr. Shon D. Smith
fcatraumatologysymposium@gmail.com
2018 FCA Traumatology Symposium

Keynote Speaker
Friday, June 8, 2018

Deborah C. Beidel, PhD

Deborah C. Beidel, Ph.D., ABPP is Trustee Chair and Pegasus Professor of Psychology and Medical Education and Director of UCF RESTORES at the University of Central Florida.

Keynote Speaker
Saturday, June 9, 2018

Cindy Arnold, LPC

Cindy Arnold, LPC is a licensed professional counselor since 2010. She works with children, teens, and adults, and specializes in physical, emotional, sexual trauma, childhood trauma, complex trauma, dissociation, military and first responders.

Registration and Information:
www.flacounseling.org
2018 FCA Convention
October 5th and 6th, 2018
Tampa, FL

CALL for Proposals Now Open!

Submission Deadline:
May 13, 2018, 11:59 PM ET

www.flagcounseling.org
2018 FCA Convention Call for Proposals
Join us for the 69th Annual Florida Counseling Association Convention
“Celebrating Diversity: Counselors as Leaders, Advocates, and Voices for Marginalized Individuals”
October 5th and 6th, 2018
USF Embassy Suites
3705 Spectrum Blvd, Tampa, Florida 33612

Call Opens: February 5, 2018
Submission Deadline: May 13, 2018, 11:59 pm ET

Important for this year:
All proposals must be submitted using the online form on the FCA website http://www.flacounseling.org

- FCA is actively seeking advanced programs in all areas.
- Also, in support of evidence-based practice, FCA is now requesting a brief description of the research supporting each proposal, as appropriate.

Convention Education Sessions: October 5th and 6th
- Education Sessions make up the core conference
  - Three Tracks
    o Clinical Session
    o Skill Building Session
    o Research Session
    o Two different formats:
      o 90-Minute Session
      o 60-Minute Project/Research Poster Session

Support
Technical support with electronic submissions is available by contacting the FCA office at fcaoffice@flacounseling.org

For general questions regarding the proposal, please contact the 2018 FCA Convention Committee Chair, Dr. Cecilia L. Guyton at DrCeciliaL-GuytonFCA@gmail.com
The Florida Counseling Association’s—Traumatology Symposium
“Resiliency, Leadership, Culturally Responsive Interventions &
Social Justice Actions”
June 8-9, 2018

The purpose of the Florida Counseling Association is to promote the counseling profession through public awareness, professional development, and advocacy of legislation that supports the profession. The Florida Counseling Association is comprised of counselors from a variety of work settings and specialty areas.

The Florida Counseling Association and four of its divisions invite you to exhibit, advertise and/or be a sponsor at its Traumatology Symposium. The Traumatology Symposium will provide an intensive, collaborative training experience to providers, educators and leaders across health, education, and social service disciplines, as well as to community members invested in the health of their families, neighborhoods and cities.

The aim of the symposium is to provide to people across the family system serving sectors and disciplines, foundational trauma training, coupled with interprofessional learning opportunities, to improve health and educational outcomes for children, adolescents, adults and families from all backgrounds and intersections.

Participation opportunities include an exhibitor's booth, advertising in the symposium program, sponsoring our keynote speaker or promotional items for the symposium tote bags. Any agency, organization or association may participate. Space for exhibit tables and for advertisement is limited. Final deadline for submission is April 30, 2018.

Benefits of Becoming An Advertiser at Symposium
v Inclusion in the Traumatization Symposium Program for future reference by attendees.

Benefits of Becoming An Exhibitor At Symposium
v Introduce and sell your product from the exhibit area.
v Receive numerous business leads through networking with attendees and other exhibitors.
v Receive a set of Symposium materials, tote bag and an identifiable exhibitor name badge.

Benefits of Becoming a Keynote Sponsor
v All of the benefits above and;
v Link your business on the FCA website for one full year.
v Opportunity to speak before the Keynote session to all registered participants

Program & Advertising Information:
Advertisements will be printed in the attractive, professionally designed official convention program. The program includes: the complete daily schedules, keynote speakers information, name/address/phone contact information for all exhibitors/vendors/sponsors and organizations who take part in the traumatization symposium. Ads for the program must be “camera ready,” in gray scale or black and white for printing. All materials are due to FCA on or by April 30, 2018.
Serving the Transgender Community: What We Need to Know as Counselors

Daniel Balva, MS, NCC, CRC
FAMCD President-Elect

When watching the news and reading stories of discrimination and harassment towards transgender individuals, it would appear as though society has regressed, as many of the discriminatory acts we are hearing resemble those directed towards other minorities for decades. The Human Rights Campaign (2018) listed some of the challenges faced by the transgender community, which included (a) harassment and stigma, (b) lack of legal protection (including, public accommodations, employment, housing, and education), (c) poverty, anti-transgender violence, barriers to healthcare, difficulties within the criminal justice system, and (d) lack of knowledge within the general public.

Goodman et al. (2004) stated, “Unless fundamental change occurs within our neighborhoods, schools, media, culture, and religious, political, and social institutions, our work with individuals is destined to be, at best, only partially successful” (p. 797). As leaders of change and advocates, we must make ourselves aware of the difficulties faced by underserved minorities so that we can do our part to unite and affect positive change.

Suicidality Among the Transgender Community

When discussing the obstacles experienced by transgender persons, it is important for us to recognize the impact that such hardships can cause, including suicidality. The attempted suicide rate within the transgender community has been found to be between 41 to 48 percent compared with 4.6 percent of the general public and 10 to 20 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults (Haas, Rodgers, and Herman, 2014). In this survey, the suicide attempts among trans men were 46 percent, whereas, the rate of attempt amongst trans women were 42 percent (Haas et al., 2014). Among those who participated in the survey, 57 percent of respondents whose parents or families stopped speaking to them after coming out as transgender attempted suicide in comparison to 33 percent of those whose familial relationships remained strong after they came out (Haas, Rodgers, and Herman,
When watching the news and reading stories of discrimination and harassment towards transgender individuals, it would appear as though society has regressed, as many of the discriminatory acts we are hearing resemble those directed towards other minorities for decades. The Human Rights Campaign (2018) listed some of the challenges faced by the transgender community, which included (a) harassment and stigma, (b) lack of legal protection (including, public accommodations, employment, housing, and education), (c) poverty, anti-transgender violence, barriers to healthcare, difficulties within the criminal justice system, and (d) lack of knowledge within the general public.

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If we look at the reported statistics through a multicultural lens, the prevalence of suicide attempts was highest among: American Indian or Alaska Native (56%), multiracial individuals
Conclusion

One of the many responsibilities that we have as counselors is to provide the highest level of care possible to our clients. We must be competent in transgender care by completing necessary and relevant trainings so that we are helping clients, rather than harming them. Consult and refer, as needed, but only when necessary for the client to receive the best care possible (ACA, 2014). And as we educate ourselves on transgender care, it is crucial that we also educate those around us. If we can create a greater dialogue among fellow clinicians, we can all work together to support another important population in need of advocacy.

References


In March, the Florida counseling Association foundation posted their first ever fundraising event with the Orlando solar Bears. The Fca foundation made over $1300 by participating in the Orlando solar Bears chuck a puck event. FCA is grateful to the Orlando solar Bears for allowing them this opportunity to share with the community of Orlando the amazing work of Counselor's while gathering donations to continue to fund the great work of The Florida counseling Association.
The Florida Career Development Association (FCDA) held their first mini-conference and allowed learning and networking between career development and counseling professionals on Friday, April 13, 2018, at the University of Central Florida (UCF) Career Center, located in Orlando, FL.
Therapeutic Issues for Same-sex Couples
Shon D. Smith, Ed.D., MA
FAMFC President 2017-2018

Same-sex couples share many commonalities with heterosexual couples. The day-to-day activities of their lives often are similar, but the social context in which they live differs greatly, largely due to the influences of the dominant heterosexual culture and traditional expectations of gender roles within a relationship. Many same-sex pairs may experience extreme stress if every day supports are lacking in their lives—for example, familial, legal, religious, economic, and social support. Members of same-sex couples have experienced societal prejudice in different ways and have dealt with it internally in their own ways, but the effect of “minority stress,” or the effects of living with often negative social conditions, always exists to some extent. The fact that many same-sex relationships endure, and are as stable as cohabitating heterosexual unions, in spite of residing in a sometimes-hostile climate, is a testimony to the resiliency of the members involved.

Gender Roles
Traditional gender roles assume that women are relational and men are instrumental. There exists some truth in these gender-related assumptions that can be used in understanding same-sex partnerships. Psychological femininity implies a commitment to the relationship, a tendency to accommodate the needs of a partner, and attempts to remedy problems between them. Psychological masculinity, on the other hand, often is reflective of competition, independence, and lack of emotionality within the context of the relationship. When problems occur, these individuals have the tendency to allow conditions to deteriorate, or to leave the partnership. Gay male couples tend to rely on social exchange (like doing things for one another) rather than on emotional or relational factors for mutual satisfaction. When at least one member has adopted a stereotypically masculine role, there are bound to be difficulties in the relationship, such as the use of distancing strategies, high levels of competition, and strong needs for control. Still, it is important to consider other issues that play a significant role between partners, such as ethnicity, cultural background, religion, social class, education, age, and immigration status.

The similarity of biological sex and gender role conditioning allows couples to have a high level of initial rapport and to merge deeply. They know what pleases someone of their own sex and can understand, give, and respond. The loneliness of years in the closet (and possibly thinking they would never find someone to love them as they are) intensifies the emotional high of the bonding. Because initial expectations often are elevated, disillusionment is intense when initial passion naturally diminishes.

Stages Discrepancies
Generally, it takes several years after the first awareness of same-sex attractions for an individual to ad-
vance through a number of phases to fully reach a sexual minority identity. Stage discrepancies are common for many same-sex couples given that many of these pairs merge before partners have completed their own identity growth. This results in members undertaking their individual sexual orientation development while simultaneously navigating the challenges of an evolving relationship. Issues of betrayal and loyalty often occur, but rarely will couples see their difficulties in terms of stage discrepancies. These stage differences frequently result in conflict regarding the level of “openness” each partner finds acceptable in family relationships, employment, community, and friendships. Many relationships can overcome this conflict, but some are unable to do so.

As with heterosexual couples, partner differences in relationship stages are common. For example, one wants more independence or separateness and the other is holding tightly or is fearful of differences; or one begins to grow personally and the other perceives this as abandonment; or one wants more self-expression (and less agreement or sameness) and the other wants to maintain harmony and avoid conflict. Conversely, some lesbians and gay men are terrified if relationships become too close, since this reminds them of the suffocating closets of their earlier lives.

**How can a family or couples therapist help?**

A professional mental healthcare provider will be a sensitive clinician, fully aware of the pitfalls of traditional heterosexual bias, and will treat a lesbian or gay couple in an appropriate fashion. There are no unique treatments for same-sex couples and the methods used with heterosexual couples can be used for gay and lesbian pairs. However, the importance of taking into consideration developmental and sociocultural variables cannot be underestimated, and a well experienced therapist will be particularly sensitive to these effects.

A therapist will assess the environment of the relationship based on those factors mentioned previously: Level of each partner’s development; external issues (such as support or alienation from family, community, workplace, and friendships); presence of mental or physical illness or domestic violence; HIV concerns; stage discrepancies between members; and issues of intimacy. Gay and lesbian issues will be addressed somewhat differently, as certain life stressors may play more of a role for a male couple than a female couple, and vice versa. For example, lesbians often experience more anxiety than gay men regarding reactions of family members to their sexuality. Conversely, gay men report more stress surrounding HIV/AIDS-related issues and violence and harassment than do lesbian couples.

The therapist will address any “multiple social identities” that must be taken into consideration. For example, one of the members of the couple may be biracial or struggling to reconcile a minority sexual orientation with a religious identity, and/or the members of the couple may be quite different culturally. The complexity of diversity, whether in reference to the broader culture or within the couple relationship, may be problematic. There may be external forces that deny the couple social privilege, but also vast internal
differences also may exist between members of the couple. Concerns about, or differences in, religion, ethnicity, culture, world view, health condition, disability, immigration status, age, education, socio-economic standing and need for family support are some areas for reflection.

A professional can help the couple experience, for example, their fear of closeness as “normal” or developmentally appropriate, given the degree of bias associated by society with same-sex attraction. Rather than a client assuming something is wrong internally, he or she can begin to process issues in terms of a broader perspective. Often, for reasons not of their own making, sexual minorities are disengaged (or even disowned) by their families; alienated from their churches, mosques, or synagogues; and isolated in the workplace. In this situation, closeness in a couple may be a survival mechanism, rather than our traditional concept of “closeness,” especially in small or rural communities where opportunity for support from family, workplace associates, and other couples is unavailable. A therapist can determine if this is occurring in the relationship and can help the couple correct it.

That same-sex unions can survive and thrive in spite of numerous challenges is a testimony to their resilience and to the resolve of the members of these couples. This determination, along with a strong sense of interdependence, perspective, and external buffers, has allowed many lesbian couples in long-term relationships to succeed as a twosome. Similarly, more male couples than ever before are strengthening their commitment to each other and are enhancing their mutuality and intimacy.

With permission is being reprinted and was written by Kathleen Ritter, PhD., marriage & family therapist in Bakersfield, CA.

Resources

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE): A support and advocacy organization for children of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered parents and families.

Family Pride: A non-profit organization committed to securing family equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered parents, guardians, and allies.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): A nonprofit organization with over 200,000 members and 500 affiliate chapters in the United States with headquarters in Washington, DC.

Partners Task Force for Gay and Lesbian Couples: A resource for same-sex couples. The constantly updated Web site contains more than 400 surveys, legal articles and resources on official marriage, ceremonies, domestic partner benefits, relationship tips, parenting, and immigration.

FAMFC will be providing trainings on this topic over the next 12 months.

Check out the FCA website for more information on how you can be involved!
Counseling with Competency

Rebecca Moore, FACAC Secretary

Most counselors have some awareness that adolescents and younger have LGBTQ+ identities and/or concerns, but many counselors do not know how to address these concerns in an appropriate and effective manner. One study stated that LGBTQ+ adolescents are often an invisible minority and that when they are recognized it is thought of as a dysfunction, and that this false perception could be changed with more comprehensive training on counseling the LGBTQ+ population (Matthews & Salazar, 2012).

Research has shown that LGBTQ+ youth are at a higher risk for anxiety, substance abuse concerns, and depression, including suicidality, when compared to cisgender heterosexual youth (Puckett, Horne, Surace, Carter, Noffsinger-Frazier, Shulman, & Mosher, 2017). LGBTQ+ youth also have a higher rate of being abused, victimized, rejected, and bullied by peers and by family members (Puckett et al., 2017). One article believes that creating an environment where LGBTQ+ youth can develop a healthy identity and self-concept will help reduce these risk factors (Matthews & Salazar, 2012). That article further states that in order to facilitate a healthy coming out process, counselors should consider the whole environment that the LGBTQ+ youth lives in; additionally, if the client does decide to come out, the counselor should be supportive throughout the entire process (Matthews & Salazar, 2012).

One important thing for us to remember as counselors is that just because an LGBTQ+ client seeks counseling, we can not assume that their presenting concern is due to their LGBTQ+ status. Along that same line of thinking, it is not our job to decide that a client should or should not come out; we are here to help LGBTQ+ find the best path for themselves. To do this, we must have enough multicultural competencies to be comfortable addressing LGBTQ+ concerns as well as focusing on other problems that an LGBTQ+ client may discuss in counseling.
References


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