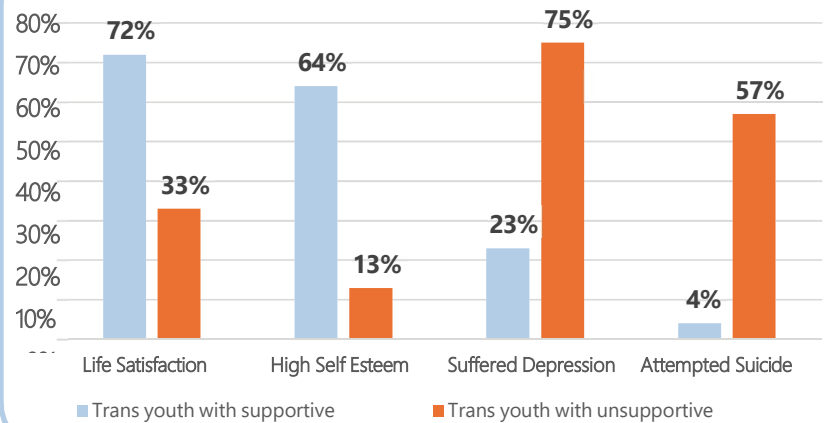


# Fostering Family Acceptance with Parents and Caregivers of LGBTQIA+ Youth



## Familial Support for Trans Youth



## Discrimination Against LGBTQ Youth

- Many LGBTQ Youth experience discrimination at home, in schools, and in their communities at large.
- 67% of LGBTQ youth have heard their parents make negative comments about LGBTQ people.<sup>1</sup>
- 85% of LGBTQ students have been verbally harassed at school, and 30% report missing at least one day of school because they felt unsafe.<sup>1</sup>
- 80% of transgender youth said they have avoided bathrooms because they felt unsafe.<sup>1</sup>
- 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ. The number one reason for LGBTQ youth homelessness is family rejection.<sup>1</sup>

## Substance Use and LGBTQ Youth

For many LGBTQ individuals, substance use is a survival strategy. LGBTQ individuals often use substances to self-soothe from trauma, numb hyper arousal symptoms, and/or combat helplessness by increasing feelings of control.<sup>8</sup>

Treatment of LGBTQ substance use must come from a trauma-informed perspective that focuses on self-acceptance and practical strategies for coping with stigma, discrimination, and stress.<sup>5</sup>

## Rejecting vs Accepting Behaviors<sup>6</sup>



### Rejecting Behaviors

- Refusing to believe child is LGBTQ – “it’s just a phase.”
- Trying to change child’s gender identity or expression.
- Excluding LGBTQ youth from family events.
- Not allowing child to speak about their identity.
- Physically, emotionally, or verbally harassing child because they are LGBTQ.
- Blaming children when they are discriminated against for being LGBTQ.

### Accepting Behaviors

- Talking with child about LGBTQ identity or questioning that identity.
- Advocating for child when they are mistreated because of their LGBTQ identity.
- Expressing affection when you learn child is LGBTQ.
- Require friends and community members respect child’s identity.
- Connecting child with LGBTQ organizations, events, and role models.

Family rejection has serious negative impact on the health outcomes of LGBTQ youth. High levels of rejection increase the risk of depression, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, substance misuse, and HIV/STD infection. Conversely, family acceptance improves health outcomes and makes LGBTQ youth more able to envision a future as happy adults.



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## Family Support Model of Change<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Engagement:

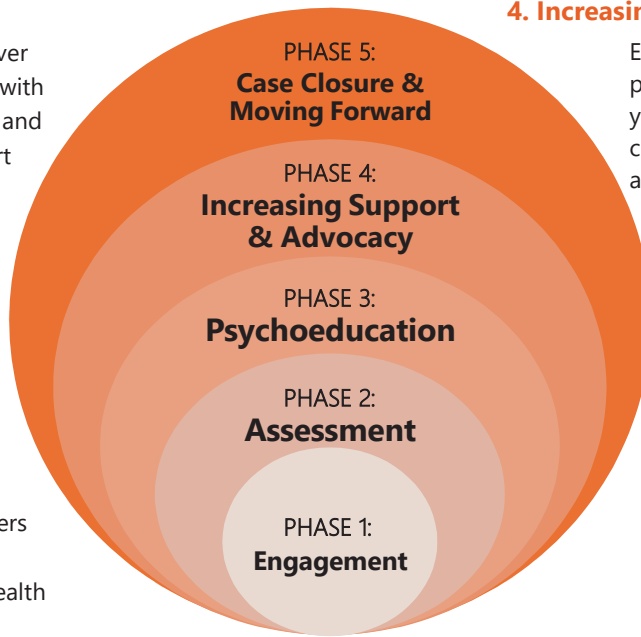
Identifying youth and caregiver service goals, begin building with family, assess current needs, and assess existing social support structure.

### 2. Assessment

Assess current youth and caregiver state, including family cultural and religious values and family's knowledge and attitude regarding youth's LGBTQ status.

### 3. Psychoeducation

Provide youth and caregivers with educational materials pertaining to the unique health needs of LGBTQ youth.



### 4. Increasing Support & Advocacy

Explore the current capacity of the caregivers to provide support and advocacy on behalf of their youth and assist with increasing capacity. Connect caregivers with support organizations and additional resources.

### 5. Moving Forward

Reflect on successes and goal completion with the family

Families who completed the Family Support Model program reported a greater understanding of the unique health and wellness needs of the LGBTQ community, the impact of supportive and rejecting behaviors, and the importance of increasing protective factors, such as building and maintaining relationships with supportive adults and peers.

## Core Assumptions of Family Acceptance<sup>6</sup>



- Assume that families love their children and want them to have a good life.
- Behavior is often motivated by concern that their child may not "fit in" or have a "good life."
- Meet families where they are.
- Youth may be eager for family to "catch up," but meet families at their level of knowledge, expectations, and current beliefs.
- Use preexisting values and strengths as a framework.
- Support the need for families to be heard and understood.
- "Rejection" behaviors are motivated by care.
- Family behaviors are aimed at socializing children to adapt and be successful in a heteronormative society.
- Share research findings linking family reactions to youth physical and mental wellbeing.
- Validate and address the feelings of parents by affirming the importance of family support.
- Many parents experience their lack of knowledge about LGBTQ issues as inadequacy, disempowering, and shameful.
- Many families perceive their child's LGBTQ identity as a loss, particularly as a loss of control over their child's future.
- When rejecting and accepting behaviors co-exist, parents and caregivers experience ambivalence.

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