

Welcome to

# Affirming Care and Allyship in Social Services: Practical Strategies for Inclusive LGBTQIA+ Support

THE TRAINING WILL BEGIN SHORTLY! WHILE YOU'RE WAITING...

 **Icebreaker Question**  
(answer in the chat)

What game show do you think you'd be very good at?



**Survey & Certificate of Completion**

Available following the training.

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SCAN TO LEARN MORE



# Hi, We're CalTrin

Supporting child abuse prevention in California through **FREE** professional development & extended learning.



## Who We Are

CalTrin delivers free science-based training to staff of Family Resource Centers, Child Abuse Prevention Councils, community-based organizations, and other child- & family-serving systems.

## What We Offer

- Live webinars & interactive, small-group training
- Virtual, self-paced courses
- Job aids & other resources

And check out our partner project, **The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (CEBC)!**



Advancing the effective implementation of evidence-based practices for children & families.

A FREE, searchable database of 500+ programs & resources for implementation.

SCAN TO  
LEARN MORE



# UPCOMING TRAININGS

*mark your calendars!*

Visit [caltrin.org](https://caltrin.org) to view and register for upcoming webinars or workshops:



**June 4:** Leading Through Change



**June 9:** Navigating Communication & Conflict in the Workplace



**June 11:** HOPE 101



**June 18:** Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



# Before We Begin...

## DURING



Access your notetaking slides now! The link can be found in the chat.



Review interactive features for today's session. Locate the controls on the toolbar at the bottom of your screen.



This presentation is being recorded.



External AI assistants are not allowed in CalTrin trainings due to California privacy laws.

## AFTER



Complete the survey at the end of this webinar to receive your Certificate of Attendance.



A follow-up email will be sent to all participants within two days.



# **Affirming Care and Allyship in Social Services: Practical Strategies for Inclusive LGBTQIA+ Support**

**Presented by Michelle Neumann, MSW;RYT 224**

Decorative leaf graphics in the bottom corners. The bottom-left corner features a green leaf with blue veins and a small sprig of green leaves with round buds. The bottom-right corner features a light blue leaf with blue veins and a small sprig of orange leaves.



**Michelle Neumann, MSW;RYT 224**

CalTrin Training  
Coordinator

- Training Coordinator for the California Training Institute (CalTrin) at Rady Children's Health
- MSW from University of Southern California & Trauma-Informed Yoga Certification from Prison Yoga Project
- 9+ years of experience on youth development, LGBTQIA+ related support, and social services
- Lived experience: Foster Care, LGBTQIA+



# Expectations for **BREAKOUT ROOMS**



**Camera and microphone on  
(muted if not speaking)**



**Be present at all times, even when not speaking**



**Participate in the conversation**



**Create space for everyone to speak**



**What is discussed here, stays here**



**If your group gets stuck, click the “Ask for Help” icon**

# Community Agreements for Our Training Space

*Creating a safe, brave, and  
respectful space together*



- 1. Everyone here is a learner.**
- 2. This is a safe and brave space.**
- 3. Clients' well-being guides us.**
- 4. Protect confidentiality.**
- 5. Call-in, not call-out.**
- 6. Use inclusive and person-centered language.**
- 7. Take care of yourself.**

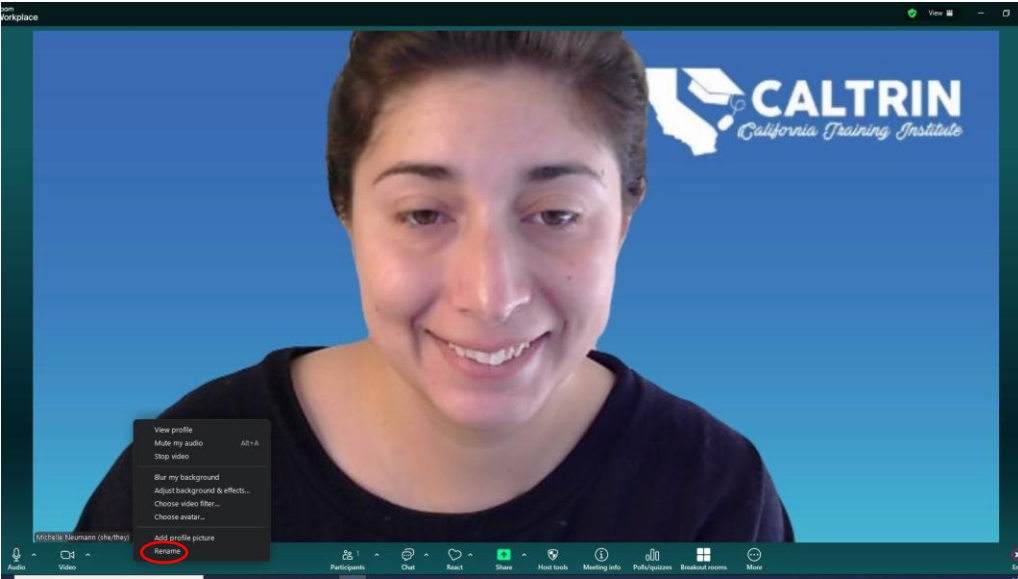
# Let's Add our Pronouns!

## Hover/right-click over your name

- In the meeting toolbar, click **Participants** & find your name.
- Or, find your name in the bottom left corner of the screen.

## Click → “Rename”

- Select **Rename** to open the name-editing window.

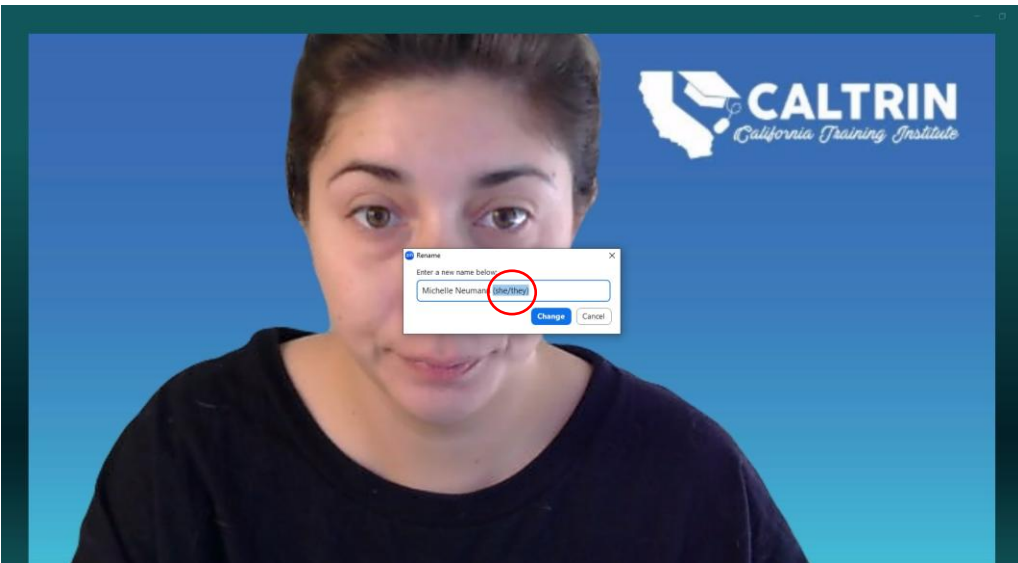


## Add your pronouns after your name

- Examples:
  - Michelle Neumann (she/her)
  - Jordan L. (they/them)
- Zoom will immediately update your name in the meeting for everyone to see.

## Click Save/OK

- Your new display name—with pronouns—appears instantly.



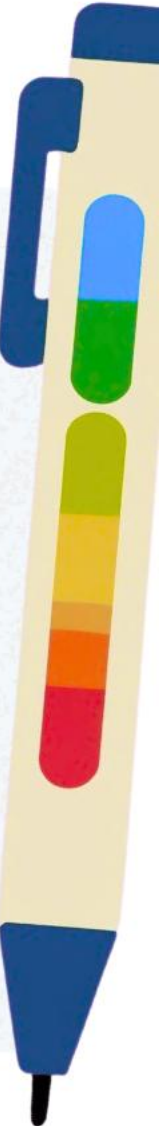
# A QUICK GLOSSARY

## **LGBTQIA+:**

Lesbian, Gay, Trans,  
Queer/Questioning,  
Intersex,  
Asexual/Aromantic + (all  
other non-cis gender and  
non-straight identities)

## **Cis:**

Describes a person  
whose gender  
identity matches the  
sex they were  
assigned at birth



# THE DATA

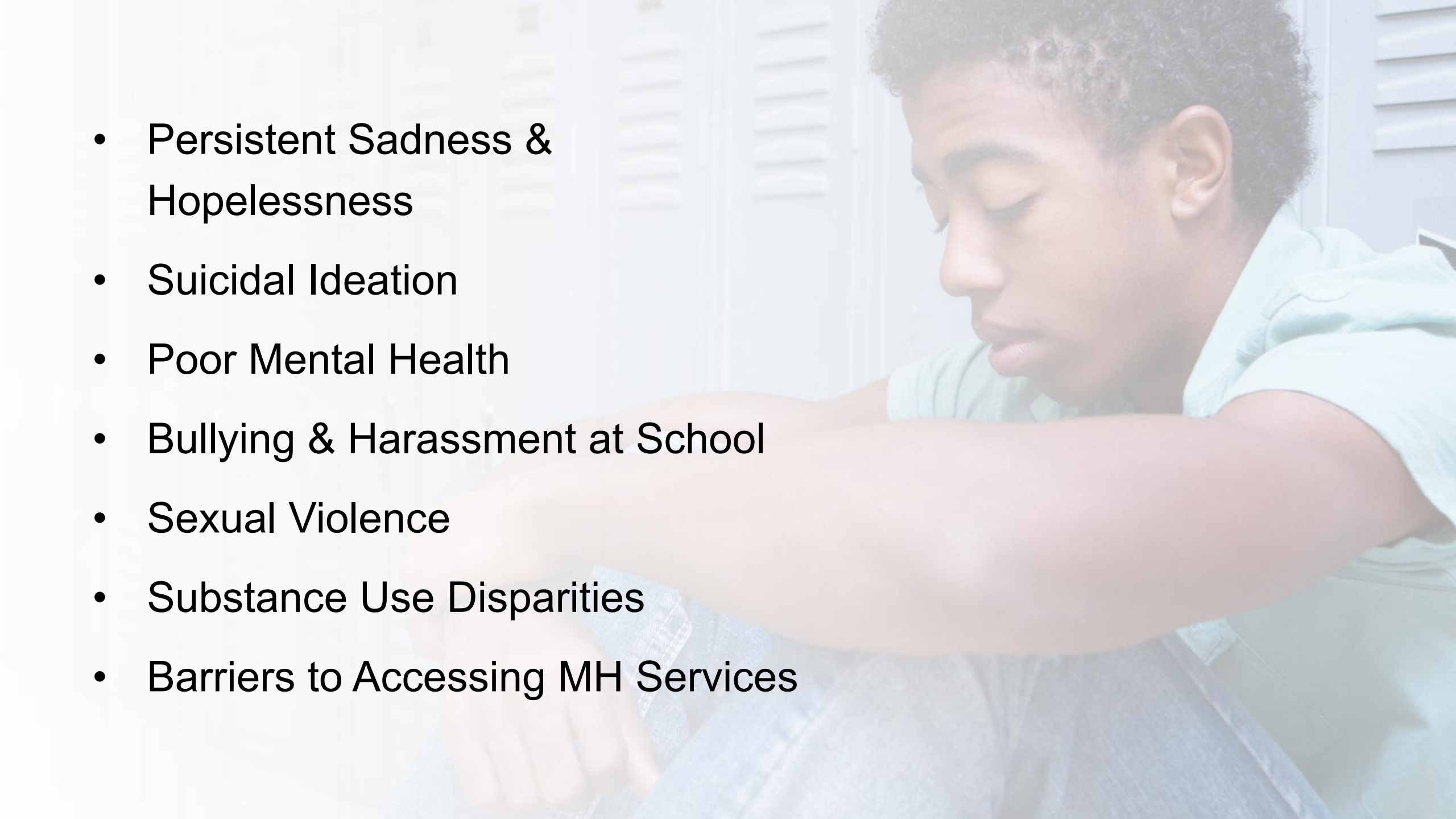
Current estimates suggest about **7–9%** of youth identify as LGBTQIA+, which is roughly **1 out of every 11 to 14** youth.

However, when accounting for under reporting, the estimate is believed to be closer to **1 in 10 youth (10%)**.



**What are  
some issues  
that our  
LGBTQIA+  
children/youth  
encounter?**



- 
- Persistent Sadness & Hopelessness
  - Suicidal Ideation
  - Poor Mental Health
  - Bullying & Harassment at School
  - Sexual Violence
  - Substance Use Disparities
  - Barriers to Accessing MH Services

# STRUCTURAL/SYSTEMIC RISKS



**Youth Homelessness**  
(120% more likely)



**Foster Care Involvement**  
(30% youth in care identify)



**Juvenile Justice Involvement**  
(LGBTQIA+ youth comprise 28%)

# THE CURRENT POLICY LANDSCAPE:

## Risks Affecting LGBTQIA+ Children & Youth in California



**Even in a protective state, LGBTQIA+ youth experience increased risk due to national policy shifts and local pressures.**

- Hostile federal actions are increasing fear and instability.
- Attempts at forced-outing policies in California school districts.
- Rising harassment and stigma toward transgender & gender-expansive youth — even within California.
- Gaps in access to gender-affirming care despite state protections.
- California must fight federal discrimination attempts through litigation.
- Beginning in 2025, federal agencies were ordered to remove or suppress data related to sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV, health equity, and youth behavioral health. This has created major gaps, data loss, and mistrust among researchers.

**Why is it  
important that  
social service  
providers  
practice allyship/  
affirming-care?**



- Research consistently shows that one affirming adult can reduce a young person's risk of suicide, self-harm, and emotional distress.
- In social services, you may be the only adult in a youth's life who sees and affirms them as they are.





## Allyship Builds Trust & Safety In Systems That Often Feel Unsafe

Many LGBTQIA+ youth have experienced:

- Discrimination
- Misgendering
- Invisibility
- Punitive responses to their identity
- Forced outing
- Service providers who are uneducated about gender and sexuality

When a provider practices allyship, it signals:  
“You are safe with me. You do not have to  
hide here.”

COMING  
OUT



LGBTQ+

**amaze**

# HOW SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS PRACTICE ALLYSHIP FOR LGBTQIA+ CHILDREN & YOUTH

1

## Use Correct Names, Pronouns, & Identity Terms

- Share your pronouns first/have them visible (e-mail/badge).
- Ask youth how they want to be addressed.
- Normalize pronoun sharing for everyone, not just LGBTQIA+ youth.
- Correct mistakes gently and model affirming language for others.



MY  
PRONOUNS  
ARE:

## 2

## Protect Youth Privacy & Confidentiality

- Never disclose a youth's LGBTQIA+ identity without their consent.
- Safeguard case notes and records that may reveal sensitive identity information.
- Understand that outing a young person can cause serious harm, including family rejection or unsafe living conditions.





### 3

## Create Safe, Inclusive Spaces

- Use visual cues (stickers, posters, pronoun options) to signal safety.
- Set group norms that prohibit discrimination, harassment, or judgment.
- Actively intervene when harmful language or behavior occurs.
- Avoid enforcing gendered dress codes or expectations.

# 4

## Listen Without Judgment & Validate Their Experiences

- Allow youth to tell their story in their own words. Don't assume every LGBTQIA+ youth has the same story or needs.
- Respond with compassion, curiosity, and respect.
- Provide youth with agency/decision-making.
- Don't assume their identity is "a phase," attention-seeking, or caused by trauma.
- Don't describe their identity as "confusing," "difficult," "controversial," or "inappropriate."
- Avoid minimizing their experiences ("Just ignore them").



# Affirming Statements for Responding to LGBTQIA+ Clients



“Thank you for trusting me with this.”

“You deserve spaces where you feel safe and affirmed.”

“Your feelings are real, and they matter.”

“You know yourself better than anyone else.”

“Nothing about who you are is wrong.”

“You have the right to explore and express who you are.”

“I’m here with you, and you’re not alone.”

“It’s okay if your identity evolves—that’s part of growing.”

“How can I support you right now?”

“You’re allowed to take your time figuring things out.”



5

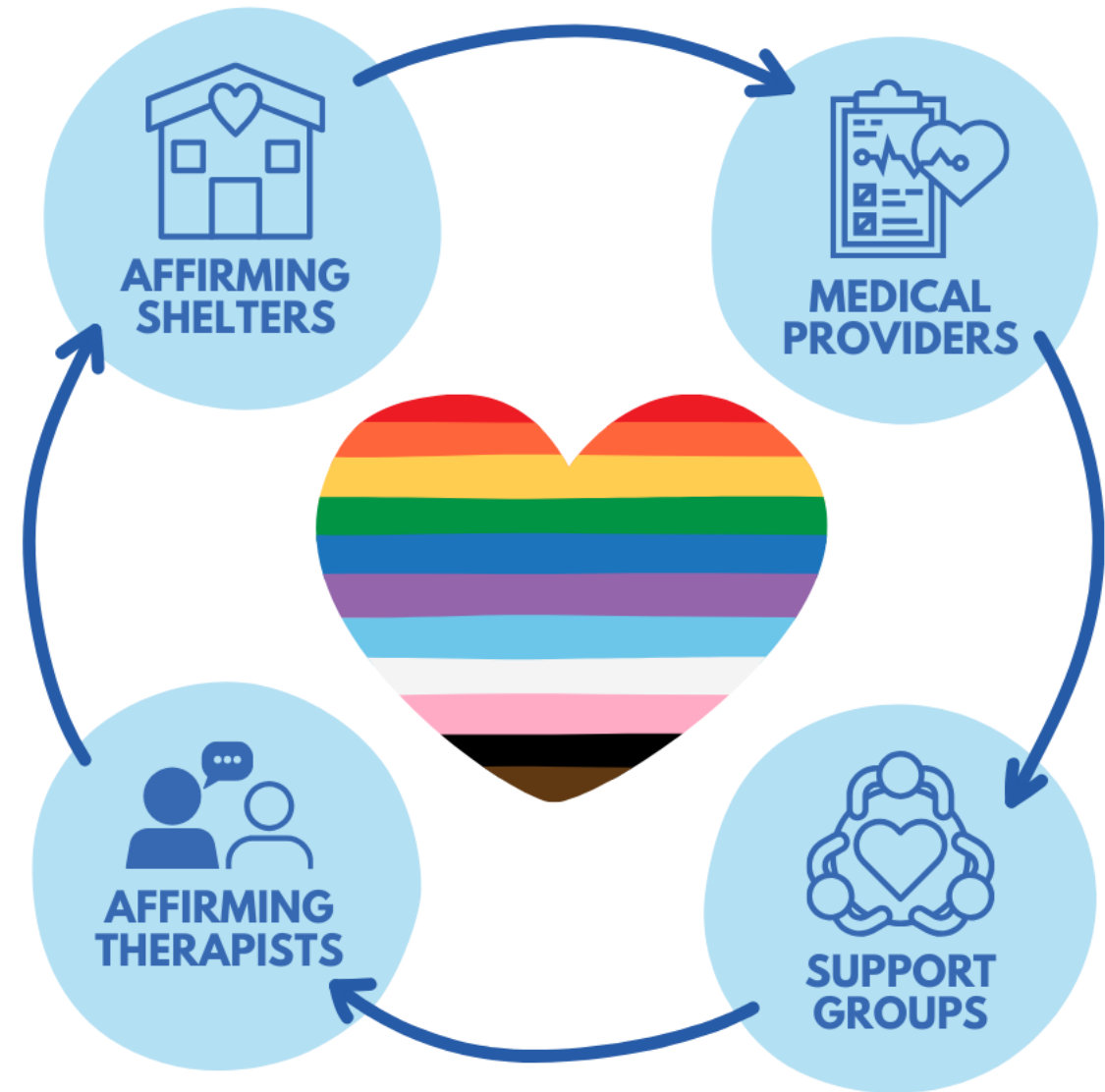
## Challenge Bias—Both Interpersonal & Systemic

- Interrupt microaggressions, stereotypes, and harmful assumptions when you hear them.
- Advocate for inclusive policies within your agency, school, or placement settings.
- Gently “call in” colleagues who use inaccurate or stigmatizing language.

## 6

## Connect Youth to Affirming Resources

- Provide referrals to LGBTQIA+ affirming therapists, shelters, and medical providers.
- Ensure placements (foster homes, congregate care, shelters) are safe and inclusive for LGBTQIA+ youth.
- Connect youth to support groups, if interested.
- Encourage participation in identity-affirming community spaces when appropriate.





## 7

## Educate Yourself Continuously

- Stay informed on LGBTQIA+ terminology, experiences, and best practices.
- Attend trainings, read reputable resources, and learn from lived experience leaders.
- Do not rely on youth to teach you everything—they deserve support, not labor.

## 8

## Advocate for Equitable Access

- Speak up when systems create barriers (e.g., gendered programs, denial of services, unsafe placements).
- Ensure youth have access to competent mental health care and gender-affirming support.
- Support policies that protect LGBTQIA+ youth from discrimination and harm.





## 9

## Recognize Intersectionality

- Understand how race, disability, immigration status, religion, poverty, and trauma shape a young person's experience.
- Don't treat being LGBTQIA+ as the primary issue unless the youth brings it up. Youth are more than their identity — avoid reducing them to it.
- Always ask the youth what they need to feel affirmed and safe.
- Support LGBTQIA+ youth of color, trans youth, and youth with multiple marginalized identities with extra care.

## 10

## Model Allyship Consistently— Not Just in Crisis

- Do not expect trust right away; allow that to grow through your consistency.
- Show affirming behavior in everyday interactions.
- Don't stay silent if you hear misgendering, slurs, or stereotypes from colleagues or caregivers. Silence can be perceived as complicity.
- Make your workspace inclusive for all youth, not only those who are out.



# CASE VIGNETTE: DANI



Dani (15, they/them) is a non-binary youth who entered foster care after conflict at home related to their gender identity, including frequent misgendering and restrictions on expression. Their new caregiver is supportive but still learning and often slips up on pronouns, leaving Dani feeling exhausted from constantly correcting others. In your first meeting, Dani shares that they just want to feel safe and not have to pretend. They're frustrated with slow updates to school records and feel isolated and anxious due to comments from peers. Their caregiver wants to support them but isn't sure how.





# BREAKOUT ACTIVITY

- How would you build trust with Dani in this first meeting?
- What steps can you take to ensure the caregiver feels supported and informed?
- How should you approach the issue of misgendering in the home and at school?
- What resources—community, mental health, school, medical—could you connect Dani with?
- How can you advocate for Dani regarding school records and safe environments?
- What boundaries around privacy and confidentiality should guide your next steps?

# How Would You Build Trust with Dani in this First Meeting?

## KEY APPROACHES:

- Affirm their identity immediately by using their chosen name and pronouns without hesitation.
- Validate their feelings: “It makes sense that you're exhausted from correcting people — that's a lot to carry.”
- Acknowledge past harm without pressing for details: “I'm sorry you weren't supported at home. You deserve safety and respect.”
- Give them control by asking what they need from you in terms of support with these situations
- Normalize that they don't owe you trust right away, and you will show consistency over time.
- Avoid overwhelming them — no rapid-fire questions, and no assumption-making.

# What Steps Can You Take to Ensure the Caregiver Feels Supported & Informed?

## KEY APPROACHES:

- Provide gentle, non-shaming education about non-binary identities and pronouns.
- Let them know slips happen, and model how to correct them.

## WHY THIS HELPS:

Caregivers who feel supported are more likely to become strong allies—and youth need caregivers in their corner.

## GIVE THE CAREGIVER SPECIFIC TOOLS, SUCH AS:

- Pronoun practice strategies.
- LGBTQIA+ youth support resources.
- Scripts for responding to extended family, teachers, etc.
- Reinforce that affirmation improves mental health outcomes, which often increases caregiver buy-in.
- Invite the caregiver to ask questions safely, knowing you won't judge their learning process.

# How Should You Approach the Issue of Misgendering in the Home & at School?

## IN THE HOME:

- Model pronoun use yourself every time.
- Coach the caregiver on gentle self-correction: “They—sorry, I’m learning.”
- Create a non-punitive environment where Dani doesn’t feel pressured to correct others.
- Set expectations that affirming language is a safety issue, not a preference.

## AT SCHOOL:

- Advocate for Dani’s rights to have their affirmed name/pronouns respected verbally and on documentation, when possible.
- Request staff training or guidance for school personnel.
- Encourage the school to establish a point person who ensures consistency (counselor, teacher, etc.)
- Work with Dani to identify where misgendering happens most and create a plan of support.

# What Resources Could You Connect Dani With?

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

- LGBTQIA+ youth support groups
- Local LGBTQ centers
- Peer-based mentoring networks

## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES:

- Affirming therapist trained in working with LGBTQIA+ youth
- Trauma-informed care if Dani has experienced rejection or bullying

## SCHOOL-BASED RESOURCES:

- School counselor or wellness center
- Safe classrooms or staff allies

## WHY THIS MATTERS:

Connection to affirming resources reduces isolation & improves mental health outcomes.

# How Can You Advocate for Dani Regarding School Records & Safe Environments?

## ADVOCACY STEPS:

- Support Dani in requesting updates to school systems where allowed.
- Educate school staff on their obligations to provide an affirming environment.
- Request a meeting with school administrators to ensure a safety plan, so teachers correctly use Dani's name and pronouns.
- Help ensure Dani has access to facilities aligned with their identity.

## WHY THIS HELPS:

School is where youth spend most of their waking time; safety & affirmation there are crucial for their well-being.

# What Privacy & Confidentiality Boundaries Should Guide Your Next Steps?

## **CONFIDENTIALITY SAFEGUARDS:**

- Do not share Dani's LGBTQIA+ identity with caregivers, teachers, or other providers without their explicit consent.
- Protect written records by limiting sensitive details that could be accessed by others.
- Ask Dani how they want information shared and with whom.
- Follow legal and ethical standards that recognize that outing a young person can put them at risk.

## **WHY THIS IS CRITICAL:**

Outing is one of the most common & most dangerous harms LGBTQIA+ youth face; confidentiality can be lifesaving.

# BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

LGBTQIA+ youth **thrive** when providers show **consistency**, **compassion**, & **affirming care**.

**Small actions**— using correct names/pronouns, challenging bias, & protecting privacy— create **life-changing safety**.

Your role as a social service provider **matters**. You may be the one affirming adult who **changes a young person's trajectory**.



**Thank you for your commitment to creating safer, more inclusive systems!**

# REFERENCES

- [Data: Movement Advancement Project | LGBTQ Youth](#)
- [Health Disparities Among LGBTQ Youth | Adolescent and School Health | CDC](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care 2023 Fact Sheet](#)
- [Know Your Rights: LGBTQ+ Rights in Response to Federal Attacks](#)



# KEEP LEARNING WITH CALTRIN

## CalTrin Replays:

- [Effectively Welcoming LGBTQIA+ Youth Into Our Work](#)
- [Foundations of Gender Inclusion](#)
- [Cultural Competence](#)

## CalTrin Training Tidbit:

- [The Three Levels of Culture](#)

## CalTrin Blog:

- [Supporting LGBTQIA+ & Gender-Diverse Youth](#)



# Thanks for joining us!

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Survey and certificate in the chat now
- Follow-up email with resources within two days
- Watch your inbox for the next issue of *CalTrin Connect*



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Record a



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