

## DEPENDENCY INVESTIGATION TIP SHEET REGARDING SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION

*To engage a youth around their SOGIE, be inquisitive just as you normally would with any child. Be curious and interested about who they are. Here are some possible statements/questions when engaging a youth around their SOGIE:*

- “My name is (...) and my pronouns are (...)
- “What is your name?”
- “Tell me about yourself?”
- “If you could be anyone you wanted, who would you be?”
- “If you could wear anything you wanted to, what would you wear?”
- “Do you have someone special in your life? Are you dating anyone?”
- “How do you see yourself in the future?”
- *If you know you are working with a transgender, gender queer, or gender variant youth and aren't sure how they identify, just ask: “What pronouns would you like me to use when I refer to you?”*
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE: “Tell me what that means to you?”*
- *If they tell you about their SOGIE: “Who have you told?” “Who else would you like to tell that you have not yet?”*
- “Who do you feel you can be yourself with? Who supports you for who you are?”
  - If you could live with anyone, who would you live with?



### INFORMATION

LGBTQ+ and Gender Expensive (GE) children may not feel comfortable talking about their SOGIE as they do not know if you will be affirming.

### STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

- + What would you like me to know about you?
- + What is the most important thing to you right now?
- + If I say something that is not right, please feel free to correct me
- + Do you feel safe here? If not, why not?
- + Remind them you are a safe person to talk to.

## INFORMATION

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LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often shamed and abused for who they are or perceived to be.

Parents may not like to be seen in public or family gathering with their LGBTQ+ or GE child

LGBTQ+ and gender expansive (GE) children are often treated differently than their siblings and other children in the home.

Children and youth are also often “kicked out” of their home because of their SOGIE.

A child’s SOGIE or perceived SOGIE may create conflicts within the family.

Children placed in out of home care who are or perceived to be LGBTQ+ and gender expansive are often mistreated by staff.

Parents may punish children and youth whose actual or perceived SOGIE is different than their parent’s expectations.

### STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

- + Remind them you are a safe person to talk to.
- + Do you feel safe here? If not, why?
- + Do your parents support who you are?
- + Do your parents or siblings call you bad names?
- + Do you parents or anyone ever hit you because they do not support who you are?
- + Do you get to go to out or go to family gatherings? If not, why not?
- + Are you being treated the same way as your siblings?  
If not, why do you think?
  
- + Have you ever been “kicked out” of your home? What happened?
- + Do your parents fight about you? What do they fight about? How bad does it get?
  
- + Does the staff treat you the same way as the other children? Do they call you names? Does the staff let other kids call you name or treat you badly?
  
- + Are you allowed to wear the clothes, hairstyle, and other things that you want? If not, what would you wear if you were allowed to?

## INFORMATION

## STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to bring their LGBTQ+ friends to the house.

+ Can you bring your friends home? If not, why?

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often not allowed to date (when age & culturally appropriate).

+ What are your family beliefs about dating? (If allowed to date) can you date who you want?

Families come from different backgrounds, cultures and religions which construct their belief system. Some may have strong convictions about gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation.

+ How does your family's religion or culture influences how they treat you?

+ Who is supportive of you in your family? In your surroundings? In what way are they being supportive?

LGBTQ+ youth often avoid school because they are being bullied.

+ Are you being bullied or discriminated against at school?

+ Who advocates for you at school?

+ Do you have anyone you feel safe with at school?

It is never okay to "out" a youth. Ask for permission to discuss the youth's SOGIE with someone else. Explain to the youth why you think someone else needs to know and who will know.

+ Thank you for trusting me with all this information, my job is to keep you safe. You are being mistreated because of your [insert here sexual orientation or gender identity]] and that is not okay. You deserve to be safe.

+ For me to ensure that you stay safe, I am going to have to write a report but first I want to ask your permission to mention your [insert here sexual orientation or gender identity]].

+ Other than me, the people who will know about your SOGIE are also people who will be safe and supporting of your SOGIE. Those people would include my supervisor, other social workers, and your attorney, and possibly even the judge. How is this for you to hear?

## IMPORTANT TO KNOW

There are also situations where a parent/caregiver is being supportive of their child's SOGIE, and a third party observes this and reports that the parent/caregiver is being abusive by affirming the child's SOGIE. When assessing for risk/harm/abuse it is essential to understand that affirming or supporting a child's SOGIE is not abuse nor neglect.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION REFER TO ACL 19-92

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACLs/2019/19-92.pdf>