

FAMILY MAINTENANCE & REUNIFICATION

Tip Sheet Regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression (SOGIE)

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?”

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>

INFORMATION

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

LGBTQ+ & GE youth are often shamed and abused because of their SOGIE or perceived SOGIE.

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

LGBTQ+ & GE children are often treated differently than their siblings and other children in the home.

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

Parents may be uncomfortable or afraid for their children and youth whose actual or perceived SOGIE is different than their parent's expectations, particularly if their child expresses themselves in a manner the caregivers do not approve of.

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

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

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.

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?

Do you like living here? Do you want to stay here?

Do your parents support who you are?

Do your parents or siblings call you bad names?

Do you get to go to family gatherings?
If not, why not?

Are you being treated the same way as your siblings?
If not, why do you think?

Do your caregivers ever fight about you?
What do they fight about?

Are you allowed to wear the clothes, hairstyles, and other things that you want?

If you could wear anything you wanted, what would you wear?

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

What are your family's beliefs about dating?
(If allowed to date) Can you date who you want?

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

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

INFORMATION

LGBTQ+ youth often avoid school because they are being bullied

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD

Are you being bullied or discriminated against at school?

Who advocates for you in 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, I am here to ensure that you and your family's relationship improves. I would like to talk to your family about SOGIE in general.

Does anyone in your family know about your [insert here sexual orientation or gender identity]?

Do you need help/support telling someone?

INFORMATION

Parents of LGBTQ+ children are often scared for their children because of their SOGIE and how they may be treated.

Parents of LGBTQ+ children often feel grief because their child does not conform to their expectations. This could be related to religion, culture, beliefs in general, or not knowing about SOGIE.

Parents of LGBTQ+ children may also feel guilty as they wonder if they did anything to "make" their child LGBTQ+.

STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE PARENTS

Tell me how you feel about your child's SOGIE?

It is normal to feel this way, tell me more about it? What scares you?

Please, tell me about your [insert here: religion, culture, beliefs in general], I want to know more about you?

Most parents feel this way, let me assure you there's nothing you could have done to influence your child's SOGIE.

Parents want the best for their children.

I can see how much you love [insert name]. Let's work together to improve your relationship with them.

Do you need some information and resources about SOGIE?