

LONG ISLAND INSTITUTE FOR GROUP WORK WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH

a newsletter about working with children and youth in groups

Volume 6. Number 3.

Special Conference Issue

Summer 2001

Guest From the Editor

On March 16th, 2001, over one hundred high school students and adults participated in the conference *Isolation or Inclusion: Creating Safe Spaces for Lesbian and Gay Youth*. This conference was the culmination of a year-long project undertaken jointly by two important organizations.

Seven years ago, a group of social workers and counselors founded the Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children and Youth, a program of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, because they saw a need to promote good group work practice and advocate for more meaningful group experiences for young people. In 1996, the Institute put together the Action Research conference called *A Sense of Alienation or Belonging: Building Bridges Through Group Involvement*. This conference was the model for this year's action research project, addressing the problems facing lesbian and gay youth.

Long Island Crisis Center's Pride for Youth Project provides education, outreach, and supportive services to lesbian and gay youth. This project was founded in 1993 in order to address the paucity of resources for these young

people on Long Island. Among Pride for Youth's accomplishments, the Project set up the first-ever suburban "Coffeeshouse" for lesbian and gay teenagers in the nation. The Project also designed an educational theater program utilizing adolescent peer educators in order to educate young people about HIV and related health problems.

This past year's action research project has been a unique partnership between the Institute, dedicated to promoting good group experiences for youth, and Pride for Youth, dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian and gay youth. While the Institute and Pride for Youth took on leadership of this project, the process of making this conference happen allowed us to bring in many students, teachers, social workers, and school administrators to our cause. The exciting thing about Action Research is that the research involves people along every step of the way- our surveys and interview questions weren't dreamed up by a single research analyst but rather were brain-stormed by a group of people who were dealing with the problems of lesbian and gay youth on a daily basis. Our hope was to raise awareness of school-based homophobia and motivate

people to create change in school systems.

At our last planning meeting before the conference, someone had remarked: "Won't we just be preaching to the choir with this conference." To which I replied: We want the choir!" We want to bring together those people who are deeply concerned about homophobia in the schools. We want you, as a student, teacher, school social worker, administrator, guidance counselor, politician, or activist to be energized by this opportunity to come together with like-minded individuals. And we want you to be challenged to think about what you can take back to your school in order to prevent the name-calling, bullying, bashing, ignoring, or denying that is going on in Nassau County schools.

This special edition of "Huh?" provides a variety of perspectives on the problem of school-based homophobia. Hernan Poza, one of the original staff members of New York City's first gay youth program, shares his experiences as both a group member and a group leader in "Looking Back- a Reminiscence: Always

Dear Reader,

It is with great pleasure that I pass the editorship of this special issue devoted to the plight of lesbian and gay youth to Andrew Peters, director of the Long Island Crisis Center's Pride for Youth program. Andrew is a fine colleague, consummate social worker, and superb advocate. He and an intergenerational cast of authors and poets will educate and move you with the riches they share in the pages to follow.

Andrew
Malshoff

Coming Out." Krissy Casquerelli, a Pride for Youth Peer Educator and co-founder of Mepham High Schools' Gay-Straight Alliance, provides observations about the peer-to-peer interview component of last year's action research project in "The Action Research Interviews." Adam Zaleznick, a member of Pride for Youth's Young Men's Creative Arts Group, describes the process of creating an art display to sensitize students and teachers in "The Lockers Project". And Cari Abatemarco, one of the conference coordinators, provides a summary of the research findings and her thoughts on future goals in "Surveys Reveal Homophobic Trends in High School."

I hope you enjoy this special issue!

Andrew J. Peters



Looking Back ... A Reminiscence Always Coming Out By: Hernan Poza, III

This is the 17th
feature in a
continuing series.

It's a Saturday morning in 1976 and I'm 17 years old, a recent high school graduate, heading into Manhattan on the Long Island Rail Road. I leave my childhood neighborhood with thoughts of Little League baseball, basketball pick-up games, and Boy Scout troop meetings. I'm off to attend the weekly GLYNY (Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York) meeting, a peer run youth group. With a nervous stomach and adrenaline rush, I'm off to meet my friends. There's Jackie - a beautiful Asian girl; Amil - hungry, fierce, and political; Clay and his striking twin sister

But most of all, this group provided a feeling of safety and commonality, of truthfulness and of the promise of community, acceptance, connection, and joy: coming-out from an uncertain adolescence into the possibility of a future rich in friendship and infinite opportunity.

Lora; Teddy - a Connecticut boarding school student; and Na Quisha - the wild ring leader of the group. Chaotic meetings with loose rules, passionate opinions, enthusiasm, and energy were our style. But most of all, this group provided a feeling of safety and commonality, of truthfulness and of the promise of community, acceptance, connection,

and joy: coming-out from an uncertain adolescence into the possibility of a future rich in friendship and infinite opportunity.

It's about five years later and I'm a new social worker, in an elegant Manhattan drawing room, sitting nervously in a comfortable leather chair, facing two well-dressed older men in sweaters and ties. One is petting a cat nestled in his lap. I'm meeting with Damian Martin and Emery Hetrick and we are discussing my upcoming work at "IPGLY", the Institute for the Protection of Gay and Lesbian Youth (now the Hetrick/Martin Institute, the largest provider of services to

lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender youth in New York). I will be facilitating the Thursday night group at their new offices on 23rd Street. I will create a safe space for my participants, with a bit more structure and access to resources than the informal group of my own adolescence. I remember my Thursday regulars: Anthony from a group home, dressed proudly in homemade outfits; Simone escaping from her Muslim family and young baby; Eric the handsome high school football star; Joshua from a strict Orthodox Jewish family in Borough

Park; Carmela, being raised by two mothers; Joey a charismatic dwarf from the deep south; and Emily, quiet and intense, on a full scholarship at Columbia. Every Thursday night we'd create a space of safety, community, support, hope, acceptance, and fun: coming out with the vision of a life rich in friendship and possibilities.

It's now 25 years later and a Friday night in Bellmore. I'm at the Pride for Youth Coffeehouse; there are over 75 noisy, raucous teenagers in attendance tonight. I'm the grown-up, looking on, feeling the familiar energy, the enthusiasm, the nervous awkwardness, and especially the freedom. I'm the visiting Board President (of the parent agency, Long Island Crisis Center), the "boss'boss", some older guy on the sideline visiting from the distant past. A survivor of the decimating 1980's and 90's, still nurturing the nervous 17 year-old boy inside, still living the life, still a social worker, still coming-out, always coming out. Coming out yet again with the words and reminiscences on these very pages. A product of loving, supportive parents and an extended family of friends, Long Island public schools and churches, Little League, Boy Scouts,

Student Council meetings and of GLYNY and IPGLY. I'm proud to be here, associated with this

I'm at the Pride for Youth Coffeehouse; there are over 75 noisy, raucous teenagers in attendance tonight. I'm the grown-up, looking on, feeling the familiar energy, the enthusiasm, the nervous awkwardness, and especially the freedom.

professional, warm, empowering program that offers acceptance, community, hope and possibilities. I'm proud to be back on Long Island.

Hernan Poza III, CSW is a bilingual clinical social worker, specializing in work with severely emotionally disturbed youth, he is President of the Board of Directors of the Long Island Crisis Center.

Join the Advocacy Coalition!!

Here is your chance to act now. Building on the network of students, faculty and community leaders that have worked together over the past year on the Action Research Project, we have created the "Advocacy Coalition. This coalition will continue our efforts to eradicate homophobia in the school system. If you would like more information about the coalition or are interested in joining, please contact Carl Abatemarco at Pride For Youth, (516)679-9000 ext.123.

The Action Research Interviews by *Krissy Casquarelli*

The voices of oppressed community and cries of help going unheard were the themes of the youth interviewed during the research for the Pride for Youth project.

I interviewed three of the ten teens willing to express their personal experiences of homophobia in their high schools. All the stories were appalling and sad. I heard teens being beaten because of their assumed sexual orientation and assaulted because they were different. Most of all, they were harassed for their willingness to be who they

are, uninhibited by society and it's standards.

The first youth I spoke with told a tale that would horrify any person. He was in constant fear. He was verbally harassed everyday. He had bottles beaten over his head and he was forced to keep quiet all the while because he is gay and has nowhere to go. His school didn't help. There were no teachers offering support, he had no family to turn to, and his friends were beside themselves in constant fear.

The second youth came across as a joker. At

first glance, he appeared to be easy going, but I sensed that he had become sadly apathetic. He tried not to care about there being no one to support him. He tried not to show his hurt, and in that came his best defense, his humor. He has a strong will to put up with his intolerant school, and to that I had to tip my cap.

The third person I interviewed lived in total fear. He was so fearful he did not want to share details. In his school, there were gangs of teenagers, groups who gay-bashed and assaulted those perceived to be gay. His story was gut wrenching. The others had come to terms with intolerance, but this youth chose to avoid it all together.

To exist in fear, to be a person not respected on the basis of a stereotype, is the struggle a member of the homosexual community must endure. These

students represent a community oppressed and silenced by the weight of fear, and the horror of discrimination. My experiences during these interviews opened my eyes to the strengths and weaknesses present in us all, and the need to be conscious of them at all times. The will to forge ahead in the face of hate, and the effort to put an end to the intolerance is all we can hope for in the fight for equality. I take pride in these brave individual. Their involvement in the action research conference has shown us the lack of safety in Nassau County schools, and how we must change this to guarantee safety to us all.

Mission Statement Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth

The Mission of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth is: To promote and enhance effective group work practice with children and youth through advocacy, education, and collegial support. **HUH?!?** is the Institute's quarterly newsletter dedicated to providing information, inspiration and support for anyone working with young people in group settings.

Steering Committee

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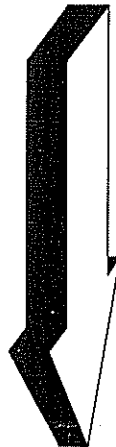
Cynthia Cavallo (Suffolk)

Coord. of Group Work Svcs.:

Michelle Laser

Steering Committee: Cari Abatemarco; Aimee Colton; Roseline Felix; Stacey Levin; Nicole Mogavera; Maureen O'Connor; Catherine Papell; Andrew Peters; Carol Sutker

Project Coordinator: Andrew Malekoff



Save the Date

MARCH 8, 2002

The Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth will hold a professional conference on March 8th, 2002. The theme of this conference will be "Group Work and Youth Development." Watch HUH?!? for further information.

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The Locker Project by Adam Zaleznick

Over at the Young Men's Creative Art Group, held at Pride For Youth, artistic know-how flourishes under the co-facilitation of Andrew Peters (Pride For Youth's Project Director) and Alberto Cesar (Pride For Youth's Creative Arts

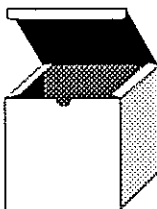


Worder). The art group, consisting of 12 young men between

the ages of 14 and 23, have decided to create almost true-to-life scale school lockers stricken with anti-gay slurs to provide how important a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) is inside a school.

Every day, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender teens are "gay bashed" in school and many have nowhere to turn to. The art group has created these model lockers to represent the homophobia that occurs in the schools. They were displayed at the Action Research Conference in the Multi-media arts room. The conference provided a place for students, school administrators, and teachers to discuss homophobia in the schools.

The lockers were created from cardboard boxes, which the group collected over several weeks from local businesses and even dumpsters. They were cut down to approximately four feet tall and glued



with industrial glue to hold them in place. The next step was to paint the lockers with a gray paint for the base color. Detailing was done by Alberto who did a fantastic job of making these lockers come to life. Next, the group got down and dirty to vandalize the posters with fluorescent paint. The words on the lockers are very harsh, but it is no different than what many students handle on a regular basis. Some of the homophobic slang was "accurately" spelled in the way homophobic people spell it. And maybe the graffiti was a little bright in color but to any victim of these brutal words and phrases it is always that intense.

We hope to be able to display the lockers, along with other art projects from the Multi-media exhibit, at other venues like high schools, libraries, and community centers. If you are interested in bringing the Multi-media exhibit to your school or organization, contact Andrew Peters at (516) 679-9000, ext. 126.



Untitled Poem by Nicole Layton

Today i saw tomorrow
In the eyes of different faces
Walking through the park i saw
Old prejudice traces

Rather than see only
Purple black or white...
My eyes now told my heart
What once was...was not right



Rather than see only
Hispanic, Italian or Jew...
my eyes now told my heart
what once was will no longer do

Rather that see only
skinny, tall, or fat...
my eyes now told my heart
their would be no more of that

Rather than see mentally ill
Or physically disabled...
My eyes now told my heart
What once was...Was blindly mislabelled

We all seek to be happy
Each in our own special way...
mine not yours...yours not mine
and yet it is fair to say

Some people seek and find happiness
By doing good things for others
some by hurting strangers and friends
Fathers, sisters, mothers and brothers

YES! today i saw tomorrow
my heart has made me feel good
Now i see others as i seek for myself
to be happy and understood

It all seems so easy
and so far from yesterday...
the faces in the park, and me
with so much more to say.

An Event to Remember ...

by *Michelle Laser*

When we first began speaking about this Action Research project at one of the meetings of the Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth, I remember thinking how very important it would be. I knew that applying action research to the problem of homophobia could be the key to advocacy on a truly large scale. What I didn't expect was being witness to the passion, angst, pain, affection, and spirit that these young people would display throughout the process. The conference participants gave testimony to the fact that, despite the horrors, there is still a wide spread and pervasive sense of hope among youth. Even amidst hardship and fear, it is encouraging to know that youth will still come forward with courage, trust, and intellect, to say that "We are not alone, we are all one." This is what made this project momentous and what will give impetus to change in the most positive sense.

Surveys Reveal Homophobic Trends in High School

by *Cari Abatemarco*

Six high schools across Nassau County agreed to let their students participate in the School Climate Survey. A total of 1166 usable questionnaires were returned (47% male, 53% female). With the goal of including a variety of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, the surveys were distributed in diverse communities throughout the county. Students answered questions about homophobia in their schools, specifically about anti-gay language, verbal and physical harassment and their general perception of how safe their school is. These are the results of the School Climate Survey. (Unless otherwise noted, the percentages reflect the combined number of students reporting either "sometimes" or "frequently".)

The first group of questions asked students about anti-gay language-what they are hearing at school, who is saying it, who is stopping it, etc. 89% of the students have heard "That so gay" used as a put down in their school. 94% hear "Faggot, Dyke, Queer" and other anti-gay words used in a negative way. 52% of them report making these comments. The most common place to hear anti-gay remarks is in the hallway (90%). After that, there is the cafeteria (81%), classes (76%), bathrooms (72%), gym (67%), bus (66%), parking

lot (56%), and walking home (42%).

When asking about who is making these comments, we found that there is not one group of school staff that did not use anti-gay slurs. As you may expect, the biggest perpetrators are the students, with 89% of the survey respondents hearing these remarks from their peers. Among the staff, coaches are the highest group at 18%, with teachers at a close second with 15%.

It's not often that someone tried to stop it. In fact, when asked how often someone tried to stop it, 44% replied never, 42% rarely, 12% sometimes and 2% frequently. On those occasions when someone did intervene, 77% of the students reported that teachers were the ones who would stop it while only 37% reported students stopping it. Of the students filling out the surveys, 15% did say that they stopped it themselves.

There is no doubt that verbal harassment is a daily problem for LGBTQ students. What about physical harassment? Is this a major issue as well? We asked students if they have been harassed because someone thought they were gay, regardless of whether they are or not. 91% said never. However, 9% have been harassed at some point because someone thought they were gay. And while 88% of the students report

never physically harassing others because they thought the person was gay, 12% do. At those times when a youth is being harassed because of his or her real or perceived sexual orientation, what is the reaction of their peers? Well, 48% did say that if they saw this type of harassment going on, they would try to stop it. Unfortunately, 36% would ignore it and walk away and 11% would watch. Scarier still is that 6% would join in.

So how safe do students think their school is for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth? 5% think very safe, 19% safe, 12% said unsafe, and 10% said very unsafe. This left 54% of the respondents saying they're not really sure how safe their school is. When asked if they would like to see changes in their school to make it safer for LGBT youth, 59% said yes, and 41% said no. While we would expect that when perceived safety was high, interest in making the school safer would be low and vice versa. That was not the case. Of those asserting the school is already safe, 45% still wanted it to be safer. Among those students who rate the school as very unsafe, more than half still think it doesn't need to be any safer.

Where does this leave us? We've done the research, we've talked with the students, we

know that homophobia exists on many levels in the schools system. Fortunately there is a large community of people who have been or are ready to do something about it. Whether you're starting a Gay-Straight Alliance, giving a faculty training on the needs of LGBTQ youth, or even just hanging a Pride For Youth flyer in the hallway, anyone and everyone can do their part to ensure that all students be provided with a safe learning environment.

➤ **The following are responses from the survey section asking, "In the space provided below, please give us your thoughts about something that concerns you deeply."** The comments we received reflect the data showing a trend of ambivalence among the students as to whether or not their school is a safe place, as well as a range of extremes.

➤ **Ambivalence**

- Well a person's sexuality never really comes up in school. I don't think people would do anything. I really don't think that many people care.
- I don't care if you are gay as long as it does not affect me. These people don't speak out so they are not safe.
- Nothing, I do not care about this. It's not a big problem. Gays should die.

Continued on Page 6.

Surveys Reveal Homophobic Trends in High School

Continued from Page 5.

- Nothing concerns me deeply as long as some gay person stays away from me and not try to do anything gay or else I will hurt that person and humiliate him.
- I really have no problems with gays. As long as you don't try to hit on me or talk to me than we are good. BUT WHEN THEY CROSS that line they're looking to get beat.

➤ Homophobia

- If I ever saw anyone being harassed because of their sexual orientation I would ignore it. I always stay away from gay people and avoid them.
- I don't like gays. They make me feel weird. I think being gay is disgusting and repulsive. If you're gay, you probably have some kind of mental illness. If a homosexual ever hit on me I would probably kick his ass.
- I believe there should not be any harassment at all. However, I also would feel uncomfortable around a gay person.
- I think all gay people suck and should all be lined up and shot. All of them would be killed. All ugly lesbians should also be killed. All hot lesbians and bisexuals should call me at my house number.
- Gays should be shot. It's not normal. People are trying to make it look normal but it's not. It's also against like every religion. I disrespect gays. They're faggots. Disgrace to the community.

- My friend is gay and he gets harassed on a daily basis. I wish I could stop it but I feel that a majority of the times, it's just teens being teens and they are arrogant.

➤ Reaching Out at School/Surviving as an LGBTQ Student or Ally

- As a gay student, I'm pleased to see that something is being done. It's EXTREMELY hard for me to try to survive out here.
- I feel I am different because I'm bisexual and I cut myself. However I stick with my own group because we are all alike.
- There was a kid in our school, who came out of the closet in the school newspaper. That kid didn't lose any friends, but that person was looked at very differently.
- I am glad that [this school] at least has a club for them to assure them.
- If more people came out there would be more acceptance.
- This school is extremely anti-gay with no support and even if there was support no one would ask for it because they would be scared or embarrassed of people found out and ostracize them.

"It's not enough to be compassionate. You Must Act!" -14th Dalai Lama



The Day

The day was shining like silver on silver.
The cars and buses streamed up the driveway and parked hither-thither on the lawns.
They burst through the doorway in a rush of talk, loud - loud
The excitement shimmered in the air in electric arcs of laughter.
The young voices - the old voices - strident and cool - hurried and slow
They all said that
The day had come.
It was time.
He said "I'm so glad I'm here!"
She said "I don't know what I'm going to say!"
They said "I feel scared - I feel nervous - I feel excited!"
He said "I've worked a long time to make this day happen!"
She said "I've tried all my life to make people understand..."
They said "I need to talk - I need to be heard - I need to say everything!"
He said "Sometimes I feel so alone!"
She said "Sometimes I wonder, why me?"
They said "I feel afraid - I feel lonely - I feel like I'm waiting for something to happen but I don't know what."
He said "I told my parents and they were OK about it."
She said "I could never tell my parents!"
They said "My parents never listen - my parents help me - my parents want to help but they can't, you know?"
He said "I want the world to change."
She said "Nothing ever changes."
They said "It's too hard - it's too painful - but it's me!!!"
He said "Today I could talk, for the first time!"
She said "It all came pouring out of me and people listened!"
They said "IT was good - It was exciting - It made me feel whole!"
The day finished - still shining.
They burst out of the doors in a rush of talk, loud - loud.
The cars and buses withdrew from their scattered pattern
And streamed back down the driveway and away.
The last sound was heard.
One voice that said...
"This was the best day of my life!"
"This was the best day ... of my life!"
The day was shining - silver on silver on silver... .

by Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour

A Special Message ...

Photo album of an extraordinary day

A vexing question about social progress has always been "Why does it take so long to recognize a serious problem and do something to make it better?"

This is a prelude to speaking of a remarkable conference that North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center's Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth recently co-sponsored with the Long Island Crisis Center's "Pride for Youth" program. The one-day meeting was all about the experiences that gay and lesbian youth have in their encounters in Long Island's high schools.

The conference was attended by well over 120 students, educators, social workers, civic activists, and some members of the Gay/Straight Alliance.

The conference theme was "Isolation or inclusion: Creating Safe Spaces for Lesbian and Gay Youth" The proceedings were extraordinary. The interplay of young people of different backgrounds with sympathetic adults had a quality of emotional honesty coupled with sophisticated assessments of reality that are rarely seen at a conference. The tough life experiences of many of the participants had a stunning impact as they were reported without the usual rancor that these meetings can easily and understandably precipitate.

There was plenty to be concerned about as the group discussed the findings of an Action Research study of 1,166 Long Island high school students. While many of the findings on the treatment of lesbian and gay youth were disturbing and negative, there was an upbeat attitude at the meeting. Not that things were getting so much better but that the uniting against bigotry by

both homosexual and heterosexual youth was in itself a unique and refreshing breakthrough. Especially so on the high school level where it is downright daring to go against the tide of conventional behavior and traditional attitudes.

Andy Peters, a pioneering social worker who is the project director for "Pride for Youth," summed up the survey results, "The survey suggests that what Nassau County schools are doing to address homophobia (if anything) is not constant and is therefore sending mixed messages to students. This needs remedy," he said.

Michelle Laser, our Coordinator of Group Work Services at North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, who along with Mr. Peters, Cari Abatemarco, and a large committee organized the conference, hit the nail on the head when she said, "We suddenly have the attention of the country on this issue of bullying and harassing of youth who are 'different.' Lesbian and gay youth fit the portrait perfectly. They deserve interest, compassion, and protection from all elements of society."

Luckily we had the video cameras rolling. A well-edited documentary will emerge from this effort. I can imagine the educational impact that the real faces and the real voices of anguished teens who live in our own backyard might make.

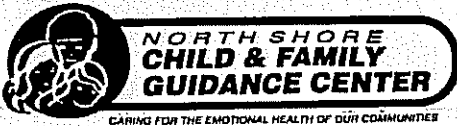
We need to sit up and pay attention. The youth and adults who attended this conference exhibited great courage. The ball is now in all of our courts, wherever we live, study, or work.

This article is excerpted from Marian S. Levine's April 26, 2001 column "Parenting" which appears monthly in all eighteen Anton Community Newspapers on Long Island, NY.



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R E S O U R C E S

✦ **July 12, 2001** - Writing for Publication: a workshop for practitioners in the human services. This workshop will focus on encouraging practitioners to write about their experiences and ideas. The fee for this workshop is \$95 (lunch included). Send name, address, phone number, and payment to: NSC&FGC/Writing Workshop; 480 Old Westbury Rd.; Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215; Attn: Barney Navas.

✦ **Beginning October 17, 2001** - Certificate Program: The Treatment of Young Children. This certificate program for professionals focuses on practice with children under ten. Held on Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8:30 PM, the course will run until May 15, 2002. The cost is \$1,250 (payment plans are available). Please contact Sandra Wolkoff, CSW at The Marks Family Right from the Start 0-3+ Center for more information - Call: (516) 484-3174 or Fax: (516) 484-2729.

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TIPS: For being inclusive of LGBT youth in group and educational settings

LGBT youth are an invisible minority, indistinguishable from their peers. Social stigma and bias-related violence cause many of these youth to remain invisible for self-protection. This invisibility leads many group workers to assume that all the teenagers in the group are heterosexual. Making this assumption, through the language you use and the information you provide, alienates at least ten percent of the young people you will encounter. Further, heterosexist practice teaches heterosexual teenagers that LGBT people are a marginal group.

➔ **TIP:** Use language that accurately reflects the diversity of youth with whom you are working. For example, when talking about dating, include the possibility that some boys will date other boys and some girls will date other girls. Reference LGBT role models as you would reference role models from other minority communities. Educate yourself about the lesbian and gay community if you are unfamiliar with gay people. LGBT youth will be more likely to come out to you if you show openness to talking about their issues. Wearing a "Safezone" pin or hanging a poster in your office will also educate your non-gay clients and reinforce a climate of respect.