



Be the One: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Out-of-Home Care

2025 Foster Care Coordinators' Conference
May 30, 2025
Molly Herrmann, Humble Pie Consulting LLC

Plan

Set the stage

Basic concepts

Data

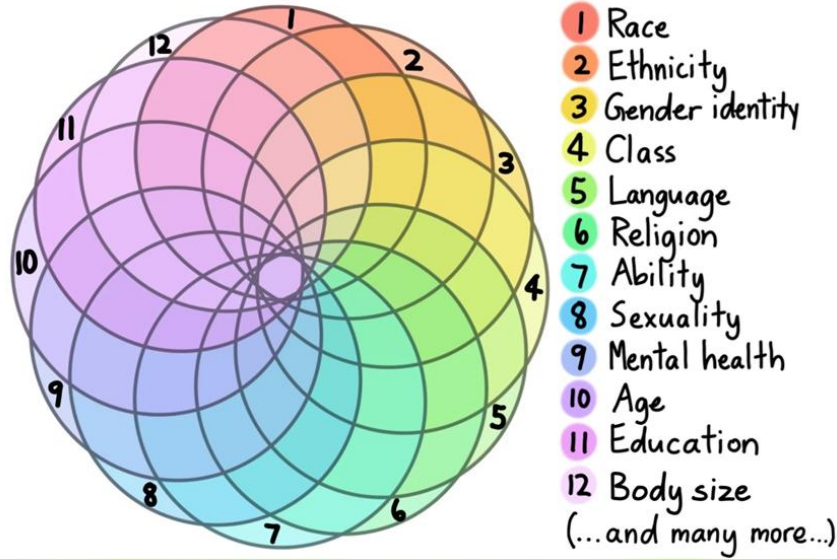
Best practices



Visualization



INTERSECTIONALITY

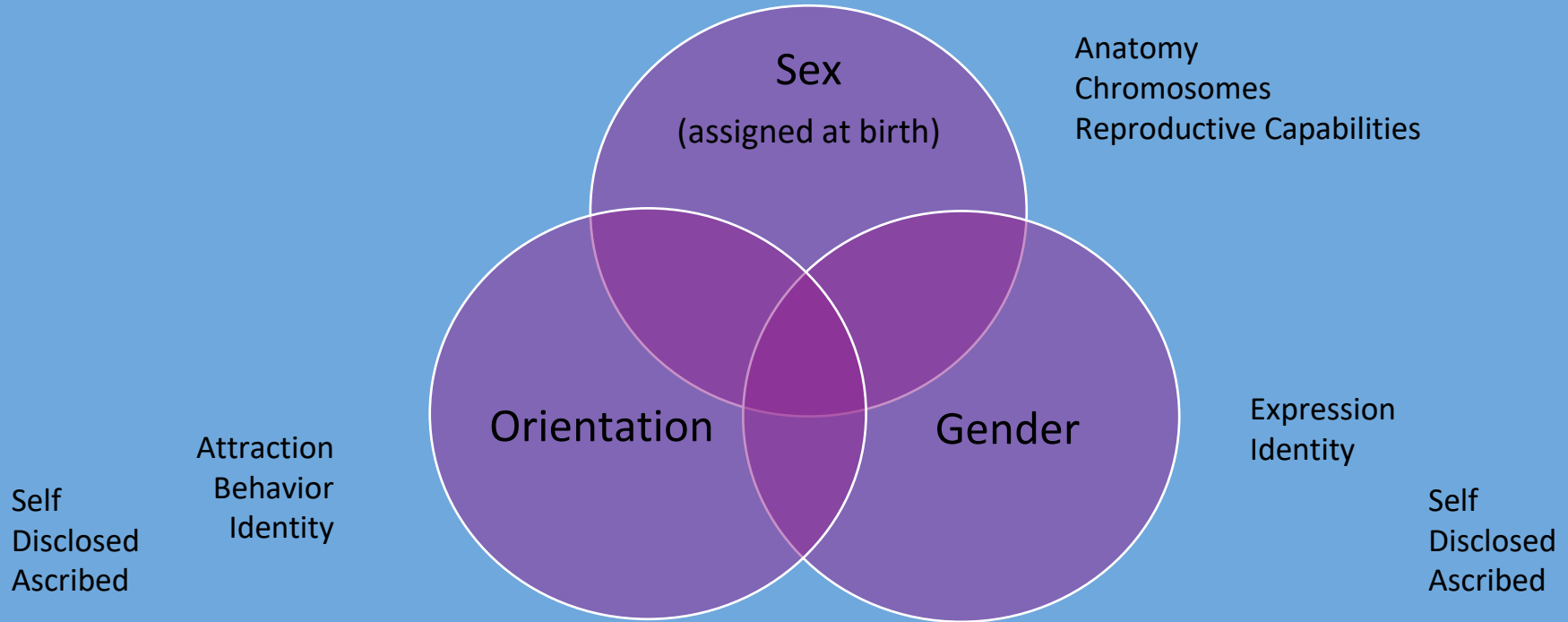


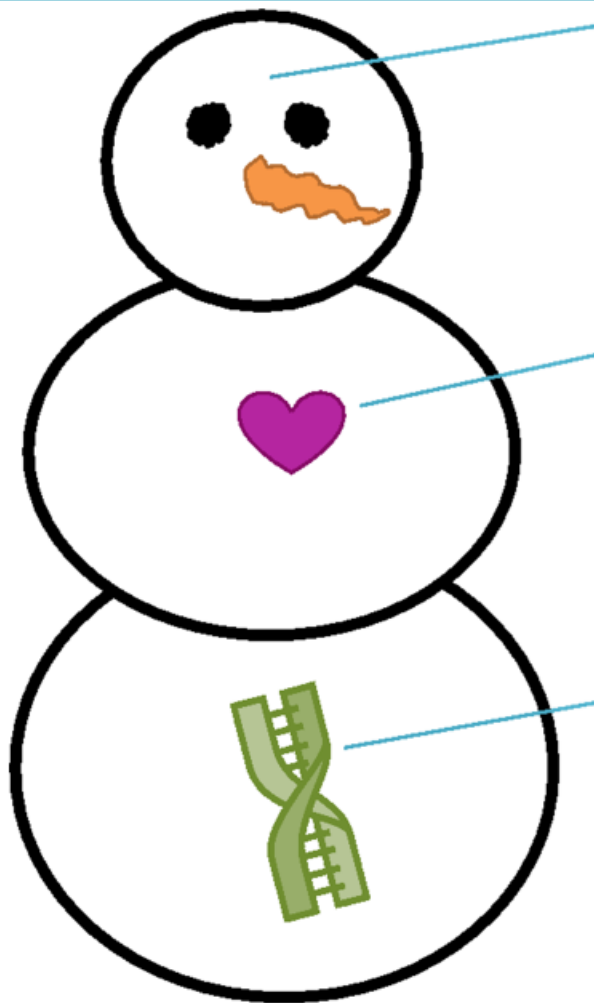
Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw -

@sylviaaduckworth

Basic Concepts: Sex vs gender vs orientation





GENDER IDENTITY

A person's innermost concept of self as being male, female, neither, or both. Gender identity may or may not align with one's sex assigned at birth.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A person's experience of being romantically, physically, and emotionally attracted to men, women, both, or neither.

Sex Assigned at Birth

The combination of anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones that are typically classified as male, female or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth based solely upon a person's visible external anatomy.

GENDER EXPRESSION

How we express our gender to the world. This could include the clothes we wear, the way we style our hair, the way we talk, and the pronouns we use.



Let's personalize it!

Think of a time **your own** presentation or sense of self did not match what others expected of you.

- ▶ What was the assumption?
- ▶ Why do you think it was made?
- ▶ How did it make you feel?



Let's apply it!

Think of a time **someone else's** presentation or sense of self did not match what you expected.

- ▶ What was the assumption?
- ▶ Why do you think it was made?
- ▶ What did you do, say, or think?



FIVE Wisconsin LGBT High School Youth

- 4 experienced anxiety
- 3 experienced depression
- 2 were bullied
- 2 seriously considered suicide
- 1 attempted suicide



Wisconsin 2023 YRBS data

Youth data: School climate



The vast majority of LGBTQ+ students in Wisconsin regularly (sometimes, often, or frequently) heard anti-LGBTQ+ remarks (Fig. 1). Many also regularly heard school staff make homophobic remarks (52%) and negative remarks about someone's gender expression (70%).

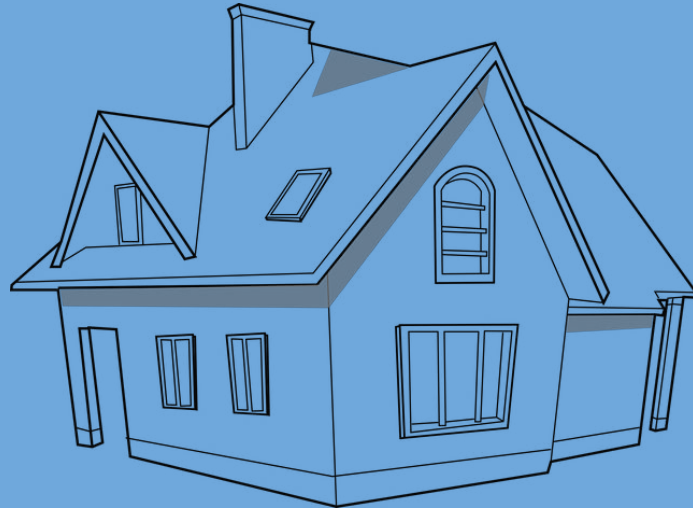
- In Wisconsin, **transgender and nonbinary students in particular experienced gender-based discrimination**, specifically being prevented from: using their chosen name or pronouns (38%), using the bathroom that aligns with their gender (37%), using the locker room that aligns with their gender (37%), wearing clothing deemed “inappropriate” based on gender (18%), and playing on the school sports team that was consistent with their gender (19%).

Youth data: National

75% of LGBTQ youth experienced emotional abuse at home during first half of 2021, compared to 50% of straight youth.

20% experienced physical abuse in the home during this time, compare to 10% of straight youth.

Centers for Disease Control MMWR, April 1, 2022



Youth data: National

Up to 40% of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ.

Choi, S.K., Wilson, B.D.M., Shelton, J., & Gates, G. (2015).

Foster care

30% LGBTQ+
transgender

5%

Not in foster care

11% LGBTQ+
transgender

1%



Pause to reflect

What feeling are you experiencing after hearing the data?

What data was new for you?

What will stick with you?



What can we do?

“For parents and caregivers, a little change – being a little less rejecting and a little more accepting – can make an important difference in reducing a young person’s risk for serious health problems, including suicide and HIV.”

Family Acceptance Project, *Supportive Families, Healthy Children*, C. Ryan, 2009.

Best practices: Creating the environment - Why and what

LGTBQ youth who have **just one** accepting adult in their life can reduce the risk of suicide attempt by 40%. (National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2019, The Trevor Project.)



Best practices: Creating the environment - How

Proactive invitations

How we talk about people

Using neutral language about identities and family structures

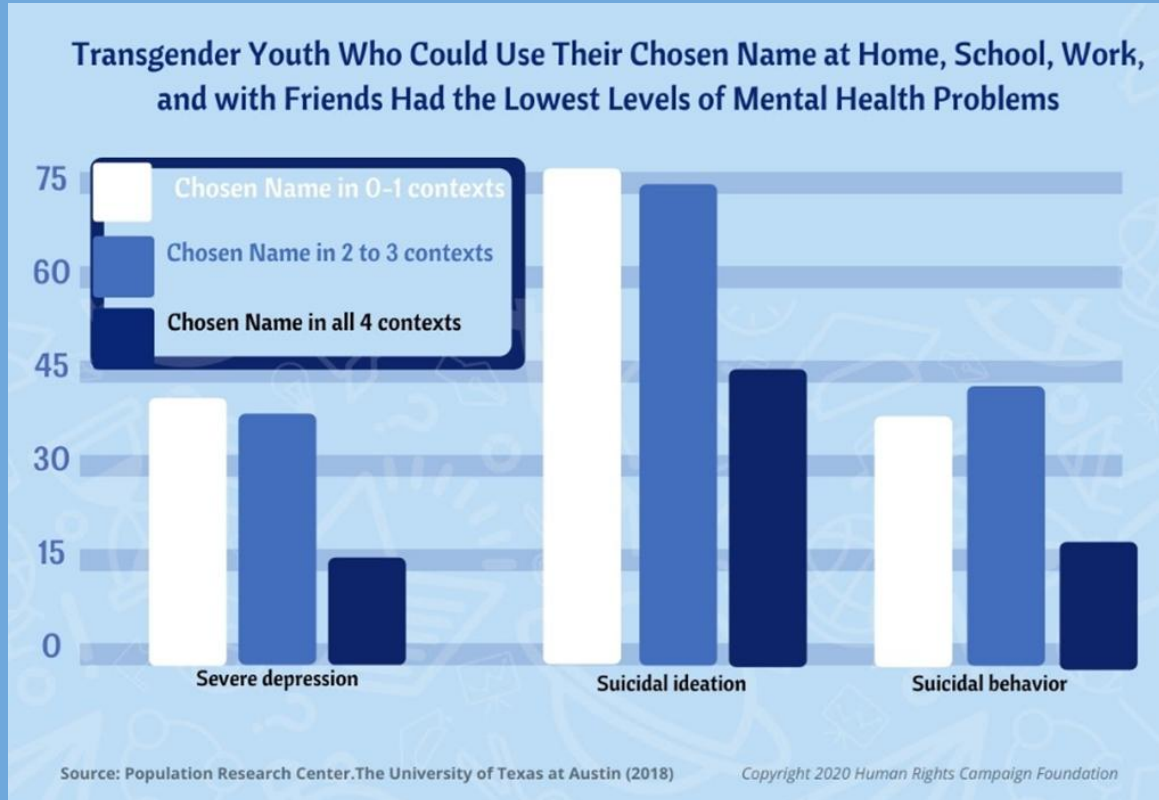
- ▶ Tell me about the people who live in your house.
- ▶ Who are the adults responsible for your care?
- ▶ Tell me more about your partner(s). How do they identify?
- ▶ I have not heard that term before. What do you want me to know about you?

Best practices: Pronouns and names - Why

Transgender, gender non-conforming, and nonbinary youth who did not have their pronouns respected **attempted suicide twice as often** as the kids who did have their pronouns respected.



Best practices: Pronouns and names - Why



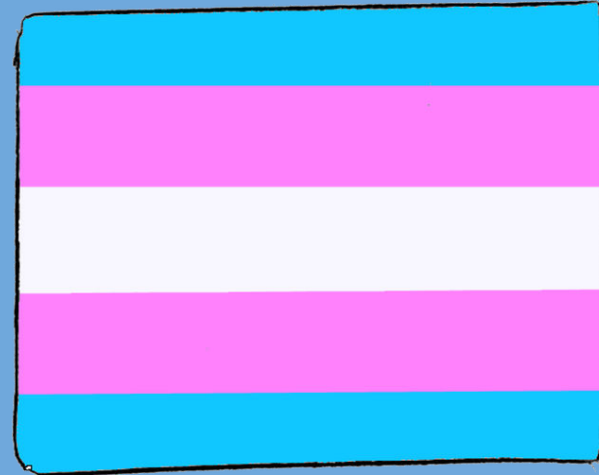
NEAR approach



- Neutralize
- Engage
- Act
- Repair (if needed)

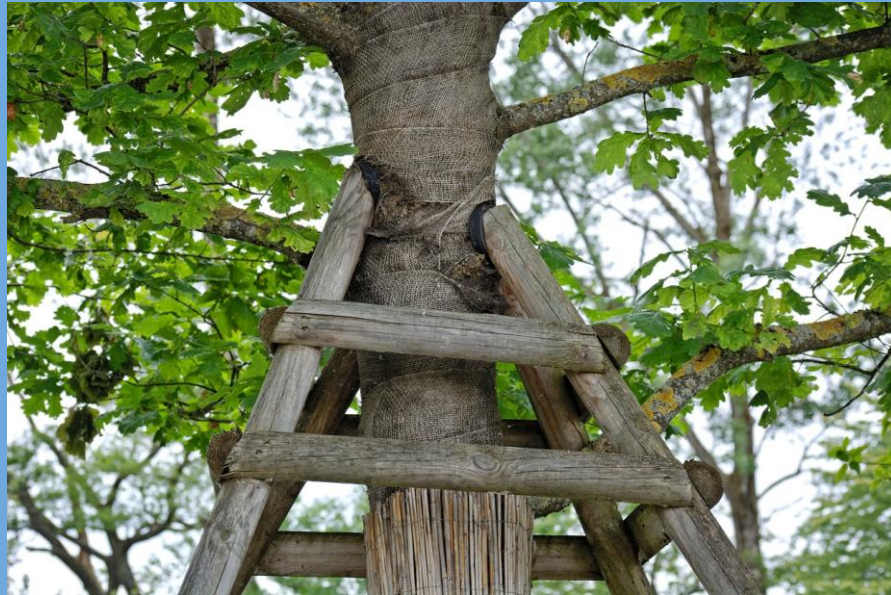
Best practices: Inclusive language - How

- What name or pronoun would you like me to use for you?
- I use...
- Using “they” until we know more, making it a default, or name
- Avoiding gendered language - Ms. Molly, Mr. Jose, “guys”



Best practices: Standing up - What and Why

Advocating for youth at school and in other settings



Best practices: Standing up - How

Centering the young person

Advocating with:

- School
- Family
- The rest of the world

Keep learning, even if you have resisted before



Questions, Takeaways, Next Steps



What are you still wondering?

What will stick with you?

What can you do in the next day or two based on what you heard?

What change can you make in the next 6 months to a year?

Contacts and Resources

Email: mollyhconsult@hotmail.com

Website: humblepieconsulting.com

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

GSAFE

<https://gsafewi.org/>

