



# Safe and Supportive Environments: OAH Expectations and Resources



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- Implement interventions in positive, safe, supportive, and healthy environments.
- Ensure inclusivity of all youth, including LGBTQ
- Apply positive youth development practices
- Use a trauma-informed approach

- Annually complete assessment tools
- Tier 1Bs should identify
  - 3 actions for Trauma-informed approaches
  - 3 actions for Positive Youth Development
  - At least 1 action per construct for Inclusivity
- Tier 1As should complete assessments with CBA partners annually and determine actions

## A Practical Guide for Creating Safe and Supportive Environments in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

[http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/assets/ta\\_9\\_safe\\_and\\_supportive\\_environments.pdf](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/assets/ta_9_safe_and_supportive_environments.pdf)

### A Practical Guide for Creating Safe and Supportive Environments in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs



#### Overview

Ensuring that adolescents feel safe and supported is key to creating a teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) program culture that enhances self-esteem, self-confidence, and autonomy in order to equip youth with the skills and knowledge they need to make healthy decisions. This practical guide provides research-based tips to help TPP programs create safe and supportive environments for the youth they serve.

As you work to ensure that your TPP program is successfully creating a safe and supportive environment for all youth, keep the following points in mind:



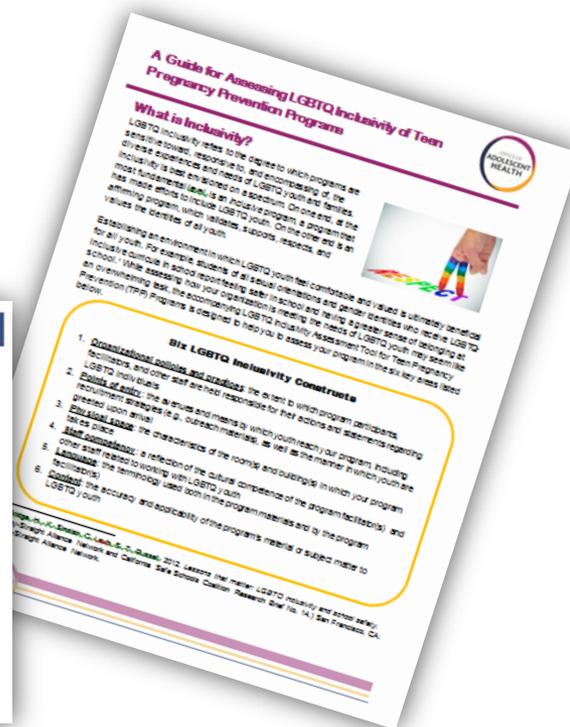
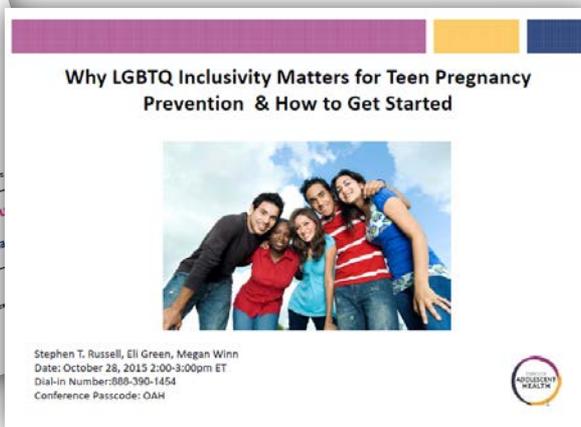
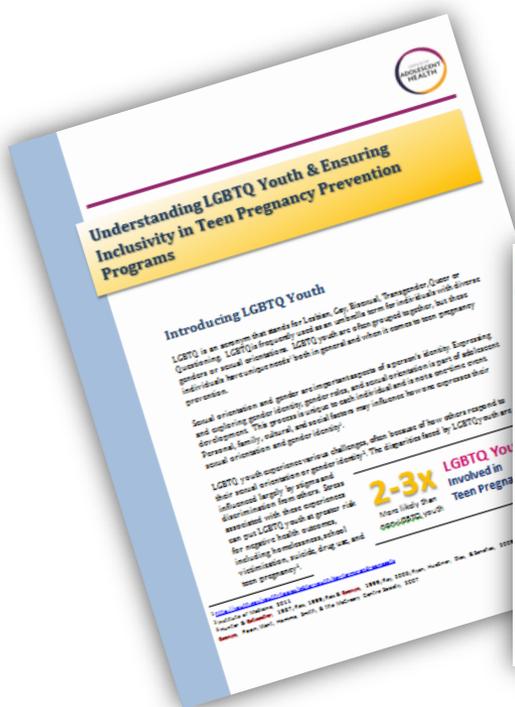
1. Youth often feel uncomfortable talking about relationships and sexual health. Safe and supportive environments help build the **trust, self-confidence, and self-esteem** that all youth, especially those that have experienced trauma, need to discuss sensitive topics.
2. Ensuring **physical and emotional safety** creates a safe and supportive environment for all participants.
3. It is estimated that sixty-four percent of individuals in the U.S. have experienced at least one *adverse childhood experience* (ACE).<sup>1</sup> Because youth don't always talk about difficult or traumatic experiences, it is critical for TPP program staff to **foster a safe and supportive environment for ALL youth**.
4. Several **resources** are available to help organizations create safe and supportive environments, particularly for those at highest risk for poor sexual health outcomes.

#### Definitions

- **Physical safety:** an experience in which one is free from physical harm or threat.
- **Emotional safety:** an experience in which one is free from bullying, harassment and humiliation and is able to express emotions, feel confident to take risks, and supported in trying something new.

Adapted from: Osher, D., Sprague, J., Weissberg, R. P., Axelrod, J., Keenan, S., Kendziora, K., & Zins, J. E. (2008). A comprehensive approach to promoting social, emotional, and academic growth in contemporary schools. *Best practices in school psychology*, 4, 1263-1278.; The National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments. <http://safesupportivelearninga.ed.gov/topic-research/safety/emotional-safety>

- 2 products and 1 webinar have been developed focused on this topic



## Understanding LGBTQ Youth & Ensuring Inclusivity in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs



### Understanding LGBTQ Youth & Ensuring Inclusivity in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

#### Introducing LGBTQ Youth

LGBTQ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning. LGBTQ is frequently used as an umbrella term for individuals with diverse genders or sexual orientations. LGBTQ youth are often grouped together, but these individuals have unique needs<sup>1</sup> both in general and when it comes to teen pregnancy prevention.

Sexual orientation and gender are important aspects of a person's identity. Expressing and exploring gender identity, gender roles, and sexual orientation is part of adolescent development. This process is unique to each individual and is not a one-time event. Personal, family, cultural, and social factors may influence how one expresses their sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>2</sup>.

LGBTQ youth experience various challenges, often because of how others respond to their sexual orientation or gender identity<sup>3</sup>. The disparities faced by LGBTQ youth are influenced largely by stigma and discrimination from others. Stress associated with these experiences can put LGBTQ youth at greater risk for negative health outcomes, including homelessness, school victimization, suicide, drug use, and teen pregnancy<sup>4</sup>.

**2-3x** More likely than cisgender youth

**LGBTQ Youth Involved in Teen Pregnancy**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aidsmap.com/2016/02/16/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology/>  
<sup>2</sup> Institute of Medicine. 2011.  
<sup>3</sup> Huebner & Schneider. 1987, Fox, 1989, Fox & Benson, 1989, Fox, 2002, Fox, Huebner, Day, & Benetkin, 2009, 2010/2011, 2014, Benson, Fox, Van, Hanna Smith, & The McKinney Centre Staff. 2007

There are many key terms relevant to LGBTQ youth; the following list includes a few common terms, adapted from <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtqyouth/keyterms-and-issues>

<b>Biological Sex</b>	-Genes, body characteristics with which youth are born, typically labeled "male" or "female." Some are born with a reproductive/sexual anatomy that does not fit typical definitions of "male" or "female." This is sometimes referred to as "intersex."
<b>Gender Identity</b>	-Internal sense of being male, female, or another gender, not necessarily visible to others. "Cisgender" is when gender identity/aggression does not differ from assigned sex at birth. "Transgender" describes people whose gender is different from assigned sex at birth; these individuals might wish to use a pronoun other than he/she such as they/ze.
<b>Gender Expression</b>	-How people show their gender to others. Many think gender to be binary or only two types: "masculine" or "feminine." However, gender and gender expression is on a spectrum. It can also see change over time and is very fluid.
<b>Transitioning</b>	-When transgender youth express their gender to align with their internal sense of gender identity. Transitioning can include physical change but may or may not include medical/surgical treatment. Transitioning is an important part of affirming identity for transgender youth.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	-Romantic attraction to others. Could be attraction to people of one gender (heterosexual), same sex (lesbian), or both (bisexual), or to people independent of their sex/gender (pansexual or asexual). Can also mean (or not mean) attraction to any sex/gender (pansexual).
<b>Questioning</b>	-A term used to describe people who are unsure about their sexual and/or gender identity.
<b>Coming Out</b>	-An ongoing process in which youth identify, acknowledge, express, and share information about their sexual orientation or gender identity to family, friends, peers, family, teachers, religious, and community members. Coming out can be affirming, but it can also create stress.
<b>Queer</b>	-A term reclaimed by the LGBTQ community that is used by some individuals to identify. Not all LGBTQ individuals use the term and it should be used with caution.
<b>Two-spirit</b>	-Term used by some Native American communities. Refers to individuals who express gender or sexual orientation roles of Indigenous origin using tribal concepts and/or who identify as LGBT, questioning or intersex in a Native setting.

#### What is Inclusivity?

LGBTQ inclusivity means the degree to which programs are sensitive toward, responsive to, and do not exclude the diverse experiences and needs of LGBTQ youth and families. Inclusivity is best envisioned on a spectrum. On one end, at the most fundamental level is an inclusive program, one that has made efforts to include LGBTQ youth. On the other end is an affirming program, which validates, supports, respects, and values the identities of all youth.

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## Assessing LGBTQ Inclusivity of Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

**A Guide for Assessing LGBTQ Inclusivity of Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs**

**What is Inclusivity?**

LGBTQ inclusivity refers to the degree to which programs are sensitive toward, responsive to, and encompassing of the diverse experiences and needs of LGBTQ youth and families. Inclusivity is best envisioned on a spectrum. On one end, at the most fundamental level, is an **inclusive** program, a program that has made efforts to include LGBTQ youth. On the other end is an **affirming** program, which validates, supports, respects, and values the identities of all youth.



Establishing an environment in which LGBTQ youth feel comfortable and valued is ultimately beneficial for all youth. For example, students of all sexual orientations and gender identities who receive LGBTQ-inclusive curricula in school report feeling safer in school and having a greater sense of belonging at school.<sup>1</sup> While assessing how your organization is meeting an overwhelming task, the accompanying LGBTQ Inclusion Prevention (TPP) Programs is designed to help you to below.

**Six LGBTQ Inclusivity Constructs**

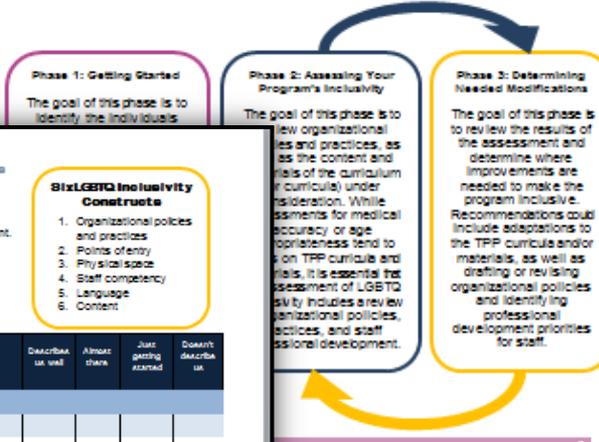
- Organizational policies and practices:** the policies and practices that staff are held responsible for regarding LGBTQ individuals
- Points of entry:** the avenues and means by which youth are recruited and greeted upon arrival
- Physical space:** the characteristics of the room where the program takes place
- Staff competency:** a reflection of the cultural knowledge and skills of staff related to working with LGBTQ youth
- Language:** the terminology used both in the program materials and by staff
- Content:** the accuracy and applicability of the program materials to the needs of LGBTQ youth

<sup>1</sup> Strigun, Chik-Ko, Estroff, C., Lewis, S., & Russell, J. (2012). Lessons from the Gay-Straight Alliance Network and California Safe Schools Coalition. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 51*(2), 145-152.

Based on the available research and expert feedback, OAH developed an assessment tool to enable grantees to assess the LGBTQ inclusivity of the various elements of their TPP programs. The tool, which can be found on page seven of this document, covers each of the six constructs outlined previously. This assessment tool provides a series of questions designed to help grantees assess the degree to which your TPP program is inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ youth. Grantees should use the tool to (1) determine areas where they are doing well, and (2) identify areas where improvements can be made to make their TPP program and its implementation inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ youth. At the end of this guide, you will find a list of additional resources that may be helpful as you through this process.

In this guide, we have broken down the process of assessing a TPP program for LGBTQ inclusivity into three phases. The amount of time you spend on each phase will depend on what your organization already does to ensure that your programs are responsive to the needs of LGBTQ youth, as well as the length and number of the curricula under consideration. Grantees should plan to reassess their program's inclusivity on an annual basis and make continuous quality improvements as needed to ensure their programs are inclusive and affirming.

**Process for Assessing TPP Programs for Inclusivity**



**Phase 1: Getting Started**  
The goal of this phase is to identify the individuals who will be assessed.

**Phase 2: Assessing Your Program's Inclusivity**  
The goal of this phase is to review organizational policies and practices, as well as the content and materials of the curriculum (if curricula) under consideration. While assessments for medical accuracy or age appropriateness tend to focus on TPP curricula and materials, it is essential that the assessment of LGBTQ inclusivity includes a review of organizational policies, practices, and staff professional development.

**Phase 3: Determining Needed Modifications**  
The goal of this phase is to review the results of the assessment and determine where improvements are needed to make the program inclusive. Recommendations could include adaptations to the TPP curricula and/or materials, as well as drafting or revising organizational policies and identifying professional development priorities for staff.

**LGBTQ Inclusivity Assessment Tool for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs**

OAH TPP grantees are expected to review all program materials for use in the project for inclusivity of LGBTQ youth prior to use in the grant. Grantees should inform OAH of their review process, results, and changes made to ensure that all materials are inclusive of LGBTQ youth. The Assessment Guide and this tool will assist you in fulfilling this requirement.

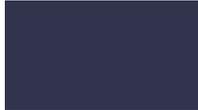
**Six LGBTQ Inclusivity Constructs**

- Organizational policies and practices
- Points of entry
- Physical space
- Staff competency
- Language
- Content

**Organizational Policies and Practices (12 items)**

Organizational Policies and Practices reflect the extent to which program participants, facilitators, and other staff are held responsible for their actions and statements regarding LGBTQ individuals.

	Describe us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Don't describe us
<b>Referrals</b>				
1. The organizations included on our referral list are inclusive of LGBTQ youth.				
2. Our referral list includes organizations that specifically focus on meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth.				
<b>Anti-discrimination Policy</b>				
3. Our organization has, and periodically updates, an anti-discrimination policy that protects program staff and participants from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as age, disability, sex, race/ethnicity, color, national origin, and religion.				
4. Our organization's anti-discrimination policy is consistently enforced.				
<b>Staff Training</b>				
5. Our organization makes a concerted effort to make all program staff and participants aware of the anti-discrimination policies (e.g., by posting them somewhere clearly visible and educating new staff and program participants about the policies).				



# A Checklist for Putting Positive Youth Development Characteristics into Action in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

## A Checklist for Putting Positive Youth Development Characteristics into Action in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs



**What is positive youth development?**  
 Positive youth development (PYD) is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs).

**1**

### Physical and psychological safety

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program provides safe facilities and encourages health-promoting practices that increase safe peer group interaction and decrease unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.<sup>1</sup>



### PYD characteristics

In our TPP program, explicit policies and procedures indicate that physical and sexual harassment and bullying are not tolerated.

Staff members make youth feel comfortable and safe.

Staff members encourage youth to be respectful of the rights and choices of others related to sexual health.

**4**

### Opportunities to belong

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program provides opportunities for meaningful inclusion of all youth, opportunities for positive identity formation, and support for cultural and bicultural competence.



PYD characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Our program is inclusive of adolescents from a variety of cultures and backgrounds (including LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities, sexually experienced youth, sexually inexperienced youth, etc.).				
Each of our program sessions have activities that involve opportunities for sharing and listening, such as ice-breakers, scenarios to react to, and/or reflection time.				
Our program provides opportunities for youth to work together to accomplish a goal.				
Our program is "branded" to help youth feel like they are a part of something special.				

[http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen\\_pregnancy/training/Assests/pyd-tpp-checklist.pdf](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/Assests/pyd-tpp-checklist.pdf)



# A Checklist for Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach into Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

## A Checklist for Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach into Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

### What is a Trauma-Informed Approach?

Trauma refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being."<sup>1</sup>

SAMSHA defines "a program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed as one that: 1) *Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; 2) *Recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; 3) *Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and 4) *Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization*."<sup>2</sup>

For resources on incorporating Trauma-Informed Approaches into your program, please visit:

**1** **Integrating a TIA at the organizational level**  
 These items assess the degree to which health promoting policies and practices are in place to ensure the physical and emotional safety for everyone.

**TIA characteristics**

Our organization has a steering committee (or leverages existing advisory groups) with representation from administration, program facilitators, and youth to assess needs and develop an action plan and a timeline for implementing integrated TIA to TPP.

**3** **Integrating a TIA at the staff level**  
 These items assess the staff's capacity to fully engage with program participants who have had adverse childhood experiences.

TIA characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Staff are initially trained on a trauma-informed approach and how to apply trauma-informed principles in every interaction with youth. Additionally, all staff participate in professional development or continuing education specifically related to using a TIA on an annual basis.				

*Please note that any adaptation to evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) programs should be discussed and reviewed with OAH as it may require OAH approval.*

TIA characteristics	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Staff members recognize that adverse childhood experiences influence a youth's participation in program activities.				

[http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen\\_pregnancy/training/Assests/traumainformed-checklist.pdf](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/Assests/traumainformed-checklist.pdf)



- **Using a Trauma Informed Approach to Create Safer Spaces for Young People**

--- Lisa Schergen, Training Manager from Cardea Services