Supporting LGBTQ Youth In the Foster Care System: A Grant Proposal To Develop A Curriculum For Foster Care Parents and Foster Care Workers

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Introduction

- LGBTQ adolescents are overrepresented in the foster care system as they are at an elevated risk of being rejected and/or “thrown out” of their familial homes due to their sexual orientation (Gallegos et al., 2011).
  - LGBTQ Youth also enter the foster care system for a number of other reasons including abuse and/or neglect or they may come to understand their sexual orientation while in the foster care system.
- Foster care is supposed to be a provisional beneficial experience but for LGBTQ adolescents, it presents another set of risks. Just like birth parents, not all foster parents are accepting of LGBTQ youth therefore they become at risk for being rejected and abandoned once again (NCLR, 2006).
  - According to Gilliam (2004), some foster care workers are in fact homophobic, insensitive or unskilled when it comes to LBGTQ matters; often reinforcing harassment and various types of abuse directly and indirectly.
  - According to the NCLR (2006), as many as 78% of LGBTQ youth face further harassment or various types of abuse once placed in their foster families.
  - These factors often contribute to a large number of foster youth running away and ending up on the streets which presents a whole other set of risk.
- The purpose of this project is to write a grant to fund the development of a uniformed and nationally utilized curriculum for foster care agencies.
- The curriculum would be used to train both foster parents and foster care workers to work with LGBTQ youth using skills that support their growth, development, and self-esteem.
Social Work Relevance

- LGBTQ adolescents are overrepresented within the foster care population yet, the current system does not support or train foster care workers and parents in this particular area (Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2001).

- By bypassing such a glaring feature within the foster care system, the NASW core principles and the needs and strengths of LGBTQ foster youth are far from being adequately met.

- The relevance to social work is that agencies that continue to license and certify foster parents, should work to ensure that these caregivers and case workers have specific competencies.
LGBTQ youth represent individuals from all different ethnicities/genders/SES

LGBTQ youth who are apart of an ethnic minority are at an even higher risk for many social ills, as they often struggle to find acceptance within their own community (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2007).

Transgender youth have a 25% rate of attempted suicide as they face additional pressures, hurdles and barriers to acceptance and understanding (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2007).
Methods

- Target Population
  - The main target population for this grant proposal is the host organization who would ultimately receive the funding to create the curriculum.
  - The secondary target population would be the foster care agencies that would use the curriculum to train their foster parents and the foster care workers.

- Strategies for Identifying and Selecting Potential Funding Sources
  - Funding sources were investigated at the national, state and local levels. The internet was used as the main source of examination for potential funding sources.
  - Key words included “LGBTQ,” “foster care,” “foster children,” “curriculum,” “foster parents,” “trainings,” “permanency,”

- Funding Source Selected
  - The David Bohnette Foundation was selected as the most suitable potential funding source.
Methods

- Needs Assessment Information Sources
  - Key resources for the grant included information from peer reviewed journals, scholarly articles, websites and books that depict the current landscape for LGBTQ youth in the foster care system.
  - Other resources included author and editor of the journal Child Welfare, Gerald P. Mallon, scholarly articles in the Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services and organizations such as Lambda Legal, Human Rights Campaign, U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources and L.A DCFS

- Projected Budget Range and Categories
  - The estimated budget for this program includes staff, evaluation and field cost which would be utilized to create the curriculum
  - Additional cost include Printing materials, and research cost, mailing cost, office supplies, and telephone, reimbursement, meeting cost, and a video teaching tool
Grant Proposal

Program Summary and Description
- When LGBTQ foster youth are not engaged, acknowledged, supported, and included, they have been shown to be vulnerable for an array of personal and social risks (Diamond et al., 2012).
- Therefore desired outcome of this grant is to fund the development a nationally utilized curriculum that engages foster care workers, foster families, LGBTQ foster youth and, to the fullest possible extent, their birth families through a curriculum resource.

Population served
- Agencies, foster care parents, foster care worker and LGBTQ youth

Sustainability
- Through a grant, this proposal has the ability to be fully funded to develop a resource, test it, and evaluate it as a useful tool to support LGBTQ Youth.
- Through evaluation, it is hoped that it agencies across the nation will utilize this resource and recognize the importance in supporting the needs and strengths of the LGBTQ foster youth in their care.
The purpose of this grant proposal is to acquire funding to facilitate the development of an effective curriculum used across the nation for the use of the foster care system.

Program Objectives

1. Review the emotional, social, and cognitive stages of adolescent development as a foundation for understanding youth with a LGBTQ identity.
2. Describe the mistreatment many LGBTQ foster youth may have previously faced either with their birth families or in previous foster care settings.
3. Explain that sexual identity is neither a choice nor something that can be “corrected.”
4. Discuss how foster care workers and foster care parents can support the LGBTQ youth in their care and caseloads even if they personally do not “approve” of the youths’ sexual and/or gender identity.
5. Explore ways in which foster parents and foster care workers can support LGBTQ youth with positive self esteem about their sexual and/or gender identity.
6. Identify risk factors for LGBTQ youth who have a gender/sexual minority identity.
7. Demonstrate how foster care workers and foster parents can be advocates and allies in stopping harassment and abuse.
8. Identify additional resources, such as individual and family therapy, support groups and other places and sites in communities that are gay-friendly, and where more information can be obtained about the LGBTQ youth in their care.

Program Evaluation

A pre and post test survey will be conducted by a Project Evaluator to measure or assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.
Lessons Learned/Implication for S.W

- Additional research surrounding LGBTQ foster youth is absolutely vital in assessing for multiple issues relating to their well-being and permanency within the foster care system, including the central role of foster parents and child welfare social workers in achieving positive outcomes for the youth in the care.

- Social workers have the unique capacity and skill to reach vulnerable populations on multiple levels through effective grant writing, direct practice and advocacy.

- By being involved in all vital aspects of an intervention, social workers may have the ability directly facilitate and create change in various areas of an issue.

- Having the skills to not only write grants in the social work profession but also collaborate with agencies that advocate for at-risk populations is vital.
References


