



Mid-America (HHS Region 7)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Supporting the Mental Well-Being of LGBTQIA+ Youth in Schools

Supporting Youth at Tier

Leah Love, MSSA, LISW, LCSW



MUNROE-MEYER
INSTITUTE



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The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND
ACCEPTING OF
DIVERSE CULTURES,
GENDERS,
PERSPECTIVES,
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED/
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH
OUR ACTIONS,
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

Leah Love, MSSA, LISW, LCSW



Leah Love (she/her) has a passion for helping others and creating a safe space for individuals to navigate through life's barriers. Leah is an independently practicing social worker with an undergraduate degree in Applied Science and a postgraduate degree in Master of Science in Social Administration (MSSA). Leah Love, MSSA, LISW, LCSW has a hybrid role with Vita Health as Clinical Development Lead and Clinician. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Ohio. She has worked in the social service field for over 10 years in both clinical and administrative roles.

Leah has a passion for assisting others reach their goals, needs and fundamental happiness by intentionally creating a safe environment to work through life's barriers. She practices from an array of theoretical perspectives utilizing various applicable interventions. Her expertise is in working with youth identifying in the LGBTQ+ community.



Best Practices in school when working with LGBTQ+ youth

By: Leah Love, MSSA, LISW, LCSW
she/her



Learning Objectives

- Brief review
- Importance of advocacy
- How to monitor for safety in various settings
- Intersectionality
- Difference between rejection, acceptance, and affirmation
- How to support youth with diverse SOGIE come out or consider coming out
 - How to cultivate a safe space for the coming out conversation
- When to refer
- How to be helpful when name change is being considered

What we know

- ASK, ASK, ASK (NO assumptions, pronouns, name, bathroom preference, unsure or undecided?)
- The IMPORTANCE of
 - Using their name and pronouns (no more “chosen”)
 - Language (in & out of youths presence)
 - Assessing for safety (safety within themselves, at school, at home, in community)
 - Autonomy
 - Advocating

We MUST Advocate

- The use of youths name and pronouns
- Youth to use the bathroom that aligns with their gender or their preference
 - Its OKAY if they change their minds or pivot
 - There is no “one size fits all” solution
- Youths autonomy (hair, dress, overall presentation)
- Against bullying/harassment
- Against labeling and ostracizing



Main places safety is threatened for LGBTQ+ youth

- In home
- In the community
- At school
 - Bathrooms
 - Locker room
 - Hallway
 - Classroom
 - Common area (cafeteria; auditorium)





Intersectionality

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalize people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

Focused on communities marginalized by systemic or structural racism & oppression

It takes into account people's overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.

- Culture
- Physical Health
- Nationality
- Community
- Race
- Languages
- Education/ Training
- Heritage
- Ethnicity
- Immigration Status
- Religion
- (Dis)Ability

- Mental Health
- History
- Class
- Gender Expression
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Family Status
- Geography
- Age
- Marital Status
- Socio-economic Status
- Political Ideology

When in doubt ASK it out

What happens in the in between

Out at school and not at home

- Take the youth's lead
- Ask specific questions around why they are out at school and not at home
 - What are they fearful of?
 - Why do they feel this way?
 - Have they made attempts to come out in the past?
 - How was this attempt made? What did they do? What happened?
 - What EXACTLY is the school environment aware of that family/home life is not?
 - Do they want to come out to their family? Are there certain family members they are worried about? Why?

Does not want to come out (only some know)

- Take the youths lead
- Ask specific questions around readiness
- Assess for fear, shame, guilt, blame
- If trained assess for self worth, gender dysphoria, depression, anxiety
- Have they made attempts to come out in the past?
 - How was this attempt made? What did they do? What happened?
 - Do they want to come out to their family or anyone else? Are there certain family members or anyone else they are worried about? Why?
- Perhaps they don't want to come out
 - That's ok! It's their choice
 - Coming out and living out are 2 different things
- If only some people know
 - Find out exactly what is known and unknown so they are not mistakenly outed!

Wants to come out but wants/needs help

- Take the youths lead, no pushing
- Ask specific questions around readiness
- Assess for worry, fear, shame, guilt, blame
 - Ask, if they don't mind sharing, what they are specifically
- If trained assess for self worth, gender dysphoria, depression, anxiety
 - Refer for therapy services when needed
 - Provide crisis hotline information if needed
- Continue to hold a safe, non judgemental space for youth to express themselves (get creative if need be)
- Make a plan to come out, offer support, let the plan be solely theirs and flexible
- TAKE THE YOUTHS LEAD
- CONTINUE being the affirming individual

How to cultivate safe space for youth to come out

- Communicate in nonverbal ways you are affirming (intro with pronouns, asking theirs, LGBTQ+ nelia)
- Do not push and Do not assume
- Ask questions like
 - What coming out means to them?
 - What they want coming out to look like?
 - What they are looking forward to?
 - What they are fearful of?
 - Unsure about?
 - reasons behind it
- Encourage them to be open when they are ready (TAKE THEIR LEAD)
- Praise and Thank youth

How to come out to parents?

- Assess for readiness
 - IT'S THE YOUTH'S CHOICE (they are allowed to change their mind)
- Assess for safety (will youth be safe following coming out)
 - Looking for things like harmful language or demonstration of dislike for the LGBTQ+ community
 - Shifts in mood or climate (use clinical judgement)
- Psycho education
- Dispelling myths and misinformation
- Ask reflective type questions (non-judgemental)
 - Ex. When did you tell your parents you liked boys/girls?

The Journey of Acceptance

Rejection

Blaming
Made to feel guilty
Excluding
Shaming
Blocking access
Keeping secrets
Pressure to conform
or "behave a certain way"

Acceptance

Respectful
Expresses love and affection
supportive
'Elephant in the room"
Can have LIMITATIONS

Ambiguity

Affirmation/

Affirming

Educates others
Seeks welcoming/affirming communities
Advocates
Expresses love/affection
REGARDLESS OF SOGIE

When to include parents in on name change?

- When youth has verbalized certainty
- When they are asking for help
- When they are expressing they are unsure what to do next

What do you do?

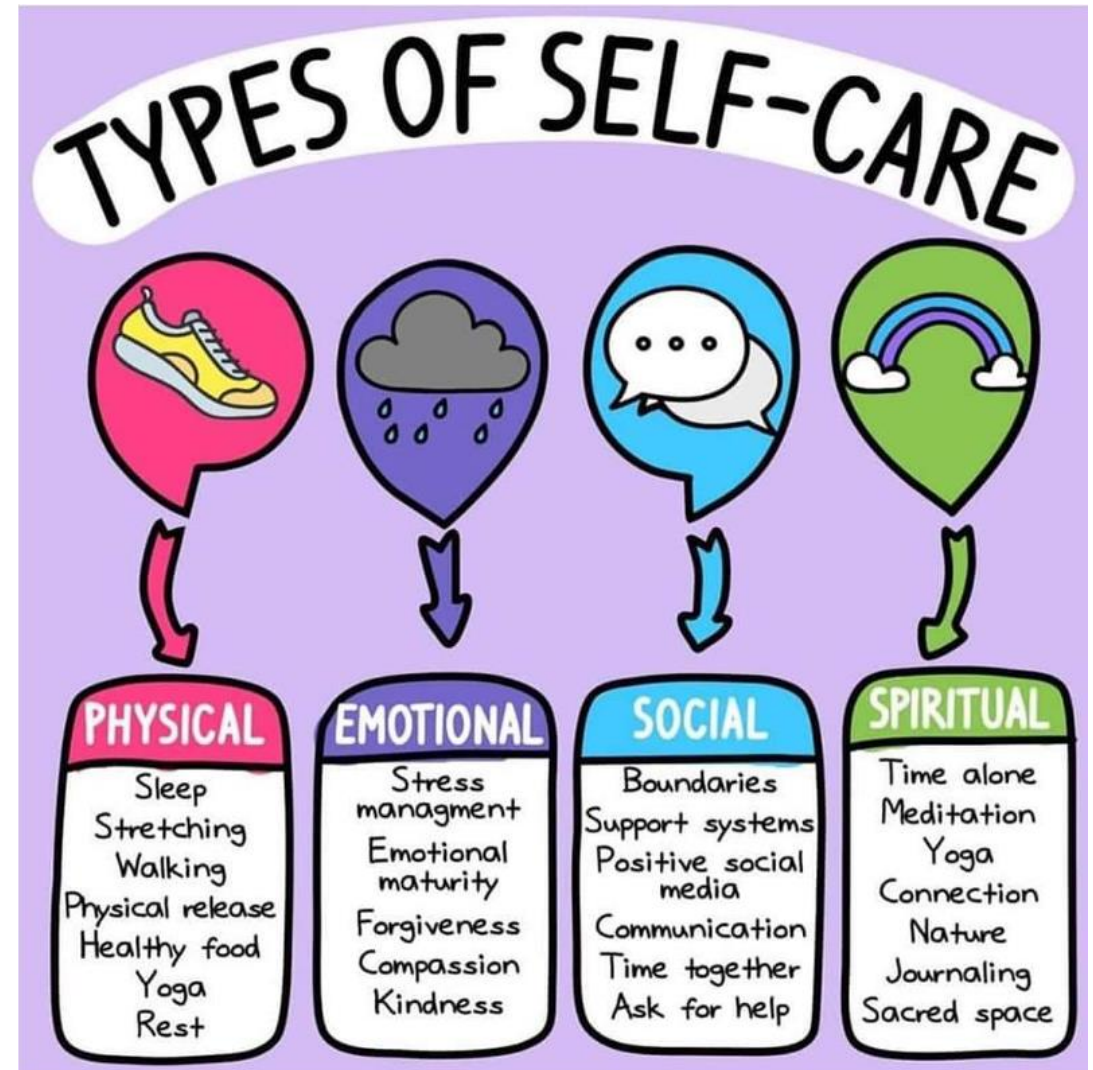
- Become familiar with the laws around name change in your state
- Educate youth and family around procedure & expectations
- Provide options when available
- Give little steps for youth and family to complete
 - Demonstration of readiness and willingness
- REFER, REFER, REFER
 - Become familiar with local (or closest) affirming providers in ALL things (MH providers, dentist, PCP, eye doctors, etc.)
 - CALL and find out who is affirming or not (asking pointedly are you affirming and accepting of the LGBTQ+ community & ask how); Advocate for affirming family members to assist here

What it boils down to

- Unconditional love/acceptance
- Safe place for expression (safe place to figure it out)
- NO judgement
- Autonomy
- To know they are accepted and cared for just the way they are
- To be treated like other kids/teens

Take care of yourselves

!!!



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Contact for questions, training & consulting

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Thank
You

Resources

<https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

www.thetrevorproject.org



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