Opening Eyes and Raising Awareness:

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This is a Public Health Issue
What Do We Know?

- There are estimated to be 2.7 million school age GLBT youth in the US
- GLBTQ Youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to:
  - Experience depression
  - Attempt suicide
  - Be harassed at school and in the community
  - Experience verbal and physical violence
  - Abuse substances
  - Drop out of school
  - Become homeless

Getting the Lingo

- Gay- Homosexual men who partner with men (also an overarching term)
- Lesbian-Homosexual women who partner with women
- Bisexual-Individuals who partner with both genders
- Transgender-Gender identity different than birth assigned gender
- Questioning-Not yet certain
Coming Out

What Does it Mean?

• Revealing that a person is GLBT to others
• The average age that youth come out is now 16
• Is incredibly difficult and a huge personal risk
• Can happen in stages
• Personal timing is essential

What does it Mean for the Person?

• Can create fear
• The danger in “outing”
  – Over 30% of GLBT youth reported suffering physical violence at by a family member after coming out
• Creating support system—“family”
• Helps many to feel a sense of pride and understanding of who they are
Awareness

Where do we get our information about GLBTQ youth?

Education

• 31% percent of LGBTQ youth reported skipping school each month because of fear for their own safety (4.5xs more than peers)

• 28% of LGBTQ youth dropped out of school due to peer harassment (3xs the national average)

• 97% of all students report hearing anti-gay remarks in school

• 18.8% have heard anti-gay remarks from faculty

• 82.9% reported that staff never or only sometimes intervened

• In one study of GLBTQ adolescents, 1/2 said homosexuality was discussed in their classes. 50% of the females and 37% of the males said it was handled negatively
Violence/Bullying

- 84% had been verbally harassed at school
- 65.3% had been sexually harassed
- 55% of transgender youth reported physical attacks
- 100% of GLBTQ youth in New York City group homes reported verbal harassment while at their group home and 70% reported physical violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Over 39% of all gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth reported being punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon at school because of their sexual orientation
- 77.9% of GLBTQ youth reported sometimes or frequently hearing anti-gay remarks. They reported hearing slurs such as “homo”, “faggot” and “sissy” about 26 times a day or once every 14 minutes.

Substance Abuse

- Youth who are harassed because of their real or perceived sexual orientation are more likely than non-harassed youth to use crack cocaine, cocaine, anabolic steroids, and inhalants
- 68% of teen gay males and 83% of teen lesbians use alcohol
- 46% of teen gay males and 56% of teen lesbians use other drugs
Homelessness

• Between 20-40% of homeless youth are GLBTQ

• Homelessness increases likelihood of engaging in prostitution and alcohol and drug abuse, violence, suicide, and HIV and other STD’s

• 26% of GLBT youth who ‘come out’ to their families are thrown out of their homes because of conflicts with moral and religious values

• 78% of the GLBTQ youth were removed or ran away from their foster placements as a result of hostility toward their sexual orientation or gender identity

Suicide

• 33% of GLBTQ high school students reported attempting suicide in the previous year, compared to 8% of their heterosexual peers

• GLBTQ youth are 4xs more likely to attempt suicide

• 16% required medical attention as a result of an attempt compared to 3% of heterosexual peers
Youth of Color

- Stigma creates even greater risk for substance use, violence, and risky sexual behaviors
- Youth of color often don't identify as 'gay' which may mean they will not seek services or hear messages designed for the White GLBTQ community
- GLBTQ youth of color may not receive their community's support regarding sexual orientation or transgender identity
- GLBTQ Native American youth have increased risk for substance abuse, mental illness, and HIV infection due to racial/ethnic discrimination and to homophobia within native cultures

FACTS

It’s NOT:
- A result of bad parenting
- A choice
- A mental illness
- Because they haven’t met the right man or woman
- Contagious
The Pride Flag

- Developed in 1978 for the San Francisco Pride Parade
- Red for life
- Orange for healing
- Yellow for the sun
- Green for nature
- Blue for art/Indigo for harmony
- Violet for spirit

Pink Triangle

This was reclaimed as a reminder of the treatment of gay men during the Holocaust. It is now a symbol of liberation.
Lambda

Simply, the Greek letter "L" stands for "liberation." Also represents unity

Other Symbols

Gay Male

Lesbian

Transgender--Represents the balance of the male and the female within the individual

Pride Rings for Unity

Bisexual Symbol

GLBTQ Youth Suicide Prevention Ribbon
What you can do

• Take a stand
• Listen without judgment
• Let them know you care
• Prohibit anti-gay remarks
• Don’t assume heterosexuality or gender
• Practice linguistic competence
• Acknowledge when culture and sexual orientation cause conflicts for GLBTQ youth
• Create a safe zone (Hang your flag!)

What You Can Do—The Big Picture

• Advocate for culturally competent services and supports for families
• Provide training in your family orgs and broader organizations
• Include GLBT protection in family organization policies
• Have GLBT resources in your offices and gay friendly magazines
• Help organize a GSA in your local school
• Advocate for anti-bullying legislation for schools to include GLBT youth
THANK YOU!