



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

ISSUE: LBGT YOUTH IN THE STATE'S FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

POLICY DESCRIPTION: Title IV-E funds are distributed to the states for foster care youth and residential placements. These funds are distributed to the states for supplement the states resources for at-risk youth in each state's child welfare system.

LGBT youth are again overrepresented in the child welfare system as caregivers abandon them. Again, there is no level of competency required by state licensed child welfare agencies receiving these funds. LGBT youth are underserved by most of these agencies and most do not even know they have LGBT youth in their placement population. As a result, LGBT youth get less service than they deserve because they are hidden within this population.

Goal: To create a minimum level of competency from every licensed child welfare agency receiving Title IV-E funding from their State.

Current law: There is none.

The current Title IV-E funding from HHS has no minimum or maximum certification or training requirements for agencies receiving federal funds through the states. Many of the youth in these child welfare agencies are outed by staff, abused by staff and peers and at minimum, isolated from their peer group and at maximum, these agencies are doing more harm to the LGBT youth than when they arrived. The ethics of do no harm are ignored by these agencies. As an example of the impact of these policies, one agency isolates LGBT youth for "their own safety" outing them in the process. When asked who gets a room by themselves, I was told sexual perpetrators, predators and LGBT youth. Another agency was shut down in Michigan because they made LGBT youth wear orange jumpsuits to identify them to the others in residence.

RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGE: Each State Department of Human Services (could be called something else) should require of all agencies receiving child welfare funds to obtain a certification in working with LGBT. There should be minimum training standards that must be



met before any federal money is awarded. Standards for LGBT youth competency should also be included in national accrediting agencies such as COA, CARF and JCAHO.

LGBT RHY will have equal access to services all over the country and not be abused by the systems designed to help them.

DESCRIBE THE PROCESS BY WHICH YOUR RECOMMENDATION CAN BE

IMPLEMENTED: Health and Human Service, Administration for Children and Families is responsible for this policy. If the policy were enacted, the States' Executive at the helm of their Department of Human Services would be responsible for implementation and accountability. The head of HHS-Mike Leavitt-Secretary of Health and Human Services, US Department of Health and Human Services has the authority to change the policy.

GRANT AND CONTRACT REVIEW COMMITTEES: Through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act of 1980, three programs are funded: Transitional Living Program, Basic Center (emergency shelter and Street Outreach. With minimum competency levels, LGBT youth will be better served by the agencies designed to assist them. If mainstream agencies are required to have a high level of competence in LGBT youth, we can decrease the number of LGBT youth with long stays in these agencies and really work on the issues that led to their placement. Forcing agencies that receive any type of federal funding to have competencies in working with LGBT youth. This would also involve educating entire state DHS systems on the need and how to work with LGBT youth as the states case manage these youth.