



CRIMSON FELLOWS
PROGRAM



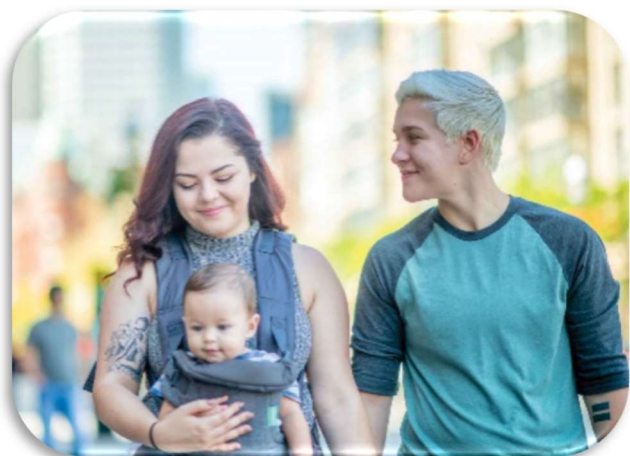
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LGBTQ Families and Early Childhood Education

LGBTQ CHILDREN

“Providing a welcoming, inclusive environment for children in their early education can impact their well-being and learning in the present and future” (Frost & Goldberg, 2019).



SUMMARY

Teaching children about LGBTQ topics at a very young age allows them to have the knowledge about themselves and others to let them be healthier and happier as they grow into adults.

As early childhood professionals, it is essential to recognize the value of including LGBTQ topics in your curriculum, as well as the harm that it can cause towards children and their parents if they do not feel heard and seen in their environment.

LGBTQ PARENTS

“An estimated 3 million Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) adults in the United States have children” (Frost & Goldberg, 2019).

“Seeing one’s family reflected in a child’s ECE program is important for families and children. This includes families like theirs being referred to in classroom language, materials, and curriculum, and seeing their identities mirrored in staff members and other parents” (Frost & Goldberg, 2012).

“More than 100 scientific publications over 30 years, taken together, have demonstrated that children’s well-being is affected much more by their relationships with their parents, their parents’ sense of competence and security, and the presence of social and economic support for the family than by the gender or the sexual orientation of their parents” (Perrin et al. 2013).



LGBTQ TOPICS AND ECE PROFESSIONALS

“Left unexamined and unchallenged, **perspectives of silence and/or homophobia in ECE professionals seriously limit progress** toward the goal of intentionally including all children and families in early childhood programs” (Kintner-Duffy et al., 2012).

LGBTQ TOPICS AND ECE PROFESSIONALS CONT.

There is "...a belief that sexuality was inappropriate content for young children. Indeed, this was a common concern—discussion of LGBT families is akin to a discussion about "sex" (Kintner-Duffy et al., 2012).

"Gender justice in early childhood begins with a commitment to create inclusive environments that respect and **acknowledge the authentic lived experiences and strengths of all children**" (Pastel et al, 2019).

Some barriers ECE professionals face against gender justice includes fear, discomfort, bias, and oppression (Pastel et al., 2019).

Anatomy can be taught with a difference between **anatomy & physiology (equating to bodies)**, and the large umbrella term of **gender (equating to bodies, identities, and more)** can be taught in spectrums, including gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation (Pastel et al, 2019).

Educators need to ensure that the gender health of their students is well taken care of, including the knowledge that "no gender identity or gender expression is pathological", "supporting children's gender health requires cultural sensitivity and culturally responsive practice", "gender is a complex integration of biology, development, socialization, culture, and context", and "gender can be fluid or fixed" (Pastel et al., 2019).



LGBTQ CHILDREN CONT.

In 2016, the National Center for Transgender Equality studied 28,000 respondents.

40% of them attempted suicide, and

34% of them attempted *before* the age of 14 for the first time.

(Pastel et al., 2019).

"...It is more common for children to come up with their own words or use more simple and concrete language" to describe their gender (Pastel et al., 2019).

Children begin recognizing gender at a young age.

At...

TWELVE MONTHS: they can categorize individuals by gender.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS: they can understand their own gender identity.

TWO YEARS: they can communicate divergence from their legally assigned sex, recognize gender stereotyping, and attribute genders to others.

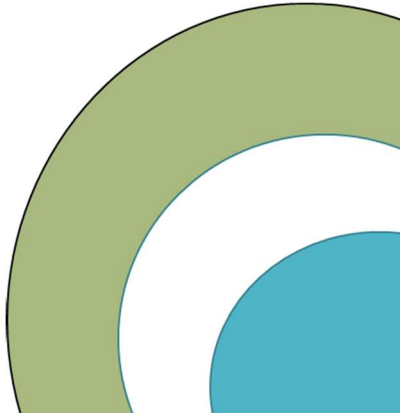
TWO AND A HALF YEARS: they have an awareness of gender identity and communicate it using language and understand internal feelings about gender.

FOUR YEARS: they construct a strong belief system of gender stereotypes based on social and cultural norms. (Pastel et al., 2019).





Potential Courses of Action

1. Integrate LGBTQ topics into early childhood curriculum:
 - a. Inclusive or LGBTQ-centered picture books
 - b. Activities about diverse family types
 - i. *e.g., Worksheets, class discussions*
 - c. Activities engaging children in exploring their gender outside of the one assigned at birth
 - i. *e.g., Class discussions, play*
 2. Create a welcoming environment for parents:
 - a. Ask for preferred names and pronouns on forms
 - b. Ask how parents would like to be referred to in reference to their relationship to their child
 - i. *e.g., Mom/mommy, dad/daddy, ren/renny, etc.*
 - c. Create support groups for open conversation on LGBTQ topics pertaining to adults or children
 3. Partner with an organization:
 - a. One Iowa: advocacy for LGBTQ Iowans
 - i. <https://oneiowa.org/>
 - b. GLAAD: national LGBTQ advocacy organization
 - i. <https://www.glaad.org/>
 - c. GLSEN: national LGBTQ youth advocacy organization
 - i. <https://www.glsen.org/>
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References

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