

## Cover Email

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with the Bloom team about your experiences and ideas to improve the safety of LGBTQIA2S+ (or “queer”) children and youth within the child welfare system.

We heard stories of immense personal strength and resilience, supportive resource families and affirming child welfare staff. We also heard that there is a lot to be done to make the child welfare system ready and able to meet the needs of queer children and youth.

We’re excited to share a condensed summary of our findings and recommendations to help better equip child welfare agencies to support queer children and youth. By sharing this document, we hope you will see your voices, ideas, and concerns were not only heard, but harnessed to create something to progress safety in this space. If you have thoughts you’d like to share with us on what’s included here, please send us an email at [queer-safety@bloomworks.digital](mailto:queer-safety@bloomworks.digital). Thank you again for your help and support.

## What we found

### **To keep queer children and youth safe, we must affirm their queer SOGIE**

Even in otherwise safe homes, children and youth with queer sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIE) have to hide a big part of themselves. Queer safety starts with affirming organizations. Affirmation celebrates, it does not merely tolerate.

### **Queer youth craved greater inclusion in critical decisions that affect them**

Whether it's about room assignments, relationships with family of origin, queer-affirming medical care, or who gets to know their SOGIE status, youth are the experts of their own experiences and need to be involved in decisions that affect their lives whenever possible and appropriate.

### **Leadership buy-in was essential for coordinating affirmation across the system**

Agency leaders need to prioritize affirmation and standardize affirming practices at every level of the agency and ecosystem including in strategic goals, contracts, policies, practice, and culture.

### **Staff needed more education, training, and coaching opportunities**

Staff are often underinformed about queer SOGIE, or they are so afraid of messing up and causing unintentional harm that they don't bring up important topics, which can actually make things harder for youth.

### **SOGIE data are mostly not being recorded and tracked**

Without good information, agencies may not offer relevant support. Strong data systems can also show progress to making conversations about SOGIE commonplace. Agencies need SOGIE data tracking systems that capture important information while considering confidentiality needs.

### **Many have narrow ideas of who can be an affirming foster family**

Most people presumed that queer children and youth need queer foster parents. While shared lived experience can be enormously meaningful, it's not the only way for families to become affirming. Any family can become affirming as long as they are willing and open to learn how.

### **Services need to boost access to affirming medical, behavioral, and peer support**

Queer children and youth need access to affirming mental and physical health providers. Agencies need to hold all service providers and contracted programs to the same standard of queer competence — including faith-based organizations.

There is a lot to do to make the child welfare system more affirming for queer children and youth. There is also incredible work underway to support this effort. Thank you for your contributions.