Serving LGBTQ youth

A readers advisory guide
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The reader

• 4 in 10 LGBTQ youth (42%) say that they don’t feel safe or accepted in their communities.
• Are two times more likely as their peers to be physically assaulted, verbally abused, kicked or shoved at school
• 92% of LGBTQ youth hear negative messages about themselves: from school, the internet, & their peers
Reader continued

• 26% of LGBTQ youth say their biggest worries are: not feeling accepted by their family, trouble/bullying at school, and a fear to be out/open.
• 22% of non-LGBTQ youth say their biggest worries are troubles with class, exams and grades.
• LGBTQ youth are 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide
• (from the Human Rights Campaign youth study) http://www.hrc.org/youth/view-statistics#.UnOuSld37-s
Stage 1: Identity confusion:

- The “Who am I?” stage
- Realization of sexual attractions and feelings for the same sex
- Sense of being different from peers, with a sense of personal alienation
Stage 2: Identity comparison:

- The rationalization or bargaining stage
- Involves a heightened sense of isolation with a sense of feeling “I am the only one in the world like this”
Stage 3: Identity tolerance

• Acceptance of being LGBT begins
• Reaching out to other LGBT people to counteract feelings of isolation and alienation
• The feeling of isolation from heterosexuals becomes stronger
Stage 4: Identity acceptance

- Continued and increased contact with other LGBT people
- Friendships are formed
- Self evaluation develops as questions of belonging are answered
- Acceptance of LGBT identity rather than tolerance
Stage 5: Identity Pride

- “These are my people” stage
- Awareness of incongruity between person’s concept of self and awareness of society’s rejection or dislike of this orientation
- Anger toward heteronormative society is common
Stage 6: Identity Synthesis

- The “Them and us” attitude from stage 5 dissipates as acceptance and comfort of self develops
- Being LGBT becomes an integral and integrated aspect of the individuals complete personality structure

(adapted from Vivian Cass 1979, 1984, 1990)
The Pronoun Game

- Be direct and upfront
- Make it a learning situation
- Avoid any negative words e.g.: “It” “they”
- Ask how they want to be addressed
- Gage their body language, level of comfort, etc.
Gender vs. Biological sex

- What is gender?
- What is biological sex?
Do they feel comfortable enough to ask?

• For LGBTQ youth the library can be a key resource for information about themselves and their emerging identities and understandings.

• Is the library a welcoming environment?

• Is the library doing all it can to help this group?
Library as a safe space

• The library is a transition point between school and home but without the same level of authority figures or familiarity.
• Librarians must strive to serve their LGBTQ patrons in their own knowledge of the subject, collection development, and programming.
• For some LGBTQ youth the library may be the only safe space to take refuge in
Library Resources

- Goodreads
- Novelist
- Book lists
- Staff expertise
- Websites (Out, Advocate, LGBTQ Bookshelf)
- GLAAD (media advocacy organization)
What Librarians Can Do

• Keep current with LGBTQ issues both locally and globally
• Familiarize yourself with the list of offensive terms maintained by GLAAD and avoid using them.
• Ensure that no staff members react negatively when any patron, regardless of age, requests or checks out LGBTQ materials.
What Librarians Can Do

• Include LGBTQ patrons of all ages in your library's policies against discrimination.
• Avoid generalizations - no one person identifies as "GLBTQ", for example, and a gay man and bisexual woman may have very different needs and wants.
• Respect your patrons' rights to choose their own self-descriptors. Use their preferred terminology when possible. If for some reason you feel uncomfortable using that terminology (e.g. "queer", which has also been used as an insult), ask them what alternatives they would accept.
• Treat the LGBTQ patron as you would anyone else at the library.
• Remember that they may observe you to see how you interact with others before they speak to you. Actions speak volumes.
• Presenting yourself as an ally with a non-verbal cue is a good idea.
• Thank you!