



Office of Children and Family Services

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Informational Letter

Transmittal:	16-OCFS-INF-04
To:	Commissioners of Social Services Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies
Issuing Division/Office:	Strategic Planning and Policy Development
Date:	March 25, 2016
Subject:	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Family Acceptance Project Release: <i>A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children</i>
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Social Services Voluntary Agency Program Directors Child Welfare Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors Staff Development Coordinators Adoption Supervisors Youth Bureau Directors Directors of Detention Programs Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Staff Planning Coordinators
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Attachments:	None

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
09-OCFS-INF-06 16-OCFS-ADM-02		9 NYCRR 180.5(a)(6), 182-1.5(g)(l), 182-2.5(g)(1) 18 NYCRR 421.3(d), 423.4(m)(7), 441.19(d), 441.24			

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Informational Letter is to inform local departments of social services (LDSSs) and voluntary agencies (VAs) of the availability of *A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children*, a resource guide released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Family Acceptance Project.

II. Background

Over the past quarter-century, youth have increasingly been coming out or identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) at much earlier ages than prior generations. Emerging research indicates that families of LGBT adolescents, in accepting or rejecting the youth, have a significant impact on the youth's health and well-being. This has led to calls for the development of proactive family-oriented approaches to support youth who identify as LGBT, including: helping parents and caregivers who react to their LGBT children with ambivalence and rejection to understand how these reactions contribute to health risks for their children, and providing accurate information on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression for parents, caregivers and practitioners in primary care, behavioral health, school-based services, family service agencies, runaway and homeless youth (RHY) programs, and foster care and juvenile justice settings.

In 2009, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) published the Informational Letter: 09-OCFS-INF-06, *Promoting a Safe and Respectful Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Placement*. OCFS continues to be committed to creating safe and affirming environments for all youth and families. In 2013, OCFS issued regulations that increase the protections afforded to LGBT individuals by prohibiting discrimination and harassment by LDSS and VA staff, volunteers, and certified or approved foster parents against applicants for adoption services, families receiving preventive services, prospective foster parents, foster parents and foster children, youth in RHY programs, and youth in detention on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation,

gender identity or expression, marital status, religion, or disability, in order to promote and maintain a safe environment for children, youth, and families whom OCFS serves.¹

A recent SAMHSA publication, *A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children* is designed to help health, mental health and social service practitioners implement best practices in family-focused prevention and care for LGBT youth. The guide emphasizes the critical role of family acceptance and rejection in regard to the health and well-being of adolescents who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. It is based on current research and more than a decade of family intervention work, and is the first resource guide published by a government agency to provide core principles and research-based approaches to engage and help families support their LGBT children. The publication was prepared by Caitlin Ryan, Ph.D., ACSW, Director of the Family Acceptance Project at San Francisco State University under contract with SAMHSA, and was released in 2014.

III. Program Implications

The guide is available in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA. The guide may be downloaded or ordered at:

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/A-Practitioner-s-Resource-Guide-Helping-Families-to-Support-Their-LGBT-Children/PEP14-LGBTKIDS>

You can also call SAMHSA at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) to order the guide.

The Family Acceptance Project website can be found at:

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

/s/ Thomas R. Brooks

Issued By:

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Division/Office: Strategic Planning and Policy Development

¹ 9 NYCRR 180.5(a)(6), 182-1.5(g)(1) and 182-2.5(g)(1), and 18 NYCRR 421.3(d), 423.4(m)(7), 441.19(d) and 441.24.