

Managing Information SOGIE

Maintaining the Health & Safety of Youth in Care



01 Guiding Principles

- Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE) info is personal and sensitive. Sharing it inappropriately or without a youth's permission could compromise the permanency, safety, and well-being of and LGBTQ+ child.
- Agencies should only collect this information when the staff have full competency working with LGBTQ+ youth and protocols to guide collection and dissemination decisions.
- Info gathering is a continuous process. People develop and change. Involve youth when recording their information.
- Failure to understand the whole child can lead to uninformed decisions that may undermine the permanency, safety and well-being of an LGBTQ+ child.

02 Collecting Information

- Create options on intake forms to document gender identity and gender expression. Collect this confidential information with a youth's best interest in mind.
- Staff should decide the most appropriate time and manner to collect SOGIE info. Base this decision on a youth's age, stage of development, personality, cognitive abilities, and level of trust.
- Develop staff competency to skillfully and sensitively discuss SOGIE with children and adolescents.
- Avoid classifying or evaluating a youth's SOGIE to redirect or change them. Attempting to "correct" someone's SOGIE can mentally and emotionally harm them. Only collect this info to explore support and resource needs.





03 Recording Information

- Capture each youth's story and summarize the agency's actions to strengthen the family and keep the child safe.
- Identify the source of SOGIE info in the case file and limit the info recorded to that which furthers a youth's permanency, well-being, and safety.
- Remember that case file info is used to develop court reports and recommendations. Consider what SOGIE info needs to be included or excluded.
- Only include SOGIE info in the court/status reports when there is a specific rationale for doing so and all precautions have been taken to minimize unnecessary sharing with third parties, which could result in potential negative impacts on the youth.

04 Disclosing Information

- Engage youth in a discussion PRIOR to sharing their SOGIE info. Allow them to ask questions and clarify their wishes. Problem solve to minimize potential negative consequences and, if necessary, amend the info that will be shared.
- If sharing SOGIE info is legally required due to the nature of a CPS case or an open suspected child abuse report, engage the youth in this process. Ensure they know what is being shared and why. Seek any necessary additional support for them.
- Be thoughtful and cautious about any decision to share SOGIE info in writing, verbally, and digitally. Identify the rationale for sharing this info [especially if a youth does not give their permission].



Note: Federal and state confidentiality provisions protect info contained in child welfare agency files.

Best Practice: Disclose SOGIE info only if the youth has given permission



05 Institutionalizing Practice

- Develop written policies and procedures governing the management of info related to a youth's SOGIE and are consistent across units/departments.
- Ground agency policies, practices, training, coaching, and supervision related to SOGIE on a foundation of credible research and considerations regarding the safety, permanency, and well-being of youth.
- Consult with your agency's legal counsel to ensure policies and practices meet all legal standards and requirements.
- Provide on-going training, supervision, and support for all agency staff regarding the management of SOGIE.