Family Acceptance Project:
Evidence-Informed Approach to Building Healthy Futures for LGBTQ Children, Youth & Young Adults

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SESSION OVERVIEW

• Overview: Family Acceptance Project
  – Social emergence of LGBT children & youth
  – Need for family-oriented services & care
  – FAP research base, resources & family support framework

• Working with Diverse Families
  – Conceptual shifts in working with families
  – FAP resources & approaches to increase family support
  – Case example & video clip

• Family Perspective – Increasing Support
  – Parent’s perspective
  – Increasing engagement & participation of families with LGBTQI2-S children in systems of care
Wide dissemination of information about sexual orientation & gender identity has enabled children and adolescents to learn about and identify as LGBT at younger ages.

- Major drop in ages of self-identifying and coming out since the 1970s.

- Sexual orientation and gender identity are part of normative child and adolescent development.

- Major gaps in education, services & support for families of LGBT children & youth – contribute to increased risk for LGBT children & youth.
Range of Identity, Expression & Behavior Components of Child Development

GENDER IDENTITY
Develop identity around age 3

GENDER EXPRESSION
Very early ages

SEXUAL ORIENTATION
First “crush” on average - age 10
Identify as LGB, average age - 13.4
Increasingly identify as gay, ages 7-13

Feminine
Heterosexual
Bisexual
Masculine
Homosexual

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Family Acceptance Project®
Family Acceptance Project

MULTI-OUTCOME INTERVENTION MODEL

Family Intervention Approach Can Prevent & Address Multiple Adverse Health & Social Outcomes for LGBT Children & Youth Across Systems

- Suicide
- Substance Abuse
- Foster Care
- Depression
- HIV
- STDs
- Homelessness
- Juvenile Justice
- Bullying
Families Not Been Included In LGBT Youth Support

• LGBT youth have been served as **individuals** *alone* or through **peer** support
  - not in the context of their families

• Many providers still see families of LGBT youth as unable to learn to support them

• Services for diverse families & caregivers with LGBT children are not generally available in mainstream and LGBT services

• Basic services for families with LGBT children *need to be included in all settings* where children and youth are served
**Connectedness** is a key protective factor for children, youth and adults.
Building healthy futures for LGBT children and youth through:

- **RESEARCH** on family acceptance and rejection
- **EDUCATION AND TRAINING** to decrease risk and promote well-being by increasing family acceptance
- **FAMILY-ORIENTED SERVICES** to help diverse families support their LGBT children
- **INFORMED PUBLIC POLICY** to promote well-being – not just protect from harm
**Family Acceptance Project®
Goals & Aims**

- Strengthen and help ethnically and religiously diverse families to support their LGBT children
  - Align with underlying values, use strengths-based and harm reduction framework and FAP family support strategies
- Prevent / decrease risk & promote well-being for LGBT children and youth
- Help families maintain LGBT children in their homes
- Reconnect families and promote permanency
- Implement FAP family intervention model across systems to support LGBT young people in the *context of their families, cultures and faith communities*
- Include focus on “upstream” prevention

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Building Healthy Futures for LGBTQ Children & Youth

- 1st evidence-informed family intervention model to prevent risk & promote well-being for diverse LGBTQ children and youth
  - Being implemented in several communities & care systems

- Often compared to ACEs Study – FAP studied family rejecting behaviors linked with risk & family accepting behaviors linked with well-being. Changing behaviors *today* can change outcomes

- FAP’s work has important implications for treating and facilitating recovery from trauma and complex trauma; implications for addressing vicarious trauma

- *Family rejecting behaviors are traumatic for LGBTQ children and youth; family accepting & supportive behaviors can help facilitate recovery and promote well-being*
Research Foundation for FAP’s Family Support Model

- **In-Depth Individual Interview Study** – 2-4 hrs each
  - LGBT Youth & Families (ages 13-18)
    - Single, foster & 2-parent, blended, system-involved, out-of-home youth
    - Identified 100+ family accepting & rejecting behaviors

- **Young Adult Survey**
  - LGBT Young Adults (ages 21-25)
    - Measured how family behaviors contribute to risk & well-being

- **Extensive Guidance from Diverse Families & Youth**
  - Cultural guidance on helping diverse families to change rejecting behavior & increase accepting and supportive behaviors

- **Family Support Model**
  - Developed model and framework to help families to reduce LGBT children’s risk & promote well-being
Link Family Behaviors with Risk & Well-Being

- **FAP research shows how experiences in adolescence relate to risk & well-being in young adulthood**

### Adolescent Experiences
- Family accepting & rejecting behaviors – including faith-based rejection
- School & peer experiences, religious & cultural experiences, victimization, coping, access to LGBTQ peers & resources

### Young Adult Experiences
- Health & mental health status, risk behaviors & discrimination, coping, self-esteem & well-being

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Examples: Common FAP Family Rejecting Behaviors
(FAP Qualitative Research)

• Try to change sexual orientation, gender identity & expression
• Deny that youth are LGBT (“It’s just a phase,” “They’re confused” “They’ll grow out of it”)
• Prevent youth from learning about their LGBT identity, from having an LGBT friend or from participating in LGBT youth groups, school clubs or LGBT community resources
• Blame youth when others mistreat them because they are LGBT
• Use religion to condemn / deny, make them pray, attend religious services to change their LGBT identity
• Don’t talk – or let youth talk – about youth’s LGBT identity
• Ridicule / speak about LGBT people in negative and derogatory ways

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Examples: Common FAP Family Accepting Behaviors
(FAP Qualitative Research)

- Express affection and caring for LGBT child
- Get accurate information about sexual orientation and gender identity
- Talk with child about their sexual orientation and gender identity, and listen respectfully
- Support child’s gender expression
- Require that other family members treat LGBT child with respect
- Advocate for child when they are mistreated because of LGBT identity in families, schools, congregations & communities
- Believe LGBT child can have a happy future
- Talk with religious leaders and congregations about supporting LGBT people and welcoming them to services and activities

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Family Acceptance Project®
Suicidal Thoughts
Past 6 Months

Accepted by Parent/Guardian

More Thoughts <-> Fewer Thoughts

p < .0001

(n = 245)
Family Rejection & Depression

LEVEL OF FAMILY REJECTION

- **Low Rejection**
- **Moderate Rejection** $p < .001$
- **High Rejection** $p < .001$

$290\% (n = 245)$

$629\%$

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Family Acceptance Project™
Family Rejection & Illegal Drug Use

LEVEL OF FAMILY REJECTION

- **Low** Rejection
- **Moderate** Rejection
- **High** Rejection

157%  
328%

(n = 245)  
p < .001

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Family Rejection & Risk for HIV Infection

(n = 245)

LEVEL OF FAMILY REJECTION

Low Rejection

Moderate Rejection

High Rejection

p < .001

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Family Acceptance Project™
Family Rejection & Lifetime Suicide Attempts
(1 or more times)

LEVEL OF FAMILY REJECTION

- **Low** Rejection
- **Moderate** Rejection, $p < .01$
- **High** Rejection, $p < .001$

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Family Acceptance Project™
See a Future as Happy LGBT Adult

LEVEL OF FAMILY ACCEPTANCE

Extremely Accepting

Very Accepting

A Little Accepting

Not at All Accepting

(\( n = 245 \))

92%

77%

59%

35%

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Family Acceptance Project™
Risks Related to High Levels of Parental Pressure to Enforce Gender Conformity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health - Mental Health Concern</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>(n = 245)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Depression</td>
<td>5.01 times or 501%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Suicide</td>
<td>3.90 times or 390%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit Drug Use</td>
<td>3.82 times or 382%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk for HIV</td>
<td>2.12 times or 212%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Using religion to discourage, try to prevent, change or condemn an adolescent’s LGBT identity is related to:

• Increased risk for suicide and depression
• Lower self esteem & life satisfaction
• Increased conflict that can lead to ejection or running away from home
Family Acceptance

(n = 245)

• Family accepting behaviors during adolescence:
  – protect against suicidal behavior, depression and substance abuse in LGBT young adults

• High levels of family acceptance during adolescence:
  – significantly higher levels of self-esteem, social support and general health

• Low levels of family acceptance during adolescence:
  – over 3 times more likely to report suicidal thoughts and suicide

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Family Acceptance Project®
Key Findings

• *Family rejection* is linked with serious health & mental health problems for LGBT young people

• *Family acceptance* is an important protective factor for LGBT young people

• *Family acceptance* helps promote well-being for LGBT young people

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Family Acceptance Project™
Family Acceptance Project Components
Components to Engage Families, Providers & Communities to Implement FAP’s Family Intervention Approach
Family education booklets: available in print and online
Lower literacy and versions for families from specific faith traditions in development

http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications
Faith-based Family Education Materials

• Developing materials for families from a wide range of religious backgrounds
  • Mormon, Catholic, Jewish, evangelical, etc.

• Present findings in the context of religious beliefs and values

• Help families address perception that they have to choose between their child and their faith
FAP Family Video Series

Short research-based documentary films that show the journey of diverse families from struggle to support of their LGBT children

AIMS

• Give youth & families hope
• Show family accepting & rejecting behaviors
• Show the journey of diverse families from struggle to support of their LGBT children
• Humanize LGBT young people & their families

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Family Acceptance Project®
FAPrisk Screener

Screening tool to quickly identify LGBT youth who are experiencing family rejection & related health risks to provide immediate intervention & care

Agency & on-site training to implement screening tool across disciplines and systems of care
Family Acceptance Project
Scope of Intervention Approach

Early Childhood
Core Education & Guidance

Range of Ages
Increasing Family Conflict
Health Risks

Range of Ages
Family Disruption
Health Risks

“Upstream” Prevention & Wellness Promotion

Early intervention – Crisis intervention
Re-connection
Permanency

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FAP Approach

Shifts the focus on LGBT youth from morality to health and well-being
Integrating FAP’s Family Support Approach into Systems & Services

Workforce development & cultural work to prepare providers, systems & advocates to deliver family-oriented services

- Behavioral Health Systems of Care
  - Family Services
    - Family service agencies
- Primary Care
  - Out-of-Home Care
    - Foster care, juvenile justice & homeless services
  - Pastoral Care
    - Ministries & congregations
- School-based Services Providers

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Family Acceptance Project™
FAP has developed a framework to help culturally, spiritually and linguistically diverse families and caregivers to support their LGBTQI2-S children.
Conceptual Shifts
Family Acceptance Project (FAP)-Generated

- Families are potential allies for their LGBT children
- Families want the best for their children
- Parents, families & caregivers can learn to support their LGBT children
- Family “rejecting” behaviors are motivated by care & concern to help their LGBT children

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Family Acceptance Project®
FAP Resources & Training
For Integrating Families into Services for Children & Youth

- State and local agencies host on-site FAP trainings
- Conferences - FAP workshops and plenary sessions
- Family education booklets, practice guidance & assessment materials, and online resources
  - Many government and community agencies disseminate print copies of FAP’s family education booklets; some host basic FAP training
  - FAP online resources: https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/
- Consultation on services and program development & collaboration

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FAP helps parents and caregivers that are struggling by increasing providers’ empathy, rapport and ability to build on the family’s core cultural & religious values to help parents learn to support their LGBTQI2-S children.
Experiences of Religiously Conservative Families

FAMILIES ARE FOREVER

“Riveting!”
- Salt Lake Tribune

A devout Mormon family’s powerful journey from knocking on doors to support California’s Proposition 8 to accepting their 13-year old gay son

Best Practice for Suicide Prevention

http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/
FAP’s Approach: Working with Diverse Families

• Meet families where they are
• Assess for cultural & religious values, family dynamics, underlying trauma & other experiences that impact child’s sexual orientation, gender identity & expression
• Help families understand impact of rejecting & accepting behaviors on LGBT child & family
• Align cultural and religious values with FAP findings
• Help families bridge divide of “all or nothing” (e.g., my child vs. my faith or my cultural values)
• Educate extended family and support system (e.g., cultural and religious leaders)
Key Messages for Families

- A little change in how families respond to their LGBT children can make an important difference in their child’s health, mental health & well-being

- Families and caregivers’ words, actions & behaviors have a physical & emotional impact on their LGBT children
Case Example – Jada & Trinity

**Background:** African American family – Mother (Trinity) found daughter, Jada, age 15, making out with another girl and hit her daughter

Their family was referred to us by Child Protective Services

**Strengths:** Close relationship between mother and daughter and investment in daughter’s well-being

**Challenges:** Mother had limited knowledge and understanding of SOGIE

- Religious background with negative perceptions of homosexuality
- Insistence in focusing only on daughter’s education and strong resistance to discussing or learning about SOGIE
- Jada was depressed and extremely reluctant to come out to her mother

**Approach:** Supported mother’s goals for daughter’s education and well-being

- Provided individual counseling sessions for Jada and for Trinity to explore underlying issues and to increase communication
- Built on strength of mother-daughter relationship to help Trinity understand how important she was to Jada and to increase her empathy for Jada
- Increased Trinity’s knowledge and understanding of SOGIE and impact of specific family rejecting behaviors on risk & well-being
- Provided opportunity for Jada to participate in LGBT affirmative program with LGBT adults and youth and family event

FAP--Ruth Elis Center Family Preservation Program
Resolution

- Jada and Trinity increased communication and deepened their relationship
- Mother was able to acknowledge and accept her daughter’s lesbian identity without forcing her daughter to verbally “come out”
- Jada’s self-esteem increased. She is doing well in school and being recognized by peers and adults for her achievements

Mother’s final comments on the program:

“Thank you for everything. I knew my child was ‘different”, but I wanted her to tell me. I would have never been able to talk about that with her without your helping our family feel comfortable to talk about what we thought was a forbidden conversation. Thank you for saving my family. We talk all the time now - about everything. But most important, I know how to love my child the way she needs me to.”
FAP-Generated Strategies to Increase Support / Reduce Risk

• Built rapport and trust between family and provider
• Identified cultural, religious and family values to provide a foundation for interactions and educating caregiver’s about FAP’s approach
• Provided individual counseling sessions to help mother and daughter identify their fears, concerns, needs & hopes
• Identified underlying struggle – unresolved anger and grief from prior traumatic experiences
• Increased positive communication between mother and daughter
• Provided accurate information about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression
• Educated mother about FAP’s research, and how parent’s behaviors contribute to their child’s risk and well-being and strengthen the family
• Provided guidance on LGBT affirmative parenting skills, validating daughter’s gender expression and sharing LGBT affirmative community activity
• Built rapport and trust between family and provider

• Identified cultural, religious and family values to provide a foundation for interactions and educated caregiver’s about FAP’s approach

• Provided individual counseling sessions to help mother and daughter identify their fears, concerns, needs & hopes

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• Provided guidance on LGBT affirmative parenting skills, validating daughter’s gender expression and sharing LGBT affirmative community program
Increasing understanding, skills and support for parents & caregivers with LGBTQ2I-S children, youth and young adults within systems of care
Support & Acceptance for LGBT Youth Includes Support for Families

**Family Needs**
- Time to process what has changed in how they think about their child’s identity
- Knowledge and Information to increase understanding for their child
- Support for grieving a loss of ‘what was’

**Family Knowledge Needs**
- Their child needs their love and acceptance
- How they talk about their child to others matters
- Safety for their child now might be different than how they thought about it before
- The reactions of family, friends and others may differ from their reactions
- They need to learn ways to support their child when family, friends and community members mistreat them

**Family Support Needs**
- Space to talk about their experiences without being shamed or blamed
- Training on LGBT issues
- Counseling and peer support

*A Parent’s Perspective*
How Systems of Care Can Support Families Raising LGBT Child/Youth

**Funding & Program Development**
- Support Family Run Organizations to provide Family/Parent Peer Support for families & caregivers (prioritize funding, program development)
- Increase training through webinars, SOC Briefing, and technical assistance to SOC communities
- Increase funding for programs such as the Ruth Ellis Center-FAP collaboration that integrates family engagement and participation in services & care

**Quality Improvement**
- Develop quality indicators and track outcomes associated with these efforts and their impact on negative outcomes such as suicide, substance abuse & homelessness

**Collaboration**
- Partner and collaborate with organizations like the Family Acceptance Project that have pioneered family-oriented care for LGBT children & youth, and with local/regional LGBT resources
Starting to Use FAP Booklets

3 mins

- Become familiar with content in family education booklets

4 mins – pick a partner & share

- What information will help you educate families about the impact of their reactions to their LGBT children?

- How do you think you might introduce this information?
FAP’s Work – From Research to Practice – 2002-17

The Family Acceptance Project (FAP) is the world’s first research, intervention, education and policy initiative that helps diverse families to support their LGBTQ children to prevent serious health risks – including suicide, substance abuse, HIV and homelessness – and to promote well-being for LGBTQ children & youth.

1st Research on LGBTQ youth & families
1st comprehensive research on LGBTQ youth and families – shows for the first time, how family rejection and acceptance contribute to risk and well-being for LGBTQ youth.

1st Research-based Family Support Model
Helps families to support and accept their LGBTQ children
Prevents suicide, substance abuse, homelessness, HIV, other risks
Builds self-esteem, health & well-being

85,000 Providers, families & religious leaders
Educated & trained on FAP’s family support approach to increase family acceptance & support and decrease risk.

530,000 Family education booklets
Best Practice resources to help families to prevent suicide and promote well-being for LGBTQ children and youth
Distributed across U.S. & 70 countries

320,000 Families, providers, religious leaders & others
Viewed Best Practice family education videos that show how families learn to support their LGBTQ children
23 awards from Los Angeles to Mumbai

Countless LGBTQ children, youth, families & allies
Lives saved, families strengthened, futures envisioned, communities transformed

Make a tax-deductible donation to build healthy futures for LGBTQ children and youth:
https://goo.gl/LD9ds1 • http://familyproject.sfsu.edu
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