

The eQuality Guiding Principles for Safe and Affirming Care

LGBTQ+ youth exist.

LGBTQ+ youth are a part of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as all systems of care and communities in general. Their sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions are valid, viable, and valued.

Meeting the specific needs of LGBTQ+ youth is a matter of health, safety, and well-being.

Failure to provide safe and affirming care jeopardizes the health, safety, and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. As such, they are entitled to access to resources and services from informed and trained professionals, volunteers, and caregivers within an environment that is “safe and affirming.”

The health, safety, and well-being of youth is the priority.

Professionals, volunteers, and caregivers’ paramount priority is to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of youth.

Youth have a right to self-determination.

Every youth has the right to acknowledge, declare, and live authentically according to their personal identity—including their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression—without harm, judgment, dismissal, or coercion to change.

LGBTQ+ youth are individuals.

While the sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions of LGBTQ+ youth may be part of their identity, it is not all of their identity. LGBTQ+ youth’s needs, experiences, strengths, and challenges are shaped by many factors aside from sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, ability, and socio-economic status.

LGBTQ+ youth are entitled to equitable services and resources.

LGBTQ+ youth have specific strengths and resiliency, in addition to specific challenges and needs. Therefore, they require equitable services and resources to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.

Understanding LGBTQ+ youth is a core competency for every professional, volunteer, and caregiver.

Basic knowledge of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression—including LGBTQ+ identities—is a core competency for every professional, volunteer, and caregiver.

Youth have expertise in their own lives.

All youth, including LGBTQ+ youth, have expertise in their own lives and can provide critical insight and information in professionals, volunteers, and caregivers’ decision making processes.

Making assumptions is harmful.

Making assumptions about youth, whether it is about their sexual orientation, gender identity, or anything else, is harmful to youth.

Collaboration is the key to success.

Implementing truly safe and affirming care will require the collaboration of professionals, volunteers, caregivers, and youth from across systems. These players can enhance collaboration by approaching others as if they are doing the best that they can with what they have and know.