

LGBTQ Youth Survey



With the goal of learning more about the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

and questioning youth in the foster care system, the Spokane office of Children's Administration is working with the [Center for Children & Youth Justice](#) (CCYJ) to survey youth about their attitudes and experiences.

The nine question survey asks foster youth between the ages of 12 and 17 questions about how they see themselves, what they consider themselves to be, how they think others see them, their experiences with homelessness and their experiences with the child welfare system.

The underlying belief, according to CCYJ's new [Model Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care](#) – an approach to learning more about these youth – is based on 10 guiding principles (see below). "We want to capture the experiences of these young folks and the resources available to them," Shogren said.

The Spokane office was chosen because it provides a good mix of youth living in urban and rural areas, she says.

The pilot project grew out of focus and research groups that included CA staff and youth who sent a clear message of "listening to our voices," Shogren said.

She said information they have now indicates about 60 percent don't feel comfortable talking about their sexual identity with their social worker.

Shogren said they believe the population of foster youth that identifies as LGBTQ may be between five and seven percent, although it could be higher because youth are uncomfortable talking about it.

Once the data is collected from the pilot project, after June 30, the hope is to take the survey statewide and put the new approach into broad effect. Here are the principles that provide the foundation for the work.

- LGBTQ+ youth exist
- Meeting the specific needs of LGBT youth is a matter of health safety and well-being. LGBTQ Youth Survey continued
- The health safety and well-being of youth is a priority.
- Youth have a right to self-determination.
- LGBTQ+ youth are individuals
- LGBTQ+ youth are entitled to equitable treatment and resources
- Understanding LGBTQ+ youth is a core competency for every professional, volunteer and caregiver.
- Youth have expertise in their own lives.
- Making assumptions is harmful.
- Collaboration is the key to success.

A list of 10 components for the work addresses the issues. These can be found in CCYJ's eQuality Project's [Model Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care](#), which includes more information about the new approach. Please also visit [CCYJ's Supporting LGBTQ Youth](#) Web page for more information about the eQuality Project.

NOTE: *This article first appeared in [Caregiver Connection](#) (January 2018) which is published by the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence in partnership with Washington State DSHS Children's Administration.*