

Questions & Answers About My Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE)



Do my caregivers, social worker/probation officer, and attorney have to get special training to understand my sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression?



Yes. You have the right to have caregivers, social workers/probation officers, and attorneys trained to understand, respect, support, and be sensitive to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and the best ways to give quality care to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) youth in foster care. You may request a new caregiver, social worker/probation officer, or attorney if they are not meeting your needs.

Can I be treated differently because of my sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or expression?



No. You have the right to be treated fairly and with respect. You have the right to get the same services, care, treatment, and benefits as all foster youth. No one can harass you, hurt you, or discriminate against you based on your actual or what someone thinks is your sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression while you are in foster care. If other youth are harassing you or threatening you, your caregiver and social worker/probation officer must do something to stop it. No one has the right to force you to change your sexual orientation or gender identity.

Can I dress, style my hair, and use products that match my gender identity and expression?



Yes. You have the right to have clothes and dress in a way that matches your gender identity and expression. You have the right to cut and style your hair and have grooming and hygiene products (like soap, shampoo, deodorant, and lotion) that respect your gender identity and expression. Your caregiver must make sure you have the things listed above.



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Can I participate in extracurricular, enrichment, spiritual, and social activities for LGBTQ+ youth?



Yes. You have the right to participate in activities for LGBTQ+ youth, like LGBTQ+ sports, Gay Prom, and LGBTQ+ youth clubs or support groups.

Can I have LGBTQ+ friends and mentors?



Yes. You have the right to see and have friends and mentors outside of foster care that are LGBTQ+.

Do I have the right to live in a home that respects my sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression?



Yes. You have the right to live in a home or STRTP that accepts your gender identity and gender expression regardless of what any records say about your sex at birth. If your caregivers do not accept your gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation and you feel unsafe, you have the right to move to a different place. You also have the right to use a safe bathroom where you are not harassed. You can't be forced to use a bathroom that doesn't match your gender identity. You should tell your attorney and social worker if you do not feel safe where you live.

Can I request my caregiver, social worker/probation officer, and other people in my home call me by my chosen name and gender pronouns?



Yes. You have the right to be called by the name and gender pronouns you choose regardless of what any records say. Your caregiver and social worker/probation officer must respect your chosen name and pronouns. Gender pronouns are words like she/her, he/him, or gender-neutral pronouns like they/them.

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Can I keep information about my sexual orientation and gender identity and expression private?



Yes. You have the right to keep information about your sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression private unless you allow the information to be shared. You can still receive support and services if you decide to keep the information private. This information may also be shared if sharing it will protect your health and safety or if the judge orders it to be shared.

Do I have the right to see a doctor or counselor that supports and understands my sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression?



Yes. You have the right to get gender affirming health care and mental health care. You have the right to see doctors and counselors that are specially trained to serve transgender and gender diverse youth. Gender affirming health care might include, but is not limited to, prescribed medications that stop puberty, hormone treatments, or surgery to make your body's appearance match your gender identity. Gender affirming mental health care means seeing a counselor that has special training to work with transgender or gender diverse youth. Gender affirming surgery and hormone treatments would require parental consent or a court order for minors, and non-minor dependents can consent for themselves. Gender diverse means people of all different genders including those outside of male and female.

Do I get to help create my case plan and can it include things to support my sexual orientation, gender identity and expression?



Yes. You have the right to help your social worker/probation officer create your case plan, including decisions about where you will live, what the long-term plan will be if you cannot return home, your needs, and any services related to your sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, gender affirming health, and mental health care.