



Model of Preventive Interventions

Prepare for Potential Responses

Consider the variety of potential responses to new preventive interventions for LGTBQ youth within school - based settings. Compile any information that could be helpful in communicating the rationale for and need to offer such preventive interventions to LGTBQ adolescents. This information could include ethical and policy statements of national school health organizations, state or local guidelines, and local health data (HIV, STD, victimization, etc.). If needed, rehearse with a friend or peer how to respond to a prejudiced comment by another adult in the school (teacher, administrator, etc.).

Signal Approachability

Identify effective strategies for signaling to adolescents that you support prevention activities and services for LGTBQ youth and that you are a safe person with whom to discuss issues related to sexual orientation. The complexity of same-sex attraction, behavior, and identity needs to be considered when identifying outreach techniques to reach a broad audience of adolescents. For example, students engaging in same-sex behavior may not identify as LGTBQ and may be unfamiliar with such symbols as pink triangles and rainbows.

Understand and Explain Confidentiality Parameters

Know existing parameters regarding confidentiality within your school, district, and state. Explain those parameters to any adolescent wishing to discuss topics related to sexual orientation. Inappropriate disclosure by professionals or disclosure by the professional to others that is unexpected by the youth can have harmful consequences, including increased risk for violence, discrimination, and victimization.

Support Youth without Requesting Disclosure

Consider how to communicate acceptance of homosexuality without expecting youth to disclose an LGTBQ sexual orientation. Attempt to differentiate with youth between sexual orientation (persistent feelings for same-sex others; identity as LGB) from same-sex behaviors and attractions. The goal of counseling is not to elicit disclosure or to push youth to disclose same-sex attraction, behavior, or identity. Instead, it is to create a safe, nonjudgmental space where youth know that it is safe to discuss feelings and experiences.

Treat Any Disclosure Seriously

If a student discloses same-sex attraction, behavior, or identity to you, don't minimize his or her fears or concerns by communicating to the student that everything will be fine or not to worry about sexual orientation issues. Share your concern for the youth and convey your appreciation of their trust. Concurrently, explore the feelings of the youth about family members' and friends' anticipated reactions without pressuring the youth to disclose sexual orientation to others. If the youth feels the need for such disclosure, encourage realistic consideration of risks and benefits and help the youth prepare to handle the reaction of other people, including potential harassment or violence. Provide resources for family support, such as referral information for the local Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) chapter, community services, and knowledgeable family counselors.

Promote Responsible Sexual Behavior

If a student discloses same-sex attraction, behavior, or identity to you, provide information to dispel stereotypes about gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, including stereotypes about sexual promiscuity. Help the student understand that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual does not exempt her or him from making responsible choices about sexual behavior. Discuss abstinence, health risks of sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV), and safer sex in an LGBTQ-inclusive manner.

Identify Next Steps, Including Referral

Address concurrent psychosocial problems and educational needs. Assure that any referral agencies are knowledgeable and prepared to assist and support LGBTQ youth before you make any referrals of youths to other agencies or organizations.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (2004). Model of preventive interventions for LGBTQ youth. Washington, DC.: Author.