

FACT SHEET



SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE OF DIVERSE GENDER AND SEXUALITY

This factsheet uses the acronym **LGBTIQ+** to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual people.

The '+' symbol refers to individuals who are not represented by these terms and who are not cisgendered or heterosexual.

Sexual health promotions often focus on messages for the heterosexual community. This provides LGBTIQ+ young people with little relevant information about how to look after their sexual health. High rates of STIs and pregnancy among LGBTIQ+ young people indicate the need for health promotions that are inclusive and relevant. The tips below may assist you when working with these communities.

DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE MATERIALS AND HEALTH PROMOTIONS

- **Include the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people in health promotions.** This includes the planning and delivery of these programs. Choose broad-ranging approaches that respectfully portray diverse genders, sexualities and intersex variations. Provide health education about all sexual behaviours rather than information based on a young person's assumed identity.
- **Ensure materials support diverse genders, sexualities and intersex variations.** Ensure young people can access inclusive resources that support their health and wellbeing. Be a visible ally by displaying posters and other items that positively depict issues for diverse genders, sexualities and intersex variations. Ask the young people you work with to give feedback on these materials.
- **Create and maintain safe settings.** This includes being aware of how your environment may perpetuate prejudice towards LGBTIQ+ communities. Use this knowledge in developing appropriate policies and work practices.

LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITIES

- **Establish links with organisations that support LGBTIQ+ communities such as Twenty10 (www.twenty10.org.au) and ACON (www.acon.org.au).** They provide a range of fantastic services and may be able to help out with staff training or health promotion activities.
- **Support LGBTIQ+ young people.** Ensure individuals who discuss their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status receive positive, non-judgemental and useful responses. Learn how to respond to instances of discrimination, indignities, and other intentional and unintentional forms of insult experienced by the LGBTIQ+ community.

CONSIDER YOUR OWN APPROACHES

- **Be aware of your assumptions.** Don't assume the gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual behaviour or intersex status of the young people you are working with. Don't assume LGBTIQ+ young people aren't accessing your service just because you aren't aware of them doing so.
- **Use appropriate language.** When meeting new people, always ask: "Which pronoun do you prefer?". Use gender neutral language when talking about relationships ('partner' vs 'boy/girlfriend') and addressing young people ('crew', 'folks', 'everyone'). Use gender neutral names in activities, such as Sam, Nic or Kim.
- **Be mindful that gender identity and sexuality can be fluid.** This can change over time.

REFERENCES

Writing Themselves In 3, The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people. See glhv.org.au

NSW Teachers Federation information leaflet, Supporting people of diverse sexuality and genders in education. See nswtf.org.au

OII-Intersex Australia Style Guide on Intersex and Terminology. See oii.org.au/style

Thanks to Twenty10 for their assistance in preparing this information.