

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services
(CCDCFS)
Policy Statement**

Policy Chapter: Case Requirements
Policy Number: 5.01.07
Policy Name: Safe Identification of LGBTQ2S + Youth

Original Effective Date: 07/01/2019
Revision Date(s): 04/01/2022
Current Revision Date: 04/01/2022
Approved By: Cynthia G. Weiskittel

PURPOSE: To ensure that youth with a diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender, Identity and Gender Expression (SOGIE) have individualized SOGIE affirming services available to them when needed.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) staff.

POLICY

- A. Research tells us that youth with a diverse SOGIE are at a significantly greater risk of self-injurious behaviors, running away, suicide, homelessness, substance abuse, and human trafficking. Because of this, CCDCFS believes that we should provide youth who have a diverse SOGIE with child-specific and tailored services to aid in reducing these risks.
- B. CCDCFS believes that all youth involved with the agency have the right to live in an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe. Youth in their own homes or in substitute care deserve to reside with affirming caregivers and other household members. We can help ensure this by safely identifying LGBTQ2S + youth and understanding their individual needs. We believe that SOGIE data belongs to the youth and that we have a responsibility to protect that information as much as possible. Protecting a young person's SOGIE information prevents increased trauma resulting from premature disclosure of the information when the youth is not ready or does not feel safe or supported to disclose on their own.
- C. CCDCFS provides staff with skills and education on how to competently ask questions about SOGIE; the Worker of Record (WOR) appropriately documents the response to these questions and refers youth to specific services based on their needs. We value diversity in all forms and the inclusion of all voices at the table. We know that with diversity comes new ideas and perspectives that lead to more effective solutions to the challenges faced by children and families.

PROCEDURES

I. Collecting SOGIE Data

- A. The WOR conducts a conversation about SOGIE with all youth ages 13-21 who have an open case to ensure:
1. That a child is not unsafe because they identify with a diverse SOGIE (i.e., experiencing abuse or neglect because of rejection)
 2. We offer individualized SOGIE affirming resources and services.
- B. The WOR must make SOGIE a part of the ongoing discussion with youth.
1. A changing SOGIE status is part of normal youth development
 2. Youth may change with whom they wish to share their SOGIE information
 3. Children younger than 13 years old often express or share diverse SOGIE information (this may include gender expansive language or expression) and the WOR shall respond in a supportive manner and connect them and their caregivers with individualized resources.
- C. The SOGIE Conversation and Documentation
1. WOR engages in a conversation with each youth about their SOGIE and reviews the Information Flow Chart, found in the weblink/desktop icon, <https://spark.adobe.com/page/G64wjclns0leS/> with them to determine next steps.
 - a. The above weblink also contains all resources, sample scripts, the Safe Identification Data and Triage Form, policy, and other helpful information.
 2. WOR documents in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) case activity log that they engaged in a SOGIE conversation with the youth **but does not enter the youth's SOGIE information in the activity log or anywhere else in SACWIS/the case record without the permission of the youth (not outing the youth)**.
 3. With the youth's permission, the WOR enters the youth's sexual orientation in SACWIS located within the person profile screen.
 4. If the youth identifies as transgender, WOR updates the information in SACWIS (with the youth's permission) by adding the youth's preferred name into the AKA section of the Basic screen.
 5. WOR shares any diverse SOGIE (anything other than heterosexual orientation or sex assigned at birth) information, and their wishes regarding with whom to share the SOGIE information, with:
 - a. The AFFIRM.ME. team lead via a Safe Identification Data & Triage Form
 - b. Their immediate supervisor
 - c. At the time of any Joint Transfer Conference (JTC).
 6. The WOR shall not disclose the youth's diverse SOGIE information with anyone else without the youth's permission **UNLESS** the confidentiality impacts safety. If the WOR believes there is a safety concern that requires sharing a youth's SOGIE, the WOR **MUST FIRST** consult with their chain of command.

D. Referrals for SOGIE Affirming Services

1. Safe Identification Data Collection and Triage Process

- a. WOR completes the Safe Identification Data and Triage Form for all youth with diverse SOGIE and submits it to the AFFIRM.ME. team lead. This form is used to collect information in a confidential data application, to monitor the need for funding, services, and potential red flags re: youth well-being.
- b. The AFFIRM.ME. team lead reviews the Safe Identification Data and Triage Form and consults with the WOR to clarify data information and determine the need for individualized resources and/or services.
 - i. Team Lead provides updated community resources to the WOR who then connects the youth and/or family.
 - ii. Team Lead submits the Safe Identification Data and Triage Form to tailored contracted or community services delivered by SOGIE affirming providers. A SOGIE affirming provider is competent and confident to provide services such as those for caregivers to increase diverse SOGIE acceptance, youth therapy, and youth medical care.

II. Sharing SOGIE Data with Juvenile Court

A. Once a youth's SOGIE information has been collected, as described in Section (I) above, if the youth has Juvenile Court involvement, the WOR shall talk to the youth about whether they want to share their SOGIE information with Juvenile Court. If the youth declines, the SOGIE information shall remain confidential. If the youth accepts, the SOGIE information shall be shared as follows:

1. By the initial Court appearance, **only** after the youth has permitted sharing of the SOGIE information with the below parties, the WOR shall inform the assigned APA and the GAL (if one has been appointed) of the youth's SOGIE information and indicate the proper pronouns and name the youth wishes to use when speaking to or referring to the youth.
2. At the initial Court appearance, the APA and/or the GAL, **only after** confirming with the WOR that the youth permits the sharing of the SOGIE information, shall inform the defense counsel and the Judge/Magistrate of the youth's SOGIE information and indicate the proper pronouns and name the youth wishes to use when speaking to or referring to the youth.
3. Unless otherwise indicated by controlling law or rules of Court, the APA and WOR shall encourage the parties and jurist to refer to the youth by the designated SOGIE information that the youth provided.

B. All parties shall treat all youth with dignity and respect and shall not discriminate against the youth due to the SOGIE information that has been shared.

SEE ALSO:

Relevant Code(s): Ohio Executive Order 2019-05D
Related Policies

FORMS

AFFIRM.ME. desktop icon/weblink:

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/cHvIZxDDvucKA/>

Safe Identification Data and Triage Form

Flow Charts

Glossary of Terms

Gender Conversation Guide

Practice Guide