



# LGBTQ

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

## LGBTQ+ Child & Youth Protection

Dr. Gerald P. Mallon  
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Silberman  
School of Social Work

**HUNTER**

# Agenda

- Introduction/Overview
- Language
- Abuse
- Neglect, including medical neglect
- Recommendations for Protection
- Resources
- References



# Definition of Child & Youth Protection

Child protection is the safeguarding of children and youth from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect in their homes by caretakers, in their schools, and in their community systems

# Definition of Child & Youth Protection

Child protection systems are a set of usually government-run services designed to protect children and youth who are underage and to encourage family stability.

# Definition of Child & Youth **Abuse**/ Child & Youth Maltreatment

Child abuse or child maltreatment is physical, sexual, and/or psychological maltreatment, especially by a parent or a caregiver. Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools, or communities the child interacts with.

# Definition of Child & Youth Neglect/ Child & Youth Maltreatment

Child neglect is a form of abuse an egregious behavior of caregivers (e.g., parents) that results in depriving a child/youth of their basic needs, such as the failure to provide adequate supervision, medical care, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs.

# Overview LGBTQ+ Child & Youth Protection

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) children and adolescents, an often-invisible population, frequently viewed as "different" by their own families and in fact by society as a whole.

# Overview LGBTQ+ Child & Youth Protection

They are at high risk for neglect, abuse, and violence from family members and from within the child welfare systems that are designed to protect them.



# Overview LGBTQ+ Child & Youth Protection

Self-identified LGBTQ+ children and youth, and those perceived to be because of gender expansiveness, reported that they were the victims of abuse, neglect, and violence.

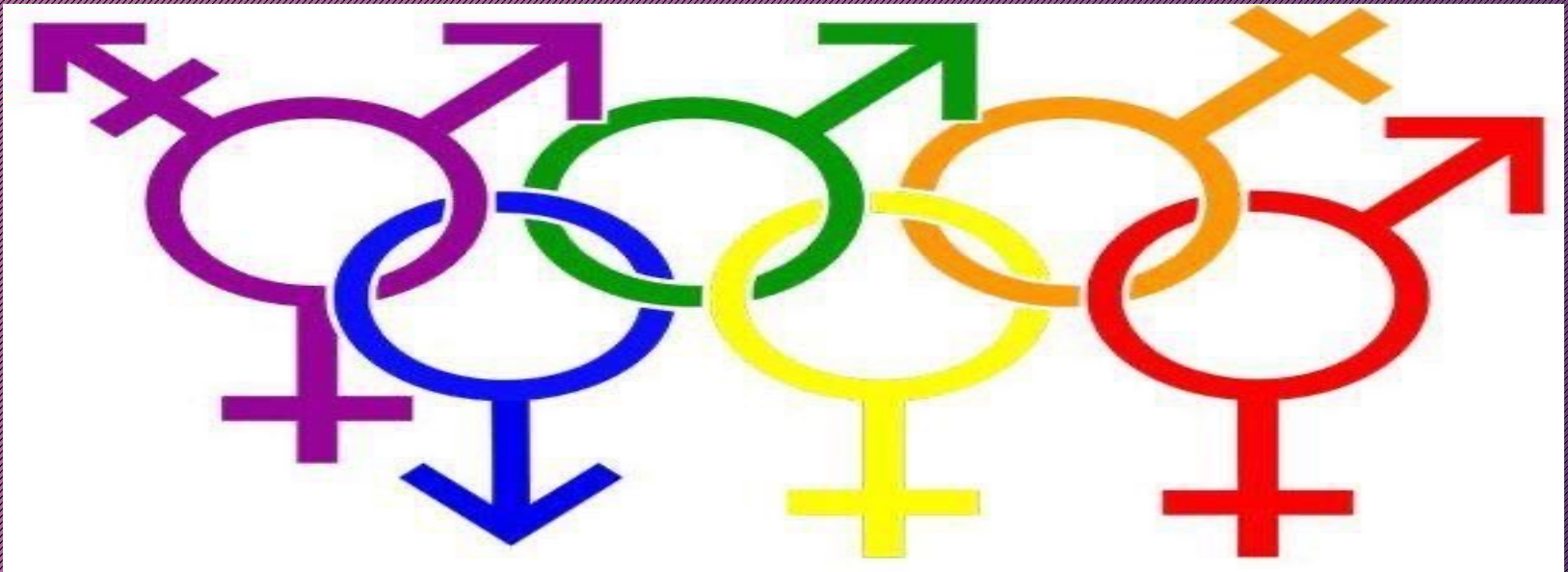
# Overview LGBTQ+ Child & Youth Protection

LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately impacted by multiple forms of trauma, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, dating violence, sexual assault, and peer violence.

# Overview LGBTQ+ Child & Youth Protection

The practices of child protection have made significant contributions to how systems respond to maltreated youth's needs. However, LGBTQ+ youth are largely excluded from many child protection conversations.

# Language



# LGBTQ +

This acronym refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning People.

Although all of the different identities within “LGBTQ+” are often lumped together (and share sexism as a common root of oppression), there are specific needs and concerns related to each individual identity.



# Sexual Orientation Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE)

# Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is how a person describes their emotional and sexual attraction to others; from a physical, fantasy, “fit” and behavioral sense.

# Sexual Orientation Terms

- ❖ Gay
- ❖ Lesbian
- ❖ Bisexual
- ❖ Asexual





# Gender Identity Expression

A term which refers to the ways in which we each manifest masculinity or femininity.

It is usually an extension of our “gender identity,” our innate sense of being male, female, or some other gender

# Gender Identity Expression


Each of us expresses a particular gender every day – by the way we style our hair, select our clothing, or even the way we stand.

Our appearance, speech, behavior, movement, and other factors signal that we feel – and wish to be understood – as masculine or feminine, or as a man or a woman or something else less binary.

# Gender Identity Terms

- ❖ Trans or Transgender
- ❖ Gender Expansive
- ❖ Cisgender
- ❖ Non-Binary





# Abuse and Neglect in the Family and in Systems

# Risk Situations Within Families

When working with families, many react with great surprize when their child/youth comes out or is found out as LGBTQ+

# Parental Reactions

- Acceptance
- Conflict
- Silence
- Insist that they do not talk about their sexual orientation or gender expression at home or with anyone in the extended family
- Try to change them
- Violence
- Throw them out of the house

# The Neglect of LGBTQ+ Children & Youth

## Types of Neglect:

- Educational
- Medical
- Well-Being
- Emotional

# The Maltreatment of LGBTQ+ Children & Youth

- Emotional abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse - violence



# What Can be Done to Help Families?

- ❑ Remind parents of the importance of loving their child/youth and give them accurate information
- ❑ Parents can continue to love their LGBTQ+ child/youth
- ❑ Parents need to know that being LGBTQ+ is a normal variation of sexuality and/or identity

# What Can Be Done to Help Systems?

- ❑ Systems, especially governments cannot discriminate against LGBTQ+ children and youth and their families
- ❑ Systems need written policies
- ❑ Systems need on-going training
- ❑ Systems need skilled supervisors
- ❑ Systems need to enforce consequences for staff who do not follow the policies
- ❑ Schools need to teach that LGBTQ+ identity is a normal variation of sexual health

## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Let youth know that you, as a professional, are willing to listen and talk about anything.

When a young person discloses their LGBTQ+ identity to you, respond affirmatively and supportively.

Understand that how people identify their sexual orientation or gender identity expression can change over time.

## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Use the name and pronoun (he/she/they) that the young person prefers. (If it's not clear, ask him what he prefers to be called.) Young people should be supported to express their gender identity. Agencies must respect the youth's preferred pronoun and name.

Respect a youth's privacy. Let him/her/them decide when and if they decide to come out and to whom.

Avoid double standards: Allow LGBTQ+ youth to discuss feelings of attraction and enter into age-appropriate romantic relationships, just as you would with a non-LGBTQ+ youth.

# How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Welcome LGBTQ+ youth's friends or acquaintances of your youth at family gatherings.

Allow youth to participate in activities that interest them, regardless of whether these activities are stereotypically binary as male or female.

Connect youth with LGBTQ+ organizations, resources, and events in the community or online. Consider looking for LGBTQ adult role models to interact with youth.

## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Stand up for LGBTQ+ youth when they are mistreated.

Make it clear that insults or jokes based on gender, expression of gender identity, or sexual orientation are not tolerated. Express your disapproval of these types of jokes or insults when you encounter them in the community or in the media.

Display “hate free zone” signs or other symbols indicating an LGBTQ+ friendly environment (pink triangle, rainbow flag).

## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Address issues of violence or abuse towards an LGBTQ+ youth, directly and with the appropriate authorities, regardless of where the abuse originates.

Use gender-neutral language when asking about relationships. For example, instead of asking a guy, "Do you have a girlfriend?" ask, "Is there someone special in your life?"

Celebrate diversity in all its forms. Provide access to a variety of books, movies, and materials, including those that positively portray same-sex relationships. Point out LGBTQ+ celebrities, role models who stand up for the LGBTQ+ community, and people who show courage in the face of social stigma.

## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Support your teen's self-expression through choices in clothing, jewelry, make-up, hairstyle, friends, and room decor.

Young people have the right to confidentiality.

Agencies must not disclose information about a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity expression without good reason (for example, developing a service plan) and the youth's permission.

Young people have the right to request that a new social worker be assigned, if the current worker is not adequately responding to their needs.



## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Sexual health should be part of every young person's wellness exam. Competent health care providers will be able to offer open, nonjudgmental, and comprehensive sexual health education that is relevant to LGBTQ+ youth.

Transgender youth need properly trained health and mental care providers to address their concerns. This includes the ability to discuss, provide, and obtain authorization for medically necessary transition-related treatment, if desired.

## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Consider the possibility that youth may benefit from mental health counseling on issues that may or may not be related to sexual orientation or gender identity expression. In addition to typical teen concerns, many LGBTQ+ youth struggle with depression or anxiety as a result of experiencing stigma, isolation, discrimination, or bullying. If that's the case, find a provider with experience and competence in helping LGBTQ+ youth cope with trauma.

## How Can Social Workers Practice Competently with LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

Under no circumstances should LGBTQ+ youth be forced or encouraged to undergo "conversion therapy." Major medical and mental health associations have condemned practices designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity expression.

Seek out education, resources, and support if, as a professional, you feel the need to deepen your understanding of LGBTQ+ youth experiences.

Educate yourself and your coworkers about LGBTQ+ history, issues, and resources

# Internet Resources



## Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG)

- <http://www.pflag.org>
- PFLAG is a national organization dedicated to providing information, education, and support for the parents, families, and friends of lesbians and gays. You will find a list of local chapters, their mission statement, and general information about sexual orientation at the PFLAG site.

# Internet Resources

## Family Acceptance Project (San Francisco State University)

- Supportive Families, Healthy Children booklet
- <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

López, López, M., González, Álvarez, R., ten Brummelaar, M., Van Mierlo, K.R.O. & Wieldraaijer-Vincent, L. (Eds. (2021). *Working with LGBTQIA+ Youth in the Child Welfare System: Perspectives From Youth and Professionals*. Groningen, NL: University of Groningen.

## Working with LGBTQIA+ youth in the child welfare system

Perspectives from youth and professionals



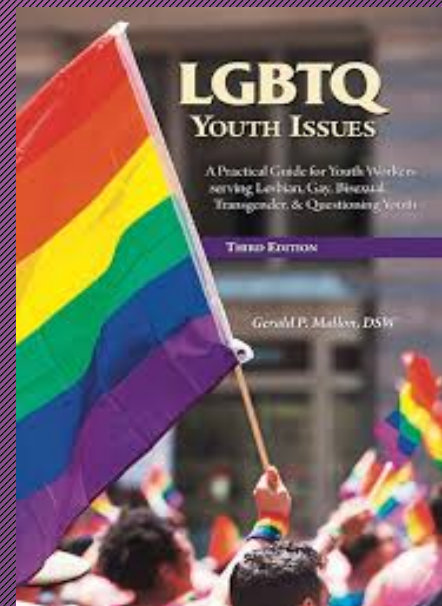
### Editors

Mónica López López  
Rodrigo González Álvarez  
Wijger ten Brummelaar  
Rayen R.O. van Mierlo  
Lies Wieldraaijer-Vincent

University of Groningen Press

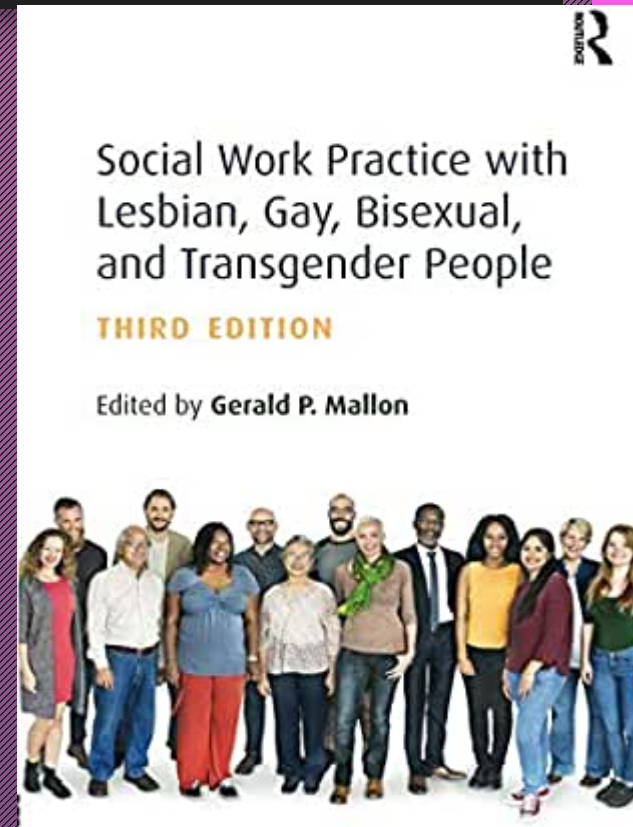
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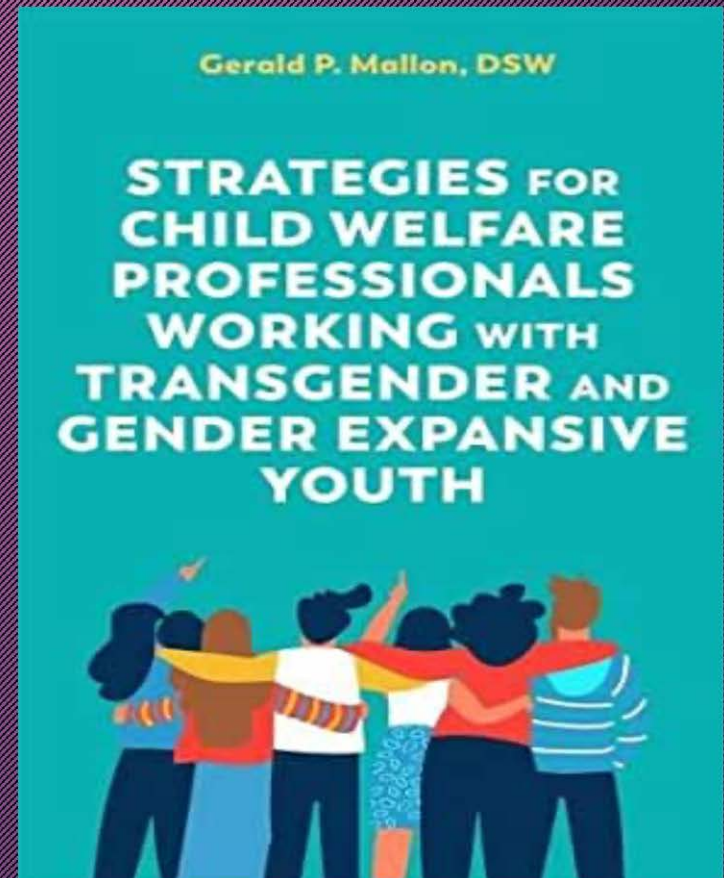
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**SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE  
WITH TRANSGENDER AND  
GENDER EXPANSIVE YOUTH**

THIRD EDITION

JAMA SHELTON AND  
GERALD P. MALLON



Silberman  
School of Social Work  

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**HUNTER**

**Gerald P. Mallon, DSW**

Silberman School of Social  
Work at Hunter College  
New York, New York

[gmallon@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:gmallon@hunter.cuny.edu)



**SAFE  
ZONE**

The "Safe Zone" symbol is a message to gay, lesbian, transgender & bisexual youth & adult allies. The message is that a person displaying this symbol is one who will be understanding, supportive & trustworthy if a gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual youth needs help, advice, or just someone to talk to.