**In a Youth’s Own Words**

I am a shy person when it comes to my orientation. I have to make sure I wait for awhile and actually get to know the person.

At first it feels awkward. “Why do you want to know my business?” But then, if you're going to ask, actually give people help and tools.

If they made it clear why they want it, it would help people to be like, “Okay, well, here you go.”

I didn’t know how to ask if something was wrong with me. Because I thought something was wrong with me. I never pictured myself liking my same sex.

25% Youth in the focus groups who did not want to disclose SOGIE information, or did not want to disclose until they had evaluated the environment.

From 3/40 Blueprint: Creating the Blueprint to Reduce LGBTQ Youth Homelessness | www.340blueprintproject.com
Youth Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE): How and When to Ask

10 Steps to More Effective Data Collection

1. Explain why the data is being collected.
2. Advise youth about who may have access to their information, and under what conditions it may be made available.
3. On intake documents make sure SOGIE-related questions are not on the first page or at the top of the page near the youth’s name, to protect their privacy.
4. Use gender-neutral pronouns in written materials.
5. In addition to pre-identified SOGIE categories, allow space for youth to write in their own descriptions.
6. Build rapport with youth who do not wish to report their SOGIE upon initial contact.
7. Try asking about SOGIE informally, such as inquiring about relationships or talking about the larger LGBTQ community.
8. Recognize that some youth may not have a strong sense of their SOGIE or may lack the vocabulary to describe them.
9. Avoid assuming SOGIE based on speech, mannerisms, dress, or other aspects of gender expression.
10. Respect youth who decide not to disclose their SOGIE, and those who are unsure of or questioning their sexual and/or gender identity.

From 3/40 Blueprint: Creating the Blueprint to Reduce LGBTQ Youth Homelessness | www.340blueprintproject.com
Talking to Youth about Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE)

Provider Perspectives

Provider Concerns

We try to make sure the youth know there’s questions they don’t have to answer if they don’t want to, and that we’re asking not to be nosy but because we want to figure out what their needs are.

There is a question, and it’s sort of prefaced with, “You have the right to refuse to answer this question if you choose; this question is asked because of a specific grant.”

If someone checks a “female” box, I’m putting in “female.” Because ultimately, I’m not questioning your gender because I want you to know no one else should be questioning it.

Intrusion into youths’ privacy

Forcing youth to “fit in boxes” that reflect government databases and funding mandates, but not their complex identities

Over- and under-representation of identities as the result of having to select from predetermined categories

Multiple disconnected and inconsistent systems requiring data entry

From 3/40 Blueprint: Creating the Blueprint to Reduce LGBTQ Youth Homelessness | www.340blueprintproject.com
4 Points to Remember Before Asking for SOGIE Information:

01. Youth's mixed feelings about disclosing SOGIE is no surprise, given the high incidence of trauma experienced by homeless youth and the fact that for many, SOGIE disclosure may have been a factor in their becoming homeless.

02. As youth are still going through many developmental changes, they may not have a strong sense of their sexual orientation or gender identities, or they may lack the vocabulary to accurately define or describe them.

03. LGBTQ youth, just like heterosexual or cisgender youth, may need education around SOGIE spectrums and the pitfalls of assuming another's SOGIE based on speech, mannerisms, dress, or other components of gender expression.

04. LGBTQ youth may be at particular risk for homelessness because they often come out at a young age. These youth may be cognitively less developed and may be using running away from home as a coping strategy.

References