

Basic Competencies for Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) Clients

**Prepared by Rob Woronoff, MS
Program Director
Just Detention International**

Presentation Description:

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) identifies incarcerated lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people as among prison populations that face the highest risk of sexual assault. Yet many advocates who seek to ensure their safety and offer post-trauma services are not equipped to address the issues facing LGBTI survivors of sexual assault. The training exercises described in this document are designed to provide a foundational understanding of the needs of LGBTI people and as well as strategies for addressing their needs. The exercises may be used in whole or in part to help expand advocates' understanding of LGBTI people in order to work with them with competence and compassion. When followed by viewing JDI's webinars on the experiences of incarcerated LGBTI sexual assault survivors, advocates will gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of LGBTI people in general, and of LGBTI survivors of sexual assault.

Target Audiences:

This training has been designed to provide a foundational understanding of the needs of LGBTI survivors and is offered for anyone involved with providing services to them. It is recommended for new-hires, current staff who do not understand basic information pertaining to LGBTI people and who wish to expand their understanding of issues facing LGBTI survivors of sexual assault, and/or those who have not had experience working with LGBTI individuals.

Recommended Training Duration:

All of the exercises in this curriculum can be delivered in 3 Hours. The training can be adapted to be shorter, though a minimum of 90 minutes is recommended. It can also be expanded to a half-day or full-day training by including additional exercises, case studies, video presentations, etc.

Equipment Needed:

Flip chart, masking tape (if not using self-sticking flip chart paper), markers, computer with DVD player and/or LCD projector. Flip chart may be replaced by dry erase and/or chalk board if available.

Presentation Agenda:

1. Understanding Terminology and Language
2. Transgender Umbrella
3. Early Messages about LGBTI People
4. Understanding SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression)
5. Impact of Silence
6. Understanding the Coming Out Process
7. Wrap-up and Q&A

Terminology & Language Exercise I

There are two main objectives of this exercise:

1. To improve participants' knowledge of and comfort with vocabulary in relation to working with LGBTI people; and,
2. To help participants recognize that the terms that people use to describe their gender and sexuality are many and constantly evolving.

This activity, which can also serve as an ice-breaker, is meant to be a fun way for participants to be exposed to numerous terms they may never have heard or might not understand with regard to the ways in which people talk about their sexuality and gender. The terms used in this exercise were taken from a variety of sources, including a "Queertionary" that was developed by Advocates for Youth, that demonstrate the wide variety of terms used by people to describe their sexuality and gender. In fact, the very letters "LGBTI" can be useful for our purposes in talking about people's sexuality and gender, but it's important for participants to understand that many people simply reject these labels altogether and prefer to describe their sexuality in any number of other ways.

Reassure participants that this lesson on terminology is meant to liberate them by making them feel more comfortable in their ignorance. Ignorance is not necessarily a bad thing. Being closed-minded and judgmental are bad things and the more we can do to reduce or eliminate them the more likely we are to earn a person's trust.

The lesson is not about making people feel self-conscious or concerned with political correctness. Be sure to let participants know that it is okay to make mistakes and that the training space is designed to be a learning environment to test out new skills and become more comfortable with their work. Finally, communicate that in situations where they do not know what words to use, it is okay to ask – either in the training or out in the world. People will likely feel appreciative, not insulted, for being asked, especially when it is clear that the person asking is coming from a position of wonder, not judgment.

To get an additional benefit from the exercise, try to get participants to use the terminology out loud as much as possible, which is especially good for those who typically shy away from or stumble over these words. For example, while debriefing the activity, if a participant says, "my word," ask them what their word is so they say

it in front of the group. Asking participants to read the definitions out loud is another way for them to practice saying the terminology.

Instructions:

Tape glossary terms (printed individually on 8½ x 11 paper) around the room prior to the start of the training. Ask participants to work individually or form small teams (2-4 people, depending on the total number of participants) and give each individual/group one or more definitions. Individuals or team members can work together to find the sign(s) hanging on the wall with the word(s) that match their definition(s). Encourage people to use their colleagues for help if they need it. Once they locate their word(s), they should stand next to or under that word on the wall. Allow approximately 5 minutes for participants to find their words, and for those still struggling at the end of this time, encourage them to make their best guess. This exercise is meant to be FUN so encourage lots of laughter. It helps ease anxiety and tension.

Take a few volunteers to read their words/definitions. You can ask the larger group if they agree that the pair is a match. If the pair is NOT a match, ask participants if they can help their colleague out by suggesting another word as the match. After a few examples, allow participants to take their seats and refer them to the terminology definitions in their handouts. Review additional terms if needed. Allow the group to drive the discussion around terms that they need the most help with.

The trainer should also point out ways in which language regarding sexuality and gender is constantly evolving. For example, the word “queer” was almost exclusively used as a pejorative, but now many people use it to describe themselves. It has also been used in titles of TV shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Queer as Folk*. Likewise, many people may be familiar with the term “hermaphrodite” but may not be as familiar with the more clinically-correct term “intersex.”

There is no right order to letters such as LGBTI, etc. Nor is there one correct set of letters such as LGBTI, etc. It’s OK to acknowledge that changes in language and terms can be hard for some people to keep up with.

“You don’t have to keep up, dear. You just have to keep open.”

This is a quote from the character Mrs. Madrigal, the transgender matriarch of the *Tales of the City* series of books by Armistead Maupin. (Olympia Dukakis played Mrs. Madrigal in the TV mini-series that some might have seen.)

This quote underscores the objective of the Terminology exercise. Emphasize that it’s much less important that advocates try to keep up with all of the terms that people use to describe their sexuality and gender. It’s an impossible task and it’s totally OK NOT to know all of these terms. The objective is to stay open and judgment-free in order to establish and maintain a trusting relationship with the person in need of your support.

Introduce the importance of CONTEXT and INTENT when understanding the value of language. Words alone don't tell us much. We need to understand the context in which the word was used and the intention of the user. For example, one gay man might greet his gay male friend by saying, "Hey fag." This could be done in a good-natured way not meant to cause offense. And the man who hears this word from his friend understands the context and intention of his friend's use of the word "fag." This is VERY different from a gay man who is walking down the street and hears from someone he doesn't know, "Hey fag" which he may perceive as offensive or even threatening. Identical words—very different context and intention.

Ask participants to talk about other terms such as "queer" or "dyke" and ask them if they can think of ways in which these words can be used in a positive way as well as in a pejorative way. When it comes to language, context is everything!

Terminology & Language Exercise II

Another terminology exercise, designed to build understand of the impact that words have, may be used in place of, or in addition to, the previous terminology exercise. The trainer asks the group to break into smaller groups of 8-10 people. Each group is asked to take out one piece of paper and a pen and to assign one person to act as scribe. The trainer then asks all of the groups to come up with a list of words or phrases that come to their mind when they hear the word "Homosexual." (The trainer writes the word "Homosexual" on a flip chart or dry erase/chalk board.)

All of the groups brainstorm their lists for 5-10 minutes. The trainer then asks one person from each group to read their list of words and phrases out loud as he writes them on the flip chart or board. Groups are asked to read only unduplicated words as many of the same words are likely to show up on a number of their lists.

After each group has read its list and all of the words are in front of the group on the flip chart or board, the trainer asks the group for their overall impression of the list. The lists are typically comprised mostly of negative words like "fag," "dyke," "isolated," "confused," "sinful," "child molester," etc. Many other words are rooted in stereotypes such as "good dresser," "flamboyant," "man-hater," "down low," "AIDS," "affluent," etc.

A discussion then takes place regarding the effects of being thought of in primarily negative or stereotypical terms by society and the emotional effects this can have on someone who may have feelings of attraction for people of the same sex. The point of this exercise is to move beyond a simple discussion of LGBTI terminology. It is designed to help participants begin to understand the emotions that many LGBTI people experience with regard to the ways in which they are often viewed by family, community members, and/or the larger society, and the impact they have on their sense of self-worth and behaviors.

Transgender Umbrella Exercise

The objective of this exercise is to illustrate that the word “transgender” is an umbrella term that includes a range of other words and varying identities, rather than one singular experience.

Instructions:

Draw an umbrella on a flip chart and write the word “transgender” inside the umbrella. Ask participants to call out all the other terms/words that they believe to be associated with transgender, and write those words on the flip chart (under the umbrella). You may choose to have a volunteer read the definition of transgender from the glossary first, and then ask participants to repeat the terms they heard in that definition.

This is a great opportunity to clarify terms such as MTF or FTM by breaking it down like, “If someone is male-bodied but identifies and presents as female, we might use the term M-to-F. Would you refer to that person as he or she?”

Trainers can refer to the list of Transgender Terminology for clarification on terms that are relevant to this exercise. In the case that a participant shares a word with which you are unfamiliar, ask the participant to define the word for the group and then come to a consensus on whether or not the word belongs under the umbrella.

We often refer to the term “transgender” as an umbrella term for many identities and experiences.

- What are some of the other terms that fall under the umbrella term of transgender?
- What do you notice about the term “transgender” when you look at this flip chart?

Conclude this exercise with the suggested talking points below (and add others as necessary).

Talking Points:

- The term “transgender” does not refer to one set of people or experiences – two people who both fall under this transgender umbrella can have vastly different identities and experiences. For example, one may be a biological male who is heterosexual and is a cross-dresser, while the other is a biological female who is a lesbian and dresses androgynously. It is possible for both of these people to identify as transgender while having little else in common.

- Even transgender people who are more alike than this may make very different choices or follow different paths with respect to their gender identity. Take two biological females, both who are attracted to other women and identify as transgender. One may choose to transition – which could include adopting a male name and masculine pronouns, taking testosterone, or surgically altering his body. The other may choose not to transition – perhaps she chooses express herself in masculine ways yet keep her feminine name/pronouns/body, etc.
- There is no single path that transgender people take in order to feel comfortable with their identities. Some people choose to take hormones while others don't. Some people choose other medical interventions such as surgeries, while others don't. Some of these decisions are made based on personal preference, but there are also financial concerns and constraints. While many health insurers cover the cost of hormone therapies, most currently do not cover surgeries.
- The term “transgender” is most correctly used as an adjective, as in, “Our agency runs a weekly support group for transgender women who are survivors of sexual assault.”
- The term “transgender” is sometimes incorrectly used as a noun, as in, “Our agency runs a weekly support group for transgenders who are survivors of sexual assault;” or as a verb, as in, “Our agency runs a weekly support group for transgendered women who are survivors of sexual assault.”

Early Messages Exercise

There are a lot of messages about LGBTI people out there in our world. When we hear messages that are new to us or that differ from our own opinions and values, we can feel anything from curious, to inspired, to offended. This activity helps participants build awareness about the origins of their own opinions about LGBTI people, as well as the origins of the varying messages they might encounter from others.

The exercise is not designed to encourage debate, and should not create an environment where participants' experiences are exploited or judged. Comparisons between participants' experiences should be made carefully, with the goal of acknowledging differences, not valuing some experiences above others. Discussion should reinforce the idea that our early experiences influence the people we are today, as well as the work we do with our clients.

Instructions:

Ask participants to identify a partner or to turn to a person next to them. (If there are an odd number of people in the room, there may be a group of 3.) Instruct the pairs to hold a discussion in which each person answers the questions:

1. What was the earliest message you heard about LGBTI people?
2. How old were you when you heard the message?
3. From whom did you get the message?
4. Was the message positive, negative, or neutral?
5. How did the message make you feel?

Meanwhile, bring up three flip charts – one titled “Negative,” one titled “Positive,” and one titled “Neutral.” After the partner discussions are complete, bring participants’ attention back to the front of the room for large group discussion. Solicit volunteers to share the messages they identified and record responses on the flip charts.

Talking Points:

- What differences (if any) do you notice about the messages that come from different sources (family vs. church vs. media, etc.)?
- How do the early messages we heard vary based on the era, community, or geographic location in which we grew up?
- How do you think these messages impact young people who are questioning their sexuality, or who grow up to identify as LGBTI?
- This is a good opportunity to bring up the concept of internalized homophobia (and biphobia/transphobia). If you defined internalized homophobia in the terminology exercise, refer back to it. If not, discuss the definition at this point. Encourage participants to reflect on how negative messages about being LGBTI can create shame, fear, embarrassment, and self-loathing for people who identify as LGBTI – especially for young people who are at the early stages of identifying their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- How has our belief in these messages changed or stayed the same for you over time? How did any changes come about?
- Even when we grow up and form our own opinions, how do early messages stay with us as adults? What are some of the ways that they continue to impact us over time?
- What are some ways that positive messages about LGBTI people can help our work?

- What are some ways that negative messages about LGBTI people can hinder our work?
- What should someone do if their personal values are in conflict with their professional responsibilities?
- Can anyone share an example from your own experience when you witnessed someone whose personal values and professional goals were in conflict with one another? What were the circumstances? What were the consequences of this clash between values and goals? How was the conflict resolved?
- This is a good time in the training to remind participants that it is not your goal to change their personal values, but rather to give them accurate information about LGBTI people and help them understand the ways in which their personal feelings/opinions impact their ability to achieve their professional roles and responsibilities.

Understanding SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression)

Everyone has a sexual orientation AND a gender identity – not just LGBTI people. People who are heterosexual and/or cisgender (meaning not transgender) don't experience the same challenge towards their sexual orientation and/or gender identity because they are aligned with the dominant culture and societal expectations. Therefore, they may not have thought much about their sexual orientation and gender identity, but they still have them.

Research from the 1970s onward has repeatedly shown that LGB youth have their first awareness of being “*different*” and/or *being attracted to same-sex persons* very early in life, sometimes around age 4 – 6, with the average age around 10 years old. The research also shows that awareness of being lesbian, gay, or bisexual (understanding and identifying with these terms) seems to be around ages 14 – 16. We know that for transgender or gender non-conforming children and youth, feelings of identifying with the “other” gender and expressions of this gender identity can start at very young ages as well. Expressing these feelings may come as soon as they begin to express themselves verbally, at ages 2-3 and later. For those of us whose (a) sexual orientation (or attractions), and (b) gender identity (feelings of being male or female) has been aligned with societal expectations all our lives, we might not have taken time to think of ourselves as even having a sexual orientation or gender identity. But for people whose sexual orientation and/or gender identity falls outside of society's expectations, they are often forced to reflect on these identities a great deal, and often from an early age.

The following exercises are designed to allow participants to explore the concepts of sexuality and gender as related, but distinct, aspects of a person's humanity.

Feelings of Attraction Exercise

The trainer asks the group how we know who might be attracted to others of their same sex. To begin to develop this understanding, the trainer asks the group to identify physiological responses we experience when we see someone we're attracted to. The group calls out responses which invariably include things like, "your heart races," "your palms sweat," "you get butterflies in your stomach," "you get flushed," etc. If the group is hesitant to respond, the trainer asks prompting questions like, "what happens to your heart rate, your palms, your stomach?" Either way, the responses are usually the same.

The trainer then asks the group to put those physiological responses into one of two categories: voluntary or involuntary responses. The group invariably identifies them as involuntary responses. The trainer then confirms that we do not make our hearts race or our palms sweat, etc. They just happen. This is the basis of human sexuality and the term sexual orientation. Everyone has a sexual orientation and the trainer then asks for terms used to describe someone who is attracted to someone of the same sex (homosexual and/or gay or lesbian), someone who is attracted to someone of the opposite or another sex (heterosexual or "straight") or someone who has the capacity to be attracted to people of both or more than one sex (bisexual).

The trainer then makes the connection between feelings we neither instigate nor can control and the negative and stereotypical words and phrases often used to describe lesbian, gay and bisexual people that are on the flip charts. This helps the group begin to understand that the feelings of loneliness, isolation, and despair experienced by many LGB people and which can lead to high rates of substance abuse, self-injurious behaviors and suicidal ideation are rooted more in the derogatory ways in which society often views LGB people than a natural propensity among LGB people to engage in self-destructive or unhealthy behaviors.

Gender Identity Development Exercise

Participants are reminded that we've explored the "LGB" parts of "LGBTI" and that now we will dedicate some time to exploring the "T." The trainer begins by asking the group to identify characteristics of biological sex. The trainer can prompt this discussion by asking, "When a baby is born, how does the doctor or midwife know the baby's sex?" The group invariably identifies genitalia and the primary characteristics that define our biological sex. The trainer then asks the group to identify physical traits that define our biological sex that are not able to be seen such as chromosomes.

The trainer then asks, "Are biological sex and gender the same thing?" The group usually responds that they are not. The trainer asks for ways in which we express our gender and responses usually include things like clothing, jewelry, hairstyles,

etc. The trainer asks if the ways in which we express our gender are fixed or if they change over time. The group then talks about the evolution of clothing styles, etc.

The trainer then deconstructs the word “Transgender” as an umbrella term used to describe anyone who might cross the line of gender identity and/or expression, in whatever ways in which that identity and expression might be defined in a moment in time. (For example, boys wearing ear rings was not considered acceptable behavior 20 years ago but is quite common now and not necessarily associated with transgender behavior. The trainer further explores the terms “Transgender” by reminding the group that it can incorporate, but is not limited to, terms like “drag queen,” “drag king,” “gender queer,” “gender variant,” and any number of other expressions.

The trainer then asks the group to identify ways in which very small children who are not able to dress themselves or choose their hairstyles might express their gender. This leads to a discussing about toy play and how a small, preverbal child might feel if they reach for the “wrong” toy, i.e., if a little girl reaches for a toy truck or a little boy reaches for a doll.

The trainer then recaps that the group should now possess, not only a deeper understanding of many terms used to describe LGBTI people but also some of the emotional motivators for some of the behaviors in which many LGBTI people engage that may prevent them from leading happy, healthy, and productive lives.

What is intersex?

Intersex people have physical characteristics that do not match the typical understandings of male and female; previously called hermaphrodites. It is now considered offensive to use the term hermaphrodite, so it is more appropriate to refer to people intersex. Some intersex people identify as transgender while others do not. Some intersex conditions are known at the time of birth while others are not discovered until later in life, if at all; some intersex conditions are anatomical, while others are chromosomal.

Intersex is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types--for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

For more information, contact Advocates for Informed Choice (<http://aiclegal.org>) or the Intersex Society of North America (<http://www.isna.org>)

The term “Questioning” is also discussed and explored in terms of the questioning nature of adolescence as well as some of the reasons why many people who may experience same sex attraction may resist assuming the label of LG or B. It is also worth noting at this point that there can often be a difference between someone who is questioning their sexual and/or gender identity and someone who resists assuming an LGBTI label. This is where issues of race and culture and the ways in which they can affect the words individuals might use to describe their sexuality. *Not all non-LGBTI identified people are questioning or closeted.*

Impact of Silence Exercise

The objective of this exercise is to illustrate how difficult it can be to talk about ourselves while at the same time, leaving out certain pieces of information that make us who we are. Each participant is asked to take out a piece of paper and something to write with. The trainer then asks each person to write down the names of 3 very important people in their lives. After a few minutes, the trainer asks each person to then write down the names of 3 very important places they’ve been. After a few more minutes, the trainer asks them to write down 3 very significant events in their lives. After everyone has completed their list, the trainer asks them to pair up with someone, preferably someone they don’t already know. The trainer then instructs them to talk with their partner about their lives (one at a time) but also instructs them to turn over their list of 3 important people, places and events and tells them that, as they talk about themselves with their partner, they are not allowed to reference anything on their list. The first person in the pair speaks for 2-3 minutes, then the trainer asks the second partner to do the same.

After all of the pairs have spoken, the trainer pulls the group back and asks for volunteers to talk about how it felt to talk about their lives but not reference any of the important people, places and events in their lives. Participants often say how hard it was to have to self-censor, how conversation felt superficial and did not flow easily since they had to be vigilant not to disclose information from their list.

Coming Out Stars Exercise

This exercise is designed to help participants experience what it is like to come out as LGBTI and to deepen their understanding of the risks each LGBTI person takes when they decide to disclose their sexuality and/or gender identity to others. The activity provides examples of the range of responses LGBTI people experience when they come out, to build understanding and empathy. Participants are likely to gain insight into ways they can be an ally in the coming out process.

Instructions:

Materials for this exercise are stars, approximately 6 inches across, cut out of colored paper (blue, red, green, and yellow). It’s a bit labor-intensive, but this exercise is designed to engender a high level of empathy with regard to the range of

reactions LGBTI people often experience once they begin to disclose their identity to friends, loved ones, colleagues, and members of their community.

Distribute colored stars to the participants – this can be done earlier in the day with the help of a co-trainer, when one is available.

Use the following script to conduct the activity. It is important to follow the script closely but is recommended that trainers develop enough familiarity with it that you do not need to rely on reading the whole thing verbatim during the training.

If appropriate, have participants get into a large circle. This can also be done in smaller groups or even just sitting in the large group. Read the group and make a choice based on their comfort and yours. Standing in a circle for this exercise makes a big impact on attendees.

Script:

Everyone should now have a paper star – blue, red, green, or yellow. Imagine that this star represents your world, with you in the center and those things or people most important to you at each point of the star.

We'll begin by writing your name in the center of the star. After all, it is your star and you should be at the very center of it.

Now, you will fill out each point of the star. Each of the points is labeled with a number. For the top point of the star, labeled with the number 1, write the name of a friend of yours. Choose a friend who is close to you. Someone you care about very much. The only restrictions are that this friend must be living and may not be your spouse. Write their name on the top point of the star.

Now for star point #2, think of a specific family member. Make it someone to whom you have turned for advice, or maybe who knows how to cheer you up when you're sad. This could be your mother, father, aunt or uncle, or any family member who has made an impact in your life. On the second point of the star please write their name on the point.

Next, think of a community group that you belong to that is important to you. It could be a spiritual community, a club, your neighborhood, your athletic group, or your circle of friends. Write the name of this community that you are a part of on the third point of the star.

On the next point of the star, write the name of the place you work or worked. It can be the name of the company, the environment or even the type of job you held.

On the last point of the star, write down a goal you have for yourself. This should be one of those important goals you have now for sometime in your future. Write that goal on the 5th point of the star.

For the rest of this exercise, each of you is now a gay man or a lesbian, or a person who is bisexual, transgender or intersex. You are about to begin your coming out process. Please understand that this activity is not to change who you are, but to help you understand some of the feelings and experiences that LGBTI people have. So let's begin.

You have known that you were different from a young age. In high school, you realized that your sexual orientation was different from your family and friends, but you were not yet ready to share this part of yourself.

After some time, you've come to realize that you really are attracted to others of the same sex and are probably gay or lesbian. It's definitely not a phase. It's not something you chose. It's just who you are. You've come to understand that. And now, you don't want to hide or deny who you are anymore.

You decide that it will be easiest to tell your friends first, since they have always been there for you in the past and you think they need to know this important part of who you are. This is the same person who you listed on the #1 point of the star.

You take your close friend to dinner. You find a moment in the conversation when you can tell them how important they are to you. You want to share something with them, and finally you say it, "I'm gay" or "I'm lesbian," etc.

- If you have a BLUE star, your friend responds positively. They have suspected it for some time now and thank you for being honest with them. They act no differently toward you and seem genuinely happy you confided in them.

- If you have a YELLOW or RED star, your friend is hesitant and concerned. They are irritated that you waited so long to tell them, but you are confident that soon they will understand that being gay or lesbian is just a part of who you are...you just need to give them some time. Please fold back this point of your star. They will come around in time.

- If you have a GREEN star, you are met with anger and disgust. This friend who has been by your side in the past tells you that being gay is wrong and that they can't associate with anyone like that. If you have a GREEN star, please tear off this point and drop it to the ground. This friend is no longer a part of your life.

With most of you having a positive response from your friends, you are a bit more ready to tell your family. So, you turn to your closest family member first so that it will be a little easier. This is the person you wrote on the #2 point of your star.

- If you have a RED star, the conversation does not go exactly how you planned. Your family member is surprised, shocked, and asks "how could this have happened? What do you think caused you to be gay?" After some lengthy

discussion, your family member seems a little more at ease with it. Fold this side of your star back, as they will become an ally over time.

- If you have a BLUE star, this family member embraces you. They are proud that you have decided to come out and let you know that they will always be there to support you.
- If you have a YELLOW star, your family member rejects the thought of being related to a “homosexual.” They tell you they don’t want to hear you ever talk about it again and that, if you were smart, you wouldn’t tell anybody else. Please tear this point of your star off. This family member will likely not understand or support you in the future.
- If you have a GREEN star, your family member is disgusted by homosexuality and suggests that you get some therapy. They tell you they don’t want to see you in their house again until you get yourself “fixed” and start living “right.” Please tear off this point of your star. This family member will no longer be there for you and has actually pushed you away from the family.

Having told your friends and family, the wheels have started to turn and soon members of your community begin to become aware of your sexual orientation.

- If you have a RED or BLUE star your community accepts your sexual orientation. They continue to embrace you and together you celebrate the growing diversity in your community.
- If you have a YELLOW star, you are met with a mixed response. Some accept you and others don’t know what to think. You remain a part of the community and with time will fit in as you once did. If you have a YELLOW star, please fold back star point #3.
- If you have a GREEN star, your community reacts badly, sometimes with hatred. They tell you that someone like you does not belong in their community. Those who had supported you in your times of need no longer speak to you or acknowledge you. If you have a GREEN star, tear point #3 off your star.

Now that you have started to come out, you have heard that rumors about your sexual orientation have started circulating at the place where you work.

- If you have a RED star, your colleagues begin to approach you and let you know that they have heard the rumors. They are proud of you for being open with who you are and they will support you. Your administrators react the same way, letting you know that you are an important part of the team and the workplace.
- If you have a BLUE star, your workplace has become quite interesting. A lot of the staff seem to think that you are gay, even though you haven’t mentioned it to anyone

or confirmed any of the rumors. Some people speak to you less, but the environment has not seemed to change drastically. If you have a BLUE star, please fold back this point. It seems as though things will be OK in time.

- If you have YELLOW star, you continue to work as though nothing is happening, ignoring the rumors that have spread throughout the workplace. One day, you come in to find that someone has taped a sign with the word “queer” on your door and when you leave work you find the word “homo” painted on the window of your car. If you have a YELLOW star, please tear off this point. You no longer feel safe at work. In fact you are scared and wonder if you can even go back to work.

- If you have a GREEN star, your boss asks to meet with you. Several co-workers have suggested that your boss should ask you to resign because they don't feel someone like you should work there, and especially not around children. You ask your boss what she thinks you should do and she can't look you in the eye. Your boss suggests that maybe this location isn't the best fit for you and says, “you know, your work performance lately hasn't been that great so maybe another workplace or job would work better for you.” If you have a GREEN star, please tear off point #4 of your star.

Now...your future lies ahead of you and you want to move forward with achieving your goals and dreams. Your goals and dreams are very important to you. You wrote it down on point #5.

- If you have a RED, BLUE, or YELLOW star, these goals and dreams are what keep you going. Most of you have been met with some sort of rejection since beginning your coming out process. However, you have managed to continue to live a relatively happy and healthy life. Your personal goals and dreams can become a reality.

- If you have a GREEN star, you fall into despair. You have been met with rejection after rejection after rejection. You find it impossible to accomplish your lifelong goals without the support and love of your friends, family and community. You become depressed. With nowhere else to turn, many of you will turn to drugs, alcohol, and even very risky behavior. You may show some desperation because of your isolation. Eventually, you feel that your life is worthless or no longer worth living. If you have a GREEN star, please tear it up.

Please be seated (or return to the group format again).

Discussion Questions:

- Can anyone share your thoughts and feelings during this exercise?
- How do your thoughts and feelings during and after the activity compare to how you felt before it started, when all of your stars were whole and contained the names of your loved ones, communities and aspirations?

- Which would you wish for your clients – for them to have a broken star or an intact star?
- What are some things that we can do to help our clients to have intact stars or repair broken stars?

Talking Points:

- One thing that you can be sure of is that the coming out process is different for everyone. People who come out as LGBTI could feel any number of a wide range of emotions.
- With LGBTI people, coming out usually happens in stages – it isn't a one-step process. People usually don't just wake up one day and say, "Hey – I think I'm gay. I'm going to go tell everyone about it!" Often, LGBTI people feel like "something is different" for quite some time before they figure out what exactly that "difference" is. Even after they begin to understand their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, there can be a period of questioning and exploration – either before, during or after they start telling others.
- People also have to come out repeatedly throughout their lives – not just one time.
- Who are some of the different people to whom someone might have to come out during the course of a lifetime?
- What are some reasons why a person would choose to NOT come out in general or in a particular situation?
- When/how do straight people come out?

Participants might think this is a strange question, but lead them to think of all the ways in which straight people disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in their lives.

Talking Points:

- Straight people don't have the same concerns for safety, judgment or loss of relationships when they come out.
- Consequently, straight people don't have to expend the same amount of energy questioning whether to stay closeted or to express their true selves.
- Straight people can enjoy certain rites of passage (like going to their homecoming dance) without additional pressures and challenges, and can

expect the support of their loved ones and communities in a way that LGBTI people cannot (in many cases).

Outing Exercise

The objective of this exercise is to help participants experience what it is like to be “outed” (meaning, to have their identity disclosed to others without their permission) as LGBTI. It is brief, but if conducted correctly will illicit very strong responses/emotions from the audience.

Begin by asking all participants to write a very personal secret on a slip of paper. Request that it be the kind of secret that they would not feel comfortable sharing with the rest of the group, and assure them that they, therefore, will NOT be asked to share it with anyone else.

Ask that when they are finished documenting their secrets, they fold their papers in half and hold them up high above their heads so you can tell when the group is ready to move on. While participants are writing down their secrets, begin to move throughout the room so you have the ability to be in easy arm’s reach of several participants. When the group is collectively done documenting their secrets, and before anyone can suspect what is going on, quickly reach out and grab one participant’s secrets from his/her hand.

At this point in the exercise, trainers can expect that participants – in particular the one whose secret has been stolen – will feel extremely uncomfortable. DO NOT under any circumstance look at or read aloud the secret! The point of this exercise is simply to get the audience to feel the vulnerability of having a secret exposed, but it is critical that trainers do not compromise the trust in the room by actually exposing any secrets. That said, there will be a short period of time before the participants know that you, the trainer, are not going to share the secret you have stolen. It is during these few moments that the most critical facilitation and learning will occur.

Follow the guide below to facilitate the rest of the exercise and pay close attention to the feelings and energy in the room, ensuring that the activity is properly debriefed and everyone is comfortable before continuing with the material.

Discussion Questions:

- What would happen if I read this aloud right now?
- (To owner of secret) How would you feel if I read this aloud? What would happen to our relationship?
- (To rest of audience) How would you feel if I read this aloud?

- What would happen to our relationship?
- How would you feel towards (the owner)?
- Might your feelings change depending on what his/her secret is?

Return the secret – unread – to its owner if you have not done so already.

If I had read (owner)'s secret – to myself or aloud – I would have to dismiss you all and cancel the rest of our time together because this training essentially would be over.

- Why is that?
- Would I have any credibility in your eyes after that?
- Would any of you trust me after that?

Talking Points:

- Of course not. For me to disclose someone's personal information to others without his/her permission would be a serious breach of trust, and my relationship with all of you would be compromised from that point onward.
- The same is true about disclosing someone's LGBTI identity without his/her permission. We have already discussed how coming out is a personal experience involving a range of emotions. Consequently, it is very important that the person who is coming out be in charge of the situation, including when, where, how, and to whom they come out.
- When a person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed by someone else without their consent, we call that "being outed", and it can cause a person pain and/or put their safety at risk. Outing someone inappropriately also can have negative repercussions on the level of trust between you and that person, as well as between you and the people you tell.
- How is this relevant to your work, particularly in relation to your work with LGBTI survivors?

Wrap-up and Q&A

At this point, the trainer can engage participants in a wrap-up of the training and ask them to share any questions, concerns, or thoughts they may have. Some example questions may include:

- What was something you learned today that you did not know before?

- Did you have an “ah ha” moment’ that you would like to share with the group?
- Was there a moment when you had to step back and think?
- Is there anything about today that you wanted to highlight?
- In what ways will today’s discussion affect the work you do with LGBTI survivors?

Remind participants of other resources at their disposal to deepen their understanding of the experiences of LGBTI survivors, including JDI’s webinars on the needs of incarcerated LGBTI survivors (which can be found at www.justdention.org), and some of the printed materials that have been provided for them.