

**Inside agency/work with staff:**

- Do an agency assessment to recognize your agency's capacity for working with families and use the assessment to determine next steps in preparing staff. Assess agency willingness and readiness to approach this work at all levels, not just direct service.
- Recognize the biases you bring to working with families, as they are influenced by the agency that you represent.
- Have a core team in place, including champions throughout the agency and in partner organizations.
- Understand that staff need to be trained and coached on how to use family led and centered approaches.
- Coach staff using a strengths-based approach, being careful not to come from a deficit based framework and remember that they were trained to enforce agency protocols that may not have been designed to be family-centered or family-directed.
- Ensure that the data you are collecting is giving you the necessary information to know your families well and then use that data in your services and supports to families.
- Help staff further their work, including additional data collection relating to SOGIE. Tell them why it's important to get the information from the families. (Read more about best practices in the *Collecting SOGIE Data Tip Sheet*.)
- Provide an array of training to staff, including basic LGBTQ+ training and how to work with families rejecting of or conflicted by LGBTQ+ identities. Also include training on loss associated with learning your child identifies as LGBTQ+ to help in processing the feelings that families might have when a loved one comes out as LGBTQ+.
- Provide multiple types of and opportunities for staff support through this process, as it can be stressful and takes time for staff to develop a comfort level and sense of competency asking about and supporting LGBTQ+ identities. Virtual work in particular can be tiring over long periods of time, so ensure staff have what they need to be successful and not burn out.

**Connecting with Families:**

- Expand lens of viewing families – beyond single identities and experiences (including prevention, family violence, and intimate partner violence); avoid pigeon-holing families and workers.
- Recognize that families need to be heard and not judged; practice cultural humility & respect.
- Give families space to speak honestly, as many have negative feelings (and/or negative prior experiences) with child welfare and other systems. Increase source of support with other foster families and connect to additional resources so they don't feel isolated or stigmatized.
- Take time to build rapport and trust with families. Be patient when resistance occurs, provide space when needed, and address any privacy or confidentiality concerns they have.
- Be flexible to meeting times and days, and meeting formats or methods of communication to ensure they work best for the family; discuss options for virtual vs. in-person meetings, email, phone, or texting communication, or other methods that work best for them and can still ensure privacy is protected.