

LGBTQ+ Youth Engagement Virtually and In-Person



Use updated means of communication like text messaging, social media, groupme, and memes. Talk to the youth about what they are using and what they prefer.



After you meet with the youth, consider sending care packages but keep safety and confidentiality in mind (i.e., discrete packaging vs. rainbow packaging, consideration for which name is used; and which parent to send it to if one is affirming and if one is not).



Encourage workers to advocate for youth to have an email, even if they may not always have access to it, so that they can stay connected (this means a non-school email because of firewalls).



Offering services virtually helps save money on transportation - consideration for using a virtual option for services or hybrid models to impact youth who live farther away from services, have a lack of transportation, or prefer to attend virtually due to time constraints.



Learn who the youth has told about their SOGIE and ask the youth how to approach conversations about SOGIE when a caregiver is present or within earshot of services (this includes virtual services, text messaging, and email correspondence, which may be monitored by the caregiver).



When conducting virtual or hybrid services, consider incentives. In-person, meals are usually provided as incentives. For virtual services, a care package of snacks may be delivered or gift cards to food delivery services might be a good replacement option. Recognize that the incentive has to align with the highest needs of the youth in the moment, and in some cases, a warm in-person meal will meet the most urgent need.



Have a soft requirement on camera use if the service is provided virtually. Having the camera on is better for rapport building and ensuring confidentiality, but there are a number of reasons why a youth might not want to view their camera. They could be having a particularly bad day of gender dysphoria and might not want to look at themselves on screen. Some youth use school accounts for virtual appointments, which list their dead name and make it hard for the youth to look at the screen. Further, neurodivergent youth may have several reasons for not wanting to look at the screen for long periods of time. Another barrier is when a youth feels an adult around them is monitoring the session, putting confidentiality at risk if someone else on screen has an affirming symbol visible. Some solutions to combat these challenges are to allow youth to point their screens up, so that they can participate but take a break from seeing the screen. Another option is to emphasize to adults around the youth that this is a confidential session for which the youth is required to have privacy. The youth could also put up a photo of themselves that they really like as a placeholder for when being on camera is not comfortable for them.