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Family Engagement Series: Session IX

# Serving Unique Needs of Diverse Families

in Early Childhood Programs

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### Our presenters




**Carrie Scruggs**  
ECE Consultant  
PreschoolFirst Trainer  
The Source for Learning



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Director, ECE Initiatives  
The Source for Learning

## Today's objectives

Understand	Learn
Understand the unique circumstances of families and implement strategies to engage diverse families.	Learn strategies to support the distinctive needs of the diverse populations in your early childhood program.



The world is a melting pot of families of different configurations, beliefs, cultural norms, and personal practices. Every child and family comes to a child care community with different family values and experiences. One of the most important gifts we can give our children is to help them feel good about the uniqueness of their family and help them learn to accept, respect, and include people whom they may experience as "different".

No two families look alike.

A family is a group of individuals with a continuing legal, genetic, and/or emotional relationship.

~The American Academy of Family Physicians (2003)



**Each Family is Unique**

- Each family has a story
- Learn the uniqueness of each family



**Program Needs**

Families with unique needs have the challenge of finding child care program that will meet their needs and that teach children to feel proud of their family.



**Importance of Supporting ALL Families**

Galinsky & Weissbourd 1992;  
Redding et al. 2004;  
Caspe & Lopez 2006; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez (2006)

Research shows that children thrive when families are engaged in their children's education and when a positive relationship exists between schools and families.

**NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct (2005)**

Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this code.

**The Four Core Goals of Anti-Bias Education (NAEYC)**

- 1 Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
- 2 Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
- 3 Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
- 4 Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.




### Support Teaching Staff

Teachers may need support learning:

- Acceptance of all families and all situations
- Treating all people with respect

Some situations might seem awkward to teachers



### Curriculum Enhancement


Provide a curriculum where the other children are already familiar – and comfortable –



### Enhance Curriculum and Classroom Environment

Children's identities and sense of self are inextricably tied to their families. When children never hear words nor see images that describe their families, the message is clear: Your family is just not something to talk about.

*~According to Lesser, Burt, and Gelnow (2005)*



### Grandparents with Guardianship




### Shocking Statistics

415,129 children are in Guardianship Care or Foster Care

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39% of children in Foster Care or Guardianship Care are 5 years old or under

**Sue Jurjevic**  
Senior Recreation Specialist  
Manassas Park Community Center

### What is Guardianship and Why is it Assigned?

1. Child Abuse/Neglect
2. Death
3. Abandonment

### Emotional Needs of Guardians

May be struggling with depression or coping to deal with situation that resulted in guardianship

Touch on both sides of the spectrum – Those who do share and those who don't

### Financial Needs/Resources of Guardians

- Financial Issues
- Resources

### Child Development

- Parenting Classes
- Understanding special needs of children

### Communication

Know their preferred method of communication.

### Guardian Activity Level

Grandparents may have limitations in activity level due to age or health

Need support from others-social connections to help with times that children are not at the child care program.

Often pause...when it is time to become the legal guardian



## Resource

**1** **The Grandparent's and other relative caregiver's guide to childcare and early childhood programs.**  
 Developed by the Children's Defense Fund.  
<http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/data/caregivers-guide-child-care-early-childhood-education-programs.pdf>

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### New School

New Placement = New Child Development Center

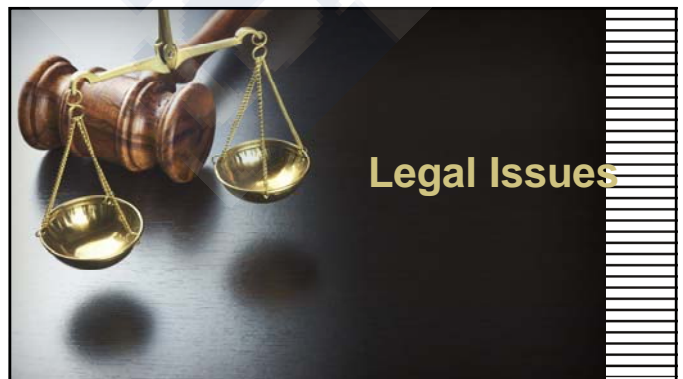


Some Foster Parents are New Parents



### Connections

- Social Connections
- Resources
- Agencies
- Guardian Ad Litem
- Social Workers
- Therapists



### Legal Issues



**Safety**

- Can information be shared with biological parents?
- Can photos of children be displayed on walls and social media?
- Should you stop announcing field trips on social media?



**Parent Visitation**

**Emotional Effects**

- Children
- Foster Parents/Guardians
- Biological Parents



**LGBT Families**



**Suad Hooper**  
 Head Start & Texas Home-Visiting Program Director  
 Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas

**Estimated Statistic**

3 out of every thousand children in the United States live in a same-sex household.

(Gates 2013)



**Support the LGBT Family Identity**

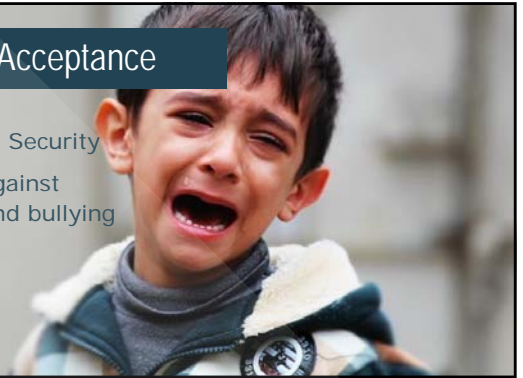


## Promoting a Respectful Environment

Take steps to promote acceptance of diversity among the other children.

## Promote Acceptance

- Emotional Security
- Policies against teasing and bullying



## Promote Acceptance

- Conduct on-going diversity training for staff
- Ask families about the language they use to describe their families



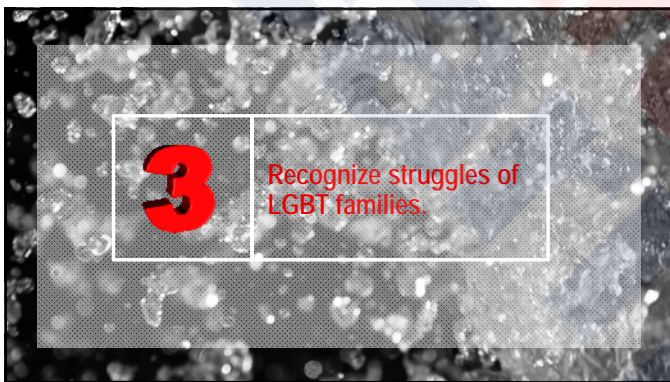
## Promote Acceptance

- Include LGBT families in promotional materials
- Address family diversity in mission statement
- Use gender neutral terms
- Implement anti-discrimination policy



## A Checklist for a Welcoming and Inclusive School Environment

What do teachers need to know?



### Resource

**1** NAEYC's Supporting Gay and Lesbian Families in the Early Childhood Classroom.

Includes:

- A list of children's books recommended by the NAEYC
- Helpful Websites

<http://www.naeyc.org/yc/gay-lesbian-families-classroom>

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**Deployment**

Effects of Separation:

- Emotions of children
- Emotions of the parent or family member that is caring for children



**Deployment**

Effects of Separation: Financial Needs



**Deployment**

Effects of Separation: Social Support



**Relocation**  
Moving into the community



**Relocation**  
Moving away from your community



**Supporting and Engaging Teen Parents in Early Childhood Settings**  
Thursday, October 12, 2017  
1:30-2:30 PM ET

Archived webinars available  
[www.sourceforlearning.org/ecei](http://www.sourceforlearning.org/ecei)

## Resources

- 1 **Statistics on Foster Care.**  
<https://www.fosterclub.com/article/statistics-foster-care>
- 2 **Gay-Positive Day Care**  
[www.therainbowbabies.com/Gay-PositiveDaycare.html](http://www.therainbowbabies.com/Gay-PositiveDaycare.html)
- 3 **The Role of Schools in Supporting Children in Foster Care**  
[www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/The%20Role%20of%20Schools.docx.pdf](http://www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/The%20Role%20of%20Schools.docx.pdf)
- 4 **L. Derman-Sparks & J.O. Edwards, AntiBias Education for Young Children and Ourselves**  
(Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2010), xiv.

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## Resources

- 5 **Making Sense of the Science: Understanding the Military and Military Families**  
[http://www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/sites/default/files/resources/msos/Understanding\\_the\\_Military\\_and\\_Military\\_Families.pdf](http://www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/sites/default/files/resources/msos/Understanding_the_Military_and_Military_Families.pdf)
- 6 **Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Families in Early Childhood Settings**  
<https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/201001/LesserOnlineExtra2.pdf>
- 7 **Gonzalez-Mena, J., 2010. 50 Strategies for Communicating and Working with Diverse Families, Pearson: NY.**

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## Questions?

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