

Silberman School of Social Work



How we can best support LGBTQ+ young people who have involvement with social care and social work agencies

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

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Learning Objectives

- Understand the unique challenges LGBTQ+ young people face in care
- Recognize the impact of stigma, trauma, and identity concealment
- Identify affirming and inclusive practice strategies
- Consider trauma-informed approaches
- Improve outcomes through systemic and relational interventions

Why This Matters

- LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in child welfare systems
- Overall, there are higher rates of:
 - Family rejection
 - Homelessness
 - Mental health concerns
 - Placement instability

Key Terms

- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Cisgender, transgender, nonbinary
- Coming out / disclosure

Understanding Identity Development

- Identity development is ongoing and contextual
- Disclosure is not a one-time event
- Safety influences visibility
- Young people assess risk constantly

Minority Stress

- Chronic stress from stigma and discrimination
- Includes:
 - External prejudice
 - Internalized stigma
 - Expectation of rejection

Experiences in Child Welfare Settings

- Placement rejection or hostility
- Lack of affirming carers
- Misgendering and invisibility
- Pressure to conceal identity

Barriers to Support

- Inconsistent policy implementation
- Politicians making policies that are purely political
- Lack of training among professionals*
- Lack of competent supervisory practices
- Heteronormative assumptions
- Fear of disclosure consequences

What Helps?

- Insuring Safety
- Affirmation from Carers, Staff and Families
- Consistency in Practices
- Advocacy

Creating LGBTQ+ Affirming Environments

- Use inclusive language
- Display visible signs of support
- Respect names and pronouns
- Challenge discriminatory behavior

Communication Skills

- Ask, don't assume
- Use open-ended questions
- Validate experiences
- Avoid pathologizing identity

Supporting Disclosure

- Do not try to get young people to come out
- Say and say again – this is a safe place for you to talk about anything
- Respect confidentiality
- Assess safety before sharing information

Working with Families

- Let them express their concerns
- Educate them about sexual orientation and gender identity
- Address fears and misconceptions
- Promote family acceptance
- Train staff to be able to work with families on these issues *

Mental Health Support

- Address trauma and minority stress issues
- Provide affirming therapeutic interventions
- Avoid conversion or reparative approaches
- Look at therapeutic approaches that support trans youth if puberty blockers are not available

Schools and Community

- Collaborate with schools for safe environments
- Connect youth to LGBTQ+ community resources

Policy and Advocacy

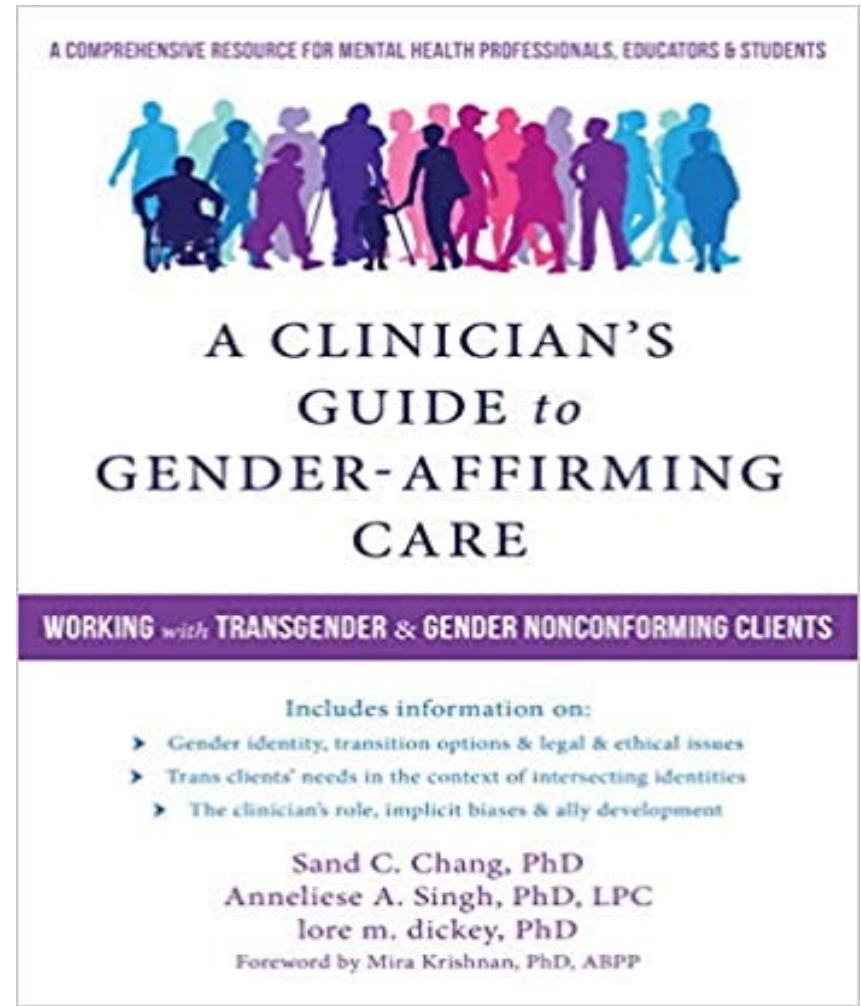
- Implement inclusive policies
- Keep politicians away from making laws that discriminate against trans youth based on inaccurate information
- Advocate for systemic change
- Ensure accountability mechanisms

Key Takeaways

- Affirmation saves lives
- Relationships matter
- Systems must adapt
- There have always been, and will always be, LGBTQ+ youth – let's do a better job of caring for them

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Transgender Children *and* Youth

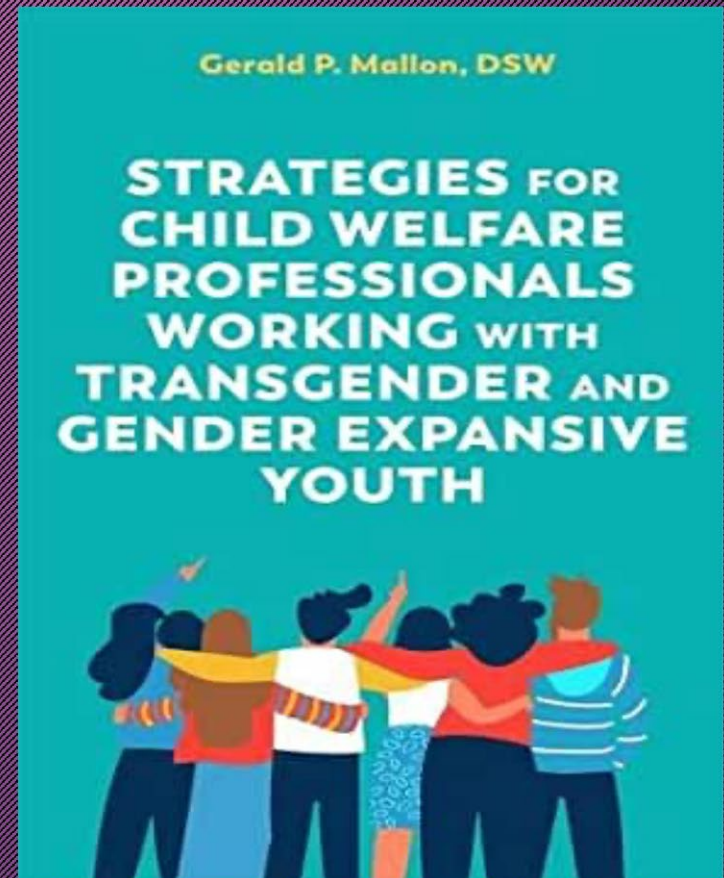
cultivating pride and joy
with families in transition

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**SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
WITH TRANSGENDER AND
GENDER EXPANSIVE YOUTH**

THIRD EDITION

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