

THE MACRO EFFECTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Advocating for and with
LGBTQIA+ foster youth



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Presented by: CASA/LA's LGBTQIA+ Committee

The CASA/LA LGBTQIA+ Committee includes staff, CASA volunteers, the court, and community stakeholders dedicated to ensuring that our organization is culturally humble to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Together we:

- Identify resources
- Build partnerships
- Provide ongoing learning opportunities
- Ensure that CASA/LA policies, processes, and community information are inclusive



Introduction to our facilitators....

- Name
- Pronouns
- Title/role



We are here to listen and learn...

Actively listen and participate.

- We welcome and encourage questions
- Acknowledge that we ALL have implicit/explicit biases
- Encourage everyone to challenge yourselves & step out of previous ideas/understandings
- Practice being voiced today and show respect to the people that voice them
- Use "I" statements where appropriate

Lastly, grant yourself and others grace when learning



Zoom Housekeeping



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- Be present with us as much as you can
- Mute/unmute yourself when appropriate
- Use the chat box/ "hand raise" feature to ask questions
- Recording of in-service is in process

What are Microaggressions?

"The everyday slights, indignities, put downs, and insults that people of color, women, LGBT populations or those who are marginalized experiences in their day-to-day interactions with people."

~ Dr. Derald Sue, Professor of Psychology

The term "microaggressions" was coined in 1970 by Harvard University psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce.

A 2011 article in the Journal of LGBT Youth described microaggressions as "death by a thousand cuts."



You're pretty for a Black girl.

So who's the man in the relationship?

She's so exotic looking.

You people...

You speak good English.

You're Asian, so you must be good at math.

But you don't *act* gay.

You're a credit to your race.

I don't get how you can feel like a man AND a woman.

No homo.

Oh, it's just a phase.

Examples of Microaggressions



Physical Microaggressions



Crossing the street to avoid walking by someone



Clutching your bag or wallet when passing someone



Person of color mistaken as a service worker



Neighbors calling the police on "suspicious" homeowners of a different race

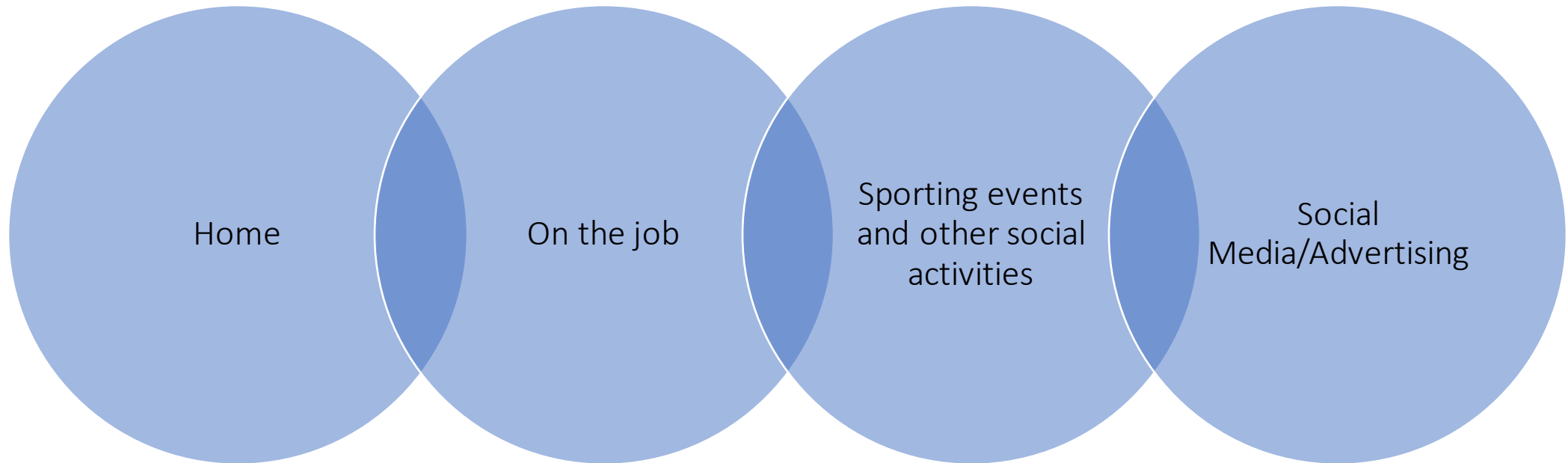
Activity

Where have you seen microaggressions in your own life?

When have you performed a microaggression?

Where Are They?

Microaggressions are actually commonplace.



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#ONSEXANDGENDER

How do microaggressions come up for our LGBTQIA+ foster youth?



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Heterosexism:

- Peers
 - Comments/questions
- CSWs and other similar case parties
 - Conversations with the youth and their support network
 - Conversations with other providers
- In the courtroom space
- Family members/support network
- Schools/Placements
 - Bathrooms
 - Same sex room/placement assignments
 - Clothing events/fairs



EXAMPLES WE SEE FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

CSW REPORTS:

“Since the abuse, child identifies himself as Jose”.

NAMES:

EX: Jaymee, Jamie, Jamey

CONVERSATIONS WITH PROVIDERS:

"They are confused/too young, etc"

In the courtroom space:



How do microaggressions come up for our LGBTQIA+ foster youth?

- **Denial of homophobia**
 - "being gay is no big deal"
- **Body language/looks from others**
- **Lack of representation in your environment**
 - Staff/people around you at schools/placements
 - Ads/other marketing materials



Photo Credit: Dreamstime.com



How do microaggressions come up for our LGBTQIA+ foster youth?



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Connecting LGBTQIA+ identity to illnesses, etc.

- In healthcare
- In social services
- In therapy/mental health services



What harm do microaggressions cause?

- Racism and discrimination contribute to **poor health**, resulting in increased rates of depression, prolonged stress and trauma, anxiety, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- **Undermine trust in service providers** and caregivers.
- Homeless youth of color routinely experience microaggressions from health care and service providers and that these microaggressions serve as **barriers to care**.

Walls et al., "Unconscious Biases: Racial Microaggressions in American Indian Health Care," J. Am. Board Fam. Med. (2015)

Hicken et al., "Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Hypertension Prevalence: Reconsidering the Role of Chronic Stress," Am. J. Public Health (2014)

G. Torino, "How Racism and Microaggressions Lead to Worse Health," Center for Health J. (2017)



What harm do microaggressions cause to LGBTQIA+ youth?

- Microaggressions toward LGBTQIA+ individuals are covert *and* overt.
- Feelings: anger, frustration, sadness, belittlement, and hopelessness.
- Negatively impact ability to be comfortable with their LGBTQIA+ identities or ability to come out of the closet.
- Led to detrimental relationships with family members, friends, coworkers, and others.
- Chronic mental health effects, including negative impacts on their self-esteem and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



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What harm do microaggressions cause to LGBTQ+ youth?

- LGBTQ+ persons suffer mental health disparities due to experiences with heterosexism and homophobia
- Experiencing these microaggressions during youth can negatively impact ability to gain a positive self-efficacy or navigate successfully in academic and professional life.
- LGBTQ+ youth who experience school violence, heterosexist threats, or damage to their property may avoid school altogether.
- LGBTQ+ youth experience higher rates of emotional distress, suicide attempts, risky sexual behavior, and substance abuse.

WHO ME?



PHOTO CREDITS (Top, L-R) Sam Wordley, Benzoix, Albert Shakirov, Roman Chazov (Bottom L-R) Mykola Kravchenko, Iurii Krasilnikov, Khosrork, Andrei Fedco

What can we do as advocates/supports?

- Be an affirming adult
 - Use the name/pronouns that your youth chooses to identify as
- Use person first language
- Create a safe space for youth
- Help educate case parties on why certain language can be harmful for your youth
- Be mindful of confidentiality
 - Don't share information about the youth's identity
 - Youth may share an incident with you. Make sure to check-in with them before advocating for change or addressing with any involved parties.



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Other Policies/Laws to Protect LGBTQIA+ Youth in Care

WIC 16006 | Requires placement in accordance with gender identity.

22 CCR 83072 & 84072 | Non-Discrimination Regulations in licensed placements.

Gov. Code 11135 | Non-Discrimination in state programs and activities.

H&S 1522.41, WIC 16013: Non-Discrimination in Foster Care: Child Welfare agency, group home facilities, and foster family agencies have legal responsibility to provide care without discriminating.



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Encouraging Youth to Call It Out

- Share with them the Foster Youth Bill of Rights
- Connect them resources:
 - **California Ombudsperson Office.**
877-694-5741 (877-MY ILP 411) or (213) 351-5720
 - **DCFS Office of Equity LGBTQQIA2S Program**
Jamie Estrada, Program Manager
managerestraja@dcfs.lacounty.gov | (323) 821-3578
- Connect them with
- Create a supportive/safe space during CFT meetings so your youth can feel comfortable speaking up
- Work with your youth to ensure that incidents of microaggression are recorded in writing
 - When did it happen?
 - What happened?
 - Who perpetrated the microaggression?
 - How did the youth feel?
- Help educate case parties on why certain language can be harmful for your youth



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Foster Youth Bill of Rights

CA Foster Youth Bill of Rights (WIC 16001.9)

Includes the rights to:

- Be treated with RESPECT
- Live in a safe, healthy comfortable least restrictive home free from abuse
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Have social contacts outside of foster care and participate in extracurricular activities consistent with sexual orientation, gender identity and expression
- Fair and equal access to available services, placement, care and not be subject to discrimination
- Have caregivers, social workers and attorneys who have received cultural competency and sensitivity training relating to SOGIE and best practices for LGBTQ youth in out of home care
- Be placed in out of home care according to gender identity
- Be referred to by preferred name and gender pronoun
- Gender affirming care, subject to applicable consent laws

Activity/Vignette

You've been the CASA for Shay for the last 6 months. Shay has recently shared with you that they're unsure about their identity. However, they have been exploring and feel that identifying as bisexual feels comfortable to them. Shay has shared that they spoke to their CSW about wanting to join an LGBTQIA+ support group to meet other youth that may identify like her. That said, the CSW told Shay that that wasn't necessary because they're just going through a phase and, before they know it, they won't like girls anymore.

What do you do? How do you handle it?

Some ideas...

Note: Make sure to check in with the youth on their comfort level before moving forward with any of these ideas.

- Have a private conversation with the CSW.
- Bring it up or empower Shay to speak up about it during the Child Family Team (CFT) meeting.
- Encourage Shay to speak to their mental health team (therapist) if they feel they need more support to process the incident.
- Connect Shay with the LGBT Center, and other LGBTQIA+ supports.
- Provide Shay with the Ombudsperson and the DCFS Office of Equity contact information in case it happens again.



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Thank you for being here! 😊

- What are some of our take aways?
- Are there any lingering questions/comments you would like to share?

Questions? Contact us at:
LGBTQIAcommittee@casala.org

References

[Sexual Orientation Microaggressions: "Death by a Thousand Cuts" for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth](#)

["What Exactly Is a Microaggression?" By Jenée Desmond-Harris](#)

["Tool: Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send" by UCSC](#)

["How Racism and Microaggressions Lead to Worse Health" by Gina Torino](#)

["Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Hypertension Prevalence: Reconsidering the Role of Chronic Stress" by Margaret T. Hicken, et al.](#)

["Unconscious Biases: Racial Microaggressions in American Indian Health Care" by Melissa L. Wells, et al.](#)