



A SPACE FOR ME

YOUTH INCLUSIVITY GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

A Space for Me is a guide that assists youth-led and youth-serving groups and organizations in Jamaica to create activities, events, and programming in an inclusive way. It has been developed with an underlying principle that organizations should create spaces where young people feel comfortable regardless of their identity. Therefore, this guide builds the capacity of youth entities in Jamaica to improve their overall environment, and provide spaces for young people, regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, to access programmes and services.

This guide is developed with a unique understanding of what it means to be a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community in Jamaica and offers seven (7) Strategies for Inclusion. Once implemented, these strategies can create a sense of belonging for all LGBT youth, so that they can achieve their full potential.

A Space for Me offers practitioners, an exciting opportunity to make a positive difference by creating programme environments that address the specific needs of LGBT youth. It will enable the development of an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth.



JAMAICAN LGBT YOUTH EXPERIENCE

In developing this guide, MOBAK conducted research that sought to better understand the unique experiences of LGBT youth in Jamaica. MOBAK's approach included conducting stakeholder interviews (interviews with both LGBT youth, allies, and leaders of youth organizations), literature reviews and an environmental scan of best practices. This was critical because cultural and other societal values and stigmas can increase risk of negative outcomes for LGBT youth.

Participants shared that Jamaica is known as an unsafe space for LGBT youth and while there have been some increased positive experiences for LGBT youth, the overall environment is not safe. This leads to LGBT youth hiding in spaces, depressing their voices or not engaging at all in some youth programmes and services that exist. Therefore, there is a need for programme leaders and heads of youth-led and youth-serving agencies to make a conscious effort to create both safe and inclusive programmes and spaces for LGBT youth.



Male Masculinity

MOBAK's research highlights that the Jamaican LGBT youth experience is shaped by wider societal values around masculinity, provision of services to LGBT youth, anti-inclusive practices and negative outcomes experienced. One of the overarching pieces coming from both literature reviews and interviews is the notion of male masculinity and how it has helped to define the gendered way organizations develop and implement programmes in Jamaica. As noted, by participants "Male masculinity is one of the main driving forces that perpetuate gender inequality." For some participants, "if you are a male with Jamaican culture, you are socialized to adapt social norms that demonstrate manliness, therefore, growing up with expected societal outcomes that a man should break his virginity at age twelve or have two or more baby mothers."

As noted, there exists a plethora of studies written on male masculinity and its heteronormative construct. In particular, the male masculinity of Jamaican youth has also been an area of great focus, with ample research depicting various extremes. For example, one research indicates that young men in Jamaica are often played into certain normative roles and patterns of behaviour reflective of culture, class, religion, and location. While other research indicates that the very approach to understanding masculinity in the Jamaican cultural context is faced with several rules and patterns of behaviour that varies depending on the requirements of society in which youth live.

While this guide does not seek to add to the debate around male masculinity, it does recognize that organizations who seek to work with all youth must find ways not to allow their programmes and activities to just accept dominant culture. They do this at the risk of alienating other youth who do not fit into the heteronormative patterns of masculinity. Instead, there is a need to have a concerted effort to ensure that there is an approach that allows space for all youth.

Provision of Services to LGBT youth

As shared by respondents, most youth organizations do not have a clear policy, programme or practice focused on supporting LGBT youth. This highlights clear gaps in the provision of services for LGBT youth. Some gaps include the inability of some organizations to address instances of bullying experienced by LGBT youth when attending programmes, the lack of discussion or awareness around LGBT youth issues and the often-repeated attempts to downplay or ignore gender identity.

Others shared that in instances where there have been attempts in some of the spaces that do try to be inclusive, it comes off as ingenuous and performative, therefore, identifying a gap in the way services are provided.

Anti-Inclusive Practice

Jamaican LGBT youth respondents indicated that anti-inclusive practices were notably experienced in both a covert and overt manner. Often stigmas are related to dress and speech, where in Jamaica, what we see is what you are, we misjudge a girl with baggy jeans and big clothes; also, men with tight pants and a shirt or if a guy speaks proper English, he is perceived as being gay.

Some of the covert discriminatory practices, experiences and feelings by LGBT youth include being steered down with disdain or for one respondent it is reflected by receptionists that I have encountered who look at me in weird way, maybe of my voice or dressing but this generally makes me uncomfortable and unwelcomed. In describing some of the more prominent youth serving organizations, some LGBT youth have indicated that they feel as if they're walking on eggshells each day, or they are made afraid to enter.

Some of the more overt and directed experiences and feelings, as shared by LGBT youth include often feeling afraid of mobs, being harassed, afraid of verbal and physical attacks in public spaces and being fearful for their lives. In Jamaica, there are several documented and anecdotal experiences of actual physical violence, sexual assault, use of abusive language and denial of entry within spaces for LGBT youth. Additionally, it was experienced through music where, the music we listen to promotes discrimination within the community.



Experiences are not similar

The experiences of LGBT youth in Jamaica vary based on the socio-economic background, geographical location, and identity as it relates to being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Trans. In terms of geographical locations, participants shared that the inclusivity in some of the spaces differ depending on whether they are the upper-class spaces vs the downtown spaces. What the data also revealed is that while there are some spaces that have become more inclusive, many LGBT youth continue to experience discrimination and feelings of being unwelcomed and uncomfortable within spaces. This occurs even within agencies who either have as their mandate to be inclusive and/or should have as part of their focus the creation of a welcoming environment for all young people.



Negative Outcomes for LGBT youth

LGBT youth, therefore, experience more negative outcomes in comparisons to heterosexual youth. These negative outcomes are a result of the experiences faced by LGBT youth and is often manifested in experiences such as:

- Feelings of isolation
- Stress
- Violence
- Depression
- Alcohol and substance use
- Suicidality
- Estrangement from family and friends
- Homelessness
- Bullying
- Verbal harassment
- Sexual assault

Increased social anxiety and depression when using public spaces because of how they dress to reduce these negative outcomes, participants shared that youth organizations must work to improve access to spaces frequented by LGBT youth. Some specific sectors identified in the research includes but is not limited to:

- **Homeless Services** – LGBT youth face greater levels of homelessness because they are kicked out of their homes because of their identity.
- **Psychosocial Support Services** – To support LGBT youth faced with trauma.
- **Youth Employment Programmes** - LGBT youth unemployment tends to be higher than other youth demographics.
- **Youth Social Programmes** - Many social programmes do not support LGBT youth
- **Youth Education Programmes** - Continual education programmes for LGBT youth that have dropped out of school.

A Space for Me, therefore, seeks to help youth serving agencies create a more inclusive environment so that LGBT Youth can experience safety, feel welcome and be seen as a valuable part of the wider society. The guide offers a platform for people who work with youth to have a very real opportunity to address the needs of LGBT young people, as all youth have the right to expect that they will be understood and respected.



7 STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION

A Space for Me has developed Seven (7) Strategies for Inclusion which can be used by organizations to become more inclusive for LGBT youth. These themes and recommendations have emerged based on best practice approaches used for developing inclusive spaces. Some inclusion strategies involve simple programme adaptations such as changes in language or terminology. Others will take a bit more time. Each will result in a more accessible learning environment for LGBT youth, which in turn will increase knowledge and engagement. Inclusion will also broaden the understanding of non-LGBT youth so they will be better equipped to assist their LGBT peers and be better prepared for today's diverse world.

Therefore, we offer these seven (7) Strategies for Inclusion to be adopted:

1. Conduct an Inclusivity Audit

An inclusivity audit helps a youth organization to explore its commitment to supporting LGBT youth. It evaluates whether the organization settings and services match with principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. It also provides a platform to work by creating a baseline for organizations to build. This will help organizations overcome barriers that prevent young people from feeling welcomed and supported. This audit can be extensive, or it can be undertaken by taking a simplistic internal scan. Some potential audit questions that could be used to measure an agencies inclusivity include:

a. Your Environment:

- What is the first impression of an LGBT youth when they enter the front door of your agency, office, or programme?
- How would youth entering your agency know that they were welcomed to be out?
- Is the general environment enabling and has gender neutral shared facilities?
- What covert information would tell a person that it is ok or not ok to "be out"?
- How do other members respond to LGBT youth within your space?

b. Your Materials

- Do LGBT youth find their experience represented in your materials?
- Do the materials use inclusive language?
- Are there pictures or images in the outreach materials that represent LGBT youth?
- What books, magazines, videos, etc. include stories and information about LGBT youth?
- Are these materials integrated among other resources?
- Do they stand alone?

c. Your Service

- Are LGBT youth and their experiences reflected in agency forms?
- Are resources, services, and referrals diverse, inclusive, and sensitive?
- How easy is it for a LGBT young person to access your services?

d. **Your Policies and Procedures**

- Is discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation prohibited in service delivery, hiring practices and other organizations' business?
- Are policies inclusive of sexual minority and gender variant people?
- How often are policies and procedures reviewed, evaluated, and updated with current trends and practices?
- Do recruitment efforts for staff, volunteers, and governing body members (i.e., Board of Directors, members etc.) actively recruit sexual minority and gender variant people?

2. Be Intentional about Including LGBT Youth Voice

Many youth serving organizations have adopted the mantra (Nothing for youth without youth), but this has not always been reflected in the inclusivity of the LGBT youth voice. Therefore, organizations should seek to be intentional in their inclusion of LGBT youth in areas of decision making and common discourse by building an inclusive culture through their programmes, services, and opportunities.

For example, organizations should:

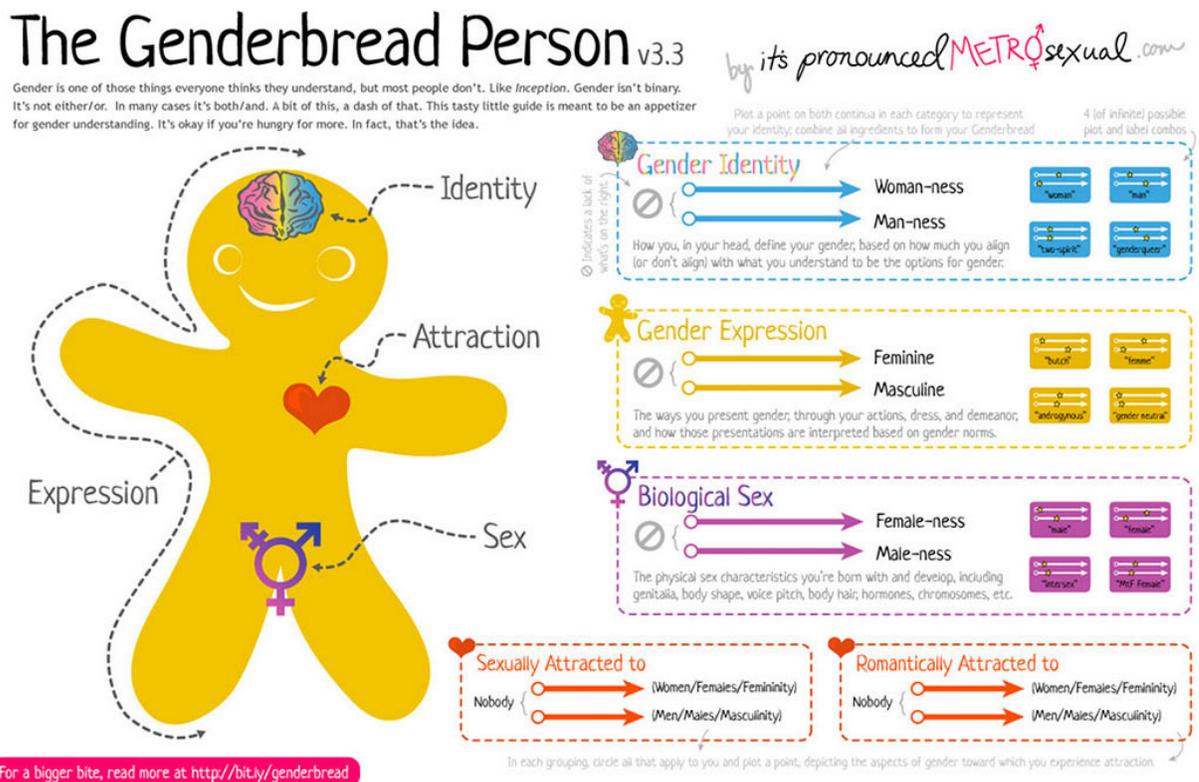
- Seek help, ask for input, and be purposeful in either appointing LGBT youth on youth committees and/or creating internal youth committees focused on encouraging the voices of LGBT youth.
- Partner with local LGBT organizations to create programme linkages.
- Identify other community resources for collaboration and referral.

3. Become Knowledgeable in Terms and Definitions

a. **Know general definitions and terminologies**

When we talk about gender, sex characteristics or sexuality, we're not talking about preferences or choices. We're just talking about how people are. A person's gender does not necessarily mean they have a particular sex characteristic or a particular sexuality, or vice versa.

The diagram below explains a bit of these concepts:



Avoid asking people what terms they 'prefer.' Having a 'preference' can sound as if it's a choice and most people do not feel as if they have a choice in these matters. If you need to, you can simply ask people what terms they 'use.'

There are many resources to help your organization get up to speed on LGBT words and terms, and the diverse and creative ways youth are using them today. For example, we have provided the "Unpacking Language Activity" that can be used as a tool to increase knowledge around language. We also stress that it is important to know how to locate key resources and keep abreast of the changing research, trends, and terminology. Young people are expanding boundaries, challenging assumptions, and constructing identity and community in exciting, new, and different ways.

b. Use Inclusive Language

Inclusive language is a form of communication that avoids using words, expressions or assumptions that would stereotype, demean, discriminate, or exclude people, but instead acknowledge and respect. As indicated by LGBT youth, youth organizations need to understand "how to communicate without offending someone. This does not require them to accept someone's sexuality but communicate with them in such a way that demonstrates respect. "

Inclusive language ensures we don't leave people out of our conversations or our work. This includes both when we are communicating directly with someone, and when describing someone who isn't present. Inclusive language acknowledges the diversity of people we work with and serve. For instance, instead of using gender-specific words in teaching scenarios and handouts, use terms like "parents" to replace "mother and father," and "boyfriend or girlfriend" rather than just one gender-specific word. This approach can also be taken when designing forms where demographic information is requested. Use inclusive pronouns or gender non-specific names in program activities. This can be a simple but powerful reminder to participants about sexual and gender diversity. You can leave it up to your participants to discuss whether "Ben" or "Sara" in a role-play scenario is male or female. Many non-LGBT people also appreciate the use of inclusive language because they have an LGBT parent, sibling, or child.

INCLUSIVE TERMS	NOT INCLUSIVE TERMS
Hi all, folks, team, friends, everyone	Hi girls, guys, ladies, gentlemen
Partners/Spouses	Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Husband/Wife
Chair/Chairperson	Chairman
Toughen up	Man up
Best person for the job	Best man for the job
Sexual Orientation/Sexuality	Sexual Preference
Gender Identity	Decided to be a man or woman
A trans person or a transgender person	Tranny/ Transvestite
Transitioning/Transitioned well	Sex change/Looks "better" as man/woman
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual	Homos/Homosexuals

4. Establish Confidential and Supportive Safe Spaces for LGBT Youth

The concept of safe space can be described as a physical meeting place where like-minded people meet and share their experiences in a safe environment. A safe space for LGBT youth represents a welcoming, supportive and enabling environment for them to be empowered and secured to share and benefit from experiences. Relying on the feedback of LGBT youth, some might not feel safe to fully participate because of fear of being “outed” to parents or peers, or concerned that the organization may not be welcoming and inclusive of LGBT youth that are known to be “out” or whose identity is influenced by their queer dressing. Therefore, regardless of what the environment outside might be, knowing that a young person has a safer space to be themselves is vital to promoting positive mental health and well-being. These spaces don’t just help LGBT youth, they also support other minority youth or young people with marginalized identities.



Tips to for creating safes spaces:

- a. **Become an ally** - The word “ally” means someone who advocates for and supports the people within a community other than their own. By supporting the health and wellbeing of LGBT youth through advocacy or participation.
- b. **Establish gender neutral amenities** - While some countries and agencies promote their mandate using symbols like the pride flag, feedback indicated that “labelling of spaces is not necessary.” Rainbow sign and symbols are not necessary because it could have the unintended consequence of making spaces targeted and increasing the fear that LGBT youth face. Rather, the focus should be to strive for neutrality and have spaces open to all persons.
- c. **Maintain youth confidentiality** - Many youth in the sector have experienced violations of their confidentiality. You can build trust with a youth and decrease their vulnerability to experiencing a myriad of risk factors by maintaining youth confidentiality. Be up front and clear with a youth about your dedication to confidentiality, as they may not assume it to be the case.

- d. **Differentiate between a safe Space and an inclusive space** -Though often used interchangeably, inclusive spaces ensures that the shared environment is equitable in nature and is a means for all persons to have the same level of access. While a safe space is an environment where anyone can be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel unwelcome, uncomfortable, and physically or verbally challenged on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity.
- e. **Become open to queer dressing & styles** - Review and modify policies with dress code expectations and make sure they are gender neutral without gender stereotypes, and do not restrict a person's individuality. Rules should not reinforce gender stereotypes (e.g., "Girls must wear dresses.") Avoid gender-specific policies altogether, instead allow all persons the same clothing choices regardless of gender (this is especially important for transgender and non-binary youth). You may consider a model policy that simply mandates which body parts must be covered and what items must be worn (top, bottom, shoes).
- f. **Engage all staff/service providers and users in LGBT Trainings** - Build a network of local and international LGBT organizations to provide training for all professionals and service users on best practices that foster greater knowledge and behavior on how to engage with the LGBT community and support a safe and enabling space for LGBT youth to participate.

5. **Respond to Bias and Misinformation in Participants and Colleagues**

In some instances, a simple reminder about the organization/agency or group's policies and ground rules may suffice. It is important in the mission, vision and values that inclusion is indicated as a priority and clearly stated. In other situations, it may be necessary to point out inappropriate or disrespectful behavior gently but firmly, and insist it stops. Doing so will also model other ways that allies can intervene quickly and effectively. Additionally, these are some approaches that have been modified from GLSEN's ThinkB4YouSpeak Educator's Guide that can be used:

a. **Address Name-Calling, Bullying or Harassment immediately**

Concentrate on stopping the behavior in that moment. Sometimes it's a simple response to hearing a derogatory term like, "That language is unacceptable in this organization." Make sure that everyone can hear you. Never miss the opportunity to interrupt the behavior. Remember, no action is an action — if an incident is overlooked or not addressed it can imply acceptance and approval.

b. **Name the Behavior**

Describe what you saw and label the behavior. "I heard you called John Brown a 'fish' that is derogatory and is considered name-calling. That language is unacceptable."

c. **Use the Teachable Moment (or create one)**

Make sure to educate after stopping the behavior. Decide if you are going to educate in the moment or later, and if it will be publicly or privately. If you decide to educate later, you will need to create the teachable moment.

d. **Support the Targeted youth**

Support the youth who has been the target of the name-calling, bullying or harassment. Do not make assumptions about what the youth is experiencing. Ask the youth what they need or want. You will have to decide whether to do this in the moment or later, and if it will be publicly or privately.

e. **Hold People Accountable**

Check organization policy and impose appropriate consequences. Make sure disciplinary actions are evenly applied across all types of name-calling, bullying and harassment.

6. Create Policies and Processes that are Inclusive of LGBT Participants and Employees

Policies and practices that exclude LGBT youth or force them to conform to what is considered by others as “normal” can alienate LGBT youth from participation. There are many ways to make your organization’s policies and practices LGBT-inclusive. Review your organization’s non-discrimination policy as well as other policies that impact all programme participants or all employees. Our research indicated that it was important for organizations to implement work policies to guide how to treat LGBT people and if they are policies, ensure that they are being adhered to.

Are participants and employees of varying sexual orientations and gender identities treated equally under these policies and procedures? If not, what changes can be made to address disparities? Additionally, it is useful to have a “diverse staff that would create the feelings of inclusion.” This will help foster and build an environment that is welcoming to youth because they can see representatives of themselves in positions. It is recommended that organizations engage in professional training opportunities to strengthen their ability to respond in situations such as these.

7. Create New Programmes and Curricula to Meet the Needs of LGBT Youth

Be purposeful and include content about sexual orientation and gender identity not as a separate, stand-alone topic but as another important aspect woven into every programmatic topic. Sometimes, very simple adaptations will make a stark difference. At other times, it may be necessary to take a more in-depth look. Always aim toward ways all youth can feel included and valued in your programme. Making programme environments more inclusive can make an important positive difference in the lives of the children of LGBT parents as well as youth who are LGBT themselves. All youth deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Making your programme environment more inclusive of LGBT youth can benefit all youth by providing facts, resources, and skills they will need to make informed decisions about their lives.



Unpacking Language Activity

Language is constantly changing and so it is important that terminology is understood because language has a significant impact on the way we see others and ourselves. Therefore, we offer this activity called matchup:

WORDS	DEFINITIONS
1) Cisgender- A cis (pronounced 'sis', short for cisgender)	A) refers to a person's biological sex characteristics. This has historically been understood as either female or male. However, we now know that some people are born with natural variations to sex characteristics.
2) Sex	B) A cis (pronounced 'sis', short for cisgender) person is someone whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth – someone who isn't trans or gender diverse.
3) Sexuality or sexual orientation	C) is part of how you understand who you are and how you interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being female or male. Some people understand their gender as a combination of these or neither. Gender can be expressed in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance.
4) Gender	D) a person who is non-binary is someone whose gender is not exclusively female or male; while a person who is agender has no gender.
5) Non-binary	E) is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of all genders, binary or non-binary.
6) Gender incongruence	F) describes a person's romantic and/or sexual attraction to others.
7) Gender diverse	G) is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.
8) Transition or affirmation	H) does not experience sexual attraction but may experience romantic attraction towards others.
9) Transgender	I) is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. This term is often used to describe men who are attracted to other men, but some women and gender diverse people may describe themselves as gay.
10) Questioning	J) is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of their own gender and other genders. The term 'bi+' is also sometimes used to describe the multiplicity of bisexualities. The term multi-gender attraction (MGA) may also be used for those who experience attraction to more than one gender over a lifetime, regardless of self-identity or labels.
11) Queer	K) person is attracted to people of the opposite gender to themselves.
12) An ally	L) is a person who considers themselves a friend and active supporter of the LGBTIQ community. This term can be used for non-LGBTIQ allies as well as those within the LGBTIQ community who support each other, e.g., a gay man who is an ally to the trans and gender diverse community.
13) Heterosexual or 'straight'	M) is often used as an umbrella term for diverse genders or sexualities. Some people use queer to describe their own gender and/or sexuality if other terms do not fit. For some people, especially older LGBTIQ people, 'queer' has negative connotations, because in the past it was used as a discriminatory term.
14) Pansexual person	O) the 'Q' in LGBTIQ is used here as 'Queer and questioning.' Rather than be locked into a certainty, some people are still exploring or questioning their gender or sexual orientation. People may not wish to have one of the other labels applied to them yet, for a variety of reasons, but may still wish to be clear, for example, that they are non-binary or non-heterosexual. It is important these individuals feel welcome and included in the acronym and communities' spaces.
15) Asexual person	P) is someone whose gender does not exclusively align with the one they were assigned at birth. Trans can be used as an -umbrella term, but not everyone uses it to describe themselves. For example, a man who was assigned female at birth might refer to himself as 'a trans man', 'a man with a trans history' or just 'a man'. It's important to use the terms someone uses to describe themselves.
16) Bisexual person	Q) refers to the process where a trans or gender diverse person takes steps to socially and/or physically feel more aligned with their gender. There is a wide range of ways this process differs between people. Some people may change how they interact with others, and others may change their appearance or seek medical assistance to better express their gender.
17) Gay person	R) refers to a range of genders expressed in different ways. There are many terms used by gender diverse people to describe themselves. Language in this space is dynamic, particularly among young people, who are more likely to describe themselves as non-binary.
18) Lesbian woman	S) is the preferred sexual health classification of transgender and gender diverse people by the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO describes gender incongruence as 'characterized by a marked and persistent incongruence between an individual's experienced gender and the assigned sex'. It replaces the stigmatizing term 'gender dysphoria' which was used previously.

Answer Key:

1B, 2A, 3F, 4C, 5T, 6S, 7R, 8Q, 9P, 10O, 11M, 12L, 13k, 14E, 15H, 16J, 17I, 18G, 19F

CONCLUSION

A Space for Me provides a guide for youth organizations in Jamaica to support LGBT youth. It offers seven (7) Inclusion Strategies that can be adopted to create safe spaces for youth and to aid in making LGBT youth feel welcomed. This should not be limited to the guiding principles outlined, but instead by the organizations' mandate to conduct further research, develop and implement innovative ways to support and maintain safe and inclusive spaces for LGBT youth.



APPENDIX

Resources

Definitions and Terminology

GLAAD: Media Reference Guide
www.glaad.org/reference

MAP: An Ally's Guide to Terminology
www.lgbtmap.org/effective-messaging/allys-guide-to-terminology

PFLAG: What Does It All Mean?
<http://community.pflag.org/page.aspx?pid=316>

ACT for Youth: Understanding the OBI: Sexual Orientation, Behavior, and Identity
www.actforyouth.net/resources/n/n/obi/

Responding to Bias

Ready, Set, Respect: GLSEN's Elementary School Toolkit
www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/002/2028-4.pdf

GLSEN: Think B4 You Speak Educator's Guide
www.thinkb4youspeak.com/foreducators/GLSEN-EducatorsGuide.pdf

GLSEN and PFLAG: Responding to Anti-LGBT Bias
[www.pflagwestchester.org/Responding To Anti-LGBT Bias.pdf](http://www.pflagwestchester.org/Responding%20To%20Anti-LGBT%20Bias.pdf)

PFLAG: Cultivating Respect
<http://community.pflag.org/page.aspx?pid=1011>

Additional Resources for LGBTQ Inclusion

LGBT History Month offers free handouts and videos for use in youth programs, classrooms, and other educational settings. Each October, 31 LGBT "icons" are featured, and an archive of those featured in previous years is maintained on the site.
<http://lgbthistorymonth.com/>

GLSEN provides lesson plans, tools, tips, research, and much more for educators, students, and parents.
www.glsen.org

GLAAD offers a wide variety of educational resource kits and other information.
www.glaad.org

PFLAG NYC has posted tips for professionals who work with LGBT youth
www.pflagnyc.org/safeschools/tips

StopBullying.gov, a U.S. government site, includes resources to create safe environments for LGBT youth.
www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/

The Family Acceptance Project provides pamphlets, videos, and research about family acceptance/rejection and health outcomes for LGBTQ youth.
<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

CenterLink LGBT Community Center Member Directory allows users to find local resources throughout the U.S.
www.lgbtcenters.org/Centers/LGBT-Centers.aspx

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