Creating a Responsive System of Care for LGBTQ Youth:

School and Community Perspectives

Presented at
Sacramento City Unified School District
NO TIME TO LOSE:
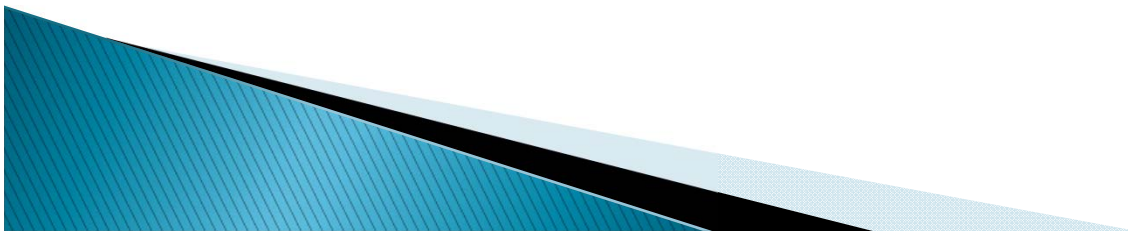### Professional Conference to Activate Change for LGBTQ Youth
April 27, 2011

LISTEN!!!

LISTEN FROM YOUR HEART!!!

- Listen to LGBTQ children & youth…
- Listen to family members…
- Listen to your own heart…
- Listen to your peers…
- Listen to what research has to say…
- ALWAYS SEEK <u>FIRST</u> TO UNDERSTAND AND <u>THEN</u> TO BE UNDERSTOOD…

Session Overview

▸ Ground-breaking research on the impact of family rejecting behaviors on the physical and mental health of LGBTQ youth

▸ Contra Costa County's efforts to address health disparities among LGBTQ youth by working toward a county-wide system of care

▸ Promising practices in school and community collaborations

▸ Lessons learned from our work

Dr. Caitlin Ryan
Family Acceptance Project

▸ In their study of LGBT adolescents and families, they found that on average youth realized they were gay around age 13

▸ Many of them knew they were gay at even younger ages – such as 7 or 9

▸ **But many of them didn't tell <u>anyone</u> because by then most had learned that their identity was shameful and wrong from family, friends and other people in the community**

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Dr. Caitlin Ryan
Family Acceptance Project

- Dr. Ryan identified more than 100 behaviors that families use to respond to their child's sexual orientation or gender identity

- Family acceptance promotes well-being and helps protect LGBT young people against risk

- Family rejection has a serious impact on a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender young person's risk for health and mental health problems.

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

What the FAP research revealed

- LGBT youth who experience high rates of <u>Family Rejection</u> of their sexual orientation or gender identity are at:
  - 8.4 Times Higher Risk of Suicide Attempts
  - 5.9 Times Higher Risk of Depression
  - 3.4 Times Higher Risk of Illicit Drug Use
  - 3.4 Times Higher Risk of Unprotected Sex

Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults. Caitlin Ryan, et al., Pediatrics 2009

Lifetime Suicide Attempts for Highly Rejected LGBTQ Young People
(One or more times)

LOW
Rejection

MODERATE
Rejection

HIGH
Rejection
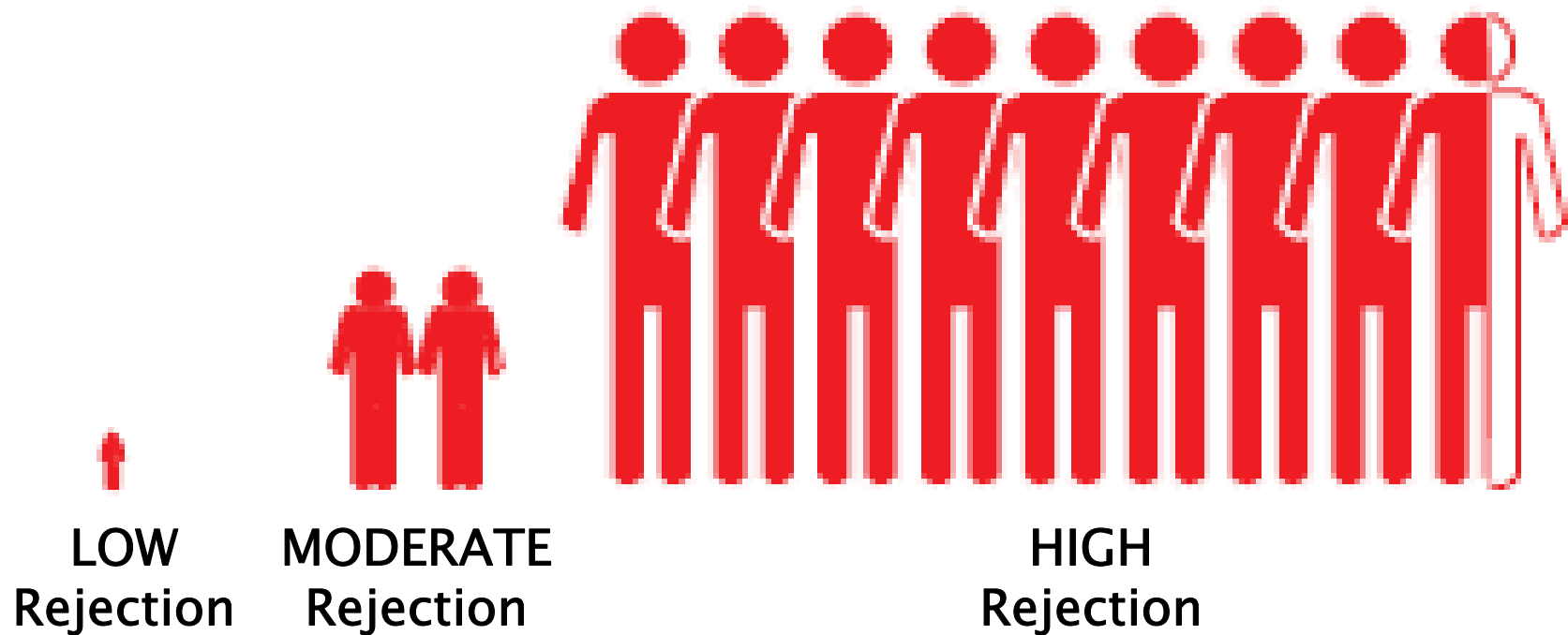
Ryan, Family Acceptance Project, 2009

Rejecting Behaviors that increase risk for health & mental health problems

▸ Hitting, slapping or physical abuse

▸ Verbal harassment or name-calling

▸ Exclusion from family and family activities

▸ Blocking access to LGBT friends, events & resources

▸ Blaming the child if they are discriminated against

▸ Pressure to be more masculine or feminine

▸ Telling the child that God will punish them

▸ Expressing shame and keeping their identity secret

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

FAP HARM REDUCTION MODEL...

- FIRST, DO NO HARM!!!

- Talk with LGBTQ youth (story)

- Many people believe that the best way to help LGBTQ children is to help them fit in with their heterosexual peers

- Young people feel that by rejecting their identity, people are rejecting all of who they are

- This leads to conflict, distress & loss of hope

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

What the FAP research told us...

▸ LGBTQ youth often experience more rejecting behaviors than other youth; such as silencing, bullying, discrimination, and isolation both at home and at school

▸ An increasing number of rejecting behaviors from families correlates to an increased risk of poor health outcomes

▸ Community & social norms & rules have a significant impact on the behavior of both LGBTQ youth and their families

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Mental Health Services Act in CCC

- Identified Underserved Populations
  - Ethnic Minorities
  - LGBT individuals and their families
    - The only LGBTQ-specific programming was through the Rainbow Community Center in Central County
    - A few other support groups for LGBTQ youth existed for brief periods in other parts of the county
    - Mental health and nonprofit service providers were not adequately prepared to address issues of sexual orientation or gender identity in children and youth

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Contra Costa County's Solution

- Engage key support networks for LGBTQ youth and their families and educate them about the consequences of rejecting behaviors

- Increase access to and participation in LGBTQ culturally-competent mental health services

- Reduce rejecting behaviors of families, peers, organizations & community members involved in the lives of LGBTQ youth

- Improve health outcomes of LGBTQ youth through outreach & engagement with key influencers of health
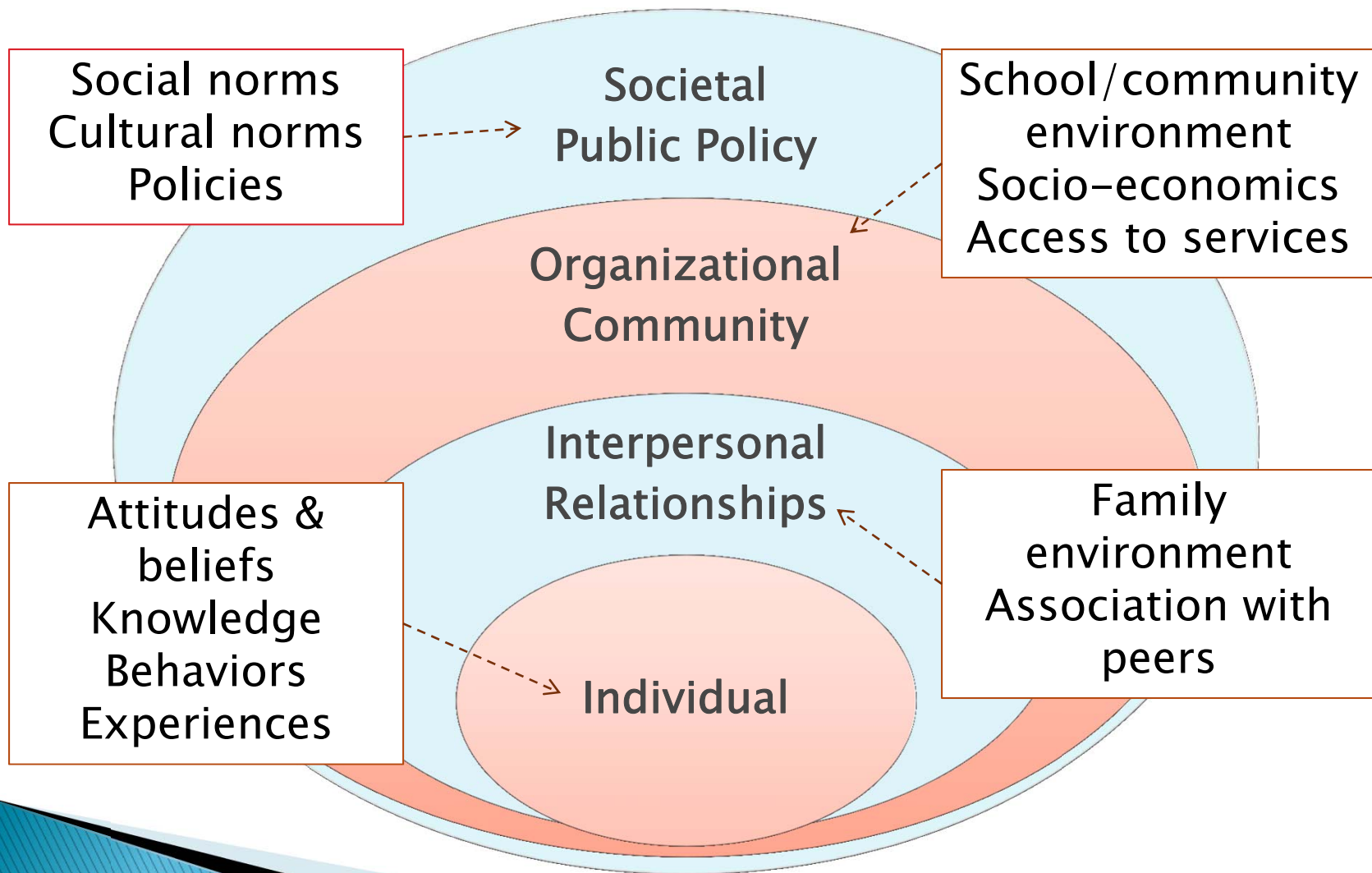
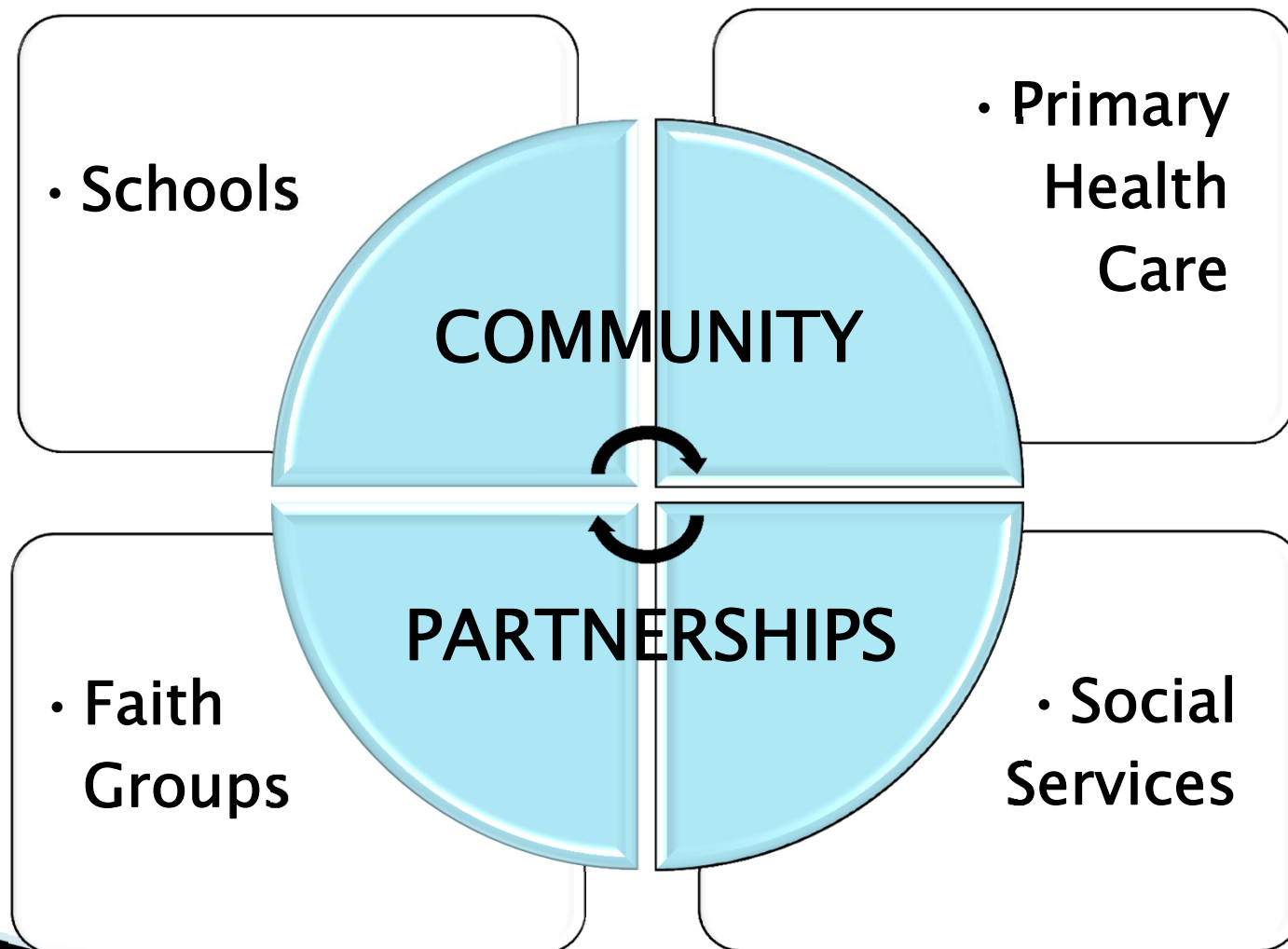CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Primary Learning Goal

▸ To determine whether applying a Social Support Model to creating a community system of care and mental health services for LGBTQ youth will improve their mental health outcomes

Social Supports: Social Ecological Model

Societal
Public Policy

Organizational
Community

Interpersonal
Relationships

Individual

Social norms
Cultural norms
Policies

School/community
environment
Socio-economics
Access to services

Attitudes &
beliefs
Knowledge
Behaviors
Experiences

Family
environment
Association with
peers

SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

- Schools

- Primary Health Care

COMMUNITY

PARTNERSHIPS

- Faith Groups

- Social Services

Positive health outcomes

- Improved physical and mental health
- Increased positive connection and participation in supportive social networks
- Improved access to culturally competent services
- Changed policies and practices that support positive identity development

Inclusive Schools Coalitions

▸ **Primary Goal**: to build local coalitions of allies across the county

- Working to establish a school-community "continuum of care" for LGBTQ students

- Paying special attention to the intersections of race, class, gender and sexual orientation

- "Inclusion" is a core concept that reaches beyond the specific issues facing LGBTQ youth in the school environment

Strategy: GSA Forums

▸ Goal is to establish strong partnerships among community service providers serving LGBTQ youth and Gay Straight Alliances

- Share information about services

- Bring community resources to GSAs

- San Ramon Valley High School GSA

- San Ramon Valley USD GSA Forum – April 30

- GSA 680

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Strategy: Youth Leadership & Voice

- **James Morehouse Project** has a train-the-trainer model to prepare LGBTQ students to do presentations with other youth, teachers, and administrators in school settings.

- The model includes instruction on telling your personal story, public speaking skills, co-facilitation techniques, listening skills, 101 definitions, exploring topics of inclusion and diversity and an overview of California laws against harassment in school.

- Excellent leadership development training for LGBTQ youth and preparing them to tell their own personal stories

Strategy: LGBTQ cultural competence

▸ Provide cultural competency assessment and training to school districts county-wide

  ◦ **Gender Spectrum** and **Family Acceptance Project** joined forces to develop training and evaluation tools

  ◦ **RYSE Center** developed LGBTQ 101 training for classrooms in West Contra Costa County USD

  ◦ **Rainbow Community Center** delivers LGBTQ 101 training in Mt. Diablo USD. Exploring MOU for training, protocols for referring students for clinical services, case management, out-of-school support groups and an in-school clinical support group

Strategy: LGBTQ cultural competence

- Provide cultural competency assessment and training to school districts county-wide

    - **Comprehensive Sex Education Network** promotes LGBTQ acceptance within the context of fulfillment of California Comprehensive Sex Ed laws

    - **Our Family Coalition** provides cultural competency assessment in conjunction with HRC's Welcoming Schools Curriculum for elementary schools

    - **Partnerships with the Queer Youth Task Force in Santa Cruz County** and other county-based efforts

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Strategy: Middle School Partnership

- Fred Finch Youth Center partnership with El Dorado Middle School

  ◦ Mini-grant to increase straight ally and peer support for LGBTQ youth as well as engaging families to create more supportive and accepting environments

  ◦ Includes a student-led video project, a flash mob activity, and a Day of Silence observation.

  ◦ Students are enthusiastic and the administration is engaged following strong resistance

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Other Strategies

- Develop a tool kit for use by allies
- Hold targeted forums
- Plan a county-wide symposium
- The possibilities are endless!!!
- Advocate for full implementation of California Education policies
  - FAIR Education Act
  - Considerations for transgender students

Lessons Learned

- Expect it to take time

- Cannot be done without a paid facilitator

- Don't shortcut the process to achieve mutual understanding and agreement

- Know the difference between "consent" and "commitment"

- Keep conversations and advocacy work focused on *Harm Reduction*

Action Items!!!

- Create safe space

- Schedule FAPrisk Screener Training

- Find funding for a facilitator

- Give up turf

- Break down walls

- Work toward mutual understanding and agreement

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

LISTEN!

HARM!

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

HARM!

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

VOICE!

CREATING A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

In the end,
we will remember
not the words of our enemies
But the SILENCE of our friends.

Dr. Martin Luther King