

Information & Resources

Call your local schools or universities to see if they have GSAs (gay-straight alliances), SAGA groups, or other LGBTQ+ affirming groups that would fit your needs for support.

If you are curious about terminology used within the LGBTQ+ community, the Trevor Project and Planned Parenthood have information for you online:

thetrevorproject.org/trvr_support_center/glossary/

plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/lgbtq

Local NRV Planned Parenthood Educator: (540) 315-2130 / www.ppsat.org

The Pulaski Public Library System (locations in Dublin and Pulaski) has a list of reputable books for youth and adults on LGBTQ+ identity.

Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project (lgbthistory.pages.roanoke.edu/)

Includes a digital archive, recorded oral history, and physical archives at the Roanoke Public Library, as well as free walking tours.

PFLAG: <http://pflag.org/find-a-chapter>

Community Health Center of the New River Valley

(540) 585-1310 – Dublin

(540) 381-0820 – Christiansburg

(540) 585-1310 – Pearisburg

New River Valley Community Services

Services for mental health and substance use disorders, with locations in Pulaski, Radford, Pearisburg, Blacksburg, and Floyd

(540) 961-8400 | nrvc.org

Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley

LGBTQ+ friendly hotline, chat, & other resources for survivors of relationship & sexual violence

540-639-1123 | wrcnr.org

Monthly LGBTQ+ Teen Zoom: Last Wednesday of each month @ 3:30 PM
Email mwade@nrvc.org for the invitation link and more information



Look for "Safe Zones"

This symbol is often displayed by community members and professionals who are allies of the LGBTQ+ community.



This resource is a project of the Pulaski Community Partners Coalition, made possible through a Behavioral Health Equity grant from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services' Office of Behavioral Health Wellness



Special thanks to the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley and the members of its Inclusion Council for their contributions and support, as well as the youth involved with the monthly LGBTQ+ Zoom meetings for their insight and suggestions.

Protecting Your Family

for LGBTQ+ youth & those that support them



Women's Resource Center
of the New River Valley



Hotline: 540-639-1123 | wrcnr.org/chat



For Parents

If your child has come out to you or is questioning their sexuality or gender, one of the best things you can do is support them along the way. LGBTQ+ families are normal, natural, and have existed throughout history.

Frequently Asked Questions

“Should my child go to counseling for this?”

Counseling can help everyone improve self-esteem, develop coping and communication skills, and work through difficult events. Counseling can make them happier and more confident, especially if they’ve experienced adverse events in their life- but counseling doesn’t - and shouldn’t - change your child’s gender or sexual orientation. The American Psychological Association has data to indicate that could be harmful¹.

“Could being LGBTQ+ be harmful to my child?”

Struggles surrounding drugs, alcohol, self-harm and so on don’t happen because a young person is LGBTQ+: often, people use those behaviors to try and cope with other hurt in their life. Research has shown that a lack of family support can increase the potential for LGBTQ+ youth to develop these types of struggles².

You can help protect your child by being someone they can rely on and allowing them to make choices about their name, clothes, pronouns, and partners, just as you would with a child who was not LGBTQ+. No one deserves to be targeted for violence simply by being who they are. It is the responsibility of perpetrators of violence not to be violent - not the responsibility of victims of violence to avoid perpetrators.

“Is my child going to end up on the street?”

Very few LGBTQ+ teens voluntarily leave their homes. Some are kicked out by family who hope that they will ‘change their mind.’ Other times, they are running away from families they are afraid of. Acceptance and support at home will help set the stage for success in youth and in adulthood.

“Why does my child want to talk so much about being LGBTQ+?”

Even if a LGBTQ+ person never comes out, the way they see the world will be through a different lens. Talking about their identity can be a way to help process prejudice they or other people experience, and listening nonjudgmentally to your child can help them and build your relationship at the same time. Similarly, your child might want to attend events to make friends that are like them.

“I have friends that say you can love someone and disapprove of their choices - isn’t that good enough?”

Your child likely won’t see a difference - try and place yourself, and one of the intensely personal choices you’ve made (like your faith or another value) in the shoes of your child, and think about how that statement could feel to you. You may not intend that to be a rejection, but it might hurt just like one.

“How can I help?”

Ask your child how they would like you to talk with friends or family about their identity. It’s natural to want support as your family navigates changes. Your child may want to behave, dress, and connect with others in different ways depending on their identity and needs. For example, they may ask for garments that help them be more comfortable - different clothes, cosmetics or nail polish, a chest binder, or a change to their name or pronouns- but they’re still your child!

If they are transgender, trans youth tend to feel much happier and more comfortable once they are allowed to make these kinds of changes. Talk to your healthcare provider about any concerns you have regarding what your child is asking for.

If you are struggling, reach out to local advocates, a counselor, or other confidential people that can hear you out and help you.

For Youth

You are an important part of the New River Valley community. If you are (or think you might be) LGBTQ+, it’s your choice if, when, and to whom you may want to come out, and your comfort and preferences on this may change over time- that’s ok!

Frequently Asked Questions

“I’m questioning my gender/sexuality- should I say anything to anybody?”

Identity is a process. It’s OK to not be sure. First, if you feel safe telling them, your parents may appreciate hearing about how you’re feeling and be happy to be trusted. Sometimes, talking to other LGBTQ+ people you know can help- or talking in more general terms about LGBTQ+ people with the people you’re considering coming out to, can help you feel more confident. Consider sharing a book or documentary with your family (see resources on the back). If that’s not right for you, think about friends and other people you do trust to talk to. You might decide you’re not comfortable talking about it right now - that’s okay too, and other people should respect your boundaries.

“What if I change my mind?”

It’s OK to change your mind- all people change as they grow, and there’s nothing wrong with finding out what you thought was right for you isn’t. Understanding yourself, including your sexuality, is a lifelong process. Try to think about how you feel now and focus on the present- not how you might feel in the future. If we knew exactly how we’d feel about anything ahead of time, it would take a lot less time to get there!

“Does being LGBTQ+ mean I have to change my religion or political beliefs, or make new friends?”

Of course not! Your religion, political beliefs and your friends are your choice, and not for anyone else to

decide for you. There are LGBTQ+ people just like you, no matter who you are.

“Is there dating violence in LGBTQ+ relationships? I’ve heard that’s not a problem.”

Yes. Dating violence can occur in any relationship, regardless of the genders of the participants. Abuse is not only a problem ‘for straight people’: it’s everybody’s job to join in stopping violence. If you or a friend are concerned about violence, there are local resources you can talk to.

“People treat me poorly for my LGBTQ+ identity. I feel unappreciated and alone.”

Bullying and harassment are often targeted at LGBTQ+ youth. You don’t deserve to be harassed- consider speaking to one of the resources linked in this pamphlet, or to friends or allies who will be on your side and help you figure out how best to address the specific situation you are in. Being LGBTQ+ does not mean you will be unhappy, or that you can’t be appreciated for who you are, or that you can’t grow up and do the things you hope to do.

“I suffered trauma as a result of my LGBTQ+ identity. I don’t feel safe anymore.”

First, any trauma that has occurred in your life was not your fault: not for any reason, including your identity. Sadly, trauma in general is not uncommon in our society- however you’re feeling, you aren’t alone. There is support here for you- life as a young LGBTQ+ person can be extremely stressful, and hard to navigate alone (or just between friends.)

¹ <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/just-the-facts>

² http://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/LGBT_Brief.pdf