



LGBTQ LEGISLATIVE AGENDA – 2015 Session

Collected from all 16 AMP Foster Care Youth Councils:

*Ames, Burlington, Calmar, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque,
Eldora State Training School, Ft. Dodge, Iowa City, Mason City, Mobile Facilitator,
Ottumwa, Sioux City & Waterloo*

LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented in our child welfare system due to their expressed identity. To improve outcomes for LGBTQ youth, AMP requests the following:

1. **AMP youth request that Iowa ban conversion/aversion/reparative counseling/therapy for LGBTQ youth.** The potential risks of conversion/aversion/reparative counseling/therapy are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the youth.

AMP has met with DHS and they are working on LGBTQ related issues. AMP is pursuing change for youth on the following LGBTQ issues and any assistance DHS can give AMP is appreciated!

2. **AMP youth request that state policy and standards be developed that require LGBTQ identity be a consideration in all out-of-home placement decisions**
3. **AMP youth request that training be required for all social workers, child welfare workers, foster home licensing workers, adoption workers, residential staff, juvenile court workers, and foster parents around LGBTQ issues so youth can be better served**
4. **AMP youth request that foster homes that are LGBTQ affirming be recruited**
5. **AMP youth request that since the state contracts most of its child welfare and human services work, each service agency be evaluated in their openness to respecting and working with LGBTQ identified youth and families**
6. **AMP youth request that DHS youth intake paperwork offers options other than male/female and includes questions regarding gender identity or sexual orientation.** By not asking, it forces youth to either be silent about their identity or be brave and skilled enough to take initiative to disclose their LGBTQ identity and ask for a placement that will be supportive of that identity.

7. **AMP youth request that the ever-expanding array of school and community-based services for LGBTQ youths include their families.** Research provides compelling evidence that family rejection severely impacts health and mental health outcomes for LGBTQ youth¹. Service providers need to be challenged to fully engage with the family member(s) as potential allies capable of increasing their support and acceptance of their LGBTQ youth. Promising program interventions are developing throughout the US; Iowa providers should access this information to better serve LGBTQ youth.
8. **AMP youth request that changes be made in the DHS foster/adoptive parent's licensing paperwork, as it offers only male/female options, and still uses mother/father terminology instead of gender neutral terminology.** In addition, some home study evaluation reports still require the licensing worker to address in the report narrative what the parent will do to provide a role model for the child of the opposite sex, if they have no immediate household partner of the opposite sex, implying that a single male or single female is deficient in meeting all of a youth's needs. This also implies that children must be taught how to be "gender conforming", which needs to change also. Persons who are transgender applying to be foster/adoptive parents will encounter many difficulties if their identity does not match their legal paperwork, requiring them to go through a lengthy and difficult process to secure the appropriate legal documents before applying to be a foster/adoptive parent.

¹ Ryan, Huebner, Diaz & Sanchez, 2009