

Get Connected!

A Survival Guide for LGBTQ Youth



Last updated October 15, 2013

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INTRODUCTION

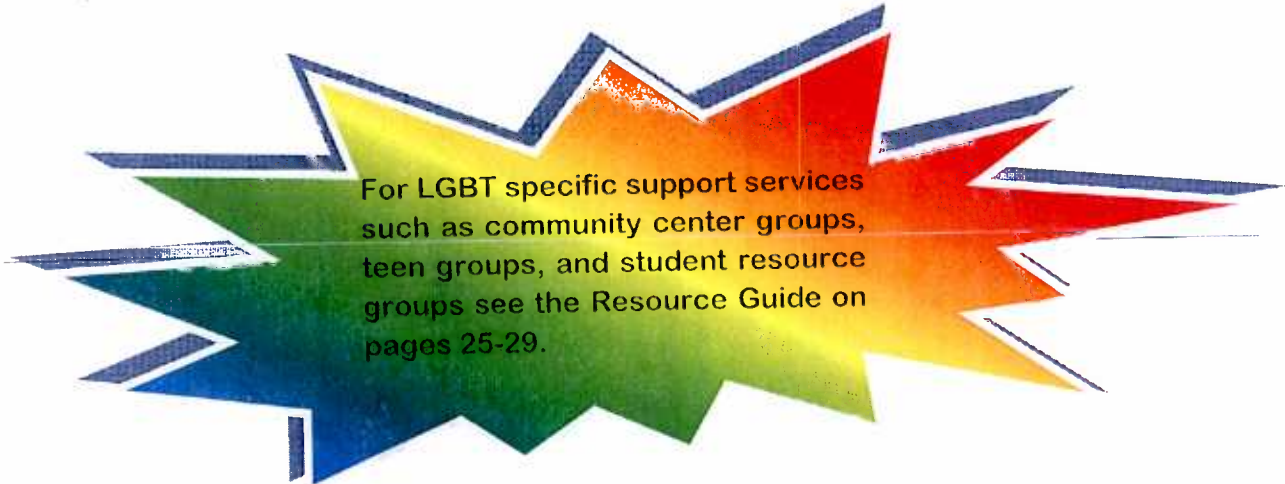
You might have known that you're lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ) for a long time. Or maybe you're just discovering your sexual orientation and/or gender-identity. It may be an exciting, yet scary time as you express who you are — to yourself, with your friends and family, and with people around you.

If you are LGBTQ and in the foster care system or find yourself homeless, you might have questions about where you will live and to whom you can turn.

No matter where you are, you are not alone and you have rights.

This guide:

- Explains your **rights in foster care, at home, in school, and in other places.**
- Gives you information so you can **understand what the foster care system is all about.**
- Lets you know about important services, such as how to get **medical care**, what your options are when you are **homeless**, and what you can do to **report discrimination.**



For LGBT specific support services such as community center groups, teen groups, and student resource groups see the Resource Guide on pages 25-29.

YOU DESERVE TO BE SAFE:

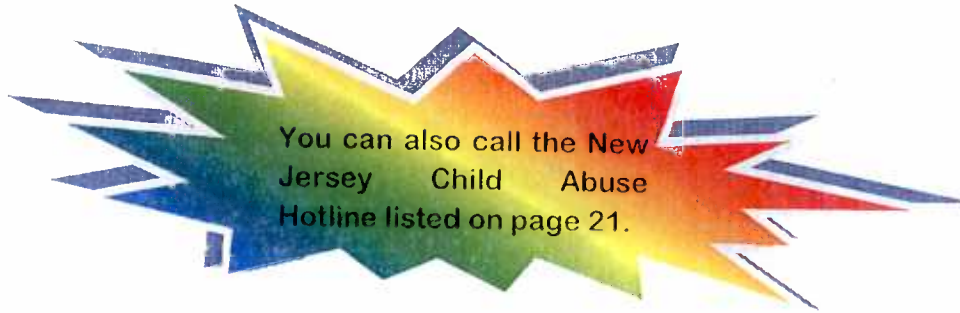
You deserve to be safe at home, at school, in foster care, or anywhere else. You deserve to be yourself without being afraid of what might happen to you. The following explains what you can do if you don't feel safe.

I don't feel safe at home...

- You have the right not to be abused or neglected by your parent/guardian.
- Abuse is any physical, emotional, or sexual harm done to you by your parent/guardian. Neglect occurs when a parent/guardian fails to provide you with basic things such as food, clothing, shelter, education, or medical care.

What can I do if I'm being abused or neglected?

Tell a trusted adult. This can be a teacher, a social worker, counselor, family member, or friend.



What happens after the abuse/neglect is reported?

Usually, a caseworker from the **Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P)**, formerly known as **DYFS**, will meet with you and investigate the claim made by either you or someone else. If there is concern about your safety, DCP&P may remove you from your parent/guardian's house and place you with a relative, friend, or in foster care.

I don't feel safe at school:

What do I do if I am harassed or bullied?

You can report harassment to your teachers, principal, and staff. They are required to take your concerns seriously and make a report so that this type of behavior doesn't happen again. Each school has a special staff member or teacher that is there to handle these issues. A law called the **Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights** protects you from harassment and bullying, which may include hateful words as well as physical intimidation that make you feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

I don't feel safe in foster care:

- You have the right not to be abused when in foster care. Those taking care of you must respect your rights and provide you with **ENOUGH food, clothing, medical care**, and other needs.
- If you don't feel safe, talk to a trusted adult. You can also talk to your caseworker or your lawyer (called a **Law Guardian**).

I don't feel safe with my girlfriend/boyfriend:

- If you feel unsafe, talk to a friend or adult you trust. You deserve to be free of any emotional, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse. You deserve to be taken seriously and not judged for what you are going through. Being LGBTQ does not mean people should make assumptions about your relationship or that you deserve any less protection than someone in straight relationship.



RIGHTS AT SCHOOL

You have the right to an education through high school. If you are under 16 years-old, you must attend school. It is the role of your parent/guardian, foster parent, or DCP&P caseworker to ensure that you attend school.

Some of your rights include:

Right to Attend School: You have the right to attend public school until the age of 20. If you are in special education, you can go to school until you turn 22.

Right to be Safe: You have the right to be safe in school. You have the right not to be bullied and teased by other students, teachers, and staff because of your LGBTQ identity or for any other reason.

Right to Participate in School Activities: You have the right to participate in LGBTQ student organizations and/or to start your own LGBTQ organization.

Right to Self-Identity: You have the right to use school facilities and activities that correspond with your gender-identity/expression. Your teacher must respect your preferred gender pronoun and name.

Right to Services: If you are struggling in school (not doing well), special education services might help you. You should talk with your foster parent, law guardian, or DCP&P caseworker about trying to get you some assistance so you can succeed in school.

I was just placed in foster care in a different town. Can I still go to the same school?

In most cases, the answer is YES! By law, it is assumed that it is best for you to continue going to the same school. Your school will provide transportation to and from school. If this is not being done, you should talk with your law guardian or DCP&P caseworker. If you do not want to go to the same school, you may be able to change schools.

HOMELESSNESS AND SHELTER CARE

Many LGBTQ youth and young adults find themselves homeless. If you are a homeless youth, there are programs that can help you.

What happens if I “run away” from home?

If you run away from home, your parent/guardian might file a missing persons report. If you leave your foster home, group home, or other placement, they have to notify DCP&P and DCP&P will file a missing persons report.

In New Jersey, it is not a crime to run away from home or to be homeless. If you are found by the police **you should not** be handcuffed and arrested just because you ran away and became homeless. **You should not** be placed in jail or a detention facility just because you ran away.

If you are not in the DCP&P system and under 18, the police must try to contact your parent or guardian. If there are reasons that you do not want to go back home, such as not feeling safe or not being taken care of, let the police know. If this is the case, the police will contact DCP&P.

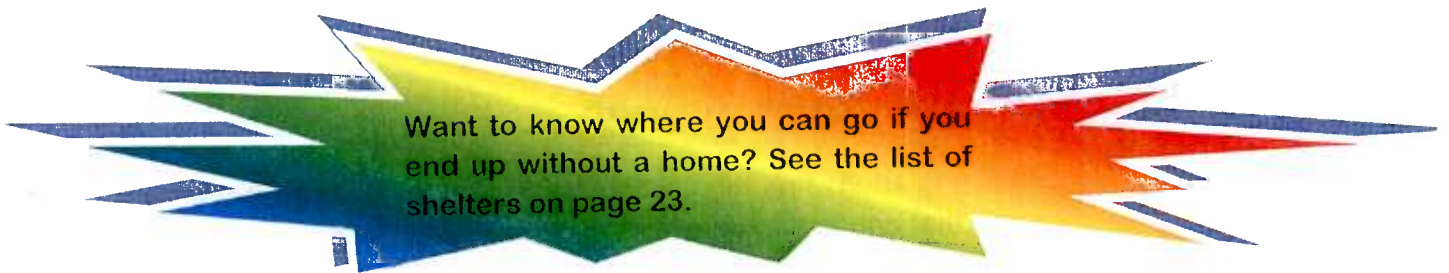
DCP&P will contact the Juvenile/Family Crisis Intervention Unit (FCIU) if it is determined that you are not being abused or neglected, but have other problems with your parents. Some of these problems could be:

- Not following your parents’ reasonable rules

- Leaving home without permission for more than 24 hours or being absent from school without permission
- DCP&P and FCIU have caseworkers who will listen to you and who will try to understand why you do not want to or cannot go home.

If it is found you cannot be returned to your parents/guardian because of concerns about your well-being or your parents refuse to let you come home, your DCP&P/FCIU caseworker will find a place where you can live temporarily such as a relative's home, a foster home, or a shelter. Soon after, there will be a court hearing to decide what is best for you.

If you are already in the DCP&P system and under 18, the police will contact DCP&P. DCP&P will determine whether returning you back to your placement is best for you. There may be a court hearing so that the judge can hear from your law guardian, caseworker, and you.



What happens when I go to a shelter?

Homeless shelters can provide temporary living arrangements for you. The shelter will have a caseworker who will see what your needs are and what brought you to the shelter.

If you are under 18 years old, the shelter must try to contact your parents or guardian within 24 hours, even if you are not from New Jersey. If you are in the care of DCP&P, the shelter staff will contact DCP&P.

If there are reasons that you cannot return back, like you've been kicked out or you are being abused or your parents cannot be located, the shelter will contact DCP&P or FCIU. Depending on your situation, you may be able to stay at the shelter for up to 10 days without your parent's consent. If returning you back to your parent or guardian is not possible during this time, there will be a court hearing to decide the best place for you to live.

The bottom line: If you feel unsafe going home or your parents refuse to allow you to come home, let the shelter caseworker know.

If you are over 18 years old, you will be able to stay at the shelter for a limited number of days (generally up to 30). The shelter may refer you to a transitional living shelter, where you can stay for a longer amount of time and get help so that you can someday live on your own. Shelters can offer services like free medical care, counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, job training, life skills classes, and legal services. They also might be able to help you obtain benefits such as food stamps, health insurance, and other resources.

What are my rights in the shelter system?

No matter how long you're at a shelter or why you're there, you have the right to be safe and not discriminated against because of your sexual orientation and/or gender-identity expression. This means the shelter staff can't treat you differently just because you identify as LGBTQ.

If you are transgender, you have the right to be in a shelter that is according to your gender. You cannot be forced to be in a shelter program that does not reflect your gender identity.

Can I attend school if I'm living at a shelter?

You can attend school. You may attend the school you went to before or a new school.

If you were enrolled in school, your school must provide transportation to and from the shelter or where you are temporarily staying. You also may work with the shelter caseworker to find a school or program for you if you do not want to or cannot go your previous school. The law allows you to enroll in any school, but you may need the help of a caseworker.

Keep in mind:

It may be important to hold on to any identification papers (state ID, green card, passport, photo ID, high school diploma, etc.). These papers can be helpful in applying for benefits such as food stamps, health insurance, and other resources.

RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE

Do I need my parents' permission to get treatment?

If you are at least 13 years old, you do not need to get your parents' permission to get reproductive and sexual health services. Those services include HIV and STD testing. If you were sexually assaulted, the hospital must notify your parents. You can ask a doctor not to, and he or she will decide if it's in your best interest not to tell your parents. You also don't need parental consent to get treatment for drug and alcohol abuse.

Will my parents find out about the treatment I get?

If you get medical treatment for pregnancy or STDs, get an abortion, or get treatment for drug abuse, only you have a right to access those medical records. Your parents cannot access them without your permission. For other types of treatment, the doctors might be able to tell your parents that you got the treatment, but doctors may respect your confidentiality.

What about HIV and STD testing?

You can get tested for HIV anonymously. If you do that, nobody will know your name, and the results can't be traced back to you. But, if you test positive for some STDs, the tester might be required to report it to the government. However, that report is confidential.

What if I was abused or neglected?

If your doctor suspects you were abused or neglected as a child, he/she must report it to DCP&P.

What if I'm having an emergency?

Go to a hospital. They must treat you immediately. They can ask you if you are able to pay, but they can't delay treating you. Even if you can't pay, they must treat you.

I'm still living with my parents, how can I pay for healthcare?

If you're still with your family, and are under 18 years old, or 19 years old and still in school, you might be able to get NJ FamilyCare. You must be low-income, uninsured, be a legal citizen, and your parents must have lived in NJ for the past 5 years. Go to www.njfamilycare.org for more information.

if I am or was involved with DCP&P, can I get health insurance?

If you have an open DCP&P case, you will be able to keep your medical insurance until you are 21.

If you close your DCP&P case after the age of 18, but before age 21, then you may be eligible for the Medicaid Extension for Young Adults (MEYA) program. To be eligible for this program, you MUST be in a DCP&P paid placement on the day after you turn 18. Then you will remain eligible for MEYA until the age of 21, unless you are put into jail, become eligible for other benefits like Social Security or public assistance (welfare), or move out of state. If you are eligible for MEYA, it does not kick in automatically when you close your DCP&P case. You must sign up for it by calling 1-888-235-4766



If you have questions about the
Medicaid Extension for Young
Adults call 1-888-235-4766.

What if I don't have health insurance?

If you have no health insurance, or if it only pays for a part of your bill, and you can't get any other private or governmental help, then you might qualify for Charity Care.



RIGHT TO NOT BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST

Discrimination is a complicated legal idea, but the basic point is that people cannot mistreat you or treat you differently because you are (or because they think you are) transgender, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. There is a law called the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (NJLAD for short) that makes it illegal to discriminate against you because of who you are—like your gender, the color of your skin, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity/expression.

Where does the law apply?

The law protects you throughout New Jersey - at school, your job, and in what are called “public accommodations.” Public accommodations can be stores, hospitals, shelters, restaurants, schools, buses, and other places that are open to the public. It also applies to your interactions with people like police officers and government workers like DCP&P caseworkers.

What are some examples of discrimination that could be illegal?

- An employer paying you less because you are a lesbian
- A shelter not allowing you to be placed with people of the gender with which you identify
- A teacher refusing to use the name or pronouns you prefer
- A principal refusing to allow you to bring a same-sex date to the prom
- A doctor refusing to see you because you are transgender, gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- A social worker telling you that being gay is “a sin”

What can I do to report the discrimination?

If you think that you might have been discriminated against because of your gender identity/expression and/or sexual orientation, you can talk to a trusted family member or adult who will listen to what you are going through and help you understand how to deal with the problem.

If you want to report the discrimination, there are a few people you can turn to:

- Schools and hospitals have special people you can talk to about this. The school principal, for example, is required to listen to your complaint and take you seriously.
- If you are in foster care, your law guardian is someone who you can talk to about this.
- The New Jersey Division on Civil Rights has offices across the state, a toll-free number, and an e-mail address. Their job is to listen and to help people file discrimination complaints and investigate those complaints. Lawyers can help you and won't charge you any money.
- Other options to report discrimination include contacting a local organization such as the ACLU or Lambda Legal. They can provide you with more information and let you know what your options are.



RIGHTS OF TRANSGENDERED YOUTH

What if I am transgendered and need a safe place to live?

First remember that you are not alone. You have a right not to be discriminated against based on your gender identity.

If you are homeless and transgendered, find a shelter and explain to them that you are transgendered and want to be with your gender of choice. You can also go to the Ali Forney Center in New York City, which is a homeless shelter that specifically helps LGBTQ foster youth.

If you are living in a group home or foster home and are facing discrimination, know that you have a right to be respected as a transgendered person. If you face discrimination you should report this to a trusted adult, your school, law guardian, or case worker. You can also contact the Lambda Legal Help Desk or the Family Acceptance Project, which will help work with you and your caregivers towards acceptance.



How do I make sure that people call me by the right name and the right pronoun?

You have the right to insist that your community, peers, school and foster parents use the name and pronoun you desire. You should always tell people which name and pronoun that you'd prefer.

Sometimes it is very helpful to legally make these changes. If you are eighteen (or younger with legal consent from your parents), you can change the name on your birth certificate and driver's license by filing paperwork at court and appearing in front of a judge who will approve the change. Call the Rutgers Child Advocacy Clinic at 973-353-3196 for assistance.

How do I get trans-affirming Healthcare?

If you identify as transgendered, you may need medical care to help your transition. There is no set age limit for starting prescription hormone related therapy. Some doctors may start transgender youth on hormone blockers in puberty and some doctors may wait until you are older. Either way, if you are under 18, you need to get permission from your parent or legal guardian before you see a doctor to begin hormone therapy. If you are transitioning, it is important to talk to a trusted adult about how you feel, and that you want to begin hormone therapy, so they can take you to a doctor who can get you the right hormones. **You should NEVER get hormones off the streets.** If you are on Medicaid, you may be able to get your hormones paid for.

I'm transgendered, can Medicaid pay for my sex reassignment surgeries?

- If you are eligible for Medicaid benefits, you may be able to get help paying for sex reassignment surgery. Please know that you may need to argue for yourself with the Medicaid agency in order to get Medicaid to help you pay for the procedure. There are several conditions that must be met, so it likely will not be easy.
- First, you need to be on Medicaid.
- Second, you must be diagnosed by a psychologist or a psychiatrist with Gender Identity Disorder (GID).
- Third, you must be in treatment with a doctor who will say that the surgery is (1) "medically necessary", (2) safe, and (3) likely to be successful (not experimental). In other words, the doctor must say that the surgery is needed and that there is a good track record for success.

I identify as transgender. What is my school required to do?

- The school must refer to you using your preferred gender pronoun and name.
- You should be able to use the bathroom and locker room of your gender identity, if you wish.
- The school should provide you with safe bathroom facilities – for example, you should have access to a single-use bathroom.
- You should be able to join school activities such as athletics and other extracurricular activities that correspond with your gender identity.



RIGHTS IN FOSTER CARE

If you are in foster care, it is likely because your parents are not able to take care of you right now. In some cases, this may not be a problem for very long. Many times, your parents or legal guardians will be able to work on the issues that led to you being placed in foster care. Other times, going back to your family may not be possible. No matter where you are placed, there are several people who will work with you to make sure you get the best care and the things you need.

This section explains the foster care system, what happens in court, and what your rights are while in foster care.

What is Foster Care?

If you are removed from your home, you will be placed in foster care. This is also known as an “**out-of-home placement**.” There are a several different types of foster care placements:

- **Relative’s or Friend’s Home** – DCP&P must first look to see if there are relatives or friends with whom you can stay. These people are often called “kin.” They do not need to be blood relations, just people with whom you have a relationship. If you know of any kin that can help and support you, make sure to tell the DCP&P worker about them right away.
- **Foster Home (called a “resource home” in New Jersey)** - This is the home of the family that has volunteered to take care of kids. There may be other kids in the home (other foster youth and/or children of the foster parents). Foster families are all families who have been checked out by DCP&P and who want to open up their home to kids and take care of them.
- **Group Home:** A group home is a place where several older youth all live together. You may have your own room or share a room with other youth.
- **Residential Treatment Facility:** A residential treatment facility is a place where you can go if you need some more intensive mental health treatment for a while. These places are often like group homes except with more services to help you.
- **Transitional Living:** There are two kinds of transitional living programs. One type is referred to as **Supervised Transitional Living (STLP)**, while the other is just called **Transitional Living (TLP)**. STLPs and TLPs are like group homes, but for even older youth. These programs help prepare you for life after foster care by providing services like life-skills classes and job training. These programs require that residents be in school or work.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** These are similar to TLPs, but some can continue past 21 or 22 years old. In supportive housing programs, you have

to contribute to the rent (up to 30% of your income) and you will be responsible for your own food.

- **Independent Living Stipend:** This is money that DCP&P can provide for you to cover rent and food. You can get up to \$600/mo for rent, up to \$240/mo for food and up to \$100 for incidentals (utilities, etc.). How much you get each month will be determined after you create a budget with your case manager, and you should speak to your law guardian if you don't think you're getting enough. You must be involved with DCP&P and must be going to school or working at least part time in order to receive this money. You also have to find your own place to live (it can be sharing an apartment or renting a room) AND DCP&P must then find it to be safe and appropriate.

I am 18-21, still under the care of DCP&P and want to do something to find housing or change my housing?

- If you are 18-21 and under the care of DCP&P and do not like your current housing placement or need a housing placement you can, on your own, do something to find a housing placement.
- You do this by calling the HUB. The HUB keeps track of all available housing and tries to match youth with these different housing options.
- The first thing you need to do is call the HUB and get registered. The number is 1-877-652-7624. You need to press 4 to become registered.
- You can call on your own, but it is recommended that you contact your DCP&P case worker and call with your worker.
- Once you call you will be registered and can look for a housing program, which can include Transitional Living Programs and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs.

Who are the people I may meet?

Case Manager: This person, also sometimes referred to as your caseworker, works for DCP&P. DCP&P is responsible for making sure that you have a safe place to live, that you have enough clothes, that you are in school, that you can get to a doctor if you need one, and that you are able to see your parents and/or siblings if you want. Your caseworker may ask you questions about your life at home, your relationship with your family, and talk to teachers and other people in your life. Throughout the process, you can contact this person with any questions or concerns. If you're having trouble reaching him/her, call the office and ask for his/her supervisor.

Lawyer: In New Jersey, every child who has a case in court concerning DCP&P will have a lawyer. This lawyer is called a law guardian. Your law guardian represents you in court and lets the judge know what you want. A law guardian works only for you. He/she **does not work for DCP&P or your parents**. Anything you discuss with your law guardian is **confidential**—this means that your conversations cannot be shared with anyone without your permission. Your law guardian or an investigator will visit you at your home or at school at different times throughout your case to find out what you want to talk about in court.

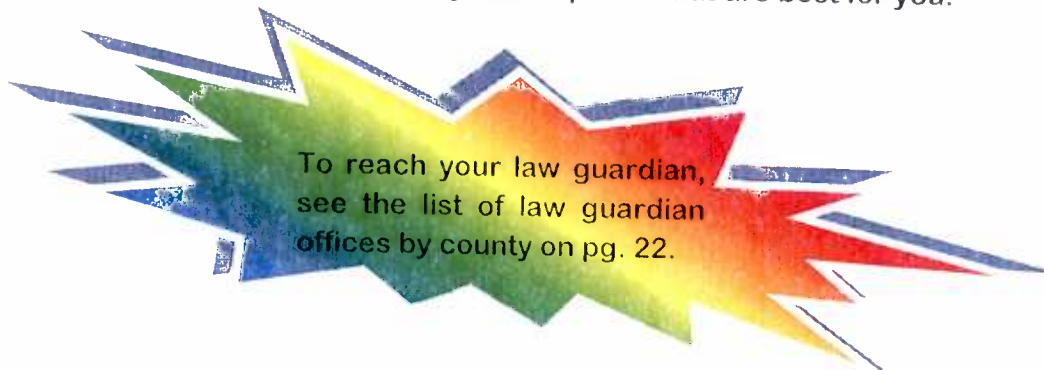
You may contact your law guardian with any questions or concerns about your placement. Law guardians work to make sure that your rights are protected. If you don't know what your law guardian's phone number is, call the office for the county your case is being heard in and ask for him/her. See page 22 for a list of office numbers.

Judge: The judge will listen to all sides of the story and then pick the best course of action for you and your well-being. You can come to court and tell the judge yourself what you want to do with the help of your law guardian. The judge wants to hear from you and understand what YOU think is best for YOU. It is very important for the judge to have all the information about you so he can make the best decision about what you need, where you should live, and what should be the plan for your future. This does not mean that the judge will do exactly what you want. If you are uncomfortable talking to the judge in a courtroom, don't worry, you can always ask to speak to the judge alone. You also may be able to write letters to the judge to tell him/her how you feel and what you want.

Why should I talk with my DCP&P caseworker and law guardian?

It is very important that you tell your DCP&P caseworker and law guardian what you think would be a good placement for you and what is important to you. Are there family members you feel comfortable living with? Do you want to continue going to the same school? Do you want to be close to your friends? Do you want more freedom?

When talking with your caseworker and law guardian, you may also choose to disclose your LGBTQ identity if you think they do not know. Remember, you do not have to disclose your LGBTQ identity. However, telling your identity may make it easier for your caseworker and law guardian to identify more options that are best for you.



What are my rights while in foster care?

You have many rights while in foster care. In fact, there is a law, called the Child Placement Bill of Rights, which gives you many rights while you are in foster care. For example, you have the right:

- To be safe
- To live with a relative, if possible and safe
- To live with your siblings in the same foster home, if possible
- To visit with your parents and siblings
- To see your DCP&P caseworker regularly
- To get regular medical and dental care
- To have enough food and clothes
- To have a plan to either go back home or find a new home

Some possible examples of your rights not being respected can be:

- Your foster home forces you to go to a church which says that “homosexuality is a sin”
- Your foster parent doesn’t allow you to call your siblings
- You are being physically attacked by foster parent or another foster child
- Your foster parent does not allow you to express your sexual identity

What can I do if I think one of these rights is not being respected?

You should tell your DCP&P caseworker and/or your law guardian. If you cannot reach them, you can ask to speak with their supervisor who can be reached simply by calling your local DCP&P office.

What is a LGBTQ Liaison and where can I find them?

Every DCP&P office has a LGBTQ Liaison. An LGBTQ Liaison can get involved if there has been any inappropriate behavior towards you or other LGBTQ youth in the foster care system. LGBTQ liaisons also will have LGBTQ resources, which will help you find LGBTQ services in your area.

TRANSITIONING TO LIFE AFTER FOSTER CARE

As you prepare to leave foster care, there are several things to consider, such as what you want to do after you turn 18. You might have questions about how you will support yourself. This section helps to answer some of your questions about life after foster care.

What is a Transitional Plan and how can it help me?

Like all youth, becoming an adult can mean lots of planning about how you can graduate high school, go to college, or find a job. You might also have questions about how you will support yourself or where you will live.


Before you turn 15, DCP&P should organize a Transitional Planning meeting with your DCP&P caseworker, law guardian, and other people who can help you. At this meeting, you are allowed to invite a caring adult of your choice. You just need to tell your DCP&P worker who it is and they will invite them.

The purpose of the meeting is to begin to plan for your life as an adult and to understand what programs and services you will need to help you achieve your goals. After the first meeting, there should be follow up meetings every six months to see how things are going. These plans will be reviewed up until you turn 21 or your DCP&P case is closed.

If you are in foster care and your DCP&P caseworker has not set up a meeting to discuss your transitional plan, ask your DCP&P caseworker and/or law guardian to do so.

I thought my DCP&P case will be closed when I turn 18. Is that true?

No. Your DCP&P case should not automatically close at the age of 18. All youth who are involved with DCP&P have the right to keep their case open until they turn 21.



For help understanding your services
call the Rutgers Child Advocacy
Clinic. see page 21 for contact info.

What are some services that are available to help me transition out of foster care?

There are many services that will help you transition out of foster care, and provide you with skills and information you need to become an independent adult.

High School Diploma/GED: Your DCP&P caseworker can help arrange tutoring or after school programs to help you graduate or get your GED.

Job Training: Every county in New Jersey has a job training programs for teens and young adults. These job training programs can help you develop the skills you need to obtain a job in the area you want to work. They can also help you write a resume and apply for jobs. These programs can be found at the One Stop Center in each county.



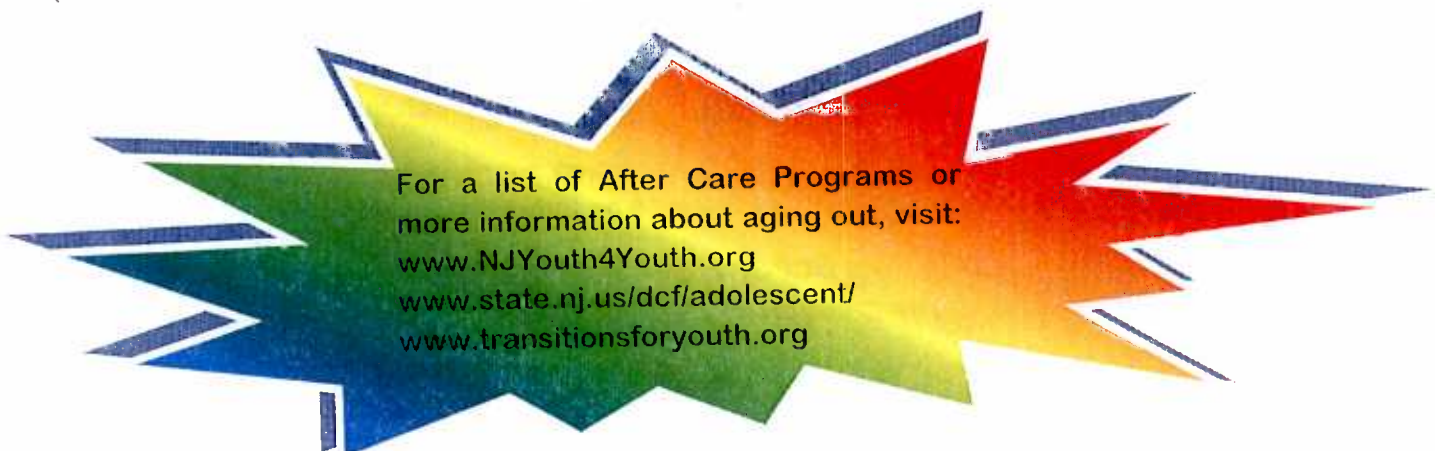
Life Skills Classes: These classes teach basic living skills such as balancing a budget, opening a checking account, finding a place to live, and cooking. These classes will also assist you with furthering your education, exploring different careers, and getting a job. You can begin these classes after you turn 14. Your DCP&P worker should refer you to these classes. If he or she hasn't yet referred you for these classes, ask!

After Care Programs: After Care programs provide case management and services to youth, ages 18-21, who are or were in a DCP&P placement. In order to be eligible for an After Care Program, you must have been in a DCP&P out of home placement after your 16th birthday.

Referrals to Aftercare Programs can be made 2 ways:

1. DCP&P can make the referral 6 months prior to closing your DCP&P case – OR
2. You can call the program directly and refer yourself.

After Care Programs can help you find a job, find housing, and help obtain educational services and any other need you might have. They can also provide wrap around funds (see below) to help you with necessary or emergency expenses.



Wrap Around Funds: There may be some money available to you to pay for things like rent, security deposits, furniture, driving lessons, tutoring, additional school expenses, and transportation. In order to have access to this money:

1. For youth Age 16 up to the day of your 21st birthday you must be:
 - Involved in a life skills program; or
 - In a transitional living housing program
2. For Age 18 up to the day of your 22nd birthday you must be:
 - Actively involved in an After Care Program; and
 - Have been in a DCP&P placement after your 16th birthday; and
 - Have completed, or be actively involved in, life skills classes.

If I want to go to college, can I get help to pay for it?

Yes, but there are a few steps you must follow first to get financial help with college:

1. Get your high school diploma or GED.
2. Apply for any federal and/or state financial assistance by filling out your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.ed.gov. There are many different types of financial aid ***grants and scholarships*** that you can qualify for and do not have to pay back. There are also student ***loans***, which you will have to pay back, with interest. It is best if you can pay for your education with financial aid grants and scholarships.

If you are in foster care, more than likely, you should qualify as an independent student when filling out this form. Make sure you ask your DCP&P worker or the school's financial aid advisor for assistance to see if you qualify.

3. Get accepted into a college, trade school, or training program.
4. You can help pay for the cost of college through the NJ Foster Care Scholars Program which can pay for public, private, in-state, out-of-state, part-time, or full time programs. These programs can be a 4 year college, a 2 year program, or vocational and technical schools as well. NJ Scholars may pay up to \$5000 a year (\$2500 per semester), in addition to what you get from FAFSA, to help with school costs which includes childcare or transportation to help you successfully graduate.

NJ Foster Care Scholars

In order to be eligible to apply for the NJ Foster Care Scholars Program, you must:

- Be between the ages of 16 and 22 years old when you first apply for the assistance
- Have a high school diploma or GED
- Be accepted at a school that accepts federal funding – AND
- Complete a FAFSA application

In addition, there are other eligibility requirements, based on how long you have been in, or were in, a DCP&P placement. Your case does not currently have to be open with DCP&P in order to qualify for NJ Scholars.

You are eligible for NJ Scholars if you are, or were, in a DCP&P placement:

- For 9 months or more after your 16th birthday – OR
- After the age of 14 for a total of 18 months – OR
- Have lived in an Independent Living Arrangement or Transitional Living Program for 3 months or more

You are eligible for NJ Scholars if you were adopted out of the DCP&P System:

- After the age of 12

You are eligible for NJ Scholars if your guardian has Kinship Legal Guardianship (KLG) and:

- KLG was awarded after you turned 16.
- To find out if your guardian has KLG, you can ask your guardian, law guardian, or DCP&P caseworker.



What if college is not an option and I cannot work:

- If you cannot go to college because of a disability and you cannot work because of a disability you may qualify for supplemental security income (SSI).
- In order to qualify for SSI you need to be unable to work.
- If you think you may qualify for SSI contact your local social security office to fill out the appropriate paperwork.



RESOURCE GUIDE



Hotline and Emergency Numbers

Suicide Prevention

T:800.273.8255

Gay and Lesbian National Hotline

T:888.843.4564

The National Dating Abuse Hotline

T:866.331.9474

Or text "loveis" to 77054

National Runaway Switchboard

T:800.786.2929

Rape Hotline

T:800.656.4673

New Jersey Child Abuse Hotline

T:877.652.2873 (1-877-NJ ABUSE)

To Report Discrimination

New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

T:609.292.4605

www.njcivilrights.org

Lambda Legal Help Desk

T:866.542.8336

www.lambdalegal.org

Family Acceptance Project

FamilyProject.sfsu.edu

New Jersey ACLU

T:973.642.2086

www.aclu-nj.org

Ali Forney Center

3591 Broadway #2C

New York, NY

T:917.822.5011

Legal Services



Lambda Legal

120 Wall Street, 19th Floor

New York, NY 10005-3904

T: 212.809.8585

www.lambdalegal.org/nhq

National Center for Lesbian Rights

870 Market Street Suite 370

San Francisco, CA 94102

T: 415.392.6257

info@nclrights.org

Rutgers Child Advocacy Clinic

123 Washington St., 4th Floor

Newark, NJ 07102

T:973.353.3196

Law Guardians Offices

ATLANTIC CITY/CAPE MAY

Citicenter Building
1300 Atlantic Ave., Mezzanine
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
T:609.441.3773

BURLINGTON

100 High St., 1st Floor, Suite 102
Mount Holly, NJ 08060
T:609.518.3068

CUMBERLAND

14 East Commerce St., 3rd Floor
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
T:856.459.7350

HUNTERDON/MERCER

840 Bear Tavern Rd., 2nd Floor
Mountain View Office Park
Ewing, NJ 08628
T:609.530.3623

MONMOUTH/OCEAN

630 Bangs Ave., 3rd Floor
Asbury Park, NJ 07728
T:732.869.2268

PASSAIC

66 Hamilton St., 5th Floor
Patterson, NJ 07505
T:973.977.4185

SUSSEX

20 E. Clinton St.
Newton, NJ 07860
T:973.383.5002

BERGEN/HUDSON

60 State St., 3rd Floor
Hackensack, NJ 07601
T:201.996.8065

CAMDEN/GLOUCESTER/SALEM

20 East Clementon Rd., Suite 301- N.
Gibbsboro, NJ 08026
T:856.346.8008

ESSEX

31 Clinton St., 2nd Floor
PO Box 46007
Newark, NJ 07101
T:973.648.4572

MIDDLESEX

172A New St.
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
T:732.246.5912

MORRIS

7 Sussex Ave.
Morristown, NJ 07960
T:973.451.5630

SOMERSET

75 Veterans Memorial Dr. E., Suite 203
Somerville, NJ 08876
T:908.575.3200

UNION COUNTY

1100 E. Jersey St.
Elizabeth, NJ 07201
T:908.820.8971



Medical Services

AIDS Community Care Alternative Program –

Passaic County

317 Pennsylvania Ave
Paterson, NJ 07503
T: 973.278.6873

Shelters and Homeless Services

National Runaway Switchboard

T:800.786.2929 (1-800-RUNAWAY)

They can help you whether you are homeless, thinking about leaving home, have left home, or want to go home.

New Jersey Shelters:

Covenant House-Newark

330 Washington St.

Newark, NJ

T:800.999.9999

Somerset Home-Bridgewater

49 Brahma Ave.

Bridgewater, NJ

T:908.526.6605

Covenant House-Atlantic City

929 Atlantic Ave.

Atlantic City, NJ

T:800.999.9999

New York City Shelter:

Ali Forney Center

527 West 22nd St., 1st Floor

New York, NY

T:212.206.0574

Philadelphia Shelter:

Covenant House-Philadelphia

31 East Armat St.

Philadelphia, PA

T:800.999.9999

LGBTQ Transitional Residential Services



Sylvia's Place
Metro. Community Church
446 W 36 Street
New York, NY
6 emergency shelter beds for
LGBTQ youth

Green Chimneys
New York, NY
T:718.732.1501
212.491.5911 ext.12
tnolan@greenchimneys.org
Age 18 to 21; 4 emergent support housing
male, female, and transgender

Ali Forney Center
3591 Broadway # 2C
New York, NY
T:917.822.5011

Educational Resources



NJ GLSEN
PO Box 261
Hightstown, NJ 08520
T:609.448.8243
cnj@njglsen.org

LGBTQ Focused Suicide Prevention

The Trevor Project
T:866.488.7386
<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/lifelinechat>

- The Trevor Project provides a nationwide, 24/7 crisis intervention lifeline, digital community and advocacy/educational programs that create a safe, supportive and positive environment for everyone.
- Trained counselors are ready 24/7 to talk to you. If you're a young person looking for someone to listen and understand without judgment or if you're feeling suicidal, please call.
- It's free and confidential.
- U.S. CALLS ONLY

Support Groups

Gay Peer Services at Ramapo College of New Jersey

Ramapo Valley Road, Women's Center C-220

Mahwah, NJ 07430-1680

T:201.684.7473

qps@ramapo.edu

- Coming Out Support
- Individual Peer Counseling for LGBTQH Students
- STD Testing Information
- Student Advocacy
- LGBT Resource Information and Other Services

Hudson Pride Connections-Youth Connect

32 Jones Street

Jersey City, NJ 07306

T:201.963.4779

- Provides a safe space for LGBTQ youth ages 13-20 living in Hudson County, to socialize, use the computer, and participate in workshops.

The Pride Center of NJ

85 Raritan Avenue, Suite 100

Highland Park, NJ

T:908.313.5900

732.846.2232

info@pridecenter.org

- The mission of the PCNJ is to provide comprehensive programming fostering the health and well-being of the LGBTQI community, increase public acceptance, and champion social change through education/outreach.
- For LGBTQI youth 17 years old and younger and their straight allies

Transgender Groups

Thank Goodness I'm Fabulous (T.G.I.F.) Peer Advocate Program

African American Office of Gay Concerns

877 Broad Street Suite 211

Newark, NJ 07102

Contact: Francesca M. Saint-Fort

T:973.639.0757

Outreach2@aaogc.org

Program designed to provide a safe space for the transgender and questioning community, with particular emphasis on African American and Latino youth and members of the 'ballroom' community; to introduce and support behavioral changes thru community support; provide HIV prevention education and create safer norms to reduce the HIV transmission.

TranStation

Girls Living In the Trans Zone (GLITZ)
Boyz Living in the Trans Zone (BLITZ)
T:201.963.4779
HPC@hudonspride.org

TranStation featuring GLITZ and BLITZ is a series of programs to support the needs of the transgender community through peer support, job development assistance, and education on hormone therapy, name changes, etc. Call for meeting times.

GRAANJ (Gender Rights Advocacy Association of New Jersey)

The Pride Center of NJ
85 Raritan Avenue, Suite 100
Highland Park, NJ 08904
T:732.846.2232
info@graanj.org

A statewide membership organization committed to securing full civil rights for transgender and intersex people, and individuals of non-stereotypical gender identity and expression, without regard to race, religion or sexual orientation.

TrueSelves

The Pride Center of NJ
85 Raritan Avenue
Highland Park, New Jersey 08904
T:201.704.2996
stephaniefyh@gmail.com

A facilitated support group exclusively for and about transgender-identified individuals, regardless of where on the transgender spectrum you believe you live.

PFLAG Transgender Support Group

Church House of the Presbyterian Church at Shrewsbury
352 Sycamore Ave.
Shrewsbury, N.J. 07702
T:908.814.2155
jspflag@gmail.com

A support group specifically catering to transgender individuals and parents or families with transgender children.

LGBTQ Community Groups

Gay Activist Alliance in Morris County — GAAMC

P.O. Box 137
Convent Station, NJ 07961
T:973.285.1595
info@gaamc.org

Hudson Pride Connections Center

32 Jones St
Jersey City, NJ 07306
T: 201.963.4779
info@hudsonpride.org

HMI: Newark - Hetrick-Martin Institute

Located in the Rutgers T.E.E.M.
Gateway/YES Center
200 Washington Street
Newark, NJ 07101
T:212.674.2600 ext.284.
Contact: Kara Tucina Olidge, Ph.D
kolidge@hmi.org

Offering counseling and crisis management, health and wellness programming, academic enrichment, job readiness and arts and cultural programming, HMI is pioneering Newark's first LGBTQ after-school program.

LGBTQ Teen Groups

GLBT OF HUNTERDON COUNTY

North County Branch of the Hunterdon
County Library
65 Halsted Street
Clinton, NJ 08809
Contact: Matthew Loscialo
matthewl@student.fdu.edu

Open to Gay & Lesbian Teens, Adults, their friends parents, family members. There is no membership fee to come to meetings. They have movie night at the Library. For outings like movie night & eating out there is a cost.

The Q-Spot Jersey Shore Community Center

Jersey Shore Community Center Project
57 South Main Street #234
Neptune, NJ 07753
T:732.481.5254
info@jsqspot.org

The mission of The PCNJ is to provide comprehensive programming which fosters the health and well-being of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexed and questioning (LGBTIQ) community, and to increase public acceptance and champion social change for the LGBTIQ community through education and outreach.

Keeping It Safe

Camden Area Health Education Center,
Support Group
514 Cooper Street
Camden, NJ 08102
Contact:Derrick Gibbs
T:856.963.2432 ext.205
gibbs_d@camden-ahec.org

KIS meets to discuss issues such as: "Coming out," self-esteem, sexual identity, decision making, cultural issues, communication, negotiation, film discussions, HIV/AIDS, etc. Group members are provided with a safe confidential place to meet to discuss issues that affect them. The group also participates in extracurricular activities such as: field trips and recreational activities.

Teen Space

PLANNED PARENTHOOD of Southern New
Jersey
317 Broadway
Camden, NJ 08103
Contact:Jennifer Jo
T:856.365.3519 ext.232
jenniferjo.stevens@ppsnj.org

Teen Space is a group providing safe space for LGBTQ teens in the Camden, NJ area.

Youth Making a Difference Camden Area Health Education Center, Drop-In Center

514 Cooper Street
Camden, NJ 08102
Contact:Derrick Gibbs
gibbs_d@camden-ahec.org

The Drop-In Center is a safe haven for LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13-23. Youth engage in health education and social activities.

HiTops ("Health Interested Teens Own Program on Sexuality")

21 Wiggins Street
Princeton NJ 08540
T:609.683.5155
hitopskids@hitops.org
http://www.hitops.org

"First & Third" is a professionally run group that provides educational and social support for GLBT youth. Activities include rap sessions, phone help, guest speakers, and mutual sharing.

BRAY Bergen Rainbow Youth
Meets at the Ethical Culture Society Building

687 Larch Avenue
Teaneck, NJ 07666
T:888.345.1886
info@b-ray.org
http://www.b-ray.org

Social support group in a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQ kids, ages 14-21 from 2-5 PM. Meets every Sunday (except during three day weekends) from 2-5 PM. Other social events are scheduled throughout the year.

ThePride Center of New Jersey Youth Groups

1048 Livingston Avenue
North Brunswick, NJ 08902
T:732.846.2232

Under the Rainbow: Both a discussion group and social group for GLBT people ages 18-25. *Youth Drop In:* For LGBTQI youth and straight allies 17 & under.

ViSAGE (Verona Straight and Gay Experience) Visage for Youth, Inc.

Verona, NJ 07044
T:973.285.1595
visageforyouth@hotmail.com

ViSAGE is a social support network for young people ages 14-21, who are self-identified as GLBTQ; and straight or heterosexual individuals. Straight members must be supportive of the gay community or seek to educate themselves in the area of sexual or gender orientation to be supportive of friends, family members or peers. ViSAGE provides their members with appropriate peer interactions, promotes a positive entry into the GLBT community and seeks to educate members about receiving acceptance in all communities.

The Attic Youth Center
255 South 16th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
T:215.545.4331

The Attic creates opportunities for LGBTQ youth to develop into healthy, independent, civic-minded adults within a safe and supportive community, and promotes the acceptance of LGBTQ youth in society. All services provided by The Attic Youth Center are free including life skills programming and mental health services such as counseling.

LGBTQ Student Resources Groups

ALI (All Lifestyles Included)

Monmouth University
Carol Afflito Conference Room
3rd Floor, Student Center
400 Cedar Avenue
West Long Branch, NJ
T:732.923.4739
ali@monmouth.edu

The purpose of ALI is to raise awareness of homosexuality in the community and the Monmouth University campus. The group works towards fostering an environment, which helps people of all sexual orientations to feel comfortable with people from all lifestyles, in an effort to present an understanding where no one is made to feel that they have to hide their own sexuality.

LEAGUE Foundation

1 AT&T Way, Room 4B214J
Bedminster, NJ 07921
T:703.691.5734
info@leaguefoundation.org

Since 1996, the LEAGUE Foundation has awarded 50 college scholarships totaling more than \$80,000 to self-identified LGBTQ students graduating US High Schools based on the following achievements: a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale; significant involvement in community service; and acceptance to an accredited US college or university.

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG) of New Jersey

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of LGBTQ persons, their families and friends through support, education, and advocacy.

PFLAG Bergen County/Ridgewood

P.O. Box 1330
Ridgewood, NJ 07450-1330
T:201.287.0318
info@bergenpflag.org

PFLAG Collingswood

PO Box 8941
Collingswood, NJ 08108
T:609.202.4622
pflagcollingswood@yahoo.com

PFLAG Hunterdon County

12 Deer Path Rd
Califon, NJ 07830
T:908.752.1370
pflaghc@yahoo.com

PFLAG Jersey Shore

1681 Ridgeway Rd.
Toms River, NJ 08757
T:908.814.2155
jspflag@gmail.com

PFLAG Morris County

Brookside Community Church
PO Box 490 East Main St
Brookside, NJ 7926
T:973.543.7229
PFLAG.Morris@verizon.net

PFLAG North Jersey

c/o First Presbyterian and Trinity Church
111 Irvington Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079
T:908.789.7489
pflagwaver@aol.com

PFLAG Princeton

Trinity Church
33 Mercer Street
Princeton, NJ 08540
T:732.679.8812

PFLAG Sparta/Northwest NJ

c/o Sparta United Methodist Church
71 Sparta Ave.
Sparta, NJ 07871
T:973.729.9909

Links to important Websites

www.gayhealth.com

Lists a small but useful list of gay-oriented, health-related resource links.

www.gaycenter.org

The NYC gay and lesbian center's site, it includes a schedule of the center's events, NYC resources, and links.

www.GLBTCentral.com

All kinds of LGBTQ info in one centralized location.

transsexual.org

Contains lots of information about transsexuality, including historical and biological perspectives.

www.WPATH.org

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (formerly Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association); official site for the Harry Benjamin guidelines for transitioning. They decide upon the standards of care and ethical guidelines for medical doctors and psychologists to adhere to when treating transgender patients who want to transition.

www.njgaylife.com

A resource directory with a calendar of events and news for NJ.

www.BiNetUSA.org

An organization that lobbies for policy changes and education about bisexuality. Their expressed purpose is to eliminate "biphobia" and orientation discrimination.

www.JCLGO.org

A vital voice in Jersey City committed to bringing the LGBTQ community together.

www.genderpsychology.org

Written by a transsexual developmental psychologist; includes info, resources, personal experiences, and links.

www.NJYouth4Youth.org

Website run by the Rutgers Child Advocacy Center. Great site for learning about aging out and other issues.