

School Support Group for LGBTQ Students

Posted on January 23, 2020

The school served as the primary interaction or unit for the socialization of children and adolescents in their growing stage. It is a societal culture in which every individual has to go through certain developmental stages to be considered successful and a regular participant in society. The schools communicate and inculcate knowledge regarding the beliefs, values, and norms. Each learner is expected to well understand the knowledge about the disciplinary actions, rules and prescribed curriculum. This fact is ignored, that every human is not the same as their needs. Thus, the teachings that are considered normal sometimes communicate the message of intolerance and rejection towards this particular population. The individual needs depend on their personal preferences and surrounding influences.

The bisexual/lesbian/gay community is often ignored, and their psychological and moral needs are not met by the other people within their circle. However, many schools have begun practicing multiculturalism in every aspect of the practices conducted within the school. But, transgender, gays, and lesbians are excluded from any particular attention and consideration. The school counseling professionals shall recognize the needs of such a population and communicate them to make sure that the GLBT community does not feel ignored.

The GLBT community faces the crisis of developing their identity or personal space within a homophobic and heterosexist school environment. Due to their sexual orientation, the GLB population often faces stigmatization from their peers and is left isolated due to the warm attitude of other fellow students. It puts the GLB population at risk of substance abuse, drug abuse, suicide and criminal behaviors. The general observation about this population is that they carry low self-esteem, different sexual behavior and struggles with anxiety and depression due to their male peer's behavior.

The isolation from the family, peers, and society may encourage the GLB population to seek any external advice or counseling to deal with their psychology. The different behaviors of the GLB population could be identified from the beginning. The parents shall not hide it from the school counseling authority and let the child explore their individuality. It shall be taken into consideration by the school management that the counseling services available at the school shall deal with the issue of homosexuality in a normal way and help the child regain their internal strength and confidence to be a productive element of society.

The GLB population may feel safe at school if the appropriate measures like the direct intervention with perpetrators of discrimination and harassment, education of staff and students, nondiscrimination policies, and, most importantly, encourage the GLB students to accept their identity and to push back and ignore the ignorant behavior of society.

Review of Literature

The GLB population was not given the status of a different population before the passing of the policy of accepting this community with their individuality. Thus, it has limited knowledge and research available. Hammond and Fontaine, in 1996, researched the formation of sexual identity. The purpose of this investigation was to provide adequate information for the counselors to deal with the situation at hand. It was identified in this research that the GLB population shows an increased risk of “coming out” issues and mental health risks. Sexual identity is the fundamental component behind forming the personality of an individual. It requires little effort or consideration to develop heterosexuality in a healthy society. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.)

Homosexuality is the opposite and may drag an individual towards isolation and secrecy and may drain their capabilities in finding out and building up their personality. The counselors shall keep in consideration that these persons are already facing isolation from society, and there are chances that a single wrong statement may turn them into a deviant. Thus, the counselors shall keep up with the ethical considerations, such as keeping up with the confidentiality requirements of the individual and the family. The sessions shall involve the factor of therapeutic frequency regarding the situation of the GLB population. The modern educational system has the fundamental responsibility of dealing appropriately with the GLB population without degrading them and confusing them about their sexual identity.

Slate, in 2004, proposed this theory that the counselors address GLB individuals shall be free from any homophobia and shall acknowledge the fact that there are other types of lifestyles, too. Any counselor having a slight inclination towards the homophobia concept will have a negative impact on the therapy. Moreover, they will be of no assistance to heterosexual behavior and improve the self-esteem of the GLB population. Also, the counselors shall be aware of the needs of this population and shall plan accordingly so that every effort has a resultant approach to the individual seeking help.

The counselors could assist them in exploring their sexual identity without getting any disease like AIDs or involvement in any drug abuse. For this purpose and to establish their authenticity and influence on the individual, the counselor may use examples from history, media, and literature. Thus, the counselors shall have knowledge regarding the support groups, local publications and social services that deal with similar situations.

Proposal's Objectives for the Group

- To formulate a closed therapy support group for the GLB population in the local schools.
- The aim of the support therapy is to offer a positive environment in which they will feel safe and may open up to others about their issues. The support group shall be formed on specific concern grounds. The group shall focus on disclosing sexual orientation, understanding attitude and relationship issues, coping with homophobia, connecting to community resources and self-

acceptance as a GLB individual.

- It will serve as a platform for peer contact. The people passed through the same issue will be able to communicate about the problem and offer them an appropriate solution. It will help them grow through the personal experience of others like them.

Composition of Group

The group will comprise 6-9 male or female high-school students identifying themselves as the heterosexist. The counselor of the group is mandatory to be an individual who is heterosexual, too but has all the qualifications to be a counselor.

Logistics

Recruitment:

The school curriculum and policies shall include multicultural sensitivity and awareness among the learners through classroom discussions and guidance. Thus, these efforts will promote social leadership, tolerance towards the GLB population and cultural acceptance of people having other-than-average needs. To participate in these discussions, an open announcement for the GLB community will be made so that they openly participate in the debates without any hindrance. The school management and the teacher's staff shall be well aware of the existence of such groups, and they shall adopt a motivating and positive behavior towards establishing these support groups. The teachers may also help individuals with different needs in their classes to join the team. (Kosciw et al., 2020)

Screening and Selection Process:

The students coming up to participate in this group will be passed through a thirty-minute screening process. The participants will be asked to express their opinions and expectations of their panel discussions. After the finalization of the students participating in the support group, the counselor in the first session will disclose their sexual orientation and will begin explaining the type of hardships they have faced and how they have coped with them. It will be a strategy to comfort the individuals to feel safe and comfortable to talk about their own experiences and sexual orientation.

The screening process is important as it communicates the nature of the group and leaves it the choice for the individuals to either join it or not and even for the counselors to plan the dynamics of the therapeutic session.

Also, the counselor will be able to shortlist the people who are coming to seek help and will not jeopardize the purpose of the group. The members will be selected according to their motivation level

and behaviors. Before the team actually begins its session, each member will be asked about their consent and will be requested to state their current situation, expectations, and approval so that they may assess at the end of the session whether or not they have been able to achieve the expected targets. The counselors will be requested to have individual consent because the prenatal influence may further demotivate the person.

Frequency and Duration of Group Sessions

The group meetings will be conducted on each Wednesday during the lunch break or after school in the counselor's department. The meetings are planned to begin in the first quarter of the educational session and end three weeks before school vacations. It is expected that in the case of normal circumstances the support group will be able to have twenty-five sessions in total. The members of the group, at the end of a session, will be requested to join again after returning from summer break.

Group Process and Content

The counselor shall be focused on developing a harmonized link between the content and the group activities. Before beginning of the session and for smooth execution of processes, the team will conduct a preparatory meeting so that they will know about the agenda of the meeting and are prepared with a positive attitude for looking up to help from other people. The leader of the group, i.e., a counselor, shall explain the ground expectations of the panel and shall well communicate the message about the focus and determination of developing this team. Also, the group members will be asked to give their suggestions on how the procedures shall proceed so that once the session begins, the individuals will be interested in participating.

The primary group's sessions shall involve in developing contact and harmony within the group. The team expectations and norms will be reviewed again to improve the group's performance. The leader will motivate the participants to communicate and openly express themselves without any foreign influence. The expected behavior of the group members is respecting all members, actively listening, authenticity, exhibiting empathy and feedback orientation.

The group members will be asked to communicate about their sexual orientation and stick to the issues so that everyone gets a chance to speak and participate. The careful selection of bibliographical content will be used to support the purpose of the group and to influence the aim of the therapeutic sessions. The content shall avoid any conflicting situations and thoughts. It may damage the motivation of the participants, and they may feel disengaged from the concept.

Once the main sessions are over, the termination session will not be executed there, and then rather, several sessions shall be devoted to this phase. The reason for carrying out in this way is that the GLB population may develop a strong affiliation with the group settings, and they shall not be demotivated if the therapy ends at once. The ending sessions will include discussions about their aims in life and

expectations for the future. Also, what was their initial state before the beginning of the session, and how did they feel after the end of the session? The members at the end of the session will be requested to submit their overall experience and will be encouraged to report any resentment towards the group leaders or other participants.

The team members will be asked to evaluate each other positively and will be asked what improvement they have felt after attending these therapy sessions. Their positive contribution will help the individuals to attend to any left-over unattended business confidently.

Evaluation

The terminating of the group sessions before the summer break will help the counselor to arrange a twenty minutes meeting with each team member alone. It will be focused on letting the individual speak for things they are shy about or do not want to talk about in public or presence of others. The counselor will have the Performa submitted by each before the beginning of the session and will be asked to evaluate themselves and how they feel about the change in themselves at the end of the therapeutic sessions.

If the individuals are confused about the change in them, they will be requested to write it so that the counselor may help them to differentiate the differences in them before participating in the group sessions. If the individual feels that the summer break will not help him in this regard, he will be suggested community services so that he may not again get trapped in isolation.

The counselor may help their participants by giving their contact number or email for anytime assistance or referrals to other groups with a similar environment. Even during the sessions, the individual with the inappropriate behavior will be asked to leave the group. The screening process is not in the initial phase, but any element irrelevant to the business will be eliminated and excused from participating. If any of the members harms or demotivates the fellow members, it is the responsibility of the group leader they immediately intermediate the situation and motivate the individuals to conduct it in a positive way.

Conclusion

The GLB population, though, has some unique needs but is are equally important part of society. Every person is born with special needs. Growing in the 21st century demands the advancement that every individual shall be allowed to live of their own free will. The support groups are expected to turn out a positive approach for encouraging the GLB population to lead their life with higher self-esteem and confidence. There are possible chances that this community may prove to be more productive and active elements of the society than the rational beings.

References

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Health disparities among LGBTQ youth. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-youth/lgbtq-youth/health-disparities-among-lgbtq-youth.html>