



Unit 5: Effective and Professional Communication with Inmates

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Acknowledgement

Before we get started we would like to acknowledge the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) for contributing significant content for this training.

NIC has an e-learning that covers communication with LGBTI inmates in more depth.

For the full training developed by NIC, *How to Communicate Effectively and Professionally with Inmates: Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Gender Non-Conforming Inmates* or more information on this important topic go to:

<http://nicic.gov>

Introductions

Faculty

- Name, Title
- Work Location
- Experience with PREA and/or training

Participants

- Name, Position



Employee Training Series Outline

This training is part of series of trainings to assist agencies with PREA Standards 115.31, 115.131, 115.231, and 115.331

Unit 1:	The Prison Rape Elimination Act: Overview of the Law and Your Role
Unit 2:	Inmates' Rights to be Free from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment and Staff and Inmate Rights to be Free from Retaliation for Reporting
Unit 3 Part I:	Prevention and Detection
Unit 3 Part II:	Response and Reporting
Unit 4:	Professional Boundaries and False Allegations
Unit 5:	Effective and Professional Communication with Inmates

Objectives for Unit 5

1. Define appropriate terminology to use when communicating with the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) population
2. Conduct professional communication with inmates, including LGBTI inmates
3. Review and understand any relevant agency policy specific to LGBTI inmates

Objective 1: Define appropriate terminology to use when communicating with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) population

To meet this objective we will discuss:

- Key terms and their definitions
- How professional communication supports PREA efforts

Key Terms

Activity

- Using the worksheet you received, take a few minutes and review the words and definitions provided
- Draw a line from the word in the left column to the correct corresponding definition in the right column
- We will discuss the answers in a few minutes



Myths and Misconceptions

Activity

- What are some myths or misconceptions you have heard about LGBTI inmates?
 - In your table group take a few minutes to answer the question that was given to you on the index card
 - Discuss why this question is a myth or misconception
 - Select a reporter who will capture notes of your best ideas
 - Select a reporter who will share your thinking with the entire group at the end of the activity



What is Respect?



Positive feelings of esteem or deference for a person, and includes specific actions and conduct that reflects back that esteem



Acknowledging others as human beings and treating them humanely and with basic dignity



Simple phrases, gestures and words like “please” and “thank you,” and direct eye contact show a level of respect



Respecting an individual does not mean condoning criminal behavior or that you agree with their identity and behavior



Respecting inmates increases the likelihood that you will be respected in return and may be a critical difference for you in a tense situation or conflict

The Words We Use are Powerful

- The language staff uses helps to create a culture of safety and respect
- If staff use disrespectful, offensive or abusive language, it creates an environment that condones the same behavior from the inmates
 - Staff language and actions can impact the emotional well-being of colleagues and inmates-especially LGBTI staff and inmates
 - Consider that you may not always be aware which staff or inmates identify as LGBTI
 - Your language helps create a culture of what is acceptable or unacceptable to say

The Words We Use are Powerful, Continued

What is safe and respectful language?

- Use professional and culturally appropriate language as opposed to slang or slurs
- Consider that everyone does not identify as heterosexual or is gender conforming
- Accept that sometimes you will say the wrong thing
- Be aware of how your own beliefs affect your perceptions, and how words you may use on the job could be offensive to others

Objective 2: Conduct professional communication with inmates, including LGBTI inmates

To meet this objective we will discuss:

- Appropriate pronoun usage as a way to conduct professional communication with LGBTI inmates
- Communication tools for staff
- Dynamics of LGBTI inmates in confinement settings

Pronoun Usage

Let's spend a few minutes exploring the importance of our use of PRONOUNS in effective communication

- Pronoun usage is important to consider when working with LGBTI, and especially transgender, inmates
- Using the correct pronoun is a way to show respect and to demonstrate acknowledgement of their gender identity

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun in a sentence

- Best practices suggest that transgender females (persons who are anatomically male but who identify as female) be addressed as “she” and referred to as “her”
- Transgender males (persons who are anatomically female but who identify as male) should be addressed as “he” and referred to as “him”

Pronoun Usage, Continued

- Depending on your agency policy, you may consider addressing a transgender inmate by their preferred first name
- Pronoun usage may be spelled out in policy or in a staff manual
- In a correctional setting, gender-neutral language means addressing the inmate or referring to them by their legal last name such as “inmate _____”
- Pronouns pertaining to any particular inmate should be applied consistently throughout the institution

Tools for Staff

Effective Communication:

- Is an important skill that will help you in your job, as well as manage and keep staff/inmates safe
- Combines a set of skills including:
 - nonverbal communication
 - attentive listening
 - the ability to manage stress in the moment
 - and the capacity to recognize and understand your own emotions and those of the person with whom you are communicating
- Consists of language and terminology that does not perpetuate stereotypes
- Uses open-ended questions

Everyone, including staff and inmates, needs to be respectful and professional

Tools for Staff, Continued

Effective Communication Yields Benefits

- Give the inmate a straightforward explanation of your purpose in asking them questions, or of what you are trying to accomplish
- Take steps to maximize respect and privacy when an LGBTI inmate is disclosing confidential information (as you would with any inmate)
- Decrease defensiveness through listening and open lines of communication between staff and inmates
- Create a facility/agency culture of safety and respect – including sexual safety

Non-Verbal Communication

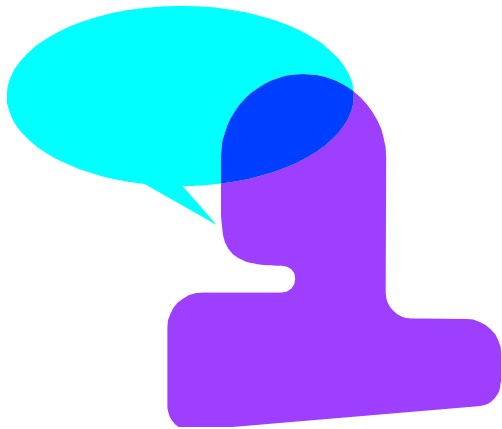
- Language can be verbal and nonverbal
- Over 70% of our communication is nonverbal
- Nonverbal communication can include:

- Gestures
- Laughing
- Facial expressions
- Body language

- Snickering
- Ignoring
- Rolling eyes
- Imitating

Professional Language

- Using demeaning, degrading, or devaluing words in front of inmates creates an unhealthy and unsafe atmosphere for staff and inmates
- While it is important to communicate with inmates in language they can understand, refrain from using inappropriate slang or inmate terminology



Discussing Gender and Sexual Orientation

- Before you have a discussion regarding an inmate's gender or sexual orientation ask yourself these questions:
 - When and why might staff need to talk about an inmate's gender or sexual orientation?
 - When, where, and with whom is it appropriate to discuss this information?
 - Are there safety concerns to be considered?
 - What are the circumstances when it would be relevant?
 - What should you do if an inmate self-discloses this information to you?
 - Does your agency/facility policy provide guidance on this matter?

Dynamics: Transgender inmates

- In a recent BJS study, more than 50% of prison and jail inmates experienced a mental health issue during the report period
- Transgender individuals have an even higher rate of anxiety, depression or other related disorders
- Transgender individuals may engage in self-injurious behavior or be at greater risk for suicidal ideation

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statics Special Report, Mental health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates, Doris J. James and Lauren E. Glaze, rev. 12/14/2006

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Mental Health Issues among Gay Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People, Wendy B. Bostwick, PhD, MPH, June 2007

Impact of Discrimination

- “Discrimination” against LGBT persons has been associated with high rates of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse and suicide
 - Experiences of violence and victimization are frequent and have long lasting effects on the individual and the community
 - Personal, family and social acceptance of sexual orientation/gender identity affects mental health and personal safety

Sources: American Psychological Association, 2011 Answers to your Questions about Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression, APA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns Office and APA Public and Member Communications

HealthyPeople.gov, U.S. Department of Health Services, April 2013

Impact of Discrimination, Continued

- LGBT youth are at a significantly higher risk than heterosexual peers for homelessness and substance abuse
- As of yet, there is little research regarding intersex individuals
 - They may experience some or all of the same type of bias directed at the LGBT population

Source: Laura Garnette, Angela Irvine, Caroly Reyes, and Shannan Wiber, 2011 “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Youth and the Juvenile Justice System” In Juvenile Justice: Advancing Research, Policy and Practice (eds. F.T. Sherman and F.H. Jacobs), John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey, pp. 156-173.

Responding to Uncertain/Uncomfortable Situations

- What do you do if you witness another staff member using offensive or disrespectful words or actions toward an inmate?
- What do you do if you witness an inmate using offensive or disrespectful words or actions toward another inmate?

Activity

- In your table groups, review the brief scenario you have been provided
- Discuss what action you think the staff person must take
- Select a recorder to capture notes of your best ideas
- Select a reporter who will share your thinking with the entire group at the end of the activity



Objective 3: Review and understand any relevant agency policy specific to LGBTI inmates

To meet this objective we will:

- Review relevant agency policy
- Discuss any guidance agency/facility policy provides in communication and interaction with LGBTI inmates

Activity

- Review the set of policies, directives, memos, post orders you receive related to LGBTI inmates
- Based on what you have learned today, with your other table team members examine them for:
 - Clarity
 - Consistency
 - Gender Sensitivity



Making a Commitment

- Identify one area of communicating with inmates including the LGBTI population for which you commit to work on based on the training today
- Write it down on a piece of paper and share with one member from your group



Continuing the Conversation

- Talking about LGBTI and gender non-conforming issues may be uncomfortable and may bring up personal concerns for you
- We encourage you to seek help through your Employee Assistance Program or other supportive services
 - Check your agency policies
 - Acknowledge and work on areas of discomfort around communication
 - Talk to a supervisor or other appropriate staff if you have questions
 - Seek out additional information to increase your understanding

Unit 5 Objectives

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End of Unit 5

