



PARACHUTE

POWERED BY MAMA DRAGONS





Parents are often caught off-guard. In the space of a moment, their life is abruptly altered. If parents haven't been paying close attention, the news that their child is LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) can hit them hard. There is no parenting book waiting on the shelf to answer their questions. Random searches online may lead to information that is neither trustworthy nor accurate. Sometimes clergy leaders, who are often untrained in LGBTQ issues, are the first people contacted. Lacking answers, parents often turn to that very same child who just shared a tender and vulnerable truth with them, to ask questions their child is not prepared to answer, reversing the support role to the child supporting the parent.

We at Mama Dragons believe there is a better solution.



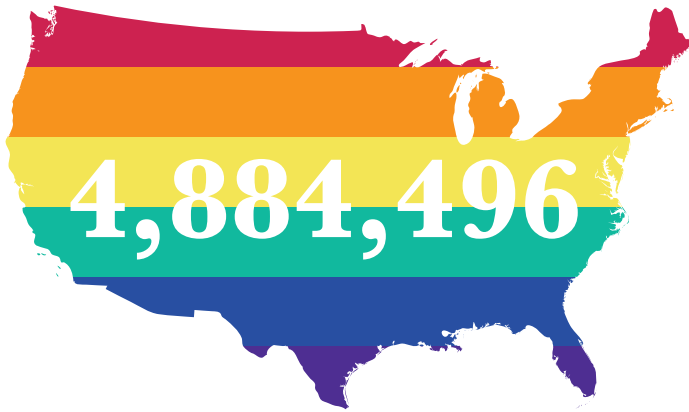
Mama Dragons' mission is to support, educate, and empower mothers of LGBTQ children. We provide support for our members within safe online spaces where they can meet other mothers with similar stories and share experiences that are mutually beneficial. Empowerment comes as a consequence of both support and education.

Currently there is no evidence-based and user-friendly program to teach parents and caregivers how to effectively and safely parent their LGBTQ child during the first 12 months after they come out. Without such a program, parents are left to find answers to their questions from unreliable online searches, advice from inexperienced friends and family, or untrained clergy leaders. Even worse, they turn to their own LGBTQ children who are then burdened with educating their parents while simultaneously navigating their own emotions around coming out. This miscellaneous, often damaging, information can lead parents to make decisions and take actions that negatively affect their LGBTQ children emotionally and sometimes even physically.

SUPPORT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

This paper discusses the need for a reliable and comprehensive parent education program. It will explore expected outcomes of affirmative parenting during the first 30 days and subsequent 11 months after a child comes out. It will also cover current publicly available resources.

PREVALENCE OF LGBTQ YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES



In the United States, there are 4,884,496 youth between the ages of 13-24 who identify as LGBTQ, according to the Trevor Project's 2017 study National Estimate of LGBTQ Youth Seriously Considering Suicide. In that study, it was estimated that of those youth, more than **1.8 million have seriously considered suicide in the past year.** (Trevor Project, 2020)

Results of The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2020 analytic report, comprising more than 40,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13–24 in the U.S.:

46%

report they wanted **psychological or emotional counseling** from a mental health professional but were unable to receive it in the past 12 months. **40% indicated they were not able to receive care due** to concerns with parental permissions.

10%

reported undergoing **conversion therapy**, with 78% reporting it occurred when they were under age 18

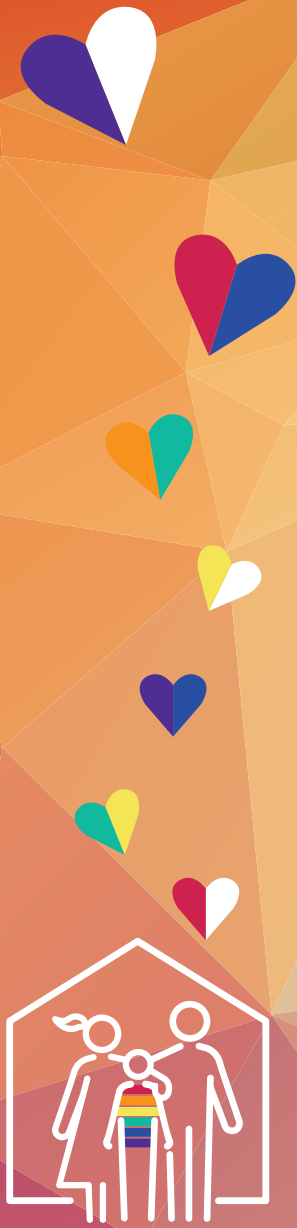


6 out of 10

said that someone tried to convince them to **change their sexual orientation** or gender identity

29%

have experienced **homelessness**, been kicked out, or run away



These statistics are a direct result of parents' actions that negatively affect the LGBTQ children in their care. There is a critical need for parents to understand the correlation between family rejecting behaviors and poor mental health and living conditions among LGBTQ kids. A comprehensive education program available to all parents of LGBTQ kids would provide that understanding, improve mental health, and decrease the rate of LGBTQ youth homelessness.

FAMILY
AFFIRMING vs. REJECTING
BEHAVIORS



Dr. Caitln Ryan, an LGBTQ researcher at San Francisco State University, found the following (Ryan, 2020):

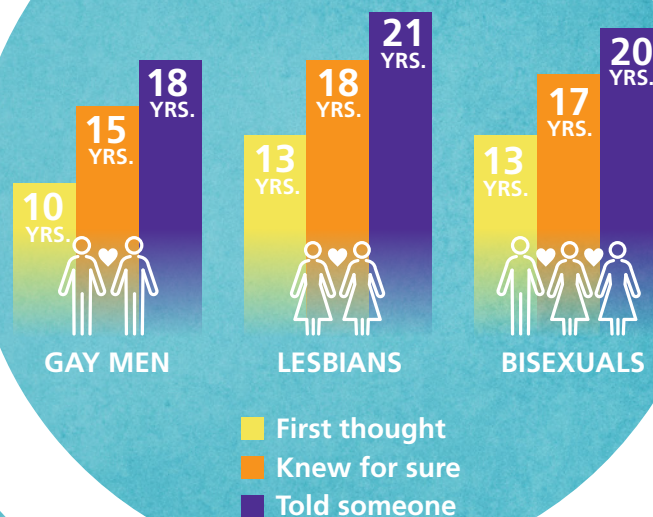
- Kids are self-identifying at earlier ages than previous generations and have greater awareness of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Self-identification at younger ages offered opportunities for positive development for LGBTQ children but also increased the likelihood of rejection and abuse.
- Even though the need for LGBTQ youth support has drastically increased, services for families with

“Family support services are particularly limited for socially and religiously conservative families, who are more likely to engage in rejecting behaviors and who lack accurate information and guidance on how to support their LGBTQ children”

(Ryan, 2020, p. 1).

The Coming Out Experience: *When You Thought, Knew, Told*

Median age at which
gay men/lesbians/bisexuals say
they were or might be LGB.

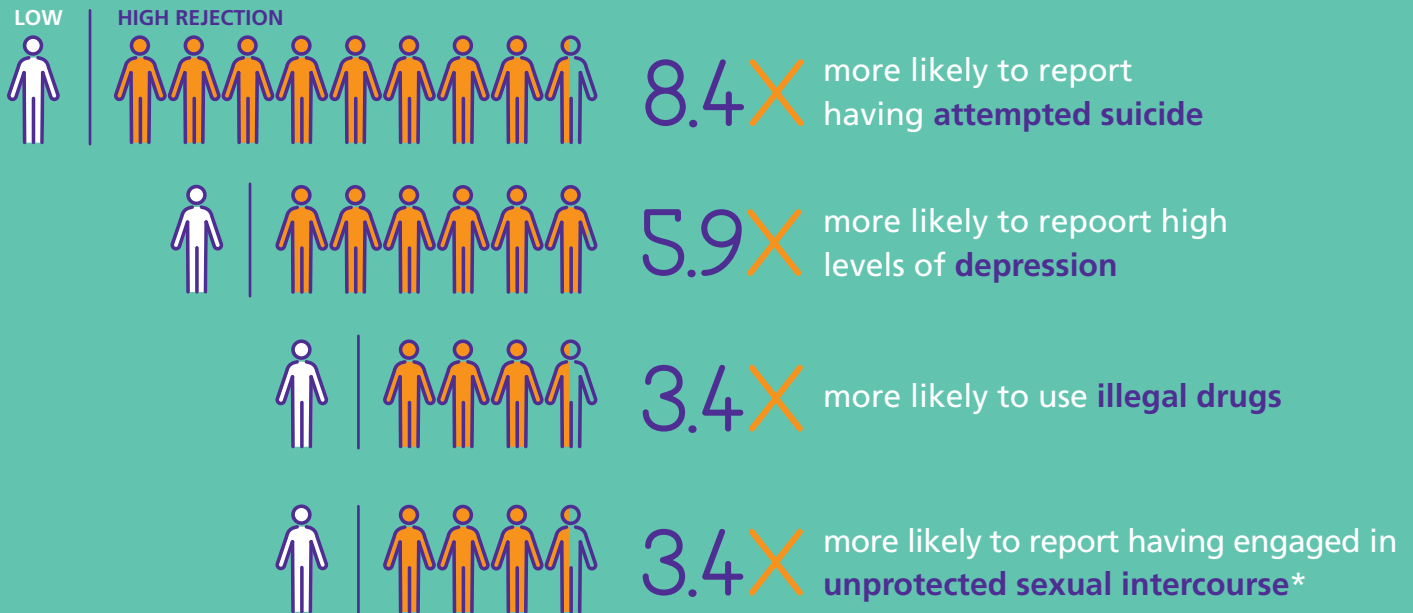




Researchers have proved that the continued importance of parents in the lives of youth is indisputable. Beginning at birth and extending through adolescence, even into emerging adulthood, it affects all relationships beyond those with the parents, and determines one's sense of self-worth. *(Katz-Wise, Rosario, & Tsappis, 2016)*

Parent and family rejection has been indicated as the highest risk factor for LGBTQ children, as there is a clear link between specific parental and caregiver rejecting behaviors and negative health problems for LGBTQ adults. *(Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009)*

According to one study, lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were:



*Compared with peers from families that reported no or low levels of family rejection. *(Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009)*



“Latino men reported the highest number of negative family reactions to their sexual orientation in adolescence of any other ethnic group”

In Latin American families, several cultural factors influence Latinx LGBTQ children. These include religion, gender roles, *familismo*—which emphasizes the importance of family loyalty, dedication, and commitment above individualism, and *machismo*—which emphasizes a strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity and traditional ideas of male and female roles.

The most commonly cited factors included religion (80%), *familismo* (80%), traditional gender roles (60%), and *machismo* (50%). (Zavala & Waters, 2020) These contribute to parents having a negative reaction to their child because their sexuality or gender identity goes against some religious values and/or because they fear for how their children will navigate their minority identities in a culture that is hostile towards sexual and gender minorities. (Zavala & Waters, 2020) In particular, one study found that Latino men reported the highest number of negative family reactions to their sexual orientation in adolescence of any other ethnic group. (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009, p. 350)



Actual or anticipated family acceptance or rejection of LGBTQ youth is important in understanding the youth's experience of minority stress, how the youth is likely to cope with the stress, and consequently, the impact of minority stress on the youth's health. *(Katz-Wise, Rosario, & Tsappis, 2016)*

Researchers found that being aware of actual or even anticipated family acceptance or rejection is important in better understanding an LGBTQ child's experience of minority stress, how they are likely to cope with that stress, and consequently, the impact of minority stress on the child's health. *(Katz-Wise, Rosario, & Tsappis, 2016)*

A comprehensive education program is likely to reduce rejecting behaviors by parents toward their LGBTQ child, resulting in reduction of stress, depression, and suicide rates among LGBTQ youth.

Effects of Best Practices of Affirming Behavior

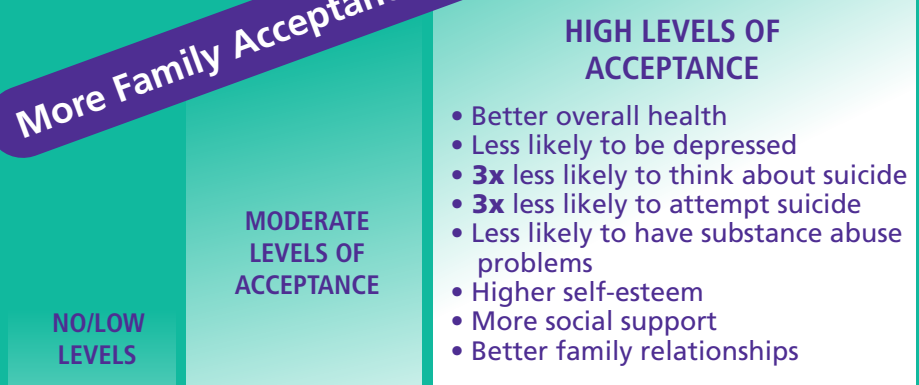
Multiple studies have demonstrated the vital importance of parental behaviors on the mental and physical health of LGBTQ kids. Just as rejecting behaviors increase risks for LGBTQ kids, effective, supportive parenting behaviors can lead to healthier outcomes for LGBTQ children and adolescents. And for LGBTQ kids with depression and anxiety, families play a key role in promoting well-being and building resilience in their children. *(Daniolos, 2018)*

Because of the concept of familismo, having a child come out in Hispanic families may have a stronger impact on parents and other family members when compared to non-Hispanic families. One study found that this can also work in a positive way. Several participants in the study stressed the importance of family support and unconditional acceptance for the child's well-being, which suggests that familismo can facilitate the coming-out process among Hispanic families. Researchers noted that further examination of how having a child come out impacts Hispanic families, and how to leverage familismo to facilitate the coming-out process is needed. *(Gattamorta, Salerno, & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2019)*

Family accepting behaviors help protect against risk & promote well-being for LGBTQ young people



More Family Acceptance = Better Health & Well-Being



CURRENTLY AVAILABLE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS OF LGBTQ KIDS

THE TREVOR PROJECT

The Trevor Project currently offers two LGBTQ learning programs specifically for professionals who work with children and young adults. The Trevor LifeGuard workshop project was created in 2016 for educators and includes a 16-minute online and downloadable video, curriculum, and classroom activities.

Trainings for Youth-Serving Professionals offers two tracks for adults who work with children, such as middle school and high school teachers, higher education staff, and health professionals. The tracks are **Ally Trainings** (resources and strategies for being an ally to LGBTQ youth) and **CARE (Connect, Accept, Respond, and Empower) Trainings** (which focuses on LGBTQ-competent suicide prevention). These programs have been around for at least seven years.

PFLAG

PFLAG offers a **peer-to-peer support system** that gives resources to family members of people who are LGBTQ. These support groups are offered in 375 U.S. cities. Unfortunately, PFLAG support groups are not offered in smaller cities and smaller more conservative areas. These groups have been less accessible due to the onset of COVID-19. PFLAG also offers an online monthly learning opportunity called PFLAG Academy Online. The monthly topics are varied and are not organized in a progressive format, nor are they geared specifically to parents of LGBTQ kids.



PARACHUTE

LIFTING PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES OF LGBTQ KIDS

Mama Dragons is excited to introduce Parachute, an e-learning program that will give parents the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to effectively, affirmatively, and safely parent their child in the first 12 months after they come out.

Working with a team of industry experts, mothers of LGBTQ kids, and technology leaders, we are developing a self-paced program designed specifically for parents of LGBTQ kids. Because we believe that improving the lives of LGBTQ kids starts in the home, this program is designed to be taken from the comfort of home.



PARACHUTE

PART 1

FIRST
30
DAYS

The first part of Parachute will directly address the first 30 days after a child comes out and will cover the immediate information a mom needs to know to keep their child safe and to lay the foundation for a healthy path going forward. It will cover basic information about both sexual orientation and gender identity.

TOPICS WILL INCLUDE:

- Navigating relationships among close family members
- Affirming vs. rejecting behaviors
- Terminology
- Resources
- Mental health care, etc.

New moms will be invited to join the course as part of a cohort at the same time they are introduced to the Mama Dragons main group. Participants will proceed through the modules as a team, with new material available each week. By establishing this cohort approach, the moms will begin building their support network immediately.

PART 2

2-12
MONTHS



The second part of Parachute will cover the information parents will need once they have a safe foundation in place and will create a pathway going forward during the first year after their child comes out.

TOPICS WILL INCLUDE:

- Navigating relationships among extended family
- Communicating with schools and health professionals
- Creating safe boundaries within communities
- Building a resource team for your child, etc.

FOCUS WILL BE:

- Building personal supports
- Building family supports
- Building community supports

OFFERING TWO MODULES OF LEARNING



SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The Sexual Orientation module will explore knowledge and information for parents who have kids who identify as L,G,B, +.



GENDER IDENTITY

The Gender Identity module will be for parents who have kids who identify under the T+ umbrella and will encompass all things related to gender identity.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are two separate parts of the self that can be part of the same person but are often unrelated. Parachute will address both of these aspects of personal development. During the First 30 Days course, parents will be introduced to basic concepts and essential knowledge that will facilitate their ability to embrace and support their child. During the rest of the first year, the program will have separate modules for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. **Each of these modules (both sexual orientation and gender identity) will be available to all, and can be taken separately or together based on the needs of the parent or caregiver.**

DEMOGRAPHICS | REACH | ROLLOUT

Mama Dragons will introduce Parachute in a phased approach. This allows us to focus our attention on areas of highest priority and continue to refine and expand the program as it grows.

PHASE 1: Apr. 2021 – Oct. 2021

Parachute will be available to the 5,000 current members in Mama Dragons as well as new members as they join the group.



PHASE 2: Oct. 2021 – Apr. 2022

Parachute courses on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity will be available to the 5,000 mothers in the Mama Dragons organization who will be able to extend an enrollment invitation to their personal support network. We anticipate that they will each share the program with four close friends or family members, reaching approximately 20,000 people.

PHASE 3: Apr. 2022 – Oct. 2022

Parachute courses on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity will be opened to mothers, their personal support networks, and their community partners, such as educators, religious leaders, mental health providers, and coaches. We anticipate that each of the 20,000 individuals who have participated during Phase 2 will share the program with four members of their community support team, reaching approximately 80,000 people.

Expanding the availability of Parachute to the family and community members surrounding the mother is an essential step in building a safe and affirming environment for all LGBTQ people, as well as building in sustainability for the program to grow and change in response to the needs of our member mothers.

¿HABLAS ESPAÑOL?

Mama Dragons is committed to addressing the needs of Madres Dragones, our group of Spanish-speaking mothers. We view cultural differences as a strength and as a catalyst for success. To support Madres Dragones in leveraging familismo during the coming-out process, Parachute will be available in Spanish beginning with our launch in April 2021.

Mama Dragons believes that improving the lives of LGBTQ kids has to start in the home. There is a real need for a comprehensive, user-friendly, reliable program that will teach parents how to affirmatively and safely parent their LGBTQ child during the critical first 30 days after they come out, progressing through the first 12 months, so that every LGBTQ kid will have the very best chance for a healthy and productive life going forward. We anticipate that this program will **decrease suicide rates**, **increase general understanding of LGBTQ issues** among the U.S. population, and **improve the environment for LGBTQ people** everywhere. We believe the combination of support for mothers through our online spaces, combined with a solid e-learning program, will result in the empowerment mothers need so they can become the best possible advocates for their LGBTQ kids.

Mama Dragons supports, educates, and empowers mothers of LGBTQ children. We envision a world where all mothers fiercely love and advocate for their LGBTQ children. As a 501(c)3 organization, we provide programs that support our mission through safe online spaces, education, connection with other mothers, and suicide prevention training.



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