

# Parent Talk

JUNE 2023

## Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth

During Pride Month this year and beyond, it's vital that caregivers provide support, guidance, and love to LGBTQ+ youth. As youth mental health has become a nationwide crisis, these children need active and caring support systems to help them thrive now more than ever. Read on for some ways you can get started today.

### Listen & Respond

In many situations, LGBTQ+ youth just need to be heard. It can be a confusing and frightening time as they begin to form their identities. There can be many worries racing through their minds. They may not know who they can confide in. Make an active choice to check in with them and try to pick up on any subtle issues that may be bothering them. If they open up to you, make sure you're listening to each thing they say and responding. Try to establish a regular cadence with them so that these conversations become more natural and relaxed.



### Don't Judge

If your child chooses to approach you about their LGBTQ+ identity, above all else **do not pass judgement**. Too often phrases like "you're confused" or "it's just a phase" are thrown around. These can be incredibly damaging. LGBTQ+ youth need to be validated and lifted up. While it can be scary for you as a caregiver to think about your child potentially being discriminated against by their peers, your support and lack of judgement will help them feel more confident and secure. Try doing some research or connecting with other caregivers to see how they handled their child's coming out process.

### Advocate

Advocating for your child is one of the best ways you can be an active supporter. Different parts of the country have different levels of tolerance for LGBTQ+ issues and topics. Some youth may need more advocacy than others. Try getting a sense of how LGBTQ+ topics are represented at your child's school. What about the school's policy toward bullying? Meet with teachers, school board members, state representatives; anyone who can help you advocate for change. If a local LGBTQ+ youth group doesn't exist, start one!



### Establish A Support System

As a caregiver, your primary goal is usually to keep your child safe. In some situations, you may assume that means preventing them from embracing their LGBTQ+ identity for fear of discrimination or violence. While this is a valid concern, forcing your child into the closet will ultimately just do them more harm. The best thing you can do as a caregiver is make sure your child has the support system they need if or when they choose to come out. Some members of your family may not approve of LGBTQ+ identities, particularly in youth. Make sure you're having those difficult conversations with those family members and protecting your child in any situations where they may interact with them. Check on your child's friend group. How are they handling the news? Are they supportive or did the friendship end when your child came out? Making sure your child is supported is the best thing you can do to help them on their journey.

## Need more help?

Resources at The Baker Center are just a click away

**Therapy & Treatment Services**

CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE THERAPY →

**Special Education**

MANVILLE SCHOOL →

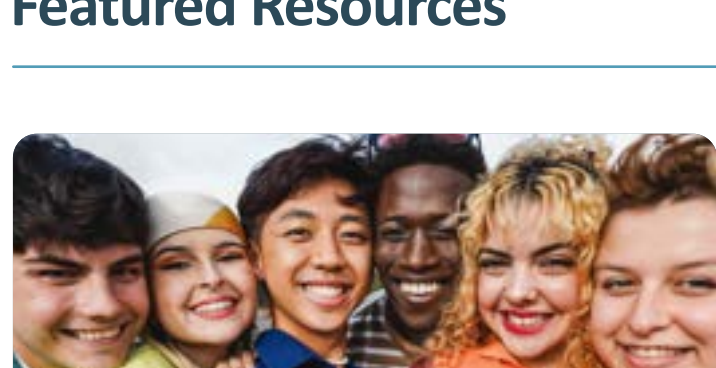
**Therapeutic Summer Camp**

CAMP BAKER →

**College Preparation**

NEXT STEP →

## Featured Resources



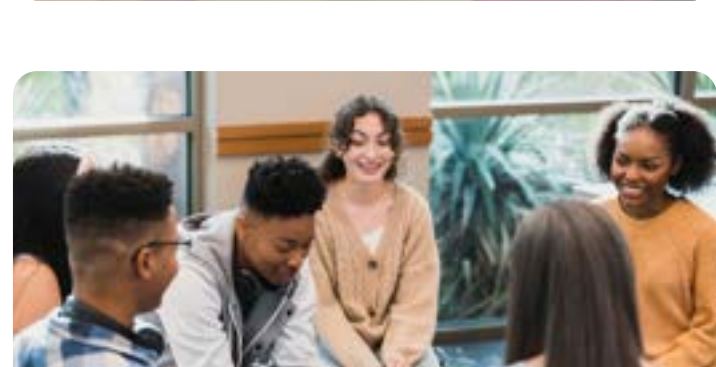
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**LGBTQ+ Youth in Massachusetts: Are the Kids Really Alright?**

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