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## Thursday, Session 1: 10:30 - Noon

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T1

### **Neuroqueer Emergence: Clinical Best Practices for Supporting Identity and Sexuality Exploration in Young Adults**

The transition into adulthood can be a difficult time for any person. Young adulthood provides opportunities to explore one's identity and path in life while balancing heavy, new responsibilities. For neuroqueer folk who live at the intersection of LGBTQIA2S+ and neurodivergent identities, this time brings unique challenges on the road to self-discovery. This workshop aims to provide clinical direction to mental health providers on how to best support neuroqueer adults in embracing and exploring their multifaceted identities.

**Presenter(s): Britt Carilli**

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T1

### **Affirmation and Advocacy skills for family therapy**

LGBTQ+ youth are at disproportionately high risk for more acute mental health risks and victimization and exploitation. LGBTQ+ youth consistently report higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempt than their straight, cisgender peers. LGBTQ+ folks are more likely to experience problems with homelessness, substance use and sexual exploitation due to lack of social support and acceptance. Numerous studies show that family and parental support is a huge protective factor for LGBTQ+ folks in reducing mental health intensity and other comorbidities. By focusing on ways to integrate family work and family systems theory into clinical practice, therapists and other providers have a much higher chance of supporting long term and improved outcomes for their LGBTQ+ identified clients. This training will support providers in increasing skill and confidence in assessment and intervention with LGBTQ+ folks in the context of their family systems; provide an increased framework to integrate family members into their direct clinical interventions and develop skills to enhance client social and community support.

**Presenter(s): Joy Lochelt**

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Supporting Families of LGBTQ+ Youth**

This content provides helpful tips on working with families and other caregivers of LGBTQ+ youth. Some families may struggle to understand their child or youth's sexual orientation or gender identity. Some may fear rejection from their own communities or fear what the future may hold for their family. During this hour, attendees will hear about the importance of family support, strategies for helping families process their feelings, and promising programs that are making strides towards creating evidence-based programs for families of LGBTQ+ youth. This content is best suited for those who work with families.

**Presenter(s):** Angela Weeks Avery Irons

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T1

**When Justice Becomes Trauma: Counseling Survivors Failed by Systems**

Survivors of physical and sexual assault often turn to the justice system seeking safety, validation, and accountability. For many women and LGBTQ+ survivors, interactions with legal and institutional systems instead result in disbelief, minimization, procedural retraumatization, or dismissal. These responses constitute secondary victimization and institutional betrayal, forms of harm that occur after the assault and frequently intensify trauma-related distress. Counseling professionals regularly encounter the consequences of institutional betrayal in clinical practice, although these dynamics are often unnamed. Without a framework that accounts for systemic harm, counseling risks focusing exclusively on the assault while overlooking the cumulative impact of justice system interactions. This session centers secondary victimization and institutional betrayal as core counseling concerns rather than peripheral contextual factors.

**Presenter(s):** Laurie Bonjo

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Neurodivergent and Gender Divergent: Supporting Youth at the Intersection**

Although there is a higher incidence of transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) youth who are neurodivergent—and a higher incidence of neurodivergent youth who are TGD—youth at this intersection often face additional barriers to care and affirmation. Youth with autism, ADHD, or sensory differences may experience and express their thoughts about gender in ways that neurotypical caregivers, educators, and medical professionals misinterpret or overlook. This presentation takes a neuroaffirming and universal design-informed approach to challenging common myths about neurodivergent TGD youth and offers concrete, real-world tools to facilitate listening and understanding within families. Through case examples and practical strategies, the session explores ways to support youth in expressing their needs and accessing affirming care in medical and school environments.

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T1 = Thursday, 10:30 – Noon

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**Presenter(s): Rachel Doyle     Zev Spiegel**

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Clinical Work With Bi+ Youth And Young Adults: Tools for a Liberatory, Socioecological Approach to Case Conceptualization**

Bi+ (bisexual, pansexual, and other multi-gender attracted) individuals constitute an estimated 60% of the sexual minority population (Tomasik, 2024), with bisexual youth making up 75% of LGB adolescents in a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey (2024). Bi+ populations experience unique minority stressors that result in mental health, physical health, educational attainment, and socioeconomic disparities that surpass those of other sexual minority groups. This session will equip clinicians with case conceptualization tools using a socioecological framework aligned with liberation psychology principles, resulting in robust therapeutic insights that support bi+ client wellbeing, identity development, and self-actualization. Additionally, this session will review research on bi+ microaffirmations (positive identity experiences), which show promise for bolstering mental health, and will include tools for identifying and addressing unconscious clinician biases. Participants will practice applying the reviewed models using fictionalized case vignettes.

**Presenter(s): Sara Townsend**

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Essential Components and Principles of LGBTQ-affirmative Cognitive Behavior Therapy**

Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or any other minoritized sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQ) experience persistent mental health disparities and negative psychosocial outcomes relative to their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts. Such disparities are rooted in LGBTQ people's disproportionate exposure to general life stressors (e.g., early childhood adversity) and identity-based stressors (e.g., exposure to discrimination). Adapted from the Unified Protocol for Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders, an evidence-based cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) for the treatment of co-occurring emotional disorders, LGBTQ-affirmative CBT was specifically designed to address LGBTQ people's general and identity-specific stress reactions (i.e., minority stress) underlying population-based mental health disparities. Through didactic presentations and experiential exercises,

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this presentation will cover key principles and techniques for addressing the impact of minority stress in CBT with LGBTQ clients. The workshop will cover the general principles of LGBTQ affirmative CBT, which can be used to facilitate LGBTQ-affirmative delivery of any evidence-based psychological treatment for clients. Although the focus of this workshop will be on CBT, clinicians who practice with another treatment approach can easily apply the content of this seminar to their practice approaches.

**Presenter(s): TJ Sullivan**

**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Dreaming Together: Planning Youth Black Pride 2026**

This workshop provides youth-serving professionals, educators, and community members with the opportunity to collaborate with Black Queer youth to plan Hartford's first half-day Youth Black Pride event. Participants will engage in hands-on exercises to explore the unique needs, strengths, and cultural expressions of Black and West Caribbean-identified Black Queer youth, co-create strategies for fun, engaging, and culturally affirming programming, and discuss how youth can safely navigate adult-centered events happening during Hartford Black Pride that same weekend. Emphasizing youth leadership, cultural affirmation, and practical implementation, this session equips participants with tools to support inclusive, empowering programming in their communities.

**Presenter(s): Nxt Thrdsy**

**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Erased in Plain Sight: Safeguarding LGBTQ+ Curricular Integrity Amid Gender-Affirming Care Restrictions Through Narrative and Case-Based Pedagogy**

Recent federal and state mandates restricting gender-affirming care have introduced a chilling effect on health professions curricula, placing LGBTQ+ health content—particularly gender-affirming care—at risk of dilution or removal. If curricular integrity is compromised, clinicians will lack interpretive and ethical competencies, exacerbating health disparities and undermining structural competency. This workshop explores how narrative-driven pedagogy and case-based learning can serve as strategic interventions to safeguard inclusive care under regulatory scrutiny. Drawing on Fricker's framework of epistemic injustice and Metzl & Hansen's structural competency model, we present findings from a qualitative comparative study analyzing two datasets: MVMNT Study (2018–2022): Yale ENRICH Lab interviews with seven LGBTQ+ participants during COVID-19. Urban Service Track (UST) Cases (2018–2022): Five narrative-driven cases representing diverse identities. Participants will engage with these insights through interactive case analysis and guided discussion, identifying strategies to integrate emergent norms, digital behaviors, and intersectionality into curricular design. By embedding epistemic justice principles and grounding gender-affirming content in lived experience, educators can preserve curricular integrity and prepare clinicians for ethically complex scenarios—even amid regulatory constraints.

**Presenter(s):** Cecil Tengtenga   Catalina Quesada   Renee Lavoie

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T1

**In Transition: A Story of Growth, Courage, and Conversations That Build Understanding**

**Presenter(s):** Erinn Eichinger

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Question Persuade Refer: Gatekeeper Training**

This training teaches individuals how to identify the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to get help. Similar to how CPR is an emergency medical intervention, QPR is an emergency mental health intervention designed to intervene in the event of a crisis and direct that person to the proper care. Participants must be 18 or older.

**Presenter(s):** Kathyria Oyola   Carissa DelGaudio

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Building Your Rainbow Toolkit**

In this political moment many of us are organizing to protect the LGBTQIA+ community, and especially youth. In this interactive workshop we will share successful strategies to defeat oppressive systems and work to strategize ways to move forward. Bring your challenges and your wins and we'll build a toolkit together.

**Presenter(s):** Rachel Simon

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T1

**Collaboration and how to build it both within and outside an organization**

This workshop will provide some basic ways to increase and build collaboration between an organization, its members, and other sources of support within the community. The focus is to provide concrete ways

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to engage everyone in an effort to build a stronger, more vibrant, and responsive communal support system for everyone. The hopeful result of this workshop is that folks leave having “hands on” ways to develop the collaborative efforts needed in this climate of misinformation and distress; how to build hope.

**Presenter(s): Rev. Joy Christi Przewor**

## Thursday, Session 2: 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T2

### **Intersecting Spectrums: Affirming Identity Exploration Strategies for Neuroqueer Youth**

Studies indicate that there exists a significant overlap in people who identify as neurodivergent and those who hold one or more queer identity. Just as there is a spectrum of varying sexualities, genders, and expressions in which no two people are exactly the same, neurodiversity is not a monolith but rather a spectrum of strengths and challenges. This workshop offers clinical best practices for professionals to support neurodivergent teens and young adults in exploring and embracing their identities.

**Presenter(s):** Britt Carilli

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T2

### **Your Child Just Came Out — Now What? A Parent’s Guide to Love, Learning, and Allyship.**

When a child comes out, it can be one of the most courageous and transformative moments in their life. But for many parents, it can also be confusing, emotional, and even frightening—especially if they’re unprepared for the conversation or unsure how to respond. Love is rarely the issue; it’s what fear, expectations, and misinformation do to that love in the moment that can cause harm. In this workshop, Victor Simmons, an inclusion strategist and former Vice President of Human Resources and Head of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging for Atelier Ace, offers a deeply personal and practical guide to navigating those first pivotal moments after a child comes out. Drawing from his own experience as a parent whose teenage son came out unexpectedly, Victor candidly reflects on the mistakes he made, the lessons he learned, and the journey toward becoming an affirming and informed ally. Participants will explore: The difference between acceptance and affirmation, and why the latter is critical for a young person’s mental health. The language of allyship—what to say, what not to say, and how to keep communication open. Common mistakes well-intentioned parents make (and how to repair them). How to access community and professional resources for ongoing learning. Parents will leave with a renewed sense of empathy and actionable strategies to help their child feel seen, safe, and supported.

**Presenter(s):** Victor Simmons

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T2

**Staying Connected: Helping to build Mental Health, Resilience, and Relational Skills for LGBTQ+ Youth & their Caregivers**

LGBTQ+ youth and their caregivers often navigate complex relational landscapes — including misunderstanding, conflict, and emotional disconnection — both inside and outside the family system. These challenges can significantly impact mental health, sense of safety, and long-term resilience. This interactive workshop focuses on guiding mental health clinicians on building emotional resilience and practical relational skills to help LGBTQ+ youth and their caregivers stay connected, even in the presence of difficult conversations, strong emotions, or opposing perspectives. Participants will learn concrete tools for regulating emotions, communicating needs, and maintaining connection without sacrificing personal boundaries. Grounded in affirming, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate practices, this session emphasizes skill-building over “fixing” and empowers both the youth and caregivers to approach conflict with greater understanding, compassion, and confidence.

**Presenter(s):** Karen Soutullo

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T2

**Joy Is Not a Luxury: Collective Care within Hostile Systems**

This workshop is for people living at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities who are navigating political climates shaped by hostility, erasure, and chronic threat. Many of us have learned how to survive—however, this space asks a different question: What becomes possible when survival is no longer the only horizon? Grounded in liberation psychology, disability justice, and collective care traditions, this workshop invites participants to explore joy, meaning, and connection as essential practices. Together, we will reflect on how constant crisis shapes our bodies, relationships, and imaginations, and experiment with ways of living that include pleasure, rest, creativity, and mutual support. This is not a space for bypassing grief, anger, or fear. It is a space for holding them alongside curiosity and hope. Through guided reflection, group dialogue, and creative or somatic practices, participants will be invited to reconnect with what nourishes them and what makes life feel worth living—even now. Participation is consent-based, with multiple ways to engage. Listening, resting, or observing are always valid. Interdependence is honored, and accessibility is prioritized. This workshop welcomes people across identities, generations, and experiences who are tired of being told that survival is the highest aspiration available to them. It centers those who have been excluded, targeted, or made disposable—and affirms that joy, connection, and liberation are not naïve dreams, but necessary conditions for collective endurance. This is an invitation to breathe, imagine, and remember that we were made for more than making it through.

**Presenter(s):** Jaime Delgado Spider Ze

**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T2

**Understanding & Affirming Asexual Identities**

In a sex-obsessed culture, but also in one that frames sexuality, especially non-normative expressions of sexuality, as taboo or at least to be kept secretive, all of us have probably heard something like, “Sex is natural”, or “Everybody likes sex”. The asexual community has always existed, though it is still frequently overlooked and dismissed - even in designated queer spaces, and especially in youth spaces, where adults might shy away from any discussion of sexuality at all. How do we build models of support and affirmation, encouraging community-building in a world that still views monogamous, sexual and romantic partnership between two individuals as the end-all, be-all? Participants will find that the tools and knowledge, built from frameworks of trauma-informed practice, with which they leave this session will help them in their support for all clients - not just those who are ace-identified.

**Presenter(s):** Cadence Pentheny

## Thursday, Session 3: 2:45 PM – 4:15 PM

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T3

### **Practice What We Teach: Sustainable Care for Queer & Trans Helpers, Healers, and Community Leaders**

Queer and trans people especially Black and BIPOC folks - are often called to be caregivers, advocates, educators, and emotional anchors within our families and communities. We teach boundaries, rest, consent, and self-advocacy, yet many of us struggle to practice these same values in our own lives. This workshop invites participants to reflect on the gap between what we teach and how we care for ourselves. Drawing from birth work, community care, and frontline support experience, this session explores sustainable, justice-rooted approaches to caregiving that honor both the people we support and ourselves. Participants will engage in reflection, discussion, and practical skill-building focused on burnout prevention, boundaries, embodied awareness, and collective care. This workshop centers lived experience. It is grounded in the belief that sustainable movements and communities require caregivers who are resourced, supported, and whole.

**Presenter(s): Venette Maurice**

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T3

### **Health Disparities Among African American LGBTQ+ Persons**

Research shows that LGBTQ+ populations of all ages disproportionately experience disparities and poorer health outcomes compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. These disparities are particularly salient among Black gay men. For example, according to CDC data, while HIV has declined among White gay men, it has increased significantly among Black gay men. In fact, 1 in 2 Black gay men will contract HIV within their lifetime. This statistic is startling and is an immediate call to action to help mitigate this trend. The goal of this webinar is to provide a closer look at the issues and trends that impact this population; including substance use disorders, HIV/AIDS, stigma, race, and homophobia. This webinar will further explore evidence-based strategies that are effective in working with this population

**Presenter(s): Lawrence Bryant**

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T3

### **Supporting Intersex Youth and Their Families**

Intersex people make up an estimated 2% of the population and yet remain one of the most underserved and misunderstood groups within LGBTQIA+ communities. Despite their prevalence, intersex youth in particular face significant erasure and trauma stemming from non-consensual medical interventions, and increasing backlash in policy and athletic arenas that is deeply rooted in racism, sexism, and transphobia. Participants will gain a clear understanding of what it means to be intersex, debunk common misconceptions, and explore the unique challenges intersex youth encounter across medical, educational, and community settings.

**Presenter(s): Bria Brown-King Maddie Moran Erika Lorshbough**

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## Thursday, Double Sessions, 1:00 PM – 4:15 PM

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T 2, T3

### **Proud Minds, Safe Spaces: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health**

This interactive 120-minute workshop equips adults with the knowledge, empathy, and practical skills needed to support the mental health and overall well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. Through engaging activities, reflection exercises, and guided discussion, participants build a deeper understanding of the unique challenges LGBTQ+ young people face—both socially and emotionally—and explore how supportive adults can positively impact a youth’s safety, resilience, and sense of belonging. Participants learn how to create affirming environments where youth feel seen, respected, and safe to express their authentic selves. The workshop includes strategies for initiating and navigating conversations about mental health concerns with confidence and sensitivity, recognizing signs that additional support may be needed, and connecting young people to appropriate mental-health and community resources. By the end of the session, attendees will expand their awareness of LGBTQ+ experiences, strengthen their allyship skills, and leave with concrete tools to foster inclusive, supportive spaces that promote positive mental-health outcomes for all youth.

**Presenter(s): Jacquilyn Davis, CDP®**

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T 2, T3

### **“Joy as Resistance: Counseling LGBTQ+ Youth Beyond Risk and Deficit”**

Across counseling, education, and youth-serving systems, LGBTQ+ youth are routinely framed through the language of risk. Labels such as at-risk, high-need, or vulnerable appear in research, policy, and practice, often without critical examination of the structural conditions that produce harm. These deficit-based narratives obscure systemic violence while positioning queer and trans youth as problems to be managed rather than as agents of creativity, resilience, and transformation. This workshop challenges risk-centered paradigms and offers a liberation-centered reframing of LGBTQ+ youth as at-promise, emphasizing queer joy as a vital resource for healing, resistance, and collective thriving. This workshop ultimately calls counselors, educators, and supervisors to move beyond harm reduction toward liberation, recognizing queer joy not as optional or frivolous, but as central to justice, healing, and professional responsibility.

**Presenter(s): Laurie Bonjo**

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T 2, T3

**Sort-of Accepting: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Families That are Still Learning**

This presentation focuses on practical strategies providers can use to support families of LGBTQ+ youth when acceptance is partial, ambiguous, or conditional rather than overtly rejecting. The session frames symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation as developmentally and relationally appropriate responses to mixed messages about safety and belonging. Providers will learn how to remain unapologetically affirming of LGBTQ+ youths' identities while engaging caregivers in respectful, values-informed conversations about moving toward more affirming behavior, without relying on false neutrality. Through case examples and practical tools, this presentation supports providers in protecting youth dignity and self-esteem while helping families move toward greater relational safety, without increasing the risk of rupture in either the therapeutic or family relationship.

**Presenter(s):** Rachel Doyle     ZevSpiegel

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**Audience:** Educators

**Workshop Time:** T 2, T3

**Children with LGBTQ+ Parents: Best Practices for School-Based Clinicians**

Join COLAGE, a national organization for people with one or more LGBTQ+ parents or caregivers, to explore how our families are formed, the evolving language we use, and relevant policies. Learn practical strategies for educators and school clinicians to affirm and support LGBTQ+-headed families in both counseling settings and classroom environments.

**Presenter(s):** Anastasia Martineau     Emma Bowe-Shulman

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**Audience:** General Professionals

**Workshop Time:** T 2, T3

**To Infinity & Beyond: Understanding the Intersectionality of Gender, Sexuality, Race, & Autism.**

This workshop will explore the following concepts: An individual's behavioral presentation is not indicative of their mental state; Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presents differently in women than in men; ASD is not a self-inflicted psychological condition, as commonly assumed by members of the BI/POC communities; The rate of ASD among the LGBTQIA+ community is greater compared to their counterparts.

**Presenter(s):** Briana Hewitt

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**Audience:** Clinicians**Workshop Time:** T2, T3**Introduction To AFFIRM Pro: A Different Way to Approach Workforce Change**

Traditional professional development models often focus on knowledge acquisition but fall short in addressing the deeply embedded biases and behavioral patterns that shape day-to-day practice. AFFIRM Pro was developed to respond to this gap by moving beyond training and engaging professionals in structured coaching, guided reflection, and experiential learning that promotes sustained change. This 4-hour workshop offers a condensed demonstration of the AFFIRM Pro model, allowing participants to actively engage with the interactive methods that distinguish this program from standard diversity trainings. Designed for leaders and trainers, the session showcases how AFFIRM Pro supports professionals in deconstructing assumptions, increasing self-awareness, and strengthening confidence in serving LGBTQ+ youth, young adults, and families across behavioral health and child welfare systems. Participants will experience AFFIRM Pro coaching activities, reflective exercises, and facilitated discussions that illustrate how the model integrates education on LGBTQ+ identities with practical skill-building and environmental analysis. Emphasis will be placed on how AFFIRM Pro addresses the impact of organizational culture, professional behavior, and systemic factors on LGBTQ+ wellbeing, while fostering affirming, trauma-informed, and evidence-informed practice. Research on AFFIRM Pro indicates positive improvements in professional bias, knowledge, attitudes, and confidence, with emerging evidence suggesting that these impacts outlast traditional training models. This workshop highlights why sustained coaching and reflection are critical for long-term workforce transformation. Attendees will receive information about implementation pathways and will be provided a discount code for the full AFFIRM Pro Training and Coaching Program, offering an opportunity to bring this evidence-informed model back to their organizations.

**Presenter(s):** Angela Weeks Avery Irons

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**Audience:** General Professionals**Workshop Time:** T 2, T3**Bisexual+ Youth: Challenging Stigma and Reducing Disparities**

A majority of LGBTQIA+ youth identify as bi+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, etc.). Yet, to paraphrase Kermit, “It ain’t easy being bi+.” Bi+ youth face higher rates of suicidality and intimate partner violence and are less connected to support and resources than their lesbian and gay counterparts. In this program, we will look at population and disparities data, with attention to the experiences of bi+ BIPOC youth and the impact of holding multiple marginalized identities. We will explore messages and stigma that surround this community and clarify what it means to identify with a non-binary sexuality. Finally, we will turn to positive aspects of identifying as bi+ and discuss strategies for supporting youth with multigender attraction.

**Presenter(s):** Robyn Ochs

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**Audience:** Clinicians

**Workshop Time:** T2, T3

**Introduction To AFFIRM Pro: A Different Way to Approach Workforce Change**

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**Presenter(s):** Angela Weeks Avery Irons

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