



American Counseling Association

# School Counselor Connection

## Utilizing Families as Allies to Queer and Trans Students of Color

School counselors are constantly called upon to address inequities for historically marginalized students (e.g., students of color, LGBTQ+ students). Given their capacity for promoting school-community-family partnerships, school counselors have multiple opportunities to engage queer and trans students of color (QTSOC) in services, programming, and collective social action. For school counselors to increase the climate of safety for QTSOC, they can utilize the strategies and resources listed below. It is important for school counselors to avoid imposing a general assumption that families of color are not necessarily affirming. Rather, the main issue might reflect lack of community support and increased oppression for these families.

### Individual:

- Individually assess the role of family, values of individualism/collectivism, and sources of family and social support in the lives of QTSOC
- Broach cultural factors with QTSOC
- Consider how racism, genderism, and heterosexism have been passed down within families and how they might intersect
- Assess the readiness of QTSOC with the coming-out process to families
- Recognize strengths, courage, and sites of resilience (e.g., social media) of QTSOC

### Family:

- Assess how family is defined by QTSOC
- Discuss with specific family members how they can relate their own experiences of oppression to instances of oppression affecting QTSOC
- Locate heroes within family members who identify as queer and trans people of color
- Create multifamily or parent-child groups that can involve education about topics surrounding race, gender identity, sexuality, and affectional identity

- Develop needs assessments for (a) QTSOC to understand family issues they might be experiencing at home and (b) family members to understand potential needs and barriers for students

### Community:

- Create groups and schoolwide programming (e.g., assemblies) for educational opportunities about oppression, strengths, and resilience associated with QTSOC
- Consult community and larger national LGBTQ+-focused organizations about resources and tools for advocacy (e.g., Parent-Teacher Associations, National Center for Transgender Equality, GLSEN [Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network], Trans Educational Resources, PFLAG)
- Feature knowledge, heroes, and exemplars of resilience of queer and trans people of color across history when developing school counselor curricula, programming, and group work

### Resources:

- Abreu, R. L., McEachern, A. G., & Kenny, M. C. (2017). Myths and misconceptions about LGBTQ youth: School counselors' role in advocacy. *Journal of School Counseling*, 15(8), 1–30.
- Chan, C. D. (2018). Families as transformative allies to trans youth of color: Positioning intersectionality as analysis to demarginalize political systems of oppression. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 14(1–2), 43–60.
- Luke, M., & Goodrich, K. (2015). *Working with family, friends, and allies of LGBT youth*. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology*, 7(1), 63–83.
- Singh, A. (2018). *The queer and transgender resilience workbook: Skills for navigating sexual orientation and gender expression*. Oakland, CA: Harbinger.

—Christian D. Chan, PhD, NCC

Assistant Professor of Counseling, Idaho State University  
President-Elect, Association for Adult Development and Aging (AADA)