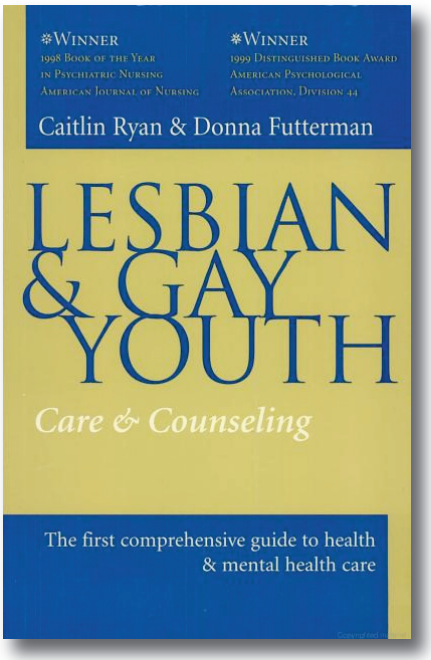
Mental Health Assessment Protocol

Source: Ryan, C. & Futterman, D. (1998). *Lesbian & Gay Youth: Care & Counseling*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.



Three clinical care protocols (mental health assessment, primary care and AIDS medical and psychosocial care) were developed as part of a conference on the Primary Care Needs of Lesbian & Gay Adolescents sponsored in 1994 by the Federal Health Resources & Services Administration that convened experts from across the U.S. who worked on health, mental health, social services, custodial care, homelessness and legal issues for LGBT youth.

Members of the conference Steering Committee and participants at the conference developed these protocols which were the first consensus guidelines for this population and have been widely disseminated and used since that time. Development of this mental health assessment protocol was coordinated and revised by Andrew Boxer, PhD and Joanne Haas, LCSW.

This mental health assessment protocol and other guidelines developed by the conference are published in a full journal article by the American Academy of Pediatrics' Adolescent Section (*Adolescent Medicine: State of the Art Reviews*, 1997; 8(2):207-374) and in a book – *Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling* – published by Columbia University Press. This book provided the first compilation and guidelines on health and mental health issues for lesbian, gay and transgender youth available at that time.

Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling subsequently received the *American Journal of Nursing* Book of the Year Award in psychiatric nursing, 1998 and the Distinguished Book Award, American Psychological Association, Division 44, 1999).

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Mental Status

Current stressful life events
Physical appearance
Sleep and appetite
Manner of relating and relationships
Orientation to time, place and person
Current medical problems; medications

Emotional states / affects
- General
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger
- Other

Speech and language
Reading / writing
Quality of thinking and perception
Intelligence
Memory
Fantasy and conflict(s)
Impulsivity and risk-taking
Coping resources / defenses
Judgment and insight
Adaptive capacities
Positive attributes / resilience

Mental Health Assessment

Background/Family History

1. Family
   a. Relationships
2. Living situation
3. Work
4. School
   a. Academic
   b. Activities and interests
5. Social Relationships
   a. Adults and peers
   b. Social networks
6. Disclosure
7. Self-concept / self-image
8. Conscience / values
   a. Capacity for judgment and decision-making
   b. Personal values: what is important / worthwhile?
9. Emotional States
   a. General feelings
      What makes you happy / sad?
   b. Anxiety (duration, severity, frequency)
   c. Depression (duration, severity, frequency)
   d. Anger
   e. Other
10. Reality Testing
   a. Judgment & insight
   b. Impulsivity
11. Fantasy - Imagination
12. Future time orientation / expectations
   a. Goals

Past Psychiatric/Mental Health History

Mental health treatment / counseling history
   a. Inpatient
   b. Outpatient
   c. Medications
   d. Experience with mental health professionals / counselors

Family History
   a. History of severe and persistent mental illness
   b. Family use of mental health services
      - Inpatient, outpatient
   c. Youth's perception of these experiences

Substance Use

Drug
   a. Cigarettes
   b. Alcohol
   c. Marijuana
   d. Cocaine
   e. Amphetamines
   f. Nonprescribed narcotics
   g. Inhalants
   h. Tranquilizers
   i. Hallucinogens

Mode of Administration
   a. Oral
   b. Nasal
   c. Intravenous / intramuscular

Age at initiation

Duration / frequency of use

Sexuality

Sexual orientation / sexual identity
   a. Sexual desires / attractions
   b. Sexual behavior and experience
      - Sexual readiness
      - Partners
      - Frequency and range of sexual behavior
      - Knowledge and safer sex practices
   c. Sexual fantasies
   d. Sexual identity / labeling (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, homosexual queer)
   e. Psychological conflicts

Sexual Development

   a. Awareness of desires – age, context
   b. First sexual experience – gender, age
   c. Sexual abuse
   d. Disclosure of sexual identity (consequences & response)
      - Parents / family / guardians
      - Peers
      - School environment
      - Workplace
      - Adults
      - Decision-making about disclosure
      - Is it safe?
      - Consequences
      - Who to tell and when

Mental Health Assessment

Gender Identity

Gender development
- a. Gender identity
- b. Gender expression
- c. Gender spectrum (range of identity and expressions)

Gender identity formation
- a. Assigned gender
- b. Affirmed gender

Gender dysphoria
- a. History and current status

Gender transition
- a. History, personal significance and current status

Emotional Response / Psychological Responses to Sexuality Issues

a. Changes in sociability
- Social engagement or withdrawal
- Changes in peer group (loss of close friends?)

b. Emotional responses
- Emotional changes (temporary or long-lasting?)
- Knowledge of help-seeking & response
- Substance use related to sexual experience
- Nature of responses
  Temporary or significant duration

Evaluation of Suicide Risk

Current/past suicidal actions / feelings / fantasies
- a. Methods

Concepts / intentions of outcome
Life circumstances / situation at time of attempt
Past experience / history of suicidality
Motivations for suicidal behavior
Experiences / concepts of death
Depression and other predominant emotional states / affects
Family and environmental circumstances
Assessment of impulsivity
Assessment of suicide within the peer network

Victimization / Abuse / Exposure to Violence

Victimization and harassment related to sexual orientation
- a. Verbal (insults, harassment)
- b. Physical (assault)
- c. Sexual (sexual abuse / rape)
- d. Non-verbal / non-physical experiences with stigma

Victimization based on ethnicity, gender or other characteristics
- a. Verbal
- b. Physical
- c. Sexual abuse

Childhood abuse history
- a. Corporal punishment
- b. Sexual abuse
  - Family members
  - Others
- c. Emotional / verbal abuse

Exposure to crime / violence
- a. Relationship to violence
  - Family
  - Intimate relationship(s)
  - Peers - in school / out of school / community
  - Gang participation

Traumatic Events
- a. Accidents
- b. Major illnesses
- c. Family dissolution
- d. Other