

# **From Closed to Open: One Program's Trauma-informed Evolution from All-Male to Gender Diverse**



**Stevens Treatment Programs  
Swansea, MA**

# From Closed to Open: One Program's Trauma-informed Evolution from All-Male to Gender Diverse



## LEARNING GOALS:

1. Participants will learn the ways in which Stevens transformed philosophy and practice to become a more welcoming and safe environment for gender-diverse youth.
2. Participants will learn why safe and gender-affirming residential treatment is a critical aspect of trauma-informed care.
3. Participants will reflect upon areas for on-going growth at Stevens and within the field to ensure that treatment and environments are “sexual and gender minority-positive cultures (ACRC, 2014, p.1).”
4. Participants will gain concrete ideas for implementation at their own settings.

# **OUTLINE FOR TODAY**

**Welcome!**

**About Stevens  
Relevant History**

**Our Evolution  
Our Adaptation**

**Performance Quality Improvement**

**Our Model & Philosophy**

**PRIDE Club**

**Our Plans**

# A Look WAY Back...



Population Served  
Referrals  
Don't Ask – Don't Tell Philosophy  
Dress Code

1939  
Frank Stevens  
Home for Boys  
opens



1980's  
Stevens  
becomes  
Residential  
Treatment  
Facility



8/20/19  
Admission of  
"Joe"



6/7/21  
"Joe" request  
for a safe space  
group for  
LGBTQ+ &  
Allies



6/22/21  
Admission of  
"Hope"



6/24/21  
1st Pride Club  
meeting with 5  
youth



1/25/22  
Admission of  
"Holly"



2/3/22  
1st Gender  
Affirmation  
Committee



3/25/22  
1st "Stump Day"  
training &  
consulting event



2/2023 "Angelo"  
requests  
pronoun and  
name change to  
"Alyssa"



Stevens: Our Path to Inclusivity

# Introducing "Joe"

**BIOLOGICAL SEX:** male

**GENDER IDENTITY:** gender fluid

**NAME:** alternating

**PRONOUNS:** they/them

**GENDER PRESENTATION:** masculine

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:**

# Introducing "Joe"

**BARRIERS CONFRONTED:**  
Staff ignorance, bias, and/or fear  
Lack of system preparation  
Lack of youth or staff self-advocacy  
Alternating names confusing  
Gender neutral pronouns

**STEVENS ENVIRONMENT:**  
Dismissive

**STEVENS RESPONSE:**  
Minimal and inconsistent





# Introducing "Hope"

BIOLOGICAL SEX: male

GENDER IDENTITY: transgender

NAME: Intake with preferred name;  
Change

PRONOUN: she/her

GENDER PRESENTATION: alternating  
masculine/feminine

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:





# Introducing "Hope"

## BARRIERS CONFRONTED:

Family dynamics  
Change in preferred name  
Gender presentation not in alignment  
Staff bias, perceived barriers related to affirmative practices

## STEVENS' ENVIRONMENT:

anxious and hesitant, but gender affirmative practices & philosophy actively evolving

## STEVENS' RESPONSE:

Pride Club; Gender Affirmation Committee; undergarments, shaving and makeup introduced



# Introducing "Holly"

**BIOLOGICAL SEX:** male

**GENDER IDENTITY:** transgender

**NAME:** Use of preferred name from intake

**PRONOUN:** she/her

**GENDER PRESENTATION:** feminine

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:**



# Introducing "Holly"

## BARRIERS:

Misunderstanding re: reason for treatment  
Highly sexualized behavior  
Strict dress code and routine

## STEVENS' ENVIRONMENT:

Open and accepting; working to adapt

## STEVENS' RESPONSE:

Dress Code changes

# ARC FRAMEWORK

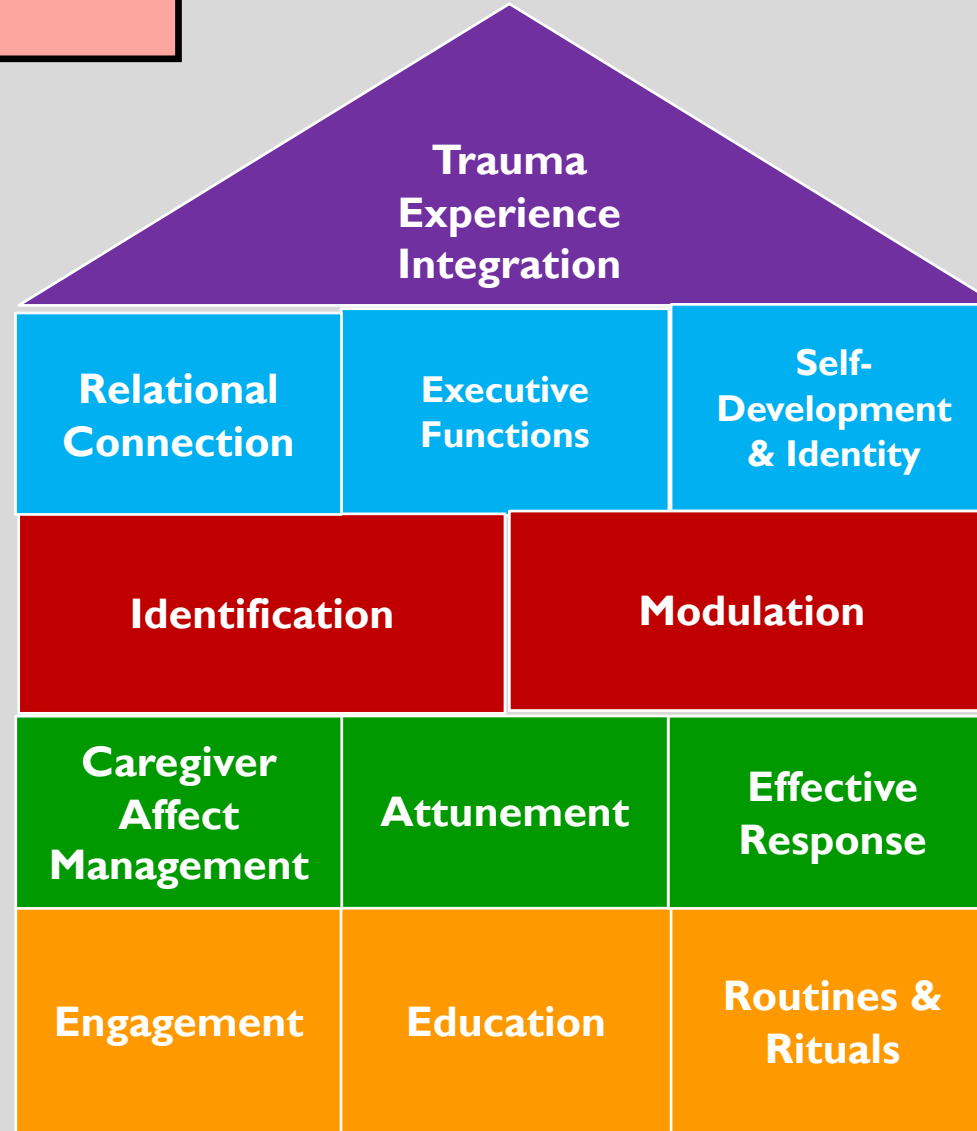
# 8 PRIMARY SKILLS

Primary Domains

**Competency**

**Regulation**

**Attachment**



Cross Cutting Strategies



# Self-development and Identity

*Involves....*

*Racial & Ethnic Identity*

*Sexual Orientation*

*Gender Identity*

*Gender Expression*

A key developmental process is the growth of a sense of self, an understanding of individuality, and eventually the formation of a cohesive identity.

*Key Point...*

*Youth can't fully accept treatment and make meaningful change if their core identity is not acknowledged, respected and affirmed.*



*Key Point...*

*Self-development and identity is deeply impacted by experiences of trauma, which may lead to feeling unlovable, unworthy, helpless or damaged. These feelings may be compounded by feelings of rage, shame, loss and grief.*

# Self-development and Identity

45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

Nearly 1 in 5 transgender and nonbinary youth attempted suicide and LGBTQ youth of color reported higher rates than their white peers.

LGBTQ youth who felt high social support from their family reported attempting suicide **less than half the rate** of those who felt low or moderate social support.

**Fewer than 1 in 3** transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be gender-affirming.

LGBTQ youth who found their school to be LGBTQ-affirming reported **lower rates of attempting suicide**.

LGBTQ youth who live in a community that is accepting of LGBTQ people reported significantly lower rates of attempting suicide than those who do not.

# Self-development and Identity

*“Although our data continue to show high rates of mental health and suicide risk among LGBTQ young people, it is crucial to note that these rates vary widely based on the way LGBTQ youth are treated.”*

*Dr. Myeshia Price (she/her or they/them)  
Senior Research Scientist, The Trevor Project*

# STEVENS' PRIDE CLUB FEBRUARY, 2023 SURVEY

- Of 23 Youth surveyed:
  - 8 identified as LGBTQIA+
  - 5 identified as trans or gender non-binary (22%)
  - 4 used chosen names

\*Other, unselected, options offered were:  
“I’d prefer not to answer.”  
“I am looking for community.”  
“I am questioning my identity,” and “other.”

11 expressed interest in attending Pride Club, citing the following reasons for interest\*:

- I am an LGBTQIA+ individual.
- I want to celebrate Queer people.
- I want to learn more about LGBTQIA+ issues.
- I want to be a better LGBTQIA+ ally and advocate.
- I want to advocate for changes on campus that may benefit queer youth.



# PRIDE CLUB



“Celebrate & Educate!”

Pride Club is an opportunity for members and supporters of the LGBTQ+ community to celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride, educate themselves and others, and spend quality time with peers who share the same values.

## Rules:

- What happens in Pride Club stays in Pride Club (Within reason. Safety rules and consequences still apply.)
- Asking questions “in good faith” is okay
- We don’t “out” others
- Sexuality is NOT inherently sexual. Attraction is okay, sex is not okay. (Pride Club is NOT dating club.)
- Be open-minded. Just because you don’t understand something does not mean it is wrong.
- Don’t talk about others when they are not here.
- Pride Club is not mandatory.
- Be respectful of others and mindful of your words. Don’t be rude.

# GENDER AFFIRMATION PQI

## SUCCESSSES

Education &  
awareness  
Pronoun & name use  
Affirming practices  
Dress code, personal  
care & hygiene  
Health care  
resources

## ONGOING GOALS

Institutionalize changes;  
Routine & daily practices,  
including hair care,  
showers, shaving, make-up

Finalize Name Change  
Procedure;  
Records  
Database

# Where We Go From Here

**TRAINING**



*Implicit bias; training review;  
non-program staff*

**YOUTH VOICE**



*Social Justice Club*

**PRACTICE**



*Institutionalize routine changes;  
personal care PQI*

**POLICY**



*Name Change; Records*


# WORDS TO LIVE BY

## Common Barriers / Challenges



*Overlap of goals,  
Real and perceived barriers (including over-focus on “safety”),  
workload,  
Structure required for safety,  
implicit bias,*

## Important Notes



*Use your practice framework to support efforts (ARC),  
Reach everyone, include everyone,  
youth voice is key*