



# BUILDING 2SLGBTQ+ COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Suggestions and guidance for child welfare agencies to begin to connect with their local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations and strengthen their current relationships.

# A GUIDE TO BUILDING 2SLGBTQ+ COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In the **Ontario Child Welfare LGBT2SQ+ Organizational Self-Assessment Provincial Report (2021)**, child welfare agencies in Ontario provided insight into the ways in which they contribute to the disparities that negatively impact 2SLGBTQ+ children, youth, and families.

This initial report included recommendations which could be used to support the development of organization-wide work plans to address areas of growth and build upon strengths.

One of the identified areas for improvement was related to building community partnerships with 2SLGBTQ+ organizations.



# “Where do I start? What steps does my organization need to take?”

This document will offer suggestions and guidance for child welfare agencies to begin to connect with their local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, or to strengthen their current relationships.

2SLGBTQ+ children, youth, and families face a myriad of disparities, and locating affirming resources who understand the unique needs of this community is a critical support that is needed.

The prevalence of heterosexism and cissexism in society lead to poorer outcomes for 2SLGBTQ+ youth; however, there are protective factors that we can build on to support better outcomes.

Identified risk factors can be mitigated through (1) **family acceptance and support**; (2) **access to gender-affirming health care**; (3) **supportive adults**; and (4) **engagement with the 2SLGBTQ+ community**.

# 1. Know Your Community



Gather information about the organizations that exist within your community.

Get a sense of who you want to work with based on available information like their mission statements, values, goals, and programming they offer.

This information will help you understand the organizations' needs and priorities and how your CAS or Well-being Agency can align with or support them.

You can search for services and organizations that support the 2SLGBTQ+ community using online directories.

▶ **LGBT Youthline's Resource Directory**

<https://resources.youthline.ca/>

▶ **Rainbow Health Ontario's Service Provider Directory**

<https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/lgbt2sq-health/service-provider-directory/>

▶ **TransCare+ Resource Directory**

<https://transcareplus.org/care-directory/>

# 2. Show Genuine Interest & Respect



When reaching out to community organizations, be respectful, professional, and sincere.

Express a genuine interest in working with the organization and in supporting their goals.

Pay attention to programming or events that organizations are putting on and attend them.

## Practice Example

Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society did intentional reach out to one of their local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, Trans Wellness Ontario, and engaged in conversations about what work Trans Wellness Ontario was engaged in, and explored avenues for how service being provided to trans and non-binary individuals could be aligned between the two organizations.

## 3. Establish Clear Communication



Establish clear lines of communication with the organizations you are working with.

This includes regular check-ins and updates, clear expectations and timelines, and open and honest feedback.

### Practice Example

York Region Children's Aid Society attends quarterly 'Rainbow Network' meetings which gathers all 2SLGBTQ+ service providers in their region to engage in regular conversation about the trends impacting their local 2SLGBTQ+ community, and to strategize around how to best support the community.

## 4. Establish Goals for the Relationship



Be clear about what you are engaging with a community partner for and why you are reaching out to a specific organization, and then communicate those reasons.

Understand what type of relationship you want to build with an organization and be

planful about the considerations involved. Many 2SLGBTQ+ organizations are non-profits with limited resources, so their services should be accessed in the case where your agency cannot provide a particular service or attend to a specific need.

### Ask yourself and your organization:

- ▶ Are you engaging an organization to support a case involving a specific family together?
- ▶ Are you seeking support in educating your staff, resource homes, or volunteers?
- ▶ Are you developing a formalized partnership agreement?

# 5. Build Trust



Building trust takes time, but it is essential for an authentic and meaningful relationship with community organizations.

Be transparent, accountable, and follow through on your commitments.

Acknowledge that some community partners will feel uneasy about partnering with a child welfare agency given the historical and ongoing practices which have led to disparities and disproportionalities for the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

In June 2022, OACAS hosted a webinar with community partners with the topic of SOGIE Affirming Practices. One of the questions posed to panelists was,

**“What are some approaches child welfare agencies can use to build partnerships with 2SLGBTQ+ focused organizations?”**

Some of the responses were:

“Commitment. Building effective programs takes a lot of time, energy, e-mail’s, meetings and planning.

The folks who are involved in the planning of Camp Lifting Leaves are so committed to the work.

The end result has been something beautiful... the commitment creates community.”

Kyamni Montgomery • Camp Ten Oaks

“The consultation that is most meaningful is something that starts early, is proactive, and gives time for the organization to give feedback. The organizations that are doing the work day after day... their knowledge needs to be respected and centered.

Don’t be afraid to be challenged or to have things steered in a direction you weren’t expecting because sometimes the needs you identified initially might not be what is coming up on the ground in these organizations.”

Minna Frederick • LGBT Youthline

## 6. Offer Support



Offer support in ways that are meaningful to the organizations you are working with. This can include offering resources, participating in events or initiatives, or providing financial support.

Many 2SLGBTQ+ organizations struggle to secure funding and resources, so providing support in ways that are manageable for your organization can have a large impact.

### Practice Example

Durham Children's Aid Society has taken a leadership role in organizing Drag Queen Storytimes with their local libraries e.g. hiring performers, using their volunteer drivers, marketing and promoting the events, etc. When the events began to be met with community backlash, Durham CAS issued official statements condemning homophobia and transphobia, and financially supported hiring security at the events to manage the protesters.

## 7. Be Inclusive



Be mindful of the diversity within the 2SLGBTQ+ community and strive to be inclusive in your work with community organizations.

This includes considering and including the experiences and perspectives of individuals with different identities and experiences, such as those who are neurodivergent or disabled, Indigenous, Black, and other racial communities.

### Practice Example

Local protocols or customs may be in place in certain communities or for particular organizations such as the offering of tobacco to an Indigenous-centered space.

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