LGBTQ+ and Disability Part 3: Supporting LGBTQ+ Clients with Disabilities in their Pursuit of Work – Session 1

JOHN WALSH: Thank you for joining us for the latest training in our LGBTQ+ and Disability series. My name is John Walsh. My pronouns are he/him/his and I am the project director for the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation, or CIT-VR. Our current training offering is entitled Supporting LGBTQ+ Clients with Disabilities in their Pursuit of Work. We will be presenting this in a two part series, each 60 minutes.

I am pleased to report that our fantastic trio of presenters are back again for this latest training. And they compiled a plethora of information and resources that will be of great use for creating a welcoming, inclusive environment at your organization and also for ways to support your clients obtaining and maintaining employment. If you do not have the opportunity to complete the first two training sessions in the series, I highly encourage you to go back and complete those webcasts. All training offered by CIT-VR is free and offers CRC continuing education hours. Our entire training library can be accessed at TrainVR.org

I also want to acknowledge that the contents of this webinar were developed by CIT-VR, funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration under the Innovative Rehabilitation Training Program. The ideas, opinions, and conclusions expressed, however, are those of the authors and do not represent recommendations, endorsements, or policies of the US Department of Education. I now have the pleasure to turn it over to our presentation team and to begin introductions and we’ll start with DJ Ralston.

DJ RALSTON: Thanks, John and welcome back, everybody. Super excited to be here again with you all. My name is DJ Ralston. My pronouns are they/them/their. I am non-binary and queer. I am a senior training and technical assistance analyst at the Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education at George Washington University. I have the distinct privilege of working on three different RSA or Rehabilitation Services Administration-funded projects that support state vocational rehabilitation agencies that include, obviously, the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, The Collaborative, as well as the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management.
In addition to my full time work, I'm also a full time student but actually now a doctoral candidate, working on my dissertation. And finally, my areas of interest and expertise lay in the intersection of disability and poverty, work incentives, counseling, and financial empowerment, partnership development, leveraging resources and integrated resource teams, and of course, supporting LGBTQ+ populations.

LUCAS DEMONTE: All right. Hey folks. So my name is Lucas DeMonte Monty, pronouns he/him/his. So I am a queer trans man who's also neurodivergent. As with my colleagues, I am a doc student, soon to be doctoral candidate at the end of spring if they let me. I do some teaching and my clinician in private practice in the prison system, done a lot of rural outreach, worked with a lot of marginalized populations. So I do a lot of work with trauma, mental illness, and other marginalized identities.

For me, I come from a very social justice oriented place. So looking at intersectionality, looking at relational therapies and theories and I've done a lot of different webinars and presentations and lucky to be here with these amazing folks, the trio. And I do a lot of educating webinars, workshops to do a lot of research, counselor consultant, social justice advocate. And then my little meme that I put for myself, it's Kermit and dark Kermit, with the little black hood on it says, "me: sees a fluffy dog." me to me: steal him." and I feel like that encapsulates me pretty well.

DJ RALSTON: Thanks for describing that, Lucas. I was remiss in not describing the animated GIF that was with my bio which was a picture of Scooter the Muppet hyperventilating into a brown paper bag because that's pretty much me.

LUCAS DEMONTE: All right, Katherine.

KATHERINE HURLEY: Thank you. So Hello, everybody watching us. Thank you for joining us again and thank you to my colleagues here. So my name is Katherine Hurley. My pronouns are she/her/hers. My image over you'll see to the right is about intersectionality and bringing forward everyone as part of all of these discussions and centering folks that are not always centered in an image of that kind of a play off of that "we can do it" with all sorts of folks, all sorts of bodies, all sorts of everything over to the right here.

So I'm a doctoral candidate in counseling at George Washington University. I have the pleasure of working with DJ and the grants that they mentioned. I'm a clinical mental health counselor and researcher and my focus is on intersectionality and marginalized groups, including those with autism spectrum disorder and those in the LGBTQ+ community. My research-- I've been researching during my time at GW these groups and I have four grants from the Social Security Administration for research toward increasing employment opportunities and other outcomes for adults with autism.

And I had the privilege of getting the National Prize for Community-Based Participatory Research because research with communities is always more important than what we say not for people but with people. I'm also the creator of cognitivegym.org which is a platform for
online curriculum to help adults with autism achieve whatever their goals are. And right now if you go to cognitivegym.org, you'll see part of my dissertation and current research, which is about intersectionality. So folks who are autistic, LGBTQ and so forth, if you're part of those groups or know of people who might be interested, please stop by cognitivegym.org and thank you for being here again.

DJ RALSTON: Awesome. Thanks, Katherine. So as John mentioned in the introduction, there are two previous parts to this series and in that, we do an introduction to working with clients with intersecting identities and we also do a webinar around considerations for working with clients with intersecting identities. I would strongly encourage you to go check those out, especially if working with the LGBTQ community is new to you.

We cover a lot of the basics. That is kind of like the 101, 102 type level whereas today, I think we like to say that we're at least 300 level, maybe even getting into the 500 level, depending on the different parts of today's presentation. So part one really focused on increasing knowledge on the application of the CRC or the Certified Rehabilitation Code of Ethics along with the American Counseling Association Ethics. It really increased knowledge around ability to utilize common language around LGBTQ identity. So yeah, if you don't know a lot of that language, really strongly encourage you to check this out.

We talked about intersectionality in part one, including how LGBTQ+ identities are one set of identities that can be one of many marginalized identities. We talk about common narratives that LGBTQ+ youth face, including youth with disabilities and including, again, those intersectional identities. And we described the sociopolitical impacts on working with gender expansive adolescents and adults in part one. So that's part one.

Part two, we do a quick recap of part one and then we also talk about understanding the implication of power and privilege and the counseling relationship as it relates to LGBTQ+ and disability identities. Spoiler, we're going to talk a little bit about that today. But it's framed in a different way. So be on the look out for that. We're really excited to talk to you a little bit more in depth about it. Also, we talked about how to support LGBTQ+ people, including transgender and gender expansive persons in their pursuit of work.

Again, that was more like the 100 level. We're going to talk more extensively about that today, including talking about what to do when you run into discrimination issues around disclosure and how to approach employers. So there were some basics there but today's going to be pretty extensive. We talked about the ability to locate local resources and support. We'll talk more about that today as well as discerning appropriate resources versus not appropriate resources and also hoping to foster a desire to examine your own agency's policies. So that's part one and two. If you haven't checked those out, strongly encourage you to do so. Katherine.

KATHERINE HURLEY: Yep. Thanks, DJ. So as John mentioned at the top of the hour here that we're going to split up this conversation between two videos basically. So this first hour in the second hour will be split up. And the learning objectives throughout those two videos that you're going to watch-- we hope stay with us for the two sections-- are the following. So you'll
learn and have an increased knowledge of how organizations can support LGBTQ+ identified clients with disabilities through policy and procedures, increased understanding and application of how to address needs of LGBTQ+ clients as it pertains to working with agency partners and natural supports. And when we say natural supports, we mean school systems, families, and so forth. An increased capacity to support LGBTQ+ identified clients in their pursuit of work, including how to approach potential employers.

And that will be something we talk about towards the end and probably in the second section mostly. An increased understanding of what to do in cases of discrimination, including the discernment of legitimate resources and bystander intervention practices. And we'll also be hitting on that in the second hour.

LUCAS DEMONTE: All right. So something to start off with. I know we are in a recording and can't actually engage in many of the ways that we would like to with a reflection but this is a chance to pause the webinar, take a moment to really think about the messages that you've heard in professional contexts or in your education, whether you're a student, clinician, working in voc(ational) rehab, you're an educator. But really thinking about the messages you've heard in these contexts about gender, sexuality, and disability.

So take a moment just to pause and really sit and reflect because this is important in terms of engaging with current and future clients but also in really grounding yourself in the material we talk about today. So pause, take maybe a sip of water, talk to a loved one or a colleague if you're in an office, really have this conversation and go from there. So the meme that we included because we love meme here, it's a moth looking in the mirror and it says "Man, maybe life isn't about finding the perfect lamp, but finding the lamp inside you."

So relatively quickly, I'm just going to go over needs assessments. The meme is a cat trying to get through a screen door, saying "Got time for a needs assessment survey?" And so with the needs assessments, I did two different ones, one for students, educators, and clinicians and then another one for clients and consumers. So the biggest things that I explored and received feedback on, both related to taking the actual survey or having conversations and verbal interviews about certain themes from providers, so a big thing that came up-- and that's also why we're doing these presentations-- is the need for more nuanced trainings beyond the one on one.

So like DJ said, the 300 to 500, maybe 1,000 level training that we have today. So we made sure we listen to that and are trying to give more information. The need for more resources and direct guidance for assisting with gender expansive clients. Another one was need for how to navigate micro and macro microaggressions, ableism, heteronormativity and cisnormativity in various capacities. With students, again, educators, workplace. Needing to know how to provide better services and also in terms of intersectionality, talking about race, gender identity, socioeconomic status, disability, et cetera and how that will also impact working with your clients.
So with the needs assessment, I worked with some clients on again, interviews and also I had a survey that I had folks have the option of filling out. But the general themes that were identified by clients was the need and want for counselors or other professionals with similar values. So not needing to have to explain yourself, having someone who's familiar with the community or part of the community, and having that experience in education so folks don't need to educate their provider.

Need to not focused therapy or services on one identity based on therapist assumption. So a holistic approach and also asking what this person needs rather than assuming it's, oh, they're here for this or they're here because of their gender identity when that might not even be the reason that they are seeking services or going to therapy. And the need for us as all providers to engage in continuous education. So not put the burden or the labor of educating us and about identities and intersectional identities.

The things that I did notice that did come up, some additional themes, when you said like conflicting themes identified, clinicians don't have to share your identity or identities as long as you're knowledgeable, again, the shared values. But there is a preference to share identities with the clinician. Seeing yourself represented in someone does make you feel more connected and safe. And we had a mixture of both positive and negative experiences that also vary across the spectrum of positive and negative experiences.

So now we're going to talk about inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons and to the right to see SpongeBob kind of literally manifesting a rainbow under the sea, being so excited and showing the beauty of LGBTQ+ inclusion under the sea and on land, hopefully, in air and everywhere else. So we're going to start talking about this in the next section. So first, we're going to talk about inclusion on an organizational level. And I think DJ, you're going to kick off the conversation there for us.

DJ RALSTON: Thanks, Katherine. And it literally was all I could do to keep myself from starting to sing the SpongeBob theme song when you said under the sea, I'm like, "who lives in a pineapple"-- wait. I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to do it. OK, so yeah. So we're talking about LGBTQ+ inclusion. We're going to, as Katherine said, we really want to start what does this look like at an organizational level. And don't worry for all of you that are counselors on the line. You're like, I don't care what it looks like at an organizational level but you do. And we promise we will also get to what it looks like at the counselor level.

So one of the first things that we really want to talk about at the organizational level is there's an opportunity to look at your agency's policies and practices. So how is your agency or your organization creating inclusive environments? So on the right hand side, before I actually get into this, there is a meme of Alice from Alice in Wonderland, the Disney version, so blonde Alice. And she's leaning over a desk, got her hand on her face, like smoooshing her face and you can just tell that she's kind of exasperated. And the text of the meme reads, "When my VR counselor uses my dead name." Yeah.
So let's think about what might be some of those agencies policies or practices? Oh quick caveat again, remember this is us talking. This is not RSA talking. But these are what we know to be good best practices relative to creating that space of inclusion. So come along with us. So as we think about that, are there policy or practices related to your intake process, related to your agency's intake process that would include space for chosen names, space for pronouns? Is there policy regarding restrooms and restroom use? Where is your agency located?

We recognize that some of these things may not be within your control, but these are all things that you really want to think about and that your agency wants to think about as it's going forward. What about your counseling and referral processes? Are there policies in place and mechanisms for your agency to be able to share chosen names and share pronouns of clients? Are we automatically just making assumptions based on someone's name what their pronouns are? So again, is that clearly spelled out in your agency's policies or practices and how you handle that?

Same thing with the management information system. So for the purposes of your management information system that records, so obviously your data, where you're putting in all the data that you're required to, one of the things that we want to say for state vocational rehabilitation agencies is like the RSA 911 is not referring to legal gender. They're referring to gender as it's reported by the participant. And that is clarification that we did actually seek so just so folks know that, but that's kind of an important piece and I'll talk a little bit more about that in the upcoming slides.

So the other thing that you want to think about is how is your agency supporting your LGBTQ+ peers and colleagues? Are there policies in place that protect your colleagues from harassment? Is there any type of employee or resource group or affinity group for LGBTQ+ employees amongst your peers and colleagues? So those are, again, all things that we can be thinking about relative to what an organizational or agency policy or practice can look like.

Other examples. One of the things we wanted to do was we wanted to actually give you all some examples because that's one of the things I feel like we get a lot of questions from states about, especially state level administrators. Well, how do we do this? What would a policy look like? So for example, if we wanted a policy on use of a chosen name and specified pronouns, it could be as simple as consistent with our code of ethics and do no harm when an individual identifies as transgender, gender nonconforming, and/or non-binary, and/or reports their gender and indicates a chosen name other than their legal name and specifies gender pronouns, then the counselor staff and employees will use the chosen name and specified gender pronoun when working with that individual, regardless of whether that counselor, staff, or employee believes the individual's gender to be different than what the individual has identified or reported.

As so again, I know, kind of boring. We're talking about policy stuff. But like these are the important pieces because when we can get the stuff written in, these are the ways for us to signal that we're an inclusive organization. You could talk about agency pronoun inclusion, counselor, staff, and employees display their pronouns when comfortable in their email
signature block and next to name on web conferencing platforms. Like you'll notice today my pronouns, all three of us have our pronouns next to our names. Actually, everybody on here today does.

So that's something that can be done. There is some nuance here because you notice that I added the "when comfortable" on there. The biggest thing that I can advocate for, quite frankly, is this. If you are a cisgender individual, please for the love of the universe, put your pronouns in your email block and on your web platforms. Now, we don't want to necessarily mandate that everybody absolutely has to do this because if we do that, you may have folks that you're working with who may not be out and then you're forcing that person to misgender themselves or your first forcing them to out themselves.

So again, levels of nuance. This is why we're in the 300, 500 level. But you can still develop a policy around this that says, hey to the degree of comfort, this is what the expectation is. And again, another way that you can do this like provide support for your peers and colleagues who might be LGBTQ+ identified, or the agency can do this rather, is through the development or creation of an affinity group or an employee resource group.

OK. So what happens-- what about policies around when we witness deliberate mistreatment? So what happens when we’re witnessing deliberate misgendering? So a policy for example could say, if agency, counselor, or staff member witnesses continuous and deliberate misgendering of a client by another agency, counselor, or staff member, this deliberate action should be reported to the office manager or supervisor. And if it happens to be the office manager or supervisor who continuously and deliberately misgenders the clients, then action should be reported to the next level up in terms of the chain of command.

So it is important for us, for agencies and organizations to also create mechanisms for us to report harassment or mistreatment. That's part of how we create a safer and more inclusive environment. What to do if an employee cites religious beliefs or other reasons for not adhering to this policy? Well, quite frankly, I'm not holding back here. You're going to cite the code of ethics. Do no harm and avoiding value imposition. And if you can't do that, then, quite frankly, you shouldn't be here.

OK. This is a slide with a really lot of text. And I'm just going to talk through it a little bit, knowing that this slide deck lives as an example that people can pull off. But one of the things that comes up-- so we talked a little bit earlier about that management information system. So like as VR counselors, we have to technically record someone's gender for the purposes of our client's profile.

And so typically, there are basically two or actually three options, I believe, within the 911 data, the RSA 911 data. And that's male, female, or not reported or not identified, forgive me. So what do we do in that sense? Well, ultimately what it comes down to, y'all, is if somebody reports as male, regardless of whether they're cisgender or transgender, then you report that person's gender as male. If somebody reports their gender as female, regardless of if they're
cisgender or transgender, you report their gender as female. If somebody reports as non-binary, then for the purposes of the RSA 911, you should report their gender as not identified.

Now, within this context, you can actually offer all of these different options for folks in terms of reporting their gender to you. So within the context of your organization's practice, you might say, OK, we're asking you to specify your gender. The options here are male, female, non-binary, transgender, other. And within that context, then you would know, if somebody says, I'm a transgender man. Well, you're going to report their gender as male for the purposes of RSA 911, as we just talked about. Or I'm a trans woman. You're going to report their gender as female. And if they say non-binary, then you're going to report their gender as not identified. So really what this slide does is it just lays it out for you and lays it out for an agency to be able to write a policy that would be consistent with offering all these options for clients to choose from relative to their gender.

So inclusion at the organizational level and agency training. Let's talk a little bit about this. What can an agency do to support inclusion at the organizational level? Agencies can have mandated training for all new agency staff, counselors, and employees around working with LGBTQ+ clients as well as-- guess what? This applies to working with your peers too. Agencies can have mandated ongoing training for all agency staff, counselors, employees around working with LGBTQ+ clients and peers. And hey, I know a couple of agencies out there that are doing that. Shout out to you all.

Agencies can include statements from LGBTQ+ persons and/or testimony of lived experiences within those trainings. So one of the things that we think about, y'all, within the disability field, not about us, without us. Guess what? When we're talking about LGBTQ+ folks, they should be able to also talk about their lived experience. So anything you can do to include those folks, at least testimonials if not as your trainers. That's really important. You'll notice that all three of us here today talking about working with LGBTQ+ populations are folks that identify within the LGBTQ+ community.

You can also utilize agencies to-- or agencies, rather, can support external training workshops and programs designed to educate service providers working with LGBTQ+ populations. And finally, agencies can have training on how to intervene when bullying or misgendering occurs. We'll talk a little bit about that later too. So Katherine, I'm going to kick it over to you to talk about inclusion at the counselor level. See everybody? I told you we'd get there.

KATHERINE HURLEY: Thank you, DJ. So this is about-- now, I'm one person who's working within an organization and I'm doing all these great things that DJ is talking about or trying to advocate as much as I can. What about one-on-one? What about when it's me and a person in the room, a consumer or client or anyone, what can we do in terms of when we're working with clients directly?

And you'll see to the left there's a meme saying, "Having to explain what non-binary means for the 1,000th time." That's about client interaction. That's about the client. So if the client is non-binary and being like, well, now I have to explain to you as my counselor what this is because
you've asked in a way that is making me the educator. So this is kind of a reminder in some ways that we do work to educate ourselves. And everyone has an individual experience. So we want to learn about an individual's experience. But that it's not the job of the client to educate us on these broad things that we have trainings like this for.

So kind of moving over to our bullet points over here, introductions. And I really invite the other counselors on the panel also here on the presentation to talk about this too. When I introduce myself, I also used my pronouns. So you know, I'm Katherine. I use she/her/hers and invite the other person by that modeling to do it as well. That's part of just my introduction process. And I think intake also is kind of being open and asking every question so we're hoping that the forms are inclusive but also asking every question and following up as you would with anybody.

So asking about gender and marking down and saying, OK moving on, just everyone is treated the same and we're inclusive always throughout the process of the intake and asking questions, getting the information we need. And the use of chosen name and identified pronouns, that's the same thing. DJ always says and I love this. And you'll hear it in one and two, but that if someone's name is Robert, and they say my name is Bob, that's the most normal thing in the world for us to do so. If someone introduces you with any name, we are well-versed at just using whatever name they tell us. So why would it be any different in the context of anything we're talking about now?

So the name is the name. The pronouns are the pronouns. That's as much as I can say about that to kind of boil it down. Correcting self and others when mistakes are made. So that's about not kind of making-- when we use something and we use something incorrectly, say something correctly, you know it is very polite to say, oh I'm sorry and correct what you've done and move on. And what we don't want to do is belabor and make this about us if. We make a mistake, I apologize, pardon me. And use the correct whatever it is. But we don't want to say, oh, I can't believe. I'm so sorry. We don't-- no. That makes people more uncomfortable.

So so we just want to say, I'm sorry and use the correct name or correct anything and remember that moving forward. That's a sign of respect for Robert who is Bob and everybody else in the world. And documentation. And I think the other counselors want to jump in here to about documentation. But documentation is-- first of all, when we're working with clients, documentation is for them as well. They can see the documentation. People can get it in court, et cetera, and so forth.

We're not writing secrets from the client there, meaning if the client's a woman, a trans woman, whomever she is and she uses pronouns. She says this is her name, that's what ends up in the documentation. I often we use documentation as. Initials but I would use the initial of the name they gave. So I almost feel silly kind of going over it and over it because I think we all know. Bob is Bob is Bob and Bob uses whatever pronouns and when we document, we document the same way we're acting in the room. So I don't know if anybody has anything to add.
DJ RALSTON: You know what, Katherine? I love that. Thank you so much and I do want to tag in just for a second because there is one little area of nuance to this and that’s particularly when you’re working with young folks. And we get really into the context of working with young folks pretty in-depth later in terms of what happens when there’s unsupportive family and all of these pieces.

LUCAS DEMONTE: We'll get there.

DJ RALSTON: Yeah, part of the documentation piece, y'all, really is having the conversation with the person that you're working with. So if they have identified a chosen name, saying to them, OK. I love that. I'm going to use your chosen name. Can we talk about documentation? So within your file, knowing that your file may be looked at or that may be shared with someone else, with your, of course, with your permission, your release of information, how would you like the documentation in your file to look? So having that conversation, I think is really important.

And again, especially with young people because if you’ve got a young person who maybe is not out at home and hasn't reached the age of majority yet so their parents are able to look at their file or make a request of their file, then it's going to be important that documentation look the way that is going to keep that young person safest. So again, having those conversations. And we'll get into more of that nuance later on.

KATHERINE HURLEY: I might also-- just in the theme of keeping everything the same, maybe have that conversation with everyone so that we're not specifying, oh I think I should have that conversation with this particular person. But make that just like everything. Like I introduce myself with my pronouns. Make that part of your intake. So just so you know, this is how documentation works and is this the name I'm going to-- this is how you introduce yourself. Does this make sense. And so that you're doing it with everyone too.

DJ RALSTON: Yeah, sorry. I should have made that clear, Katherine. I appreciate you making that distinction because it totally is. It is absolutely something-- it's a conversation you should be having with everybody, regardless of age. So yeah.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Normalizing the process. And I mean, because you could write if we're going to the Robert and Bob application, like if Bob wants to be called Bob in the documentation, we're going to listen to that and list Bob instead of Robert.

DJ RALSTON: I'm going to caveat this a little bit and say you know what I'm going to ask folks to maybe spend a little bit some of that gut reaction that we might have and actually maybe listen to that gut reaction a little bit. So this slide is really about at the counselor level, our need to do the continuous critical reflection, especially as we think about it in the context of power and privilege and how we show up within our social identities.

So one of the first things that we need to do is reflect on what our own identities are. And when we start to talk about social identity, we're talking about things like gender, language, ethnicity,
race, education level, ability-disability, sexual orientation, could be mental health, could be body—like there's all these different things. And so in the image on the right, which is from Sylvia Duckworth. She created the wheel of power and privilege and this was actually adapted from an advocacy group within Canada. But I actually think it's a really powerful visual. And this is part of the reason I'm sharing it.

So in the center, you have power and then there--within the center of a circle, sorry. You've got a few concentric circles here. So three nested circles and in the very, very center, you have power and these concentric circles are dissected into pieces of pie and each one of these pieces of pie is a different social identity. And so then, within these three concentric circles, essentially there's three pieces of that pie. And the pie that's closest to the center has the most power. And the pie that's the furthest from the center is typically the social identity that would be the most marginalized.

So for example, let's use education. So someone who probably has the most power in a situation it is likely, when it comes to education, is the person that has the most amount of education, which would be post-secondary education. And then as you move a little bit further out, away from that power, the next group that tends to have hold more power in this area would be those that have a high school education. And then as we move all the way out to the edge of that wheel, which is furthest from the power, and those that are typically most marginalized are those folks who haven't completed a high school education.

So the reality is when we start thinking about all of the different social identities that we each inhabit, we may land in different places relative to our proximity to power. So like for me for example, I definitely sit towards the center of power as a white person, as somebody with post-secondary education. And we could talk about wealth because I'm in the middle class. Maybe I'm not closest to the power but I'm there in the middle.

But at the same time, if we look at my gender as a non-binary person, guess what? I'm in that most marginalized group. And if we look at my orientation, for example, like I identify as queer. I'm all the way out there. Like so it's just something to be aware of. We all move through this world and we all occupy different spaces within our social identity as it relates to power and privilege. And you can occupy more than one level of power and one level of privilege or one level of marginalization at a time.

And so it's important that we recognize the power and privilege that we do bring and the space that we take up and so that requires us to do this reflection. It's important for us to think about the language, both explicit and implicit implications of the language that we're using, as well as our nonverbals. And it's important for us to recognize our own biases and our growth edges and our strengths and starting this slide by asking folks to suspend because it can feel uncomfortable when you recognize, hey yeah, maybe I do have some power and with that power comes some privilege I hadn't thought about.

And here's the thing. In the context of any time we're talking about a counseling relationship, you always have a degree of power and privilege by the mere fact that the person is coming to
you for help. In the context of the helping relationship, you are the helper, not necessarily the
one seeking the help so therefore, we automatically show up with a degree of power and
privilege. So it’s important for us to think about these other pieces too and how those may
intersect as well as where our client sits and how our clients may have these different-- where
their social identities rest and recognizing that there’s going to be some differences there and
we need to account for that and be cognizant and do the reflection that’s required. So I saw
Lucas and Katherine nodding their heads so I just want to give them a chance to weigh in if they
had anything or we can-- Lucas, you’re up next.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Yeah, I mean, you can move on. But I do have a comment. I really love how
you really broke down like your intersecting identities and the power and privilege. And I think
something kind of to add to that too is you can also share the same identity with somebody and
beside, OK I can maybe connect on this level or that or not putting your identity experience on
somebody else because it might be completely different. But you could be seeing somebody
who shares an identity but doesn’t share another and there's still power and privilege.

So for example, if I'm seeing a Black trans man, me being a white trans man and being cis
assumed as a white male in public versus this person being assumed as a Black man in public,
the implications are very, very different. So I think it’s important to recognize while we both
experienced that transness, it looks different both on a bigger level but also even more
personally. So it's so important to kind of recognize those things and like you said, DJ, really just
educating yourself and being OK with discomfort. Because now discomfort isn't inherently a
bad thing unless your foot's fallen off. That's a different story.

But discomfort isn't inherently a bad thing and like DJ said, pause for a moment, really sit with
the material because as all of us as providers or future providers, educators, we need to sit with
this stuff because we all, no matter who we are, we all embody all sorts of different identities.
So I really appreciate the way you said that, DJ. So I guess it's still me. Sorry, everybody.

So we're looking at further inclusion at the counselor level. So looking at the community
resources. Something I like to start off with before anything is we don’t determine whether a
space is safe for somebody. They determine that themselves and either they'll let us know.
Maybe they won’t but it’s being important of the space we occupy. Because if we're looking at
the unique challenges for LGBTQ+ folks with disabilities like what we experience, there's that
invisibility.

And so kind of the example that I provided earlier, it's, OK maybe your queerness is validated in
a setting but your race is completely disregarded. Or your race or socioeconomic status or your
education status, that’s acknowledged, like for example I’m first gen and all of the things. And
so for me like yes, I'm first gen and I still have that education that I'm getting. So I think it's
important to recognize not everybody is going to have all their identities embodied and
embraced and I think that’s the really important thing to be mindful of, is approaching our folks
with cultural humility and also holistically.
So that invisibility, I think it's really fascinating the study looked at the infographic as percent of LGBT community centers that have. So the one infographic says accessible restrooms and fountains is 73%, which I actually was surprised that it was that high and that's still not great. The next one is accessible parking, 70%. So you see it starting to go down. And I was still surprised that number too, which is commentary on the ways in which our own communities interact and the identities that interact with each other.

Then this is when it takes a really deep dive so looking at Braille or looking at other materials, 16%. So whether that's on signs or the materials, 16%. And that's low. And so of course, LGBT folks with disabilities don't feel welcome and a lot of spaces. And here it says TTY services are 13%. I know that's a little outdated but it gives the nuance and just there's not a lot of access within your own community or there is isolation in the community because people might not understand you or they might be like, that's your problem. And so I think this is a continuation of a bigger issue and conversation that also is going to come up with clients.

So me still blabbing at you, looking at inclusion at the counselor level. So for me, building that community relationship, I mean, that's a big area of focus and practice for me, especially rural outreach. I'm from the not fun Florida, the rural Florida. Sorry, Florida. But I think something that's important for when you're doing rural outreach, which is, again, something I've done for a long time. There's this really great infographic with the LGBT people in rural America. It provides a map and familiarity, visibility of LGBT folks in rural areas. How often do we hear things? You know, me being from the South of oh, well, in the South, there's all these problems and that.

But then it's easy to forget that LGBT people with disabilities still live there. We're still there. And so I think it's important to recognize whether it's accidental or not, erasure of a lot of rural queer trans folks with disabilities in rural America. So looking for ways to educate yourself. We provided some things about Ted Talks, literature, which I think, DJ, if you wanted to go over the literature you provided real quick. No?

DJ RALSTON: Yeah, like YA literature. There's a lot of really great YA literature out there, YA, young adult literature that is a good window in. And a lot of times when we get parents who will reach out to us, which inevitably happens after every single one of these trainings, I will get somebody that emails me and be, like--

LUCAS DEMONTE: Which is great.

DJ RALSTON: Right. No. I think it's fantastic and I'm always glad to respond and they're always like, the young person in my life has come out and I don't know the best ways to support them. And I'm like, well one of the things you can do is go look at some of the YA literature, buy a couple of things and like maybe you and your young person can read them together and have some conversations. Open the door. Show that support. So that was just my point on that.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Absolutely. And then so attending virtual trainings like this one. The fact that you're even attending shows there's a desire to grow and learn. And that's really important.
And I think the other thing too is intention does matter. And even if you don't mean to hurt somebody and the intention isn't there, we still need to own our mistakes. And so this is going to be really important, especially in rural contexts because there is a lot more distrust of folks who not only are not from the South but that share these identities. So faith leaders, community orgs, community centers, those are going to be really big areas of building relationships.

So looking at we did the same thing with this slide, linking and LGBT youth in rural schools and communities. It also shows the same thing, very similar, talking about safe and supportive, staff employees, counselors, faculty, and going over like what are the-- building a comprehensive anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policy. And schools, I know in Florida in particular, the statistics of the amount of folks who are bullied or isolated are extremely high. I've had a lot of folks I've worked with who've been like, I stopped going to school physically because I felt unsafe or was bullied.

So I think it's important to also we're taking action and also the representation of LGBT identities included at all levels. And so using that affirming climate like Katherine said, introducing with pronouns, keeping that consistent, using the right name, et cetera. And the importance of having GSAs. I remember where I went to high school-- and this provides further information of why we need this-- is I remember there was so much fight against having a GSA and it did get shut down after I left, which was very sad. It was my senior year. And the principal was quoted in a newspaper saying "We don't have a problem with LGBT bullying here because there are no LGBT students." So I think it's really important when we're looking at rural folks, it's really important to have that representation.

So then looking at urban and suburban-- and I recognize too, want to be mindful of time. So there's a bunch of different community centers and resources and trainings that we've linked on this slide. So if you want to come back to the building communal relationships, urban and suburban networking events, educational workshops, research articles, universities are great access. But we linked a bunch of different links in here.

DJ RALSTON: Yeah, and that's one of the things I'll say, folks, even just kind of looking at the last slide. All of the places where you see-- these are all links and so when you-- and there's even more links coming. We tried to put as many resources in this presentation for you as possible so pretty much you can see like all of these different links.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Map, PFLAG website, GSA.

DJ RALSTON: GSA network. So anywhere that you see a link, we'd highly encourage you to go check out that link because these are additional resources that you can use to support you both in your ongoing education and your commitment to being inclusive as well as are going to be able to support the folks that you're working with because just a quick reminder, you don't actually have to be the expert, which is nice. It brings us right into this slide.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Exactly. I got you.
DJ RALSTON: Yeah, it's going to get us closer to wrapping part one. So on the right hand side, I would be remiss if I did not include-- or we would be remiss, rather, if we did not include at least one SpongeBob meme. So we have Patrick Star here, who's looking quite studious, bent over looking into the microscope, and it says, "When VR is inclusive of LGBTQ+ clients" whereas this is juxtaposed against the bottom image of Patrick Star, who is sitting there holding a hammer with a board nailed to the top of his star head and stuff kind of strewn about him and it says, "When VR is not inclusive of LGBTQ+ clients." So we definitely want to be like Patrick Star on top.

So what is the role of VR? We've spent a lot of time talking about how you create an inclusive environment through agency and at the organizational level through policies and practices. We've talked about what you can do as a counselor yourself in your own practice individually and working with individuals. So what is the role of VR? Well, you are not expected to be the experts but you are expected to be familiar with resources and connections to those who are. You are expected to be able to be inclusive, use language that is inclusive, be knowledgeable about identity.

But you don't have to know everything and folks aren't going to expect you to You need to know how to appropriately Google and you need to know how to ask informed questions. And we say appropriately Google, we're saying like you have to be aware. You have to be discerning about the resources and how you locate resources. Because quite frankly, there are people out there. There are entities out there-- I'm not going to say people but, there are people. There are entities out there that are putting out false information and false narratives about the LGBTQ+ community. So you do want to be cautious and make sure that you're finding reputable resources.

You want to locate resources for clients you have. You want to be familiar with resources for clients you don't yet have, but who someday might actually need those resources and P.S., by being familiar with those resources, that may actually then help generate those clients coming into your office because then your agency or your office becomes known for being inclusive. And so you'll end up seeing more LGBTQ+ people accessing your services. Again, familiarizing yourself with legitimate organizations and you want to keep learning. So that is the main role of Vocational Rehabilitation so Lucas, we have a lot of resources right.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Very many about-- I mean, so many different things. And like DJ said earlier, we made sure to link everything and make it as accessible as possible. So we have some safe space kits, we have some Ted Talks. Again, we have those national transgender discrimination survey, that full report, youth organizing disabled and proud. We have a lot of different things that we've put in here and it's not an exhaustive list.

And the biggest thing that I think is so important-- because no one really teaches us how to really do the research when it comes to looking at the intersections of these identities. So in collecting and evaluating resource tips, I included a bunch of different how to evaluate different internet resources. How do you evaluate that information? And like DJ said, there are people and entities that put things out there that aren't true but makes them look like they're very
formal like, oh, this is an association or organization. We can believe them. And juxtaposing OK, we have this one source. What does this source say?

DJ RALSTON: Right. And this is particularly true, y'all, for social media. So if you are looking at social media, whether that's Facebook, because I know that there's a generation of folks that still use Facebook or maybe a couple of generations where that may be their primary social media. But if you are looking at Facebook, if you are looking at Instagram, if you are looking at TikTok, if you are looking at Twitter, if you are on Reddit, if you are-- like all of those places, it's going to be really important that you are doing that discerning work of determining what's legitimate and what's not.

So again, we have another-- this is kind of the continuation. A lot of the resources on the first page looked at both disability, activism, as well as some LGBTQ+ activism in addition to the discerning resource tips. These ones are really focused on the LGBTQ+ populations. A lot of times these might be national-level resources but you will find that they have local-level chapters so you can support all of that.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Absolutely. And being able to connect folks, like if there's a student group that I know there's youth outlook over here. You can connect with other teens, other adults, parents can connect with other parents. There are some resources here that can also do that as well.

DJ RALSTON: Yeah. And that, y'all, brings us to the conclusion of our first installment under part three. So now's your chance to go run and use the restroom, to get some Twizzlers, maybe some caffeine, maybe you need a cup of coffee or some tea. So go do that.

LUCAS DEMONTE: Bring me some Twizzlers too. I want some of those.

DJ RALSTON: I'm definitely here for the Twizzlers. So we will see you back here hopefully in just a few minutes. Thanks.