Understanding SOGIE

What is SOGIE?

- SOGIE stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity/Expression
- It involves 4 elements of identity
  - **Sexual Orientation**: The gender(s) toward which one is romantically and/or erotically attracted
  - **Gender Identity**: Our internal understanding of ourselves as a man, a woman, neither, both and/or a non-binary gender
  - **Gender Expression**: External presentation of gender including hair, clothes, gestures, voice, etc.
  - **Sexed Body**: Assigned at birth by others. An individual’s gender identity and/or expression may correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender) or not (transgender or non-binary)

Why do we need to ask about SOGIE?

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Non-Binary Youth are over-represented and under-served in child welfare, juvenile justice, and housing instability programs. As a result, they suffer the ill-effects of neglect, discrimination, and harassment at significantly higher rates than their straight and cisgender peers.
- Mentoring programs which serve youth serve LGBTQ+ youth. But in too many situations, this core element of their identity is ignored at best, stigmatized or harassed at worst.
- Collecting SOGIE Data allows us to ensure that our mentoring programs meet the needs of all the youth we serve – not just the straight and cisgender ones. That means better outcomes and healthier young adults.

When do we ask about SOGIE?

- As early as possible in your work with your program participants at intake, during initial interviews, during training for mentors, when preparing for a youth or a mentor match.

How do we ask about SOGIE?

- Make sure your agency is ready; ensure appropriate policies, training and programs are in place
- Choose a system for data collection (update interview, intake, training procedures and forms and train staff how to use them, etc.)
- Introduce the questions (Tell them why you are asking, ensure their confidentiality, and allow them to choose to answer or not)
- How you ask the questions matters. Leave room for people to choose the words, identities or labels that best fit them). An example is attached