

FAMILIES:

Rethinking Approaches to Reduce Risk and Promote Well-Being for LGBT Youth



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LGBT Youth Health & Support Needs

- Supportive home, school & community environments
- Family & peer support
- Access to accurate information & socialization related to their LGBT identity
- Mentoring, vocational & career guidance in the context of their LGBT identity

LGBT Youth: Knowledge Gaps & Misconceptions

- Misinformation about homosexuality – and gender identity – among young people is widespread.
- Most information about LGBT youth was collected to advocate for services so it focuses on risk behaviors not strengths (very limited info on transgender youth)
- Major gaps in knowledge of critical issues, including:
 - Role of families in fostering / protecting against risk and promoting well-being
 - Sexual orientation & gender identity development in children & adolescents
 - Resiliency, strengths & positive coping

Key Points

- FAP is generating a paradigm shift to serve LGBT young people in the *context of their families*
- Families have a **compelling impact** on their LGBT children's health & mental health
- Family “rejecting” behaviors are **motivated by care & concern** to help their LGBT children
- **FAP is developing the first evidence-based family model** of wellness, prevention & care for LGBTQ and gender variant children & adolescents
 - FAP's new **family system approach** can help reduce risk, prevent homelessness & custodial care and promote wellness for LGBT young people

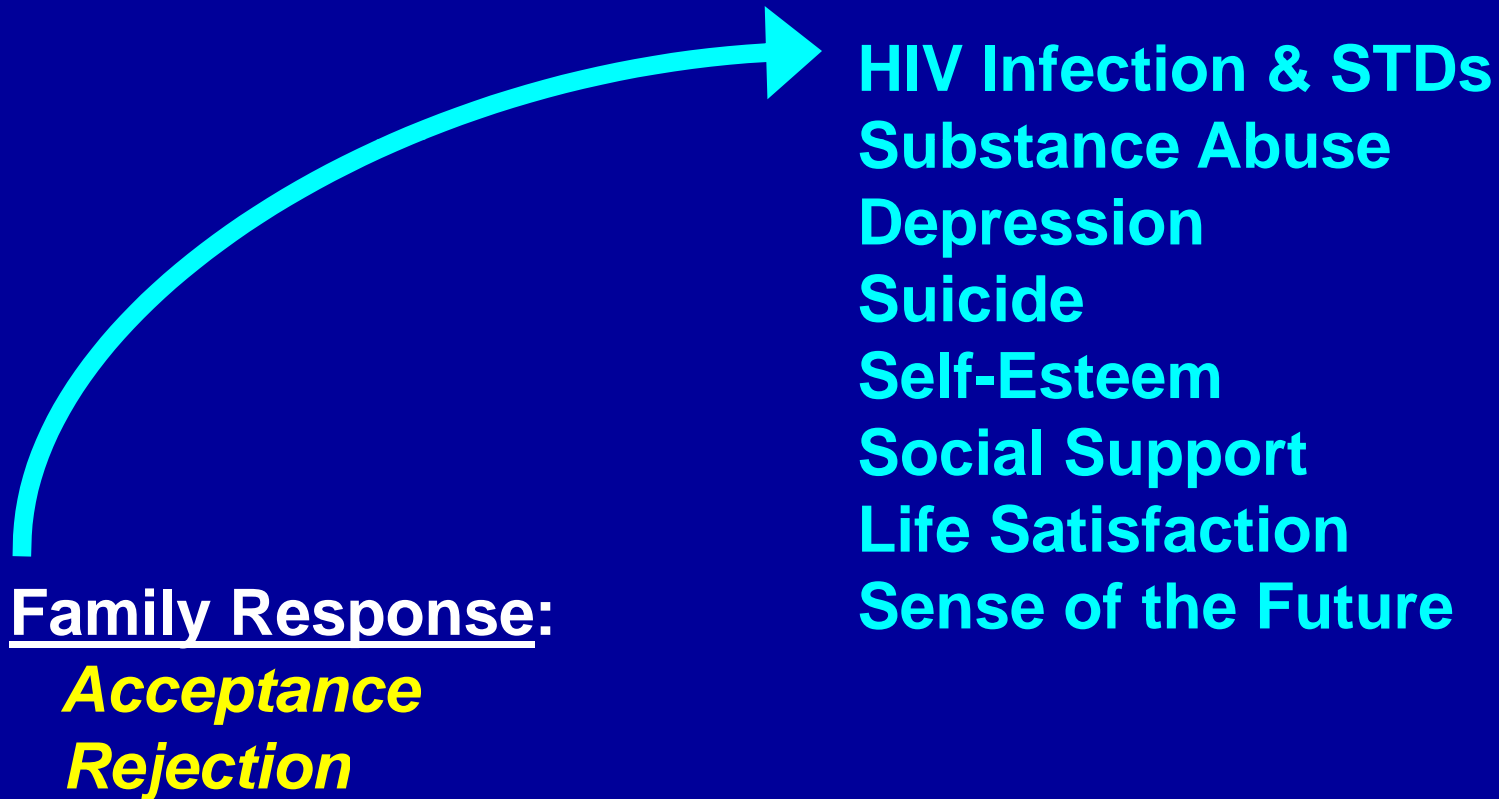
Level of Family Awareness

- LGBT youth are served as individuals, alone, in services, community agencies and systems of care
- Providers are reluctant & uncertain about engaging families in an LGBT adolescent's care
 - don't ask LGBT youth about family relationships
 - don't have a rationale for involving families
 - see families of LGBT youth as rejecting, unpredictable, unsupportive

Family Acceptance Project™

- Research
- Education & Professional Training
- Family Interventions
 - New evidence-based family model of wellness, prevention & care
- Public Policy

Impact of Family Acceptance & Rejection on Health/Mental Health



Process

- ***In-depth Interviews*** – **LGBT Youth & Families**
(Qualitative Study) identified more than 100 family reactions
- ***Young Adult Survey*** – (Quantitative Study)
- ***Family Briefing Sessions***
- ***Family Interventions***

Examples of Family Reactions

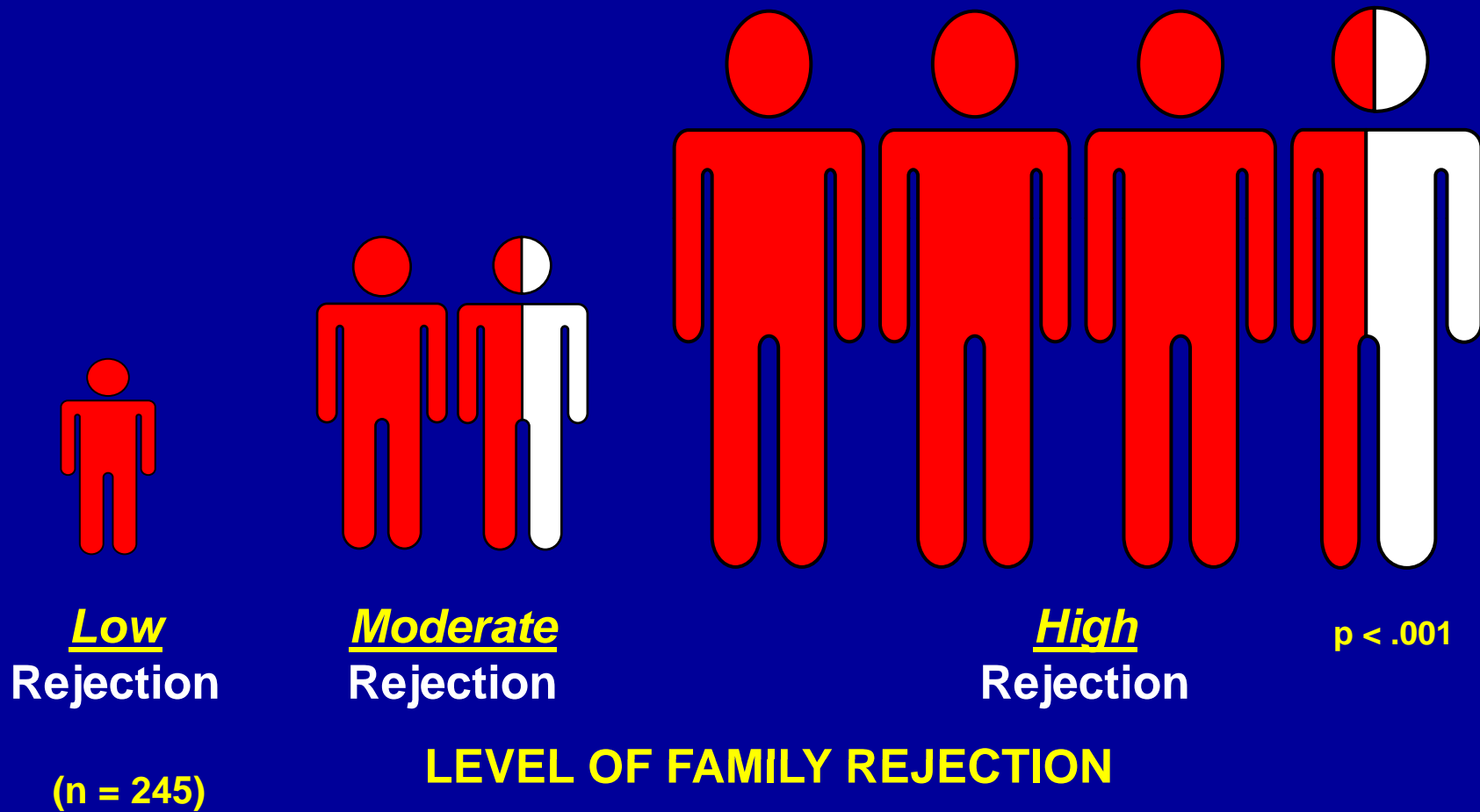
Supportive Behaviors

- Express affection & caring for LGBT youth
- Talk with your child about their LGBT identity
- Advocate for child when they are discriminated against by others
- Welcome LGBT friends & partners to family activities
- Support child's gender expression

Rejecting Behaviors

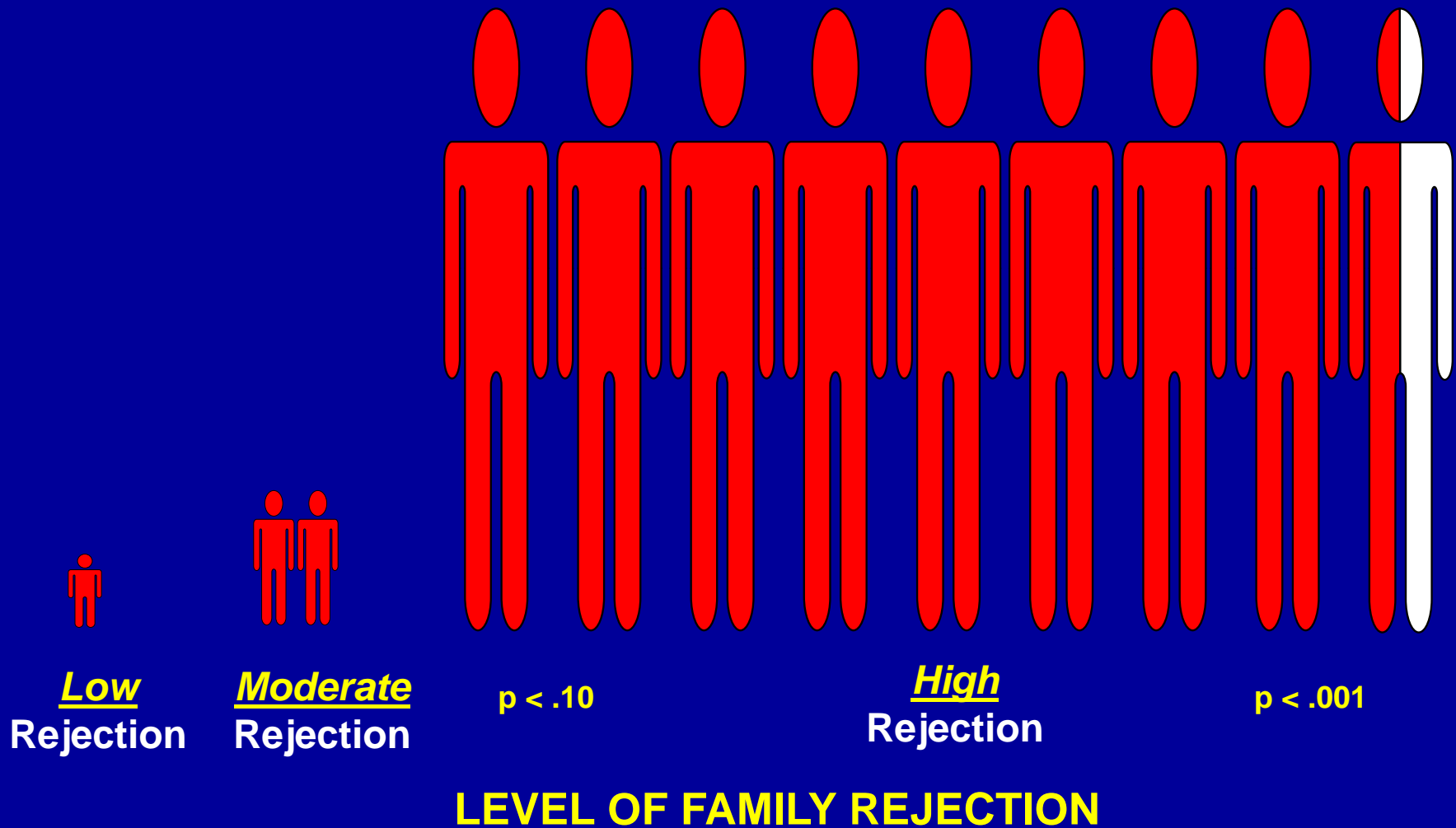
- Call youth derogatory names related to their sexual orientation, gender expression or identity
- Restrict access to LGBT positive information, including peers & community resources
- Tell LGBT youth that the way they look, act or behave is shameful to the family
- Try to change child's LGBT identity

Illegal Drug Use



Lifetime Suicide Attempts

(1 or more times)



(n = 245)

Caitlin Ryan, PhD / Family Acceptance Project™, 2009

Key Findings

- *Family rejection* is linked with serious health & mental health problems for LGBT youth
- *Family acceptance* is a protective factor for LGBT youth
- *Family acceptance* helps promote well-being for LGBT youth

FAP Resources & Applications

- *Family education materials* – basic guidance in English, Spanish & Chinese
 - *Family video stories* of ethnically & religiously diverse families with LGBT children – *raising funds to complete series*
- *Policy & practice related materials* – assessment materials; policy & practice guidelines; training
- *Academic publications* – publications in peer-reviewed journals
- *Evidence-based family interventions* – to help families decrease risk & promote support for their LGBT children (in collaboration with Child & Adolescent Services, San Francisco General Hospital/ UCSF), with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Approach to Working with Families

- We respect family's beliefs and values and do not try to change their values
- We meet families where they are
- We believe that families love their children and want the best for them
- We aim to show families how to reduce their LGBT children's risk for serious health and mental health problems related to social stigma and rejection and how to promote their well-being

Family Acceptance Project™



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