



**Building Community Support for
LGBT/Q Youth in Care**

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Dear Professional,

As you know, gay youth—particularly youth in care—are facing significant emotional and physical trauma. I know that this is an important priority for you and your organization and we believe we can be of great assistance to your community.

A Thousand Moms can help you and your staff mobilize available resources to meet the unique challenges of assisting the up to 30% of youth in our child welfare systems who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning their sexuality/identity (LGBT/Q). Our trained educators can help you develop a targeted support plan for these youth, building toward permanency and transition to independence.

Also, A Thousand Moms is ready to help you and your staff immediately to address the crisis of bullying and suicide with tested “stop bullying” open forums. We can demonstrate to parents, staff, and youth how to cope with the trauma and to how to most effectively help other children.

A Thousand Moms will guide you and your staff to respond effectively to the emotional and social needs of these youth, who are identifying as LGBT/Q as young as 13, and ending up in foster care without adequate supports and understanding. Our unique programs will help you serve the developmental and emotional needs of gay teens.

Please review our detailed programs to help agencies and gay youth in the enclosed brochure.

We would like to schedule an appointment with you and your executive team.

Sincerely yours,

Fred Elia, MS
Executive Director, A Thousand Moms

About Fred Elia and A Thousand Moms



Fred Elia is a child welfare trainer/consultant with over 30 years' professional experience, concentrating in the recruitment, training and support of foster/adoptive parents. He is also president of A Thousand Moms, a statewide community organization project in support of LGBT/Q youth in New York's child welfare system.

Fred grew up in foster care with a younger brother in Schenectady, NY. He began working with the child welfare community in NYS to recruit LGBT foster/adoptive parents about 20 years ago. Ten years ago he organized the founding of the **NYC LGBT Foster Care Coalition** to bring together the LGBT community with the child welfare community in order to better serve children/youth in the foster care/adoption system.

He now shares his foster family homestead (including The Foster Care Garden -- a welcoming space for all connected to the Child Welfare System), with his partner of 16 years, Dave.

A Thousand Moms' team of professionals currently conduct programs that include:

- **Network of Support** conference calls for parents, agency staff, and child welfare administrators
- **Training and recruitment** of foster/adoptive parents at agencies throughout New York State
- A "**Banners of Hope**" public awareness program for LGBT/Q youth in the foster/adoptive care system
- A **weekly radio program** to highlight LGBT issues for parents, youth in care, and professionals. (Listen at www.athousandmoms.org)
- **Community outreach**, education, and forums on issues such as "bullying" and parental support
- **Information and referral** available to foster/adoptive parents and agency staff across the State of New York

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A Thousand Moms

Recruitment and Retention Developmental Resource Guide



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A THOUSAND MOMS
Consultation and Training Services
For Starting Youth LGBT/Q Foster Family
Recruitment and Retention Projects

Our Mission: A Thousand Moms will help our communities in New York State organize, educate, and mobilize in order that we may meet the emotional, developmental, and social needs of youth in our child welfare systems who may be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and/or Questioning (LGBT/Q) of their sexual identity so they may reach their full potential.

Who We Are: A Thousand Moms comprises a network of diverse people across the spectrum of New Yorkers, representing many skills, abilities, and talents. We believe it is time to celebrate and support the lives of New York's youth in foster/adoptive care who may be LGBT/Q. We aim to bring together the child welfare community with all the citizens it serves. Additionally, **A Thousand Moms** seeks solutions and reaches out to youth and families before crises arise. Existing public and private organizations provide various levels of training or expertise in foster care/adoption issues or in the needs of gay and lesbian youth, but not both, as does **A Thousand Moms**.

Our Approach Begins With You. Even before an agency begins **A Thousand Moms'** LGBT/Q foster youth recruitment and retention process, we can provide consultation and assistance including:

Establishing Desired Outcomes for LGBT/Q Youth

A Thousand Moms will assist in the development and completion of an agency assessment to determine the present foundation for effectively recruiting and supporting families for LGBT/Q youth. The agency can then use the assessment as a resource to determine how to support developing long-term agency and community-based practices. This could include foundation training of LGBT/Q youth for agency staff and foster parents.

Building Real Community Partnerships

Working with **A Thousand Moms** project staff we will advise and help develop a visible and tangible buy-in process with administrators and community members. Administrators help staff buy-in by clearly identifying how the agency will publicly support LGBT/Q youth to build enthusiasm, assigning and allocating key staff resources, and designating a process for reviewing data and progress. When administrators remain aware through subsequent **A Thousand Moms** activities – training, policy, and practice implementation - the agency moves forward more successfully. Buy-in at all staff levels is key, as are establishing a committee on LGBT/Q youth support and having members engage in activities to

achieve youth program goals. As staff do the work, they will become champions and believers in the viability of the program.

Understanding Developmental Needs and Successful Engagement with LGBT/Q Youth

As part of the assessment process **A Thousand Moms** has a structured data-gathering format to determine which youth do not have a permanent connection or are at risk. How large a group is it? What are the characteristics of the agency's LGBT/Q youth in foster care? Are most in group homes? foster families? Who has been waiting the longest? The answers to these questions will assist your agency in determining which youth the agency will initially focus on. Decide what outcome measures you want to track and how.

Planning for Long-Term Support for LGBT/Q Youth and Care Givers

A Thousand Moms will consult and examine your agency's structure to identify where our approach will work most effectively. In what area should you implement first? Where are the potential supports and champions? Can we assist you in establishing partnerships, for instance, by pairing social/case workers, community stakeholders, permanency-minded community groups, or individuals with foster parents or youth in care?

Building Organizational and Emotional Commitment With Team Members

A Thousand Moms staff members possess years of experience in educating and successfully involving professionals about permanency on a regular basis. Finding permanence requires a team approach with staff, the youth's community, and family sharing the work. Selecting the professional partner most likely to work well on youth permanence and gradually include others is critical to the success in the child's permanency plan. **A Thousand Moms** can assist your organization in training and educating service providers of the agency's expectations regarding LGBT/Q youth permanence, developmental needs, and care-giving approaches that meet the unique emotional and social needs of LGBT/Q youth.

Sustaining Success for LGBT/Q Youth

A Thousand Moms provides training for supervisors and staff on the philosophy of finding a family that will support LGBT/Q youth, including training about how these youth experience grief and loss and what challenges that experience presents in terms of permanence. Initially - assign supervisors who understand the practice and philosophy of LGBT/Q youth permanence and possess youth permanence skills. Consider assigning support staff to schedule family meetings.

Also consider using **A Thousand Moms** LGBT/Q group meeting experts to help facilitate meetings.

Contact for Assistance, Consultation Services, and Training Development:

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A Thousand Moms is a project of the National Association of Former Foster Children, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Caregiver Engagement concepts drawn from *A Practice Guide to Family Search and Engagement*; THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR FAMILY CENTERED PRACTICE AND PERMANENCY PLANNING; Hunter College School of Social Work A Service of the Children's Bureau/ACF/DHHS