



# Gender, Sexuality, and the Family

## Workshops for Educators & Families

*When and how do children develop an understanding of gender?*

*How can we encourage children's comfort and respect for their own body and other people's bodies?*

*How can we include and celebrate the diversity of families and family structures in our programs?*

During the preschool years, children are beginning to develop their understandings of gender, sexuality, and family. Unfortunately, there are often few spaces for early childhood educators and families to talk about the questions and behaviors that come up in their homes and classrooms. There has to be a better way. We are committed to providing educators and professionals with high-quality training on how to explore these concepts with young children in curriculum and pedagogy. And we are committed to supporting parents and family members to confidently address these topics with their children in empowering, accurate, and developmentally appropriate ways.

The New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute is offering a series of workshops – one set for educators and one set for families – designed to spark discussion, facilitate the creation of shared language, and provide educators and families with the resources they need to make their classrooms and homes supportive spaces for the development and expansive exploration of identity. By running workshops both for families and educators we hope to engage all members of an early childhood community in supporting each other and the children they care for.

## Workshops for Educators and Early Childhood Professionals

### Session 1: Gender Development, Expression and Play

In this workshop, we will learn about and discuss gender development in young children. Through discussions of how rigid gender roles and stereotypes can limit children's growth and self-expression, we will collectively develop and role-play strategies to facilitate expansive gender performances and to create inclusive classrooms which support a variety of gender expressions. We will also discuss a variety of ways to resist the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes – from rethinking how we praise children to how we organize the classroom – and strategies for working with family members who are struggling with their children's gender non-conforming dress or behavior.

### Session 2: Bodies, Curiosity and Touching

In this workshop, participants will explore what it means to help children develop healthy relationships and will learn strategies for teaching consent, respect, and encouraging children's



sense of ownership over their bodies. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on and better understand their own feelings about children's curiosity and sexual exploration. Through readings and role-plays, we will develop strategies for fostering children's feelings of comfort about sexuality and their bodies while also helping children develop healthy boundaries by setting limits. We will also discuss fears regarding child sexual abuse and learn to distinguish between signs of abuse and behaviors associated with common childhood exploration.

### **Session 3: Including All Families and Supporting All Children**

In this workshop, we will discuss the importance of representing and including all families in the social and cultural community of early childhood programs. Focusing specifically on LGBTQ families, this workshop will help educators consider both deliberate and unintentional messages about belonging that are reflected in their classroom's written material, environment, curriculum, and pedagogy. To create inclusive classrooms and schools, we will introduce concepts and language to for participants to use when talking with families and colleagues about different sexual and gender identities, discuss the legal structures that are involved in defining families, and help participants understand discrimination targeted at people who do not conform to our society's gender or sexual norms. We will also identify curricular opportunities to teach about family diversity and develop strategies for teaching a more expansive understanding of family.

## **Workshops for Parents and Families**

### **Session 1: Gender Development, Expression and Play**

In this workshop, parents and family members will learn about and discuss gender development in young children. Through discussions of how rigid gender roles and stereotypes can limit children's growth and self-expression, we will collectively develop and role-play strategies to support young children in an expansive development of identity. We will also discuss a variety of ways to resist the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes and develop strategies to engage our children and families in meaningful conversations around both gender conforming and non-conforming expression. Participants will have opportunities to work on their specific challenges and questions, as well as share strategies and develop a shared language for future discussions.

### **Session 2: Bodies, Curiosity and Touching**

In this workshop, parents and family members will have the opportunity to reflect on and better understand their feelings about children's curiosity and sexual exploration. Together we will develop strategies for fostering children's feelings of comfort about sexuality and their bodies, while also setting limits to help children develop a sense of healthy boundaries. We will discuss fears regarding child sexual abuse and learn to distinguish between signs of abuse and common childhood exploration. Through readings and role-plays, participants will explore what it means to help children develop healthy relationships and will learn strategies for teaching consent, respect, and encouraging children's sense of ownership over their bodies.

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### **Scheduling the Workshop Series**

We'd be happy to offer these workshops to the educators and families in your early childhood program! The Educator workshops are each three hours in length and the cost for this three session series (a total of 9 hours of in-person training) is \$3000. The Family workshops are each two hours in length and the cost for this two session series (a total of 4 hours of in-person training) is \$1000. Although we offer these series separately, we highly recommend that a school or program run the entire five session series (a total of 13 hours of in-person training) and thereby include both families and educators in these important discussions. To facilitate this, we offer the full series of five workshops at a significant discount of \$3500.

It is important to us that all programs interested in these workshops are able to provide them. To further discuss costs, to schedule the workshop series or for more information, contact Katie Schaffer at [Katherine.Schaffer@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:Katherine.Schaffer@mail.cuny.edu) or 646-265-2044.