



State of Connecticut Community Collaborative



True Colors, Inc.




*Connecticut Association of
Foster and Adoptive Parents, Inc.*



The Safe Harbor Project




True Colors, Inc. Timeline

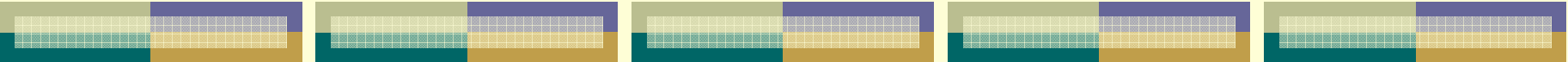
- **1992** – Robin McHaelen, Founder and Executive Director was studying for her Master’s degree in Social Work at the UCONN School of Social Work.
 - She began organizing the first “Children From the Shadows” (CFS) conference - Children From the Shadows: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth At Risk. The University of Connecticut, School of Social Work approved the idea of creating a conference about LGBT youth and the risks associated with sexual minority status. After meeting with representatives from various grassroots and mainstream organizations, one of the first agencies to come on board as a supporter was the Connecticut State Department of Children and Families. The Department of Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services soon followed. Both Connecticut Teachers Unions came on board, as did more than 30 grassroots community organizations.
 - **1994** - That first conference, held in March 1994, attracted 160 teachers, social service and mental health care providers, and 90 LGBT youth.
 - **1996** - The Conference was expanded to two (2) days to accommodate the more than 600 participants.
 - **1997** - Connecticut becomes only the 4th state in the country to protect LGBT youth from harassment. True Colors was awarded a grant through the Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective for the creation and administration of Connecticut’s first Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services Bureau. For the first time in the organization’s history, we were able to fund a part-time Executive Director position and to expand our scope to include LGBT adults and families.
 - **1998** - Children From the Shadows changed the name to True Colors Inc, Sexual Minority Youth and Family Service of CT and expanded its focus to include LGBT families. The mission was also expanded: “To improve and enrich the lives of sexual minority people through support, education and advocacy in each of the systems necessary to their development as full and productive members of society is fulfilled, and people are judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin, the gender of their life partners or their gender presentation. True Colors, Inc. was incorporated in 1998
 - True Colors was the largest LGBT youth issues conference in the country with more than 1,000 participants and we moved to a bigger venue (the University of Hartford).
 - **1999** – True Colors acquires federal non-profit status.
 - **2001** - True Colors strengthens our existing alliance with the State Department of Children and Families and created the Safe Harbors Project designed to identify and resolve gaps in services for LGBT youth in Child Welfare. The project now includes training, foster parent recruitment, a state-wide task force, and with start-up funding provided by the Connecticut Health Foundation, Connecticut’s first LGBT mentoring program.
 - **Today** - True Colors stands for full equality for LGBT youth, adults and families. We are actively supporting same sex marriage equity. We are committed to the work of social justice as an anti-racist organization. And with youth in the lead, we expect to move into our next decade with a continued passion to ensure that LGBT people are welcomed, valued and affirmed as full and productive members of society.
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True Colors, Inc

True Colors has grown tremendously over the last 17 years. True Colors now hosts the nations largest conference focusing on LGBT youth and their providers. Last month (March 2010) was the 17th annual conference held at the University of Connecticut with over 3000 youth and professionals in attendance.






In 2000 Lambda Legal completed a 14 State Analysis entitled “Youth in the Margins - A Report on the Unmet Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adolescents in Foster Care”

The Report concluded that “Connecticut is in the forefront in enacting state laws broadly prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination. Nonetheless, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) has not kept pace in promulgating policies consistent with state non-discrimination laws. DCF has taken positive first steps in offering optional training to foster care staff on LGBT youth issues, and although far more is needed to address the needs of LGBT youth in foster care, DCF now appears motivated to initiate these necessary improvements.”

The DCF Commissioner agreed that something needed to be done to rectify this and thus the collaboration began.





The Safe Harbor Project

This collaboration began with the creation of the SHP in 2001

The SHP Mission:


The Safe Harbor initiative seeks to ensure the safety, support and nurturance of all children, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender expression by ensuring culturally competent and unbiased service across the spectrum of child welfare.





The Safe Harbor Project

Created the states first inclusive non-discrimination policy, which includes:


- gender identity/expression
 - marital/partner or cohabitation status
 - actual or perceived sexual orientation.
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DCF Policy 30-9

Non-Discrimination of LGBTQI Individuals

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that LGBTQI children, youth and adolescents under the guardianship of DCF receive non-discriminatory, safe, affirming and non-detrimental services, which shall include but not be limited to mental health, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS medical care, foster care and adoption, and mentoring services.






DCF Policy 30-9


Non-Discrimination of LGBTQI Individuals (Continued)

Training: LGBTQI sensitivity training (taught by Someone with expertise in the area of LGBTQI issues) shall be made available through the DCF Training Academy for

- all DCF employees
 - biological parent(s)
 - foster or adoptive parent(s), and
 - mentor(s).
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Key Accomplishments of the SHP

- 50 SHP liaisons – statewide, at least one contact in every DCF office and facility.
 - Training of DCF staff and congregate care facilities
 - LGBT-affirming Foster Care placements
 - Creation of a foster parent training program
 - Tackling transgender issues in 2010
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The Safe Harbor Project

Has worked closely with the over the years to develop policies and curricula in conjunction

With:

- Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)
 - Lambda Legal
 - Casey Family Services
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Contact Information:

Robin McHaelen

True Colors, Inc.

576 Farmington Avenue

Hartford, CT 06105

OurTrueColors.org

860-232-0050

