

LGBTQ Homelessness

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*LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning.

LGBTQ persons often have great difficulty finding shelters that accept and respect them. Transgender people are often forced to classify themselves as a gender with which they do not identify. These individuals are particularly at physical risk in shelters. This risk comes from a lack of acceptance. Ex. Transgender women (born with male genitalia but identify and live as women) forced to take shelter with heterosexual men are frequently subjected to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. Transgender individuals are often turned away from shelters and in some cases signs have been posted barring their entrance.

YOUTH

- 20% of homeless youth are LGBTQ. In comparison, the general youth population is only 10% LGBTQ.
- While homeless youth typically experience severe family conflict as the primary reason for their homelessness, LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to experience sexual abuse before the age of 12.
- LGBTQ youth, once homeless, are at higher risk for victimization, mental health problems, and unsafe sexual practices. 58.7% of LGBT homeless youth have been sexually victimized compared to 33.4% of heterosexual homeless youth
- LGBTQ youth are roughly 7.4 times more likely to experience acts of sexual violence than heterosexual homeless youth
- LGBTQ homeless youth commit suicide at higher rates (62%) than heterosexual homeless youth (29%)

POLICY ISSUES

LGBTQ individuals everywhere deserve respect. However, for the homeless, some new considerations should be taken into hand. Forcing a person to identify as the sex their physical characteristics and genitalia identify them as is cruel. Requiring a sex change to allow the individual to stay in their expressed and self identified gender is also unfair and demeaning. Regardless of a persons' gender, sexual preferences, or questioning manner, all people deserve the right to safe shelter.

Suggestions:

- Research to see if LGBTQ individuals are protected against discrimination in your state or locality.
- Training for Shelter staff on how to be an Ally to LGBTQ individuals and written policies to keep discrimination from occurring (See *Transitioning Our Shelters Guide*).
- For federal and state recommendations see *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- **LGBTQ Homeless Youth Fact Sheet**

Published on the SSC website with permission from The National Alliance to End Homelessness, a nonpartisan, organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. The Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, cost-effective policy solutions. Working collaboratively with public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity, the Alliance provides data and research that lead to stronger programs and policies that help communities achieve their goal of ending homelessness.

<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/LGBTQhomelessFactSheetbyNAEH.pdf>

- **Challenges Faced by Homeless Sexual Minorities: Comparison of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Homeless Adolescents With Their Heterosexual Counterparts**

From American Journal of Public Health, May 2002, Vol. 92, No. 5, pgs. 773-777.

<http://www.ajph.org/cgi/reprint/92/5/773.pdf>

- **Transitioning Our Shelters**

A GUIDE TO MAKING HOMELESS SHELTERS SAFE FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE - by Lisa Mottet and John M. Ohle; 2003; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute National Coalition. "Because youth are coming out as transgender or cross-dressing at earlier ages, a significant number are being kicked out of family homes."

<http://thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/TransitioningOurShelters.pdf>

- **Being Safe, Being Out: Helping LGBTQ Youth in Crisis**

A brochure from the National Runaway Switchboard for LGBTQ youth, their friends, and families. Ever wonder whether the National Runaway Switchboard was a safe place to refer a homeless GLBTQ youth? Here's a free, downloadable brochure from them with statistics, information and resources for your clinic or counseling waiting room or the literature rack in your classroom or library. http://www.1800runaway.org/pub_mat/documents/LGBTQ.pdf

- **Hidden in Plain Sight: Homelessness amongst Lesbian and Gay Youth**

W. O'Connor and D. Molloy, 2001. ISBN/ISSN: 0-904607-79-8. A report which looks into the reasons for homelessness among young lesbians and gay men, and the problems they face. Researchers spoke to a cross section of lesbians and gay men aged 15-24 from six cities across the UK. The report also looks at service provision among housing and homelessness agencies, and makes recommendations about how homeless lesbian and gay youth can be better served. London: National Centre for Social Research; Phone: 020 7549 8520; Fax: 020 7250 1524; E-mail: s.johnson@natcen.ac.uk; Cost: £12.50 plus £2.50 p&p.

- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness**

A January 30, 2007 report from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in collaboration with the National Coalition for the Homeless. Of the estimated 1.6 million homeless American youth, up to 42 percent identify as lesbian or gay, and a disproportionate number identify as bisexual or transgender. Why do LGBT youth become homeless? In one study, 26 percent of gay teens who came out to their parents/guardians were told they must leave home. LGBT youth also leave home

due to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. LGBT youth report they are threatened, belittled and abused at shelters by staff as well as other residents.

<http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/HomelessYouth.pdf>

- **The National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Advisory Council on LGBTQ Homeless Youth**

Includes national and local nonprofit organizations dedicated to advocating for increased support for LGBTQ homeless youth. <http://blog.nyacyouth.org/2009/04/new-research-and-best-practices-for.html>. To increase community awareness, The National Alliance to End Homelessness and The National Youth Advocacy Coalition have published three new documents in partnership with Lambda Legal, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and the National Network for Youth:

1. [National Recommended Best Practices for Servicing LGBT Homeless Youth](#)
2. [Incidence and Vulnerability of LGBTQ Homeless Youth – Research Brief](#)
3. [A National Approach to Meeting the Needs of LGBTQ Homeless Youth](#)

- **Resources on LGBTQ youth in the Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Systems**

The documents are part of a new tool kit from the National Center for Lesbian Rights designed to educate people about the experiences of LGBTQ youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems. Some are California-specific. The others are applicable anywhere.

http://www.nclrights.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issue_youth_docsDownloads

- **We Don't Exactly Get the Welcome Wagon: The Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Adolescents in Child Welfare Systems**

By G. P. Mallon, 1998. ISBN: 0-231-10455-3. The first comprehensive examination of the experiences of gay and lesbian youths in the child welfare system, *Welcome Wagon* makes solid recommendations to social work practitioners as well as to policy makers about how they can provide a competent practice for gay and lesbian adolescents, and offers a methods chapter which will be useful in classroom instruction. NY: Columbia University Press. @28.00 (pbk).

<http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-10455-5/we-dont-exactly-get-the-welcome-wagon>

- **Working with Homeless LGBTQ Youth: Getting Down to Basics Tool Kit**

From Lambda Legal. <http://www.lambdalegal.org/take-action/tool-kits/getting-down-to-basics/homeless-youth.html>

- **Youth in the Margins: A Report on the Unmet Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adolescents in Foster Care**

Current state foster-care programs neglect LGBT youth, and in many cases, promote a homophobic atmosphere that serves to undermine the welfare of LGBT youth. This report from Lambda Legal examines the foster-care programs of 14 states; highlighting the shortfalls of each program in addressing LGBT youth, and in turn providing recommendations so that these problems can be reformed. [Lambda Legal's Foster Care Poster](#) includes the hotline info below.

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/our-work/publications/page.jsp?itemID=32009148>

- **Foster Care Helpline**

For young people in foster care who have questions about LGBT-related discrimination or abuse, a service of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. The line is staffed (Pacific Standard Time) Monday-Friday, 6:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m. [9-5:30, Eastern], but callers may leave messages 24-hours ... Phone: 866-LGBTTeen (542-8336). Also contact person: Stefan Johnson @ phone 213-382-7600.

- **LGBTQI2-S Homeless Youth**

A page from the Homelessness Resource Center of SAMSHA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Youth who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, or Two-Spirited (LGBTQI2-S) are more likely to experience family conflict, abuse, and mental health problems than their heterosexual peers. Because of discrimination and stigma, LGBTQI2-S youth who are homeless are often careful to protect their sexual identities from service providers. In this feature, you will find information about LGBTQI2-S youth along with tips for working with them. Research notes are presented about the important differences among youth who are homeless and identify as heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian. Website: <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/>

- [Who are LGBTQI2-S Homeless Youth?:](#) Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Two-Spirited...as a service provider, what do you need to know?
- [Quick Tips: Working with LGBTQI2-S Youth who are Homeless:](#) What can you and your agencies do to help LGBTQI2-S youth feel welcome and safe? Check out these tips and resources.
- [Research Notes: Sexual Health Risks Among Youth who are Homeless:](#) Youth who are on the streets have different histories, risks and needs. This research study takes a look at youth who are gay and lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual and offers some insight for providers.
- **Out in the Cold**
A documentary about homeless gay and lesbian youth. Website: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0328227/>
- **We Are ... GBLTQ**
A 42 minute DVD that was produced by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration, the Washington State Department of Information Services and Project Coordinator, Evonne Hedgepeth, Ph.D. – Lifespan Education, (Phone / Fax: 360-352-9980, evonne@lifespaneducation.com) who is available to speak with it at training events and conferences around the country. It's easily the BEST video about LGBTQ youth in recent memory. It's about LGBTQ youth in foster care, featuring the wonderfully articulate, diverse voices of a dozen or so LGBTQ current and former foster kids, with guest appearances by some adult experts. It's an excellent training tool intended for case workers, foster parents and others serving out-of-home youth, but absolutely great too for school counselors, nurses, social workers, teachers, physicians, parents ...any adult who cares about youth...and for any youth in the child welfare system. To order free copies while they last, contact Marianne K. Ozmun at ozmk300@dshs.wa.gov - 360-902-7928 or Carolyn Jones at zoca300@dshs.wa.gov - 360-902-0215.

- **We are ... GBLTQ**

Video and an accompanying discussion guide are both available online at the Foster Parent Website <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/onGoingVid.asp> - the video appears second from the bottom in the list on the page.

The discussion guide is available here: [http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/We Are GLBTQ Discussion and Resource Guide.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/We%20Are%20GLBTQ%20Discussion%20and%20Resource%20Guide.pdf).

- **We are ... GLBTQ**

Online (42 min). [http://www.dshs.wa.gov/video/ca/New GLBTQ.asx](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/video/ca/New%20GLBTQ.asx)

- **Out on the Streets**

Twenty LGBTQ youth shared their stories about living on the streets. Five youth are featured in the presentation. The other stories appear in a study guide to accompany the exhibit and are especially designed for high school, church and community discussion around the challenges and needs of homeless youth - in particular, LGBTQ youth). It is of an approximately 7 feet by 8 feet display. If you are interested in having this exhibit at your school, church or place of work please contact Mary Dispenza, photographer and story research specialist at mcdispenza@earthlink.net; Website: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/outonthestreets/outonthestreets.pdf>