

How Being Trauma-Informed Improves Criminal Justice System Responses

Fact Sheet: LGBTQ Youth

Understanding the LGBTQ Population

- LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning
 - Lesbian – a biological female with attraction to other females, including romantic, emotional, or sexual
 - Gay – a biological male with attraction to other males, including romantic, emotional, or sexual
 - Bisexual – a biological male or female who experiences attraction to both other males and other females, including romantic, emotional, or sexual
 - Transgender – a biological male or female who identifies with gender norms (man/woman) usually not culturally associated with his or her sex (male/female)
 - Questioning/Openly Questioning – a male or female who is openly questioning his or her sexual attractions, gender identity, or sexual orientation

(Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.)

- LGBTQ youth account for approximately 9% of high school students

- 4.5% identify as LGBT
- 4.5% identify as questioning

(Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.)

- Suicide rates in the LGBTQ population are disproportionately high

- An average of 45% of LGBTQ youth report suicidal ideations
- An average of 35% of LGBTQ youth report suicidal attempts
- The suicide attempt rates of gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens and young adults are among the highest of all populations

(Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.)

- Health problems, mental health challenges, and substance abuse are higher among gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens

(Shapiro, 2008)

Commonly Identified Mental Health Challenges

Among the LGBTQ community, there are a number of mental health challenges that are often identified among members of this population.

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal Ideation/Attempts
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Substance Abuse
- Dual Diagnosis/Co-Occurring Disorders

(Harlow, 2009)

Risk of Trauma

- LGBTQ youth are more likely to be subjected to traumatic events than their peers

- Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning are more likely experience homelessness and the victimizations associated with being homeless

(K-Town Youth Empowerment Network, n.d.)

- 25-40% of homeless youth may identify as LGBTQ; they are often kicked out of their homes by their parents after disclosing their sexuality/identity

(Killen-Harvey, 2006)

- LGBTQ youth who are homeless or runaway report victimization rates on the streets of 58.7% versus 33.4% reported by heterosexual youth who are homeless or runaway

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012)

- Personal and vicarious trauma
- 45% of LGBTQ youth of color self-report being the victim of physical violence as a result of their sexual orientation

(GLSEN, 2004 as cited in Killen-Harvey, 2006)



Further Reading and References

Harlow, S. (2009). *LGBTQ mental health* [PowerPoint Slides]. Retrieved from <http://lgbt.ucsf.edu/pdfs/LGBTQ%20Mental%20Health.pdf>

K-Town Youth Empowerment Network. (n.d.) *LGBTQ trauma risks*. Retrieved from <http://www.ktownyen.org/get-the-facts/lgbtq/>

Killen-Harvey, A. (2006). *Culture and trauma brief: Trauma among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth*. Retrieved from http://www.nctsn.net/org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/culture_and_trauma_brief_LGBTQ_youth.pdf

National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth. (2011). *Primary sources: Trauma and homelessness in the lives of LGBTQ youth*. Retrieved from <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/the-beat/2011/12/lgbtq-ca-homeless>

Shapiro, J. (2008, December 29). Study: Tolerance can lower gay kids' suicide risk. *Npr*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98782569>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2012). *Data on children's mental health and trauma: March 2012*. Retrieved from http://www.samhsa.gov/children/social_media_mar2012.asp

Youth Suicide Prevention Program. (n.d.). *Lesbian – gay – bisexual – transgender youth FAQ*. Retrieved from http://www.yspp.org/about_suicide/gay_lesbian_FAQs.htm