



# SUPPORTING LGBTQ YOUTH INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM



## TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) youth, especially those of color, are at a greater risk for experiencing trauma and subsequently being involved with the juvenile justice system.<sup>1</sup>

Many youth struggle to come to terms with their sexuality, and in this process, also face significant bias and discrimination from their families, schools, and other institutions such as the courts.

LGBTQ youth experience **HIGHER** school difficulties (e.g. bullying and suspensions). School discipline can lead to involvement in juvenile courts.

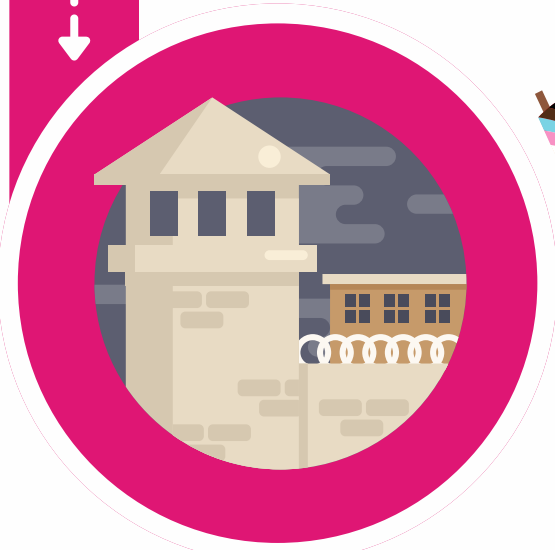
## SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

## WHAT WE CAN DO

Efforts to improve these outcomes should focus on **FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, or the JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM.**

This could look like:

- Earlier identification of parents/ caregivers who struggle with accepting their child's sexual identity
- Mental health support
- Violence prevention interventions
- Bullying prevention efforts
- More LGBTQ youth alliance organizations





# SUICIDALITY

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth experience much higher rates of suicidality and exposure to traumatic events such as sexual violence and teen dating violence compared to their heterosexual peers.<sup>2</sup>

LGB youth are often lumped together in discussions about suicidality prevention and treatment. However, results from a national sample of youth shows that subgroups may vary significantly, which can affect how treatment is directed.

- Sexual abuse had the strongest influence on suicidality among lesbian and gay youth.
- Sexual dating violence had a significant impact on the development of suicidality among bisexual youth.



# WHAT WE CAN DO

**Suicide prevention efforts CANNOT be a one-size fits-all approach.**

To improve quality of care for LGB youth, suicide prevention efforts need to also incorporate:

- Violence prevention and intervention strategies
- Treatment for traumatic stress following exposure to complex trauma
- Increased mental health resources



**LGB YOUTH ARE  
3X  
MORE LIKELY TO  
ATTEMPT SUICIDE THAN  
HETEROSEXUAL PEERS.<sup>3</sup>**

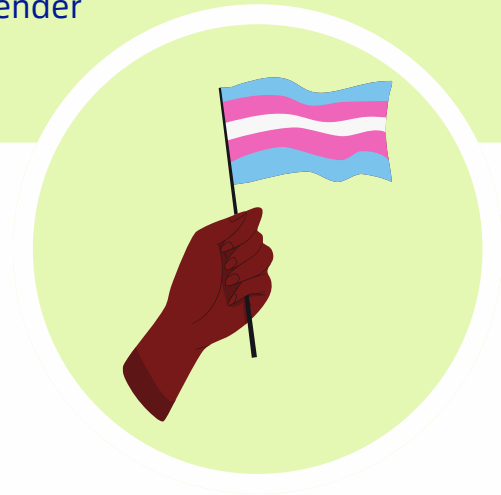
“We have to look first at why [LGBTQ youth] are in our system in a disproportionate way, and that's, in part, because of society's rejection and lack of understanding of gender diversity. And so now they're in our system where we have an opportunity to either change that response and perhaps actually have them leave the system a more complete, full human being.”

- Al Killen-Harvey, LCSW



# SUPPORTING GENDER DIVERSE YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Acknowledge gender diversity exists
- Recognize gender diversity in interactions with youth
  - i.e. share your pronouns, respect others' pronouns, use the name the youth identifies with
- Bring a gender diverse view to interactions with other professionals
  - i.e. call out the lack of understanding of gender diversity in policies, communications, and conversations



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Suicide, Self-Harm, and LGBTQ Youth: Tips for Therapists \(NCTSN\)](#)
- [LGBTQ Family Acceptance](#)
- [LGBTQ Youth \(NCTSN\)](#)
- [Safe Places, Safe Spaces: Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Environments for Traumatized LGBTQ Youth Video Resource Guide](#)
- [LGBTQ Issues and Child Trauma \(NCTSN\)](#)
- [The Trevor Project National Survey 2019](#)
- [Screening for the Intersection of Trauma with Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(NCTSN\)](#)



LEARN MORE

### SOURCES

1. Yun, J., Fukushima-Tedor, M., Mallett, C. A., Quinn, M. I., & Quinn, L. M. (2021). Examining Trauma and Crime by Gender and Sexual Orientation among Youth: Findings from the Add Health National Longitudinal Study. In *Crime & Delinquency* (Vol. 68, Issue 5, pp. 814-839). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128721999342>
2. Ellis, E. M., & Tate, A. (2022). Is Trauma Exposure More Harmful for Sexual Minority Youth? Differences in Trauma-Suicide Associations in a Nationally Representative Sample of U.S. Youth and Implications for Suicide Prevention. In *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* (Vol. 16, Issue 2, pp. 173-182). Springer Science and Business Media LLC. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-022-00475-0>
3. Raifman, J., Charlton, B. M., Arrington-Sanders, R., Chan, P. A., Rusley, J., Mayer, K. H., Stein, M. D., Austin, S. B., & McConnell, M. (2020). Sexual orientation and suicide attempt disparities among US adolescents: 2009-2017. *Pediatrics*, 145(3), e20191658. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1658>