

LGBTQ Youth Connection – Employment and Housing Supports

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's
Homelessness Partnering Strategy's Innovative Solutions to Homelessness

Project Summary Report, August 2018

The ***LGBTQ Youth Connection – Employment and Housing Supports*** project, which ran from May 2017 to June 2018, was conceived with the goal of positively impacting the lives of LGBTQ youth with regards to homelessness. We aimed to do this primarily through increasing the employability of such youth through life skills training, and by increasing access to LGBTQ affirming youth-specific employment services, shelter services, and transitional housing services. Another facet of the program was to aim to help ensure a higher quality of life and community inclusion among trans people.

The Gilbert Centre has been providing spaces for LGBTQ youth for over ten years in various communities in Simcoe County. At present, groups for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Gender Non-conforming and Queer identified youth are run in Barrie, Orillia and Midland. In addition, two test groups were run in the last year in Alliston and Bradford. This project added an employability focus to the overall youth program.

Over the course of the project, in addition to the 177 youth accessing the regular youth drop-ins, 38 youth were provided with one-on-one support. Support that was given was either episodic support not requiring follow-up, or was ongoing, and involved life skills support. Nine youth were identified as having more complex needs requiring on-going support and referral to local mental health services, such as the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). Of the nine youth, 3 identified as transgender or gender diverse, 6 identified as female. When looking at the entire program overall, 50% of the youth identified as gender variant or transgender.

Gender Journeys, which is a life skills/support group for trans, non-binary, and gender diverse youth between the ages of 16-29, took place for 8 weeks of the project. The group's goal is to help youth in developing life skills and with regards to topics such as acceptance, confidence, and their gender identity. 7 youth attended this program. Additionally, a second Gender Journeys Junior version, aimed at youth aged 12-18, took place for 10 weeks of the project, and 9 youth took part in this support group. Gender Journeys is a Sherbourne Health program which takes participants on a journey exploring such topics as gender expression, health, hormones and surgeries, transphobia and discrimination, engaging in community and coming out to family and friends.

Finally, over the course of this project, several trainings took place around our region which were designed to create safer and more welcoming spaces for LGBTQ youth. 107 community members participated in the workshop trainings at Georgian College Career Centre, Dress for Success, TRACKS Employment Centre and the YMCA Employment Centre. The workshops

explored language, barriers and working effectively with these youth, particularly working with youth who identify as gender variant or transgender. These youth are often most at risk of unemployment and homelessness due to family rejection and the barriers to services. Through pre and post evaluations conducted at the workshops, there was a 19% increase in staff identifying an increase in their skill level to effectively work with LGBTQ youth after participating in the training.

One departure from our original plan, made available to us through a grant from the Provincial Ministry of Education's Parents Reaching Out fund, was to offer parenting workshops for parents/guardians of LGBTQ youth. These workshops, held in the communities of Barrie, Alliston, Collingwood and Orillia provided two evening workshops for parents and guardians to learn about language and terminology, hormones and hormone replacement therapy, about community resources available to youth and how to advocate on behalf of their youth. The primary aim of these workshops is to support families in avoiding family breakdown and ultimately homelessness for their youth. Fifty parents/guardians in Simcoe County attended these workshops.

Some observations of the program were:

- the funding cycle of 13 months limited the amount of work we were able to do with the youth. It was difficult to hire, advertise and deliver a program within the time frame.
- the issues related to employability presented by the youth were far more complex in nature than originally expected. The youth who accessed the program for the most part required referrals for on-going mental health support beyond the life skills support of the program.
- by far, most of the youth accessing the program and needing support identified as transgender or gender diverse.

Of note, throughout the year of the project the City of Barrie experienced an odd fluctuation in the areas employment rate – from being very low to very high. While this created fluctuation in the interest in the program, it did not seem to affect the complexity of the issues faced by youth accessing the program. However, what we originally thought we could accomplish wasn't achievable within the short time frame of the project. Comments from youth of "I have friends", "I got a job" and "I feel accepted" spoke to the isolation experienced by these marginalized youths. Finding a physician and going on hormone replacement therapy or puberty blockers was a milestone toward achieving their goals. The youth who required support presented much more complex needs than anticipated. These youths are still being supported by both the Centre and referral agencies.

In all, the objectives and commitments of the project have been fulfilled, and as such, we consider this project a success.

Colin Green
Director, Research & Development
Gilbert Centre for Social & Support Services



GENDER JOURNEYS

FOR YOUTH

The Gilbert Centre is offering a free 8-week program that explores gender identity, gender roles, and sexual orientation for trans, gender diverse, and questioning youth between the ages of 16-29

WHEN
Mondays
Oct 23rd, 2017 - Dec 11th, 2017
4:30pm - 6:30pm

WHERE
80 Bradford St. Suite 345
Barrie, Ontario

REGISTER
Ve Tao at
vet@gilbertcentre.ca
705-722-6778 x 109




LGBTQ Youth Event

For lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit, questioning youth and their friends between the ages of 12-19.
An event to hang out, do fun activities, make balloons, and build community.



For more information, contact Ve at vet@gilbertcentre.ca or 705-722-6778 ext. 109

Free dinner and snacks!

Bradford	Alliston
March 23 4:00-7:00PM BAG Public Library Zuma Room	March 28 4:30-7:30PM Gilson Centre Rotary Hall






Brought to you by the partnership of the BAG Public Library & the Youth Advisory Committee of New Tecumseth.

LGBTQ YOUTH 1-ON-1 SUPPORTS

Are you 16-29?
Identify as LGBTQI2S+?

- Feel isolated and alone?
- Have low self-esteem and confidence?
- Have trouble coming out/transioning?

We offer one-on-one support to:

- Increase confidence & self-esteem
- Set goals to overcome challenges
- Explore your gender and/or sexual orientation



Book an appointment with:
Ve Tao, Youth Support Worker
vet@gilbertcentre.ca
705-722-6778 x109

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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.