

Sexually diverse youth reveal their service needs



What you need to know

LGBTQ youth prefer receiving services at schools, community centres and LGBTQ specific agencies. There is no 'one size fits all' youth program for LGBTQ youth. Youth require varied services and safe settings to account for the different needs of youth in the LGBTQ community.

What is this research about?

Agencies often look at Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered & Queer (LGBTQ) communities as one large group. However, it is more realistic to consider the different experiences of subgroups within the community. LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in rates of: depression, substance abuse, suicide, riskier sexual behaviours and eating disorders. They are also more likely to be homeless than heterosexual youth. This over representation can

be addressed through coordinated service delivery. Despite this over representation, there are still major gaps in service access for LGBTQ youth and a lack of understanding about which services they are using.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers surveyed 544 LGBTQ youth aged 14 to 19 across the U.S. The surveys were completed online. Youth were recruited through

postings at LGBTQ youth focused organizations, Listservs and ads on Facebook. The survey was mostly made up of multiple choice questions, with four open ended questions. The questions were meant to determine the types of services most needed. Those who were surveyed were asked to provide their zip code, which allowed researchers to find out whether community characteristics were related to service needs.

KEYWORDS

Youth Homelessness, Homelessness Prevention, LGBTQ Youth, Service Delivery, Program Design

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What did the researchers find?

Youth showed a high level of interest in a variety of types of services. These included sex education, peer support & dating, help with family issues, and adult support.

There were also differences between subgroups. Transgendered or “unsure” youth were more likely to want support from LGBTQ peers and older people. They also requested more support for family issues, stress and self defense. The same participants were more likely to want to receive services at an LGBTQ agency and more likely to attend in person.

Youth who reported not being “out” to some or all of those around them saw a larger need for programs on STI/HIV prevention. Those who reported a connection with the LGBTQ community were more likely to request sex education on specific LGBTQ content and on STI prevention. If youth felt connected to LGBTQ communities, they were

more likely to seek an agency that specifically serves LGBTQ individuals.

Youth reported that they preferred services delivered at schools, community centres, LGBTQ specific agencies and libraries. They preferred service delivered in the following formats:

- Small groups led by LGBTQ youth were overall the most preferred.
- Young Women preferred Groups led by LGBTQ Adults.
- Young Men preferred groups led by non-LGBTQ Adults.
- Older youth were more likely to want to talk one-on-one

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HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

Service providers can cater to the needs of LGBTQ youth in three ways. First, create programs that are specific to different subgroups within the LGBTQ communities. Second, ensure that there is a variety of safe spaces for LGBTQ youth. Finally, create mentorship programs for transgendered, questioning youth and those who are not “out”.

Municipal and provincial governments should look to more widespread partnerships with LGBTQ agencies. This could allow a wider variety of programs to be offered in schools, at community centres & libraries and online.