



Youth Suicide Prevention: LGBTQAI+ FAQs

1. What does LGBTQ stand for?

Lesbian – A female with romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to females

Gay – A male with romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to males; also used as an ‘umbrella’ term

Bisexual – Someone with romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to both males and females

Transgender – An ‘umbrella’ term to describe different types of gender identity - one’s sense that they are outside the boundaries of biological sex and don’t necessarily conform to societal gender norms usually associated with male and female; includes people who are homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual

Questioning – Any person who is questioning their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity

2. What are some other terms I may want to familiarize myself with?

Ally - A non-LGBTQ identified person who actively supports the rights of LGBTQ people and works to reduce heterosexism and transgender discrimination

Gender Identity - One’s sense of self as male or female, or somewhere between or outside traditional gender roles

Heterosexism - Bias against non-heterosexuals, based on the belief that everyone is or should be heterosexual or that homosexuality is abnormal or wrong

Homosexuality - Romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to members of the same sex

Sexual Orientation - A person’s romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction towards males, females, or both

Homophobia - Fear of or contempt for LGBTQ individuals

Coming Out (of the closet) - Voluntary announcement of one’s (primarily homosexual or bisexual) sexual orientation or gender identity - this happens at different times throughout one’s life and can be a continuous experience

3. Why are LGBTQ youth more at risk for suicide (suicide attempts)?

- LGBTQ youth may also be at an increased risk for suicide ideation and/or attempts due to an increased occurrence of risk factors that occur in their “straight” peer’s lives and additional factors such as: gender nonconformity, coming out: early or not coming out to anyone, homophobia/transphobia, internalized homophobia/transphobia, internal conflict, heterosexism, inaccessible LGBTQ friendly service providers.

4. Is there an increased risk for suicide because of bullying behavior?

- Yes; being a victim, perpetrator or even a witness to bullying has been associated with multiple behavioral, emotional, and social problems, including an increased risk for suicidal ideation.
- Learn more about the negative effects of bullying
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5. Are the signs of depression or suicidal behavior different in LGBTQ youth vs. adolescents in general?

- The signs are the same, but statistics show that the risk is higher so we must be aware of that risk. They key is that LGBTQ youth have proven quite resilient and not all of them suffer from severe depression and/or suicidal ideation. The risk is there, though, just as in any youth



6. Is there a difference in suicide attempts for those who have “come out” versus those who haven’t?

- Studies have shown that the highest risk for LGBTQ youth is when they come out at an early age-this may be due to homophobia and negative coming out experiences.
- Additionally, when they don’t come out to anyone at all. This may cause internalized homophobia/transphobia, fear of rejection, and low self esteem.

7. How many kids in my community might be LGBTQ? Of those, how many might be at risk for suicide?

- Statistics from multiple studies show that 4.5% of youth identify as LGBT in high school and an additional 4.5% identify as Questioning. So, we’re looking at about 9% (this number may be low due to issues with self reporting). Other studies have shown that 20-40% of LGBTQ youth report having suicidal thoughts (average of 45%) and/or attempts (average of 35%).

8. How do we help support LGBTQ youth in our communities?

(For more information, please visit www.yspp.org/resources/GLBTQResources.htm)

- Schools:
Safe schools are an important protective factor for LGBTQ youth
LGBTQ students are victimized and often faculty and staff do not intervene
Strategies: Train faculty & staff, and students, establish clear school policies, hire LGBTQ staff and include LGBTQ curricular content. Use the umbrella of cultural competence and civil rights
Teachers: identify self as Ally (or LGBTQ if that applies) or as LGBTQ
- Families:
Unconditional acceptance of your child’s identity and identity of all youth
Educate yourself and family members about LGBTQ issues
Attend support group meetings such as PFLAG (parents & families of lesbians and gays)
Ensure that your child’s schools is safe and welcoming
Maintain confidentiality - let the child decide when and to whom they will “come out”

Resources:

- Youth Suicide Prevention Program Resources: www.yspp.org/resources/GLBTQResources.htm
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) | TTY: 1-800-799-4889 | www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- 1-866-TEENLINK | 866-833-6546 | www.866teenlink.org
- Washington Recovery Help Line (24 hours): Support and resources for youth struggling with substance abuse, problem gambling, and/or mental health. Confidential and anonymous.
Toll Free 1-866-789-1511 | www.warecoveryhelpline.org
- Greater Seattle Alateen & Alanon: Support groups for youth struggling with addiction. Meetings available in King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties. Visit their website for more information and a list of meetings in your area. Call 24-Hour Hotline (206) 625-0000 | www.seattle-al-anon.org
- LGBTQAI+ Youth: Call 24-Hour Hotline 1-866-488-7386 | www.thetrevorproject.org
- 1-855-DRUGFREE | www.drugfree.com