LGBT Youth and Homelessness: Increasing Understanding and Ending Invisibility

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Workshop Itinerary

- Audience Assessment

- Developmental overview of sexual orientation and gender identity

- The Scope of Homelessness in LGBT youth
  - Risk factors for homelessness
  - Homelessness as a risk factor
  - Understanding the experiences of LGBT youth

- Prevention

- Interactive discussion
Audience Assessment

- What do you hope to gain out of this workshop?

- What experience, if any, do you have in working with LGBT youth?

- What are some of the barriers towards implementing change?
Definitions

- **Sex** - refers to biologic sex, comprised of person’s genetic make-up and its phenotypic expression

- **Sexual Orientation** - the sex in response to which an individual is erotically attracted comprised of sexual fantasy, patterns of physiological arousal, sexual behavior, personal identity and social role

- **Gender** - refers to the perception of a person’s sex on the part of society as male or female

- **Gender Role** - refers to a person’s expression of social norms conventionally regarded as masculine or feminine in such areas as dress, speech, and behavior

- **Gender Identity** - refers to a person’s personal sense of self as male or female, usually develops by age three and usually remains stable over the lifetime
Definitions (continued)

- **Gender Atypicality/Variance/Non-conforming** - refers to variation in gender role from conventional norms.

- **Gender Dysphoria** - subjective mood/affect disturbance experienced by patients’ whose gender identity is opposite of their biologic sex.

- **Transgender** - people whose gender identity is discordant with their biological sex and others’ perceptions of their gender, many of whom seek some degree of medical or surgical intervention to align their minds and bodies.

- **Transsexual** - subset of transgender individuals who have transitioned to the opposite sex through sexual reassignment surgery, however this definition has been used more broadly by others to include those who have not received surgery.
Definitions (continued)

- **Sexual Minority Youth**: any child or adolescent whose sexual orientation differs from the heterosexual norm

- **Gender Minority Youth**: any child or adolescent whose gender identity or expression differs from the conventional gender binary

- **“Pansexual”**: a relatively new term used by individuals who feel sexual attractions to all people, regardless of their gender

- **“Gender-queer”**: a relatively new term used by individuals who don’t identify as fully male or fully female, but rather somewhere along the middle of the spectrum
Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation in Human Development

**WHO ARE GENDER and SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH?**

- TRANSGENDER ADOLESCENTS
- GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL ADOLESCENTS
- GENDER-QUEER/QUESTIONING

**CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS WITH DISORDERS OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT**

- SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**GENDER IDENTITY**

**PUBERTY**

- 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18
- INFANCY TODDLER PRESCHOOL CHILDHOOD PRE-ADOLESCENCE ADOLESCENCE
Queer Theory: Dispelling the “Binary Construct Myth”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER IDENTITY</th>
<th>GENDER EXPRESSION</th>
<th>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Who we are”</td>
<td>“How we act”</td>
<td>“Who we are attracted to”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Mind</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Arousal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>Attraction</td>
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<td>Mannerisms</td>
<td>Fantasy</td>
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<td>Hairstyle</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Toy Preference</td>
<td>Self-identification</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play Preference</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **FEMININITY**
- **HETEROSEXUALITY**
- **MASCULINITY**
- **HOMOSEXUALITY**
Environment and Societal Norms

- Traditional Family Values
- Culture
- Child/Teen Influences
- Community/School
- Religion
- Politics

Societal Influences

MARGINALIZATION of HOMOSEXUALITY and GENDER VARIANCE
Psychosexual Pathway towards Male Homosexuality

- Same-sex erotic fantasy
- Patterns of arousal and masturbation
- Sexual experimentation with same-sex partners
- Homosexual identity (self-labeling as gay)

Arousal, Attraction, Fantasy, Behavior, Self-identification

Troiden RR. 1989
Treatment recommendations for Transgender Adolescents

- Psychotherapy - individual, group, family modalities
- Facilitating Environmental adjustment
- Medical/Physical Interventions

- Fully reversible: GnRH analogues Tanner 2/3 or 4/5
- Partially reversible: Cross-sex Hormones Tanner 4/5 Age 15-16
- Irreversible: Surgery Age 18
Mental health issues in therapy for transgender youth

- Safety prioritization
- Internalized Transphobia
- Pronoun use
- Family support or rejection
- Victimization and isolation
- Progressive role transition
- Simulation of the opposite gender
  - Breast padding and binding
- Sensitivity to body change
- Discussion of the expected medical changes
- Discussion of how others view a changing body
- Intimacy fears
- Irreversibility of the reproductive system
  - Sperm and egg bank
- Discussion of the surgical process for beyond age 18
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), June 2011

- Sexual identity question

11. Which of the following best describes you?
A. Heterosexual (straight)
B. Gay or lesbian
C. Bisexual
D. Not sure
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), June 2011

- Sexual contact behavior question

74. During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact?
   A. I have never had sexual contact
   B. Females
   C. Males
   D. Females and males
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Defining homelessness

- Difficult to define for youth

- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: “children and youth without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”
Dilemma in studying LGBT youth homelessness

2 vaguely defined populations

HOMELESS POPULATION

With family  Without family  At friends  In a shelter  Streets

HIDDEN LGBT YOUTH POPULATION

Arousal  Attraction  Fantasy  Behavior  Self-identification
Understanding Homelessness in a Minority Population

Demographics (LGBT youth)  Homelessness  Negative Psychosocial Adjustment
Prevalence Disparity

**General Youth Population**
- 95% Non-LGB youth
- 5% LGB youth

**Homeless youth**
- 64% Non-LGB youth
- 36% LGB youth
Prevalence study- Corliss et. al 2011

HOMELESS POPULATION on Massachusetts YRBS

- With family
- Without family
- At friends
- In a shelter
- Streets

LGBT YOUTH POPULATION on Massachusetts YRBS

- Arousal
- Attraction
- Fantasy
- Behavior
- Self-identification

Percent of youth who were homeless

- 3 non-LGB
- 15 Bisexual
- 25 Lesbian or gay
Risk Factors for Homelessness

All youth

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse or violence in the home
- Parental rejection or perception of lack of nurturance by them
- Substance abuse in parents
- Parental involvement in the criminal justice system

LGB youth

- Earlier LGB identity development
- Parental rejection
- Greater incidence of sexual abuse
- Greater incidence of physical abuse
- Hostile School environments
People coming out as gay at younger age, research shows
Stonewall poll finds that the average age those in their 30s came out at is 21 – down from age 37 among the over-60s

Rachel Williams
guardian.co.uk, Monday 15 November 2010 15.01 EST

Gay teens coming out earlier to peers and family
By Marilyn Elias, USA TODAY

Kate Haigh, 18, a high school senior in St. Paul, recalls attending her first meeting at the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance club when she was in the ninth grade. “I said, ‘My name is Kate, and I’m a lesbian.’ It was so liberating. I felt like something huge had been lifted off my shoulders, and finally I had people to talk to.”

Zach Lundin, 16, has brought boyfriends to several dances at his high school in suburban Seattle.

Vance Smith wanted to start a club to support gay students at his rural Colorado school but says administrators balked. At age 15, Vance contacted a New York advocacy group that sent...
LGB identity development and homelessness

- Rosario et. al, 2011 study- LGB youth specific cohort
- Mean age for first homeless episode was age 14.
- Runaway/throwaway youths were, on average, a year younger than the non-homeless LGB youths on markers of psychosexual development including internal awareness of same-sex orientation and initiation of same-sex behavior.
  - Neurocognitive explanation- poor coping strategies
- Mean age of disclosure (15.4) was the same for both groups
- Perceived LGB identity from others is likely to lead to negative parental reactions
Why some LGB youth become homeless and not others

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**Psychologic**
- Attachment
- Parental Expectations
- Parent-child relationships
- Sibling order
- Parent shame/anxiety
- Child shame/invalidation
- Rules
- Regulations
- Peer relationships
- Adjustment to body
- Guilt and shame
- Repression
- Internalized homophobia/transphobia

**Social**
- Gender role
- Societal norms
- Peer teasing
- Teachers
- Role model
- School discomfort
- Sexual experimentation and dating
- Parent and parent acceptance
- Lack of acceptance
- Rejection
- Bullying and victimization
- Conformation

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**Gender Identity**

**Puberty**

**Infancy Toddler Preschool Childhood Pre-Adolescence Adolescence**

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**LifeLong ---- Coming Out ------- Process**

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**Homeless GLB Youth**

**Non-Homeless GLB youth**

**Sexual Orientation**
Parental rejection

- 50% of gay male youth were met with negative parental reaction when coming out

- 26% of these males were asked to leave the home

- LGB young adults (ages 21-25) were eight times higher risk for making a suicide attempt if coming from a rejecting family when compared to other LGB young adults


Ryan, C. et. al (2009), Family Acceptance Project data.
Functionality of family relationships

Transgender experience- film clip
Percent of youth reporting experiences of sex abuse and sexual victimization

Whitbeck et. al 2004
Understanding Homelessness in a Minority Population

Demographics (LGBT youth)
- Parental rejection
- Earlier LGBT identity
- Sexual and physical abuse
- Hostile school climate
- Lack of resilience

Homelessness

Negative Psychosocial Adjustment
2006 National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Report on LGBT youth homelessness
Mental health and Medical co-morbidities

- Suicidal ideations, behavior, attempts
- Risk-taking behavior
- Internalizing Disorders- depression, anxiety
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorders
- Conduct and anti-social behavior
- Substance abuse/dependence

- Comparative studies between LGBT homeless youth and heterosexual counterparts show much higher rates of these negative psychosocial outcomes in the LGBT youth (Cochran 2002)
- Lifetime prevalence of five disorders is much higher in LGBT homeless youth (Whitbeck 2004)
Transgender Suicide Risk

- Not well-studied: definition of transgender is wide in youth, understanding suicidal behavior is difficult.

- Nonrandom study shows that half of the transgender youth seriously considered taking their lives and a quarter of them were had made suicide attempts (Grossman and D’Augelli 2007).

- Factors related to suicidal behavior were:
  - SI due to transgender identity
  - Experience of past parental physical and verbal abuse
  - Lower body esteem
The existence of substance use disorders is correlated to living circumstances.
Survival Sex

- “Exchanging sex for anything needed, including money, food, clothes, drugs, or a place to stay.” (Rew and colleagues)

- Youth without a social network were eight times more likely to engage in survival sex compared to those with a social network.

- Leads to HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases.

- More likely to occur among males who endured sex abuse when younger.

Why do the youths stay homeless?

• Affordable housing is scarce if not completely impossible to obtain, especially in many urban areas

• Incomplete education

• Access to jobs is poor

• Substance abuse was cited as a key reason for remaining severely poor or homeless

Anti-LGBT experiences in the shelter system

**All LGBT youth**

- Verbal and physical victimization from others
- Treated differently by staff
- Lie about their identities to receive the help they need
- Sometimes feel they are better off becoming HIV-positive to receive services for HIV positive youth

**Transgender youth**

- Forced to dress as birth sex or be denied admission
- Must use bathroom of birth sex
- Forced to be with roommates of their birth sex
- Lack mental health care or access to medical services for gender transition
**Faith-based programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics about Faith based programs from the National Coalition of the Homeless report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with serious problems finding food or shelter in the past 30 days were twice as likely to use faith-based services than other homeless individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey indicated that they offer mental health services much less (9 percent of the time) when compared to secular organizations (22 percent of the time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often do not provide diversity or LGBT sensitivity training to staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive disproportionate funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment and management practices often centered around religious biases.</td>
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Understanding Homelessness in a Minority Population

Demographics (LGBT youth)
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Homelessness
- Substance Use
- Unsafe environments
- Victimization/assault
- Lack of education
- Lack of medical/mental health services

Negative Psychosocial Adjustment

Parental rejection
- Earlier LGBT identity
- Sexual and physical abuse
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Substance Use
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Some LGBT programs in the country

RUTH ELLIS CENTER

THE ALI FORNEY CENTER
Housing for Homeless LGBT Youth

WALTHAM HOUSE
A GLBT HOME

OZONE HOUSE
safe place. real support.
# Creating a welcoming space

## All youth
- Do not presume heterosexuality or gender identity
- Use open-ended questions that are inclusive of all populations
- Promote staff assessments of their own biases and beliefs
- Create a warm, welcoming environment that prioritizes safety
- Facilitate positive psychosocial adjustment by offering services for healthy coping mechanisms and harm-reduction techniques

## LGBT youth
- Do not conflate gender identity and sexual orientation
- Offer mental health services that provide culturally competent care
- Understand the pathway for alternative identity formations
- Sensitivity and diversity training for staff
- Know the increased risks for externalizing behaviors and internalizing mental health disorders
- Intervene when harassment is observed or reported

## Transgender youth
- Respect affirmed gender identity in name and pronoun use
- Understand the medical needs for gender transition and increase access to care
- Allow safe bathroom use for transgender individuals
- Do not force transgender individuals to room with members of their biologic sex
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

Unaccompanied Youth Toolkit* for Shelters and Service Providers

Welcome to NAEHCY's Unaccompanied Youth Toolkit for Shelters and Service Providers! The following table of contents shows all the documents included in the Toolkit. Click on a document title to access it.

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* Toolkit availability and content may vary.
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Interactive discussion
Resources

- National Coalition for the Homeless- LGBTQ report
  - [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/lgbtq.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/lgbtq.html)
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
  - [http://naehcy.org/tk/ssp.html](http://naehcy.org/tk/ssp.html)
- National Alliance to End Homelessness
  - [http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/about_homelessness](http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/about_homelessness)
- The National Runaway Switchboard
- The Trevor Project- 24/7 LGBT suicide prevention hotline
  - [http://www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
- Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
- Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
  - [http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html](http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html)
- Lesbian and Gay Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Association (LAGCAPA)
  - [http://www.lagcapa.org](http://www.lagcapa.org)