

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender and Questioning
Youth (LGBTQ) in Seattle:

Report and Policy Recommendations
from the Queer Youth Forum
City of Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities
May 22, 2006

Overview of the Queer Youth Forum

Goals

- Update the 1988 Report on *Gay and Lesbian Youth*
- Hear directly from youth, families and service providers regarding their experiences in Seattle
- Identify ways to address the needs of this population

Overview of the Queer Youth Forum

- Queer Youth Forum (April 2, 2005, Seattle)
- Plenary Session Topics
 - Health – Dr. Bob Wood: Public Health for Seattle-King County
 - Youth Homelessness – Megan Gibbard: University Street Ministries
- Break-out Session Topics
 - Family
 - School Safety
 - Coming Out
 - Diversity
 - Transgender Youth
 - Drugs and Alcohol
 - Spiritual Health and Religion

Training and Curriculum

- LGBTQ youth have higher rates of the following compared to their heterosexual peers¹:
 - 10% Lower GPAs for collegiate consideration
 - 37.4% of LGBT students feel uncomfortable discussing LGBT issues with teachers.
 - 39.1% of LGBT students report being physically harassed in public schools.
- GLSEN reports that when teachers are supportive with LGBT-related resources, students do better in school.
- Locally, Seattle Public Schools support Gay-Straight Associations, and provide training and curriculum materials for the district.

1. The 2003 National School Climate Survey. The School Related Experiences of our Nation's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth. GLSEN.
www.glsen.org.

Recommendation One

To enhance academic opportunity for LGBT youth, the City of Seattle can support community programs that develop inclusive curriculum and teacher/staff training. It is recommended that a Request for Proposal process would generate several innovative programs.

LGBTQ Youth and Community Centers

The Role of LGBTQ Youth and Community Centers

- Foster an LGBTQ youth community within a traditionally adult oriented community.
- Create space for peer group activities and mentoring.
- Time for identity development and decision making within a safe space.

Community Organizations with LGBTQ youth programs and initiatives: Lambert House, LGBTQ Center, Seattle Counseling Service, Empowerment, Seattle Public Schools.

LGBTQ Youth and Community Centers

- Key statistical issues for LGBTQ youth that community centers can address (GLSEN 2004, National Mental Health Survey, and CDC)
 - 39% of LGBT students report being physically harassed in public schools.
 - 84% of LGBT youth report verbal harassment in public schools.
 - Of all youth who attempted suicide, 40% were LGBTQ youth.
 - HIV infection among men, ages 13 to 19, accounts for 46% of cumulative HIV cases.

Recommendation Two

Research indicates that there is an inter-connection between safe space, education, health, and identity development that affects positive outcomes.

Therefore, it is recommended that the City of Seattle support organizational collaboration to address these disparities in LGBTQ youth. This could create an intentional sharing of expertise to improve the lives of LGBTQ youth.

Homelessness

It is estimated that 40% of homeless youth are sexual minorities.¹

When basic needs are not being met, youth are at greater risk for unhealthy behaviors.

Dearth of shelters and transitional housing in Seattle to support homeless youth, with fewer safe options for LGBTQ youth.

1. Caitlin Ryan and Donna Futterman, *Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling*, 1998 as cited in <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-homeless.html>

Recommendation Three

In conjunction with the 10-year plan to end homelessness, the City of Seattle should support organizations that provide appropriate shelters and transitional housing for LGBTQ youth, which would address the cycle of homelessness.

Health

- Sexual minority status key social indicator of health.
- Research indicates that LGBT youth are at higher risk for health disparities when compared to their heterosexual peers.
- Example: Half all new HIV infections are among youth 15-24 years.¹

1. Kirby, Douglas, "HIV Transmission and Prevention in Adolescents", HIV InSite Knowledge Chapter, December 2002.

Addressing Health Disparities

- Successful collaboration between SCSM, UW, HSD and PHSKC.
- Conduct an analysis of the local Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey data.
- Identify key health indicators and public health data sources to better address health disparities among LGBTQ persons.
- Explore funding options to sustain research and health related initiatives addressing health disparities in these communities.

Recommendation Four

To mitigate health disparities among LGBTQ youth the City of Seattle will need to:

- Assess data sources to insure inclusion of youth and sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Fund and evaluate initiatives addressing health disparities in these communities, including youth.

Conclusions

- The City of Seattle has created a supportive and welcoming environment for the LGBTQ community. Examples:
 - Equal Benefits Ordinance
 - Expanding the Protected Class to include Gender Identity
 - Funding health promotion campaigns and LGBTQ organizations such as the LGBT Health Center
 - City Domestic Partner Benefits
 - Seattle Public Schools

Conclusions

- These investments can be credited for such City of Seattle statistics as lower HIV rates in youth although still high for this demographic.
- Resolution may be found in Family, School and Community based initiatives that enhance collaborative tools and information to support youth.
- It is time to reinvest and pro-actively address disparities in the LGBTQ youth community.