

COME OUT FOR HEALTH

9TH ANNUAL NATIONAL LGBT HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

LGBTQ Youth

Many young people in America today grow up realizing at an early age that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and/or transgender, and many more question their sexuality and gender identity during childhood and adolescence. Unfortunately, too many of our nation's schools and families are not safe places for LGBTQ or questioning youth. According to the 2009 National School Climate Survey, nine out of ten LGBTQ students have experienced harassment in school, while two-thirds feel unsafe. Between 20 to 40 percent of America's 1.6 million homeless youth identify as LGBTQ, approximately 30 percent of LGBTQ young people have been physically abused by a member of their family, and LGBTQ youth are significantly more likely than other young people to attempt suicide.

As a result of factors such as bullying, violence, and fear of family rejection, many LGBTQ youth face serious mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide. However, many families, schools, and health care providers are unable or unwilling to protect LGBTQ young people and to facilitate access to counseling and other services that affirm their control over their own lives and help them to safely explore their sexuality and identity.

Moreover, a lack of safe social gathering places for LGBTQ youth encourages many young people to seek out community in bars and clubs, which increases the likelihood that they will experiment with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. A lack of comprehensive and LGBT-affirming sex education in schools also leaves LGBTQ youth ill-equipped to navigate the questions about sexuality that tend to arise in adolescence and young adulthood, leading to alarmingly high rates among LGBTQ youth of intimate partner violence, unplanned pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV.

What you can do:

- Hold community forums to educate parents, teachers, counselors, and other leaders about the challenges that LGBTQ youth face on a daily basis
- Support the creation of anti-bullying policies, LGBT-affirming comprehensive sex education programs, and Gay-Straight Alliances in your local schools
- Encourage local health care providers to [create a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment](#) for all of their LGBT clients, including LGBTQ young people

For more information:

Advocates for Youth (www.advocatesforyouth.org)

OutProud (www.outproud.org)

YouthResource (www.youthresource.com)

Stop Bullying (www.stopbullying.gov)

National Youth Advocacy Coalition (www.nyacyouth.org)

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays

(www.pflag.org)

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (www.glsen.org)



WWW.LGBTHEALTH.NET