

LGBTQ Youth in the Foster Care System

With the recent media attention given to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth committing suicide, this is a topic that deserves more attention. The youth that have received much of the media attention were not youth in foster care. However, one can imagine how LGBTQ youth in the foster care system that have suffered abuse and/or neglect would be at an increased risk for suicide. While it is impossible to precisely determine the number of LGBTQ youth in the foster care system, recent studies suggest that these youth make up a disproportionate percentage of the total foster youth population. In a terrible irony, many of these youth endure further harassment or abuse after being placed in out-of-home care. As a result, some LGBTQ youth runaway from their placements, preferring to live on the street rather than in homophobic settings where they are in danger of harassment or violence. We in the helping community need to bring awareness to this issue.

Videos on Working with LGBT Youth available on SAMSHA's YouTube Channel:

Larkin Street Youth Services is an organization in San Francisco that provides homeless, runaway and at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 24 with the help and comprehensive services they need to rebuild their lives. Larkin Street participated in creating training videos for working with LGBT youth for the Homeless Resource Center, a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA). The SAMSHA YouTube Channel now features the following Larkin Street Stories:

- The Homeless LGBT Experience (Episode 1)
<http://www.youtube.com/user/SAMHSA#p/u/11/48mC89f6PgA>
- Confronting Hate Speech and Homophobia (Episode 2)
<http://www.youtube.com/user/SAMHSA#p/u/10/eNlOqoHYHEo>
- Neither/Nor Working with Transgender Youth (Episode 3)
<http://www.youtube.com/user/SAMHSA#p/u/9/12AYYR3kMhQ>