

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

Report and Policy Recommendations from the
Queer Youth Forum

April 2nd, 2005

Seattle, WA

Overview of the Queer Youth Forum

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

Overview of the Queer Youth Forum

- 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
- All sessions had at least 2 youth and 2 service provider panelists

Recommendations: 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.
- Seattle Public Schools lack significant funding for Gay-Straight Associations, training materials and curriculum materials that align with district standards that can mitigate these issues.
- A mini-grant opportunity may provide these resources or renew dated materials for teachers, staff and students.

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.

Recommendations: Access to Information

- Issue specific websites are hosted by Seattle-King County Public Health, Seattle Public Libraries and Seattle Public Schools.
- However, forum attendees indicated a lack of web-based information for LGBTQ youth and parents.
- Recommendation: City of Seattle sponsored community-wide website for LGBTQ youth.
 - A one-stop resource that will link to other City resources
 - Marketed to the community that will benefit the other related City and community resources

Recommendations: LGBTQ Youth Centers

- Why LGBTQ youth centers?
 - LGBTQ community is an adult oriented community.
 - Create space for peer group activities
 - Time for identity development and decision making within a safe space.
- Lambert House
 - The only drop-in/activity center in Seattle
 - Serves 25 youth per day on average
 - 50% of the youth identify as a minority.

Recommendations: LGBTQ Youth Centers

- Statistical overview of key LGBTQ issues that community centers can address (GLSEN 2004, National Mental Health Survey, and CDC)
 - 39.1% of LGBT students report being physically harassed in public schools.
 - 84% of LGBT youth report verbal harassment in public schools.
 - 40% of LGBTQ youth attempted suicide compared to heterosexual peers
 - HIV infection among men, ages 13 to 19, accounts for 46% of cumulative HIV cases. Among men ages 20 to 24, the figures rise to 55% and 65%, respectively.
- Other cities have supported LGBTQ centers due to the lack of funding opportunities that exist elsewhere for this valued resource.
 - Example: Lyric in San Francisco

Recommendations: Homelessness

- It is estimated that 40% of homeless youth are sexual minorities¹
- 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 all homeless youth and even fewer safe options for LGBTQ youth.
- Support organizations like Youth Care and others which provide shelters and transitional housing 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>

Recommendations:

Media

- Create & support opportunities to recognize the positive contributions of LGBT individuals to Seattle
 - Support the efforts of the Seattle Channel as they expand programming to include diverse Seattle perspectives through “Community Stories” program.
 - Support the launching of a media campaign that highlights the diversity within the LGBT Community and within Seattle.

Recommendations: Anti-Oppression Training

- Incorporate City-wide Anti-Oppression trainings and LGBT-sensitive workshops.
 - Utilize the power analysis developed in the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative to combat other forms of systematic oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity, among other things.
 - Implement these trainings for those who work closely with LGBT 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 disparity in the LGBTQ youth community.