

Mental Health Promotion  
and Suicide Prevention for  
**LGBTQIA2S+**  
**YOUTH**

A Resource Guide for Professionals, Families, and Communities



Suicide Prevention  
Resource Center



Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention for

# LGBTQIA2S+ Youth

A Resource Guide for Professionals, Families, and Communities



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# Introduction

## Background of Development

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center partnered with NORC at the University of Chicago to develop one resource guide and four population-focused Focus Guides for those who live and work with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) youth. NORC, a research organization with expertise in suicide prevention, was selected to collect and report information in an objective, unbiased manner.

The process of developing this resource guide and its four companion Focus Guides included: (1) a comprehensive literature review, (2) an environmental scan of current resources, programs, trainings, and policies related to LGBTQIA2S+ mental health and suicide prevention, (3) key informant interviews with suicide prevention and mental health experts, many of whom are part of LGBTQIA2S+ communities and have suicide-centered lived experience, (4) focus groups with LGBTQIA2S+ young adults ages 18 to 24, and (5) focus groups with parents of LGBTQIA2S+ youth. For both parents and young adults, separate focus groups were held for those who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and those who identified as transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, or genderqueer to respect their unique

needs and experiences. Key informant interviews and focus groups were conducted between October 2022 and January 2023, and the NORC team analyzed the data to identify key themes, recommendations, and strategies.

## Contents of the Resource Guide

Developed with input and review from LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and those having experienced suicidal thoughts and behaviors, this resource guide is intended to serve as a novel resource for families, communities, and professionals who interact with LGBTQIA2S+ youth (ages 10 to 24). It considers current events and legislation that impact these youth, the long-standing and current impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and other realities that these youth face daily. It does not dwell on statistics, as those statistics are cited elsewhere;<sup>1,2</sup> it highlights action-oriented strategies to support youth, positive elements of being LGBTQIA2S+, and sources of joy.

The guide provides detailed and actionable recommendations for families, communities, technical assistance providers, and professionals who work with and support LGBTQIA2S+ youth. The resources that we

reference have been carefully vetted and developed by and for LGBTQIA2S+ communities.

We also highlight multiple resources in the Appendix, including four newly developed companion Focus Guides for specific audiences: (1) parents, families, and communities; (2) teachers and school staff; (3) health and behavioral health care providers; and (4) state agencies.

## Intended Audience

This resource guide was designed to provide families, communities, organizations, technical assistance providers, and professionals who work with LGBTQIA2S+ youth with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to implement recommended programs, trainings, and policies that will help them better serve LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Several specific groups may benefit from the content of this guide, including parents, caregivers, and communities; school professionals (teachers, administrators, school psychologists, social workers, and other school staff); health and behavioral health care providers; legislators and advocates; and professionals providing technical assistance and support to various state and local agencies. This list is not comprehensive; any adult who interacts with LGBTQIA2S+ youth or develops policies or programs that impact LGBTQIA2S+ youth will benefit from



reviewing this resource guide. All readers of the guide can use the table of contents to access background information, strategies, rationales, implementation checklists, action steps, resources, recommendations, and special considerations for unique populations. We highly recommend that technical assistance providers share this resource guide and the companion Focus Guides with the appropriate audiences and familiarize themselves with the content to better support the states, communities, and organizations they serve.

## Glossary of Commonly Used Language

We would like to acknowledge the breadth of language that is used by LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit youth to describe their identities. We use the acronym LGBTQIA2S+ throughout the resource guide to include those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and Two-Spirit. We acknowledge that there are hundreds of different terms and identities within the overarching LGBTQIA2S+ umbrella, and this list is by no means exhaustive. We also reference the term SOGIE, which stands for sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. We use these terms frequently throughout the resource guide but encourage you to speak directly with the youth in your lives to identify the terms with which they are most comfortable. Many LGBTQIA2S+ youth will experience frequent and inappropriate misuse of their name and pronouns, so making an effort to use language that resonates with them is critical. In the Appendix, you will find links to multiple [glossaries of terms](#) that have been developed by and for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

# Scope of Problem

## Current Statistics

There are many environmental and systemic factors that contribute to an increased risk of suicide for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, including:

- Discrimination in school, healthcare, employment, and everyday life
- Intentional politicization of LGBTQIA2S+ communities by politicians and the media
- Higher rates of housing insecurity, especially among transgender youth who are forced to leave their homes
- Bullying, both in person and online
- Increased alcohol and substance use to cope with these challenges

While many LGBTQIA2S+ youth may experience challenges such as those listed above, Black and Indigenous people and people of color (BIPOC) who are members of LGBTQIA2S+ communities often face additional barriers, discrimination, and violence.<sup>3</sup> In the Cultural Considerations section later in the resource guide, we delve more deeply into the unique experiences of these LGBTQIA2S+ youth and provide additional information and resources.



*“Everyone always loves to give definitions and a glossary of words that are being used, and I keep trying to remind people that there are more than 100 different terms being used by LGBTQ youth these days. Stop! Your glossary is useless before it starts. Instead, we should say, ‘Guess what, none of this may apply to the LGBTQ young person who is sitting in front of you.’ Not a single bit of this may apply. Why? Because it’s an identity, and identities are personal. And so, I think there’s something really powerful about teaching adults to stop trying to [make youth] experience the world as you expect them to experience it.”*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**

## LGBTQIA2S+ Youth Mental Health

The 2023 Trevor Project National Survey of LGBTQIA2S+ youth<sup>2</sup> captured the experiences of nearly 34,000 LGBTQIA2S+ youth ages 13 to 24 across the United States.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of respondents were LGBTQIA2S+ youth of color (45%) and/or identified as transgender or nonbinary (48%). The Trevor Project highlighted the following past-year findings among LGBTQIA2S+ youth:

<b>Considered suicide</b>	<b>Attempted suicide</b>
<b>41%</b>	<b>14%</b>

### Impact of Pronoun Respect:

Respectful families/guardians = Lower suicide rates among transgender and nonbinary youth

### Affirming Environments:

**40%** of transgender/nonbinary youth considered home affirming

**LGBTQ+ affirming schools**  
reduced suicide rates

### Barriers to Mental Health Care:

**56%** of LGBTQ+ youth were unable to access desired care

### Protective Factors:

Affirming homes, schools, communities, and online spaces = Lower suicide rates among LGBTQ+ youth

### Mental Health Challenges:

1 in 3 LGBTQ+ youth experienced poor mental health due to anti-LGBTQ policies and legislation



*"We talk about disparities as if they belong to populations inherently, like we talk about how LGBTQ [people] experience more suicidality, and that is true on its face. But I think sometimes it can unintentionally reinforce this idea that belonging to a population, being a member of a population, or identifying with the population, is the thing that raises our suicide or mental health risk... It is institutionalized discrimination, social stigma, disproportionate experiences of violence and harassment, and a lack of family and community support that are behind those health disparities."*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**

## Gaps in Currently Available Services

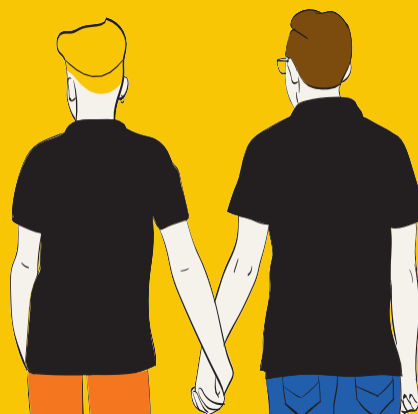
Our literature review, environmental scan, key informant interviews, and focus groups uncovered many limitations in the availability of services and resources for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, including:

- Culturally sensitive, affirming providers, even in areas that are typically considered "highly resourced"
- Programming and services for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, particularly in certain areas of the country such as rural communities
- Financial resources for life-saving medical procedures, therapy, and housing, especially for transgender youth
- Inclusive curricula for schools
- Integration of faith-based resources and LGBTQIA2S+ programs
- Peer support groups for both youth and parents of LGBTQIA2S+ youth
- Training for families, communities, and professionals working with LGBTQIA2S+ youth



*"We have such a shortage in mental health care right now and, even if we can get them into counseling, sometimes they don't want to be getting therapy. I think that's where the challenges come. Every individual has a unique situation and story, but the barriers that stop them are often just the system of getting them help. We don't have enough therapists, there's wait list after wait list and that's really hard. And then if you've been rejected from your family on top of that, it's hard for you to open up to a therapist."*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**





# Overarching Principles

During the development of this resource guide, we identified three overarching principles to consider when working and interacting with LGBTQIA2S+ youth:

- Use positive messaging focused on hope, joy, and resilience.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the diversity and complexity of LGBTQIA2S+ identities.
- Involve LGBTQIA2S+ youth in the development of programs, services, and resources.

These principles should serve as a foundation for any work you do to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth. We describe each principle in detail below.

## Positive messaging focused on hope, joy, and resilience

Professionals and media tend to focus solely on risk among LGBTQIA2S+ youth, using grave statistics to make their point. This approach is limiting and inadvertently conveys the message that being LGBTQIA2S+ is responsible for this risk rather than external factors (e.g., lack of acceptance, discrimination, homophobia, and violence). Instead, highlight the strengths of LGBTQIA2S+ communities and spread messages of hope, healing, and joy. Risk can be reduced by focusing on the positive experiences of being LGBTQIA2S+.



*"The experience of a white, cis, suburban gay youth is going to be a lot different than a Black inner-city trans youth and different from a rural indigenous Two-Spirited person. Trying to get those specific identities involved and let them lead the charge is preferred."*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**



*"There needs to be a space to talk about how amazing life is as a queer person and to talk about queer joy and trans joy and gay joy. Because we don't hear enough of that... So having people who are...queer themselves, have found themselves, and are comfortable being those leaders who can walk into a room and say, 'Hi, I love being trans. How can I help you?'"*

**Focus Group, transgender and nonbinary youth**



## Acknowledging and celebrating the diversity and complexity of LGBTQIA2S+ identities

Although members of LGBTQIA2S+ communities are often discussed as a singular group, there are unique and significant differences among members of these communities, and it is important to recognize the diversity, complexity, and fluid nature of these identities. All youth, including LGBTQIA2S+ youth, are developing rapidly; respecting that SOGIE is a personal and fluid characteristic can go a long way toward creating mutual respect and understanding.

## LGBTQIA2S+ youth involvement in program, service, and resource development

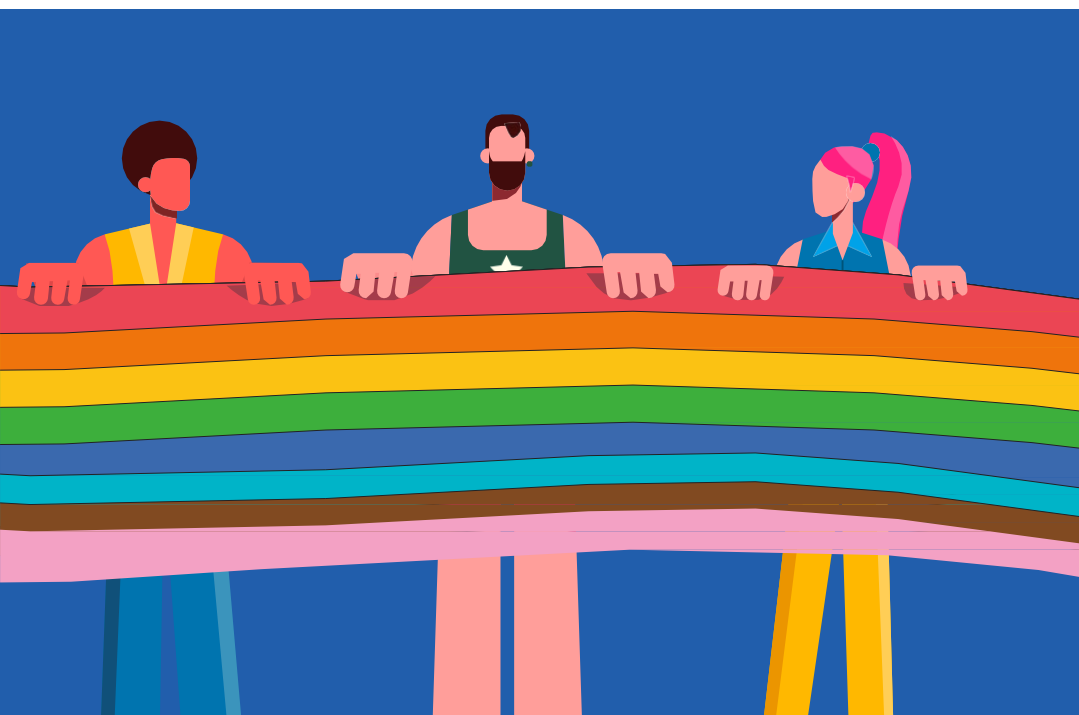
It is important to involve LGBTQIA2S+ youth with suicide-centered lived experience in the development of resources, programs, and services; nothing should be developed without LGBTQIA2S+ youth at the table. Adults may find this challenging, but it is a necessary step in meeting the unique needs of these diverse communities. Consider compensating youth for their involvement to convey the value of their input and perspective.

# Implementation Strategies

This section highlights five implementation strategies derived directly from LGBTQIA2S+ youth, parents, and professionals in the suicide prevention field. These strategies are supported by current research and best practices. They can be employed in any setting that serves LGBTQIA2S+ youth to help these youth live and express themselves in authentic ways. For each strategy, we provide a rationale, concrete action steps, and a description of factors that may foster or impede success; an implementation checklist is available in the Appendix. Don't forget to consider the three overarching principles described in the previous section when implementing these strategies and action steps.

## STRATEGY 1

### Create Protective and Affirming Environments



*“Youth are best situated to speak for their own needs...I think they are certainly the folks who should be leading the conversation on what is right for them. No matter what specific population is under this great big queer umbrella, those specific identities deserve to have their voices heard.”*

**Key Informant Interview  
Participant**

#### **Rationale:**

LGBTQIA2S+ youth feel unsafe and unsupported more frequently than heterosexual and cisgender youth, at home, at school, in healthcare settings, and in public places.<sup>4,5</sup> However, when LGBTQIA2S+ youth feel that they are in safe, supportive, and affirming environments, they have an opportunity to thrive. Research has linked supportive and affirming environments with positive

mental health and psychosocial development among LGBTQIA2S+ youth,<sup>6-13</sup> having just one supportive adult in their life can reduce a young person's risk of poor mental health, including suicidal thoughts and behaviors.<sup>7,12</sup> Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) also promote safety for LGBTQIA2S+ students and allies. These groups have shown positive outcomes in school settings, including increased feelings of safety, lower truancy rates, and lower instances

of violence.<sup>2,13</sup> Ensuring that both physical and online spaces are safe and supportive is a key component of mental health promotion and suicide prevention for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

#### **Action Steps:**

To create safe environments for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, adults need not only present themselves as “allies” to the community but should embody what it means to be an ally.

## What does this mean?

Being a true ally means taking small steps to show support. For example:

- ✓ Listen to youth and respect what they are saying.
- ✓ Ask about pronouns and use them correctly.
- ✓ Be consistent and routinely check in to build trust.
- ✓ Be respectful of the fluctuating identities of LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
- ✓ Promote the use of in-person and online spaces that allow LGBTQIA2S+ youth to safely interact with others, such as [TrevorSpace](#), run by the Trevor Project.
- ✓ Create inclusive forms, curricula, and programs.



*"We treat ally as a noun. We treat allies as people who have said, 'I have a rainbow sticker. Therefore, I know to send you to someone else, and we're good.' If, instead, we treated ally as a verb, we would actually start to have a better, more effective system. Because if someone said, 'How did you last ally?, Where did you last ally?, When did you last ally?,' you'd be giving actions that would actually prove your support systems rather than stickers for existence."*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**



## Nothing for them without them.

In general, environments are safer for LGBTQIA2S+ youth when programs, services, and resources are tailored to their unique needs; involving LGBTQIA2S+ youth in every stage of development is the best way to ensure your programs, services, and resources meet their needs. Think, "nothing for them without them." If involving youth in the development process is not possible, adults should advocate on their behalf, either formally or informally.

## Factors that foster and impede success:

Racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, lack of education, and the limited and competitive nature of funding for LGBTQIA2S+ youth programming are all barriers to creating and maintaining protective and affirming environments. Ensuring that professionals and communities are educated and accepting of differences and that leadership is representative, inclusive, informed, and engaged will help bring about success in the creation and maintenance of safe spaces.

## Tips and Advice from LGBTQIA2S+ Youth and Adults

To help you start improving your interactions with LGBTQIA2S+ youth, here are some tips and advice that came directly from LGBTQIA2S+ youth and adults. Following these tips will go a long way toward creating supportive and affirming environments for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

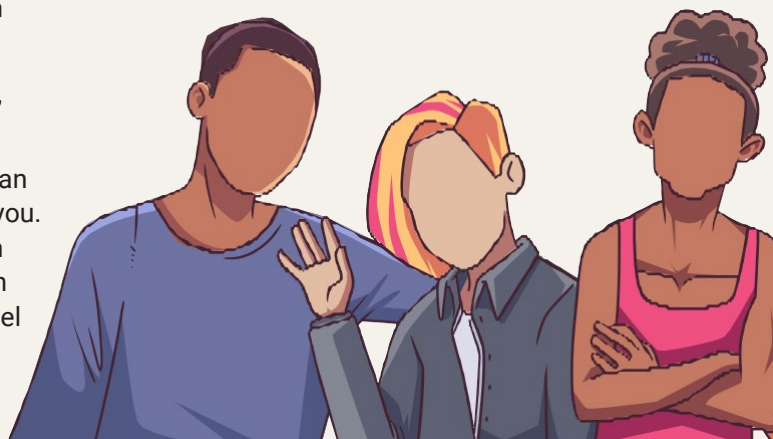
### Do's

- ✓ Let youth speak for themselves about what they need and what will help them thrive; be sure to listen and respond accordingly.
- ✓ Understand that LGBTQIA2S+ youth are going through developmental stages just like any other young person.
  - Remember, their SOGIE is evolving and if they change the way they identify multiple times, this is normal youth development. Be patient, respectful, and understanding of the journey they are taking to fully understand themselves.
- ✓ Seek out peer support groups to express your concerns and learn from others. Working to improve communication is important for both youth and adults.
- ✓ Support your child or the LGBTQIA2S+ youth in your life from the passenger's seat, **not** the driver's seat. Let them explain to you what they are feeling and experiencing, as these feelings and experiences are unique to each individual. Listen and provide support as they navigate their identity and blaze a path forward.
- ✓ Use language that is LGBTQIA2S+ affirming around youth and other adults. Modeling this language will go a long way toward making it mainstream. To be inclusive of all identities, say all the letters when talking about this population, rather stopping at LGBTQ or LGBTQ+. Just think, how would you feel if your identity was just an "extra?"
- ✓ Educate yourself on LGBTQIA2S+ terminology, history, and best practices.
  - It is best to do your own research rather than relying on LGBTQIA2S+ people to educate you. It can be frustrating for LGBTQIA2S+ youth to play the educator role; it places a burden on them and makes their identity seem novel rather than normal.

- ✓ When you see instances of discrimination or mistreatment, stand up for LGBTQIA2S+ youth! It is important for these youth to have adult allies.

### Don'ts

- ✓ Don't become defensive after making a mistake! If you make a mistake, immediately make a genuine attempt to correct it and move on. Spending too much time calling attention to your mistake takes the focus away from the youth.
- ✓ Don't focus solely on the negatives faced by LGBTQIA2S+ youth, like housing insecurity, poor mental health, and suicide risk. Instead, focus on the positive parts of these identities.
- ✓ Don't assume that everything LGBTQIA2S+ youth struggle with is related to their SOGIE. LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience other challenges, similar to their heterosexual and cisgender peers, that are unrelated to their SOGIE.
- ✓ Don't assume that a youth's SOGIE is automatically at odds with their cultural or religious background. Religion may be a central part of the life of an LGBTQIA2S+ youth.



## STRATEGY 2

### Increase Competence and Confidence Among Professionals



*"If you have a bad experience in an emergency room where you constantly get misgendered by a nurse and then you go to your therapist who misgenders you, then you leave and go to your community space to talk about this experience with being misgendered, but in that community space you're having to share that space with 18 other people who have therapists who misgender them. You come back every single week, and nothing is getting better because nobody's training your therapist how to work with queer people."*

Focus Group, transgender and nonbinary youth

#### Rationale:

Among adults and professionals, there is an overall lack of understanding about LGBTQIA2S+ populations. As the number of LGBTQIA2S+ youth grows and more adults are routinely interacting with them, a nuanced understanding of LGBTQIA2S+ identities and issues is becoming increasingly important. The lack of understanding can come from a lack of formal education and on-the-job training. For example, several studies found that most undergraduate and graduate school programs for healthcare providers do not include adequate training in this area;<sup>14-16</sup> most medical schools and residency programs lack any formal education on LGBTQIA2S+ health topics.<sup>17</sup> This lack of education and training has a significant impact on

health professionals' confidence in working with LGBTQIA2S+ populations.<sup>15,18</sup>

The White House's June 2022 [Executive Order on Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals](#) called on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide training and technical assistance on evidence-based best practices to health care and social service providers.<sup>19</sup> Any training or education should cover current terminology and language (such as the use of pronouns) as well as information about the intricacies of LGBTQIA2S+ identities and how best to respect and support youth with these identities.

#### Action Steps:

Identifying needs and tailoring training to meet these needs is critical in developing a competent and confident workforce.

#### How do you start?

Consider the following action steps:

- ✓ Identify available educational and training resources that have been developed by national groups. These resources will provide a baseline understanding of how to work with LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
- ✓ Conduct focus groups and listening sessions with professionals in your organization or agency to identify their specific needs for education and support.

- ✓ Conduct additional listening sessions with a diverse and representative sample of LGBTQIA2S+ youth who receive services at your organization or agency to get an understanding of how their interactions with your staff can be improved.
- ✓ Periodically assess both staff needs and youth experiences to inform continual updates and improvements.
- ✓ Integrate content on LGBTQIA2S+ mental health and suicide prevention into graduate school education to prepare future health care professionals to provide culturally appropriate and affirming care.



### Factors that foster and impede success:

Programs that successfully build a competent and confident workforce often include leadership with LGBTQIA2S+ representation who feel strongly about implementing education and training programs

for their staff. They also rely on LGBTQIA2S+ youth guidance to determine what is needed to improve staff-client interactions.

Unfortunately, the number of such organizations is limited. With regional anti-LGBTQIA2S+ sentiment and competing demands, it can be challenging to motivate organizations to implement education and training requirements for staff. Those that do often deliver canned trainings as a way to check an item off their to-do lists; these trainings rarely result in improved staff-client interactions. The evolving nature of LGBTQIA2S+ terminology and best practices makes it even more difficult to effectively train staff without a concerted, conscientious approach.

## STRATEGY 3

### Ensure Services are Racially, Ethnically, and Culturally Responsive



*“When we ask the question about how crisis call centers can be more supportive, it isn’t necessarily just in what we say or how we train operators. It’s...how do we actually incorporate peer support? How can we get a Black caller to a Black operator? How can we get a trans caller to a trans operator? We can really add some of that lived experience.”*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**



### Rationale:

LGBTQIA2S+ youth living in areas with high levels of discrimination may have limited access to providers who are culturally responsive, knowledgeable, and accepting of their SOGIE. LGBTQIA2S+ youth are diverse in terms of their race, ethnicity, religion, and culture, and their healthcare needs reflect this diversity. Culturally competent care should address the whole person and be specific to race, ethnicity, and culture; it should avoid elements that could be considered discriminatory or stigmatizing.<sup>20</sup> Lack of access to gender affirming care may have negative effects on LGBTQIA2S+ youth, including exacerbating gender dysphoria, creating feelings of social isolation and depression, and contributing to suicidal thoughts and behaviors.<sup>21-25</sup> Access to culturally responsive, sensitive, and affirming services for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, particularly healthcare services, has the power to improve health outcomes for this population.<sup>20-24</sup>

### Action Steps:

Because LGBTQIA2S+ populations are so diverse—in terms of SOGIE, race, ethnicity, geography, and culture—it is important that adults and professionals who provide services to LGBTQIA2S+ youth have the knowledge, confidence, and skills to interact effectively with each of the LGBTQIA2S+ youth with whom they engage.

#### How do you build knowledge, confidence, and skills?

Consider the following action steps:

- ✔ Organizations should invest in training for their front-line staff about the diverse identities within LGBTQIA2S+ populations; the intersection of SOGIE with race, ethnicity, geography, and culture; and how to effectively listen and inquire about the unique experiences of each of their LGBTQIA2S+ clients. This training can help staff provide individualized, culturally sensitive, and respectful care.
- ✔ Organizations should consider hiring staff who represent the specific backgrounds of the LGBTQIA2S+ youth they serve so youth feel a connection to the staff and are comfortable sharing sensitive issues and feelings.
- ✔ It is always helpful to solicit feedback from youth on organizational policies and procedures, intake forms, and the responsiveness and respectfulness of the staff with whom they interact. Remember, “nothing for them without them!”

### Factors that foster and impede success:

There are many impediments to the delivery of racially, ethnically, and culturally responsive services. First, programs, services, and resources for LGBTQIA2S+ youth are often limited, even in areas that are considered “well-resourced.” This can lead LGBTQIA2S+ youth to forego care completely, which can have a negative impact on both their physical and mental health. Furthermore, services promoting SOGIE change efforts, such as “conversion therapy,” still exist; such programs are incredibly harmful and should be avoided.<sup>26-32</sup> Additionally, intersecting identities mean LGBTQIA2S+ youth come with many unique experiences, making it extremely difficult to design and implement programs and services that meet all of these unique needs. Being situated in a rural area adds additional challenges; in these areas, services are often more scarce, there can be heightened stigma, and youth may experience a greater sense of “otherness” in these often-homogenous communities.<sup>33</sup> Diversifying curricula and programs and hiring staff that represent intersecting identities will help foster success. Staff with intersecting identities will be better able to relate to, and effectively serve, youth from their communities. Online communities and telehealth services can help create connectedness among rural LGBTQIA2S+ youth with intersecting identities.

## Strengthen Protective Factors and Reduce Risk Factors



### Rationale:

Research indicates that LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience multiple suicide risk and protective factors. Findings show that LGBTQIA2S+ youth may be at an increased risk of bullying, discrimination, family rejection, housing insecurity, substance use, mental health conditions, and lack of acceptance by their communities. The cumulative effects of stressful experiences can lead to increased rates of suicide among LGBTQIA2S+ youth.<sup>34</sup>

However, several protective factors can be strengthened to create safer environments. For example, supportive and affirming families are a significant protective factor for youth who have considered coming out or who have already come out to their

families. Parents and supportive others can strengthen protective factors by promoting healthy peer relationships; leading with compassion, understanding, and kindness; and modeling positive behaviors for their children and other youth. Individual factors (such as improving self-esteem and emotional well-being and promoting gender-related pride and resilience) and community factors (such as school connectedness and the presence of caring adults and teachers) are also protective for youth mental health.<sup>35,36</sup>

### Action Steps:

Parents, caregivers, and adults have an important role to play in strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

### How do you reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors?

Consider the following action steps:

- ✓ Actively seek out ways to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Listen to them and be ready to help connect them with resources if needed.
- ✓ Speak positively about LGBTQIA2S+ people in front of youth to convey that you are an ally and someone they can trust and confide in.
- ✓ Promote positive peer supports and access to LGBTQIA2S+ role models.
- ✓ Create affirming environments in schools by advocating for GSAs and all-gender



bathrooms and adhering to bullying prevention policies.

- ✓ Encourage youth to engage in positive coping mechanisms such as reaching out to a trusted adult for help when necessary.
- ✓ Focus on improving family functioning, whether you are a family member or a professional who works with LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Professionals can help by providing resources and referrals to parents, family members, and supportive others.

- ✓ Encourage LGBTQIA2S+ youth to feel a sense of pride in their identity rather than focusing on negatives.

### Factors that foster and impede success:

Focusing solely on risk factors is a major impediment to successfully strengthening protective factors. Unfortunately, these risk factors are typically the focus of national and local media outlets, which can create fear among LGBTQIA2S+ youth and their families. Some parents fear for their child's life when their child first comes out, knowing that LGBTQIA2S+ youth

are at increased risk of suicide. These thoughts and fears can make it difficult for families to recognize the many protective factors that can keep a child or loved one safe. Similarly, parents may grieve the loss of the child they had known from birth when their child embraces a new identity. Parents who dwell in that grief also pose an impediment to success. Instead, focusing on hope, joy, resilience, and the positive aspects of LGBTQIA2S+ identities will foster success; this approach will help strengthen protective environments, promote mental well-being, and reduce the risk of suicide.

## STRATEGY 5

### Strengthen Supports to Meet Basic Needs



*"I see so many mental health resource lists that don't include anything about how people might be able to pay for something. What if you're trying to figure out your next meal, or where you're going to sleep at night? I think broadening mental health care to include economic support is really key. Not just economic support to pay for mental health care, but economic support to get basic needs."*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**

#### Rationale:

LGBTQIA2S+ youth—particularly those who are transgender—often face increased financial insecurity related to unstable housing, costly medical procedures, and

employment discrimination. Parental rejection can be a significant contributor to financial insecurity. Physical and emotional abuse and neglect may lead a child to leave home. In other

cases, families may force their child to leave home and cut off all financial and emotional support due to shame and stigma. Without proper support, LGBTQIA2S+ youth may struggle to meet the basic

needs—like nutritious food and safe housing—required for living healthy and safe lives. Increasing awareness of, and access to, financial, housing, employment, and nutrition supports for LGBTQIA2S+ youth while strengthening their connections with family, school, and community can help reduce the risk of financial insecurity.

### Action Steps:

It is important to be aware of and anticipate the financial hardships that LGBTQIA2S+ youth may face. Programs, services, and resources should be developed accordingly.

#### How do you strengthen supports for basic needs?

Consider the following action steps:

- ✓ Increase access to stable employment. Post and promote open positions at safe and supportive organizations and be sure to share these openings with LGBTQIA2S+ youth who are looking for jobs. If you are involved in an organization’s hiring processes, ensure these processes are inclusive of SOGIE. All institutional and community-based medical and social service programs should keep track of LGBTQIA2S+-friendly organizations and open positions to share with LGBTQIA2S+ youth. If possible, help LGBTQIA2S+ youth complete job applications, develop interview skills, and obtain access to clothing suitable for interviews, if necessary.
- ✓ Work with parents and families to increase their support



for their child or loved one’s SOGIE. Even if parents and families do not like how their child or loved one identifies, forcing them to leave the home is never an appropriate reaction.

- ✓ Institutional and community-based medical and social service programs should ask about or screen for the social determinants of health (e.g., housing, transportation, discrimination, violence, education, job opportunities, income, access to nutritious foods) and be prepared to connect LGBTQIA2S+ youth with services and resources when indicated.
- ✓ Advocate for funding at the state and local level to support youth in meeting their basic needs.

### Factors that foster and impede success

Successfully supporting the basic

needs of LGBTQIA2S+ youth can be fostered by supportive individuals and environments, increasing awareness of existing services, and improving access to other needed services. It will be more difficult for some LGBTQIA2S+ youth and populations than others to meet their basic needs. It may be especially challenging for those living in rural communities, which often have limited services, transportation options, and safe spaces where youth can spend free time. In addition, rural communities often have higher rates of discrimination and violence toward LGBTQIA2S+ people. These impediments can be counteracted by creating and maintaining safe and supportive school environments with active GSAs and identified adult allies. Supportive peers and adults can help provide social connection, and adults can link LGBTQIA2S+ youth with services that can help the youth meet their basic needs when necessary.

Table 1

## Resources by Strategy

Strategy	Resources
<p><b>Create Protective and Affirming Environments</b></p>	<p><b><u><a href="#">Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSA)</a></u></b>            Student-run organizations that unite LGBTQIA2S+ and allied youth to build community and organize around issues that affect them in their schools and communities.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">The Bryson Institute</a></u></b>            Offers trainings to adults and professionals to help them create safe and affirming environments.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">GLSEN Model Laws and School Policies</a></u></b>            Toolkit of evidence-based model policies based on current best practices across the country focused on how to make schools safer for all students, but especially LGBTQIA2S+ students.</p>
<p><b>Increase Competence and Confidence of Professionals</b></p>	<p><b><u><a href="#">Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity E-Learning modules</a></u></b>            Provides a variety of e-learning modules for both clinical and non-clinical staff. Available modules include multi-module introductory courses as well as individual advanced modules.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">The Fenway Institute LGBTQIA+ Learning Resources</a></u></b>            Provides learning modules, toolkits, videos, and webinars for service providers focused on improving services for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">SAMHSA LGBT Training Curricula for Behavioral Health and Primary Care Practitioners</a></u></b>            Compilation of professional training curricula focused on improving the health and well-being of LGBTQIA2S+ populations.</p>
<p><b>Ensure Services for LGBTQIA2S+ Youth are Racially, Ethnically, and Culturally Responsive</b></p>	<p><b><u><a href="#">Fenway Health Center</a></u></b>            Provides and advocates for equitable and accessible health care, supportive services, and education that centers LGBTQIA+ people, BIPOC individuals, and other underserved communities.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">CDC Suicide Prevention Resource for Action</a></u></b>            Details evidence-based suicide prevention strategies. The Prevention Resource describes suicide prevention activities most likely to have an impact on diverse LGBTQIA2S+ youth.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">SAMHSA Moving Beyond Change Efforts: Evidence and Action to Support and Affirm LGBTQI+ Youth</a></u></b>            Action-oriented resource that includes recommendations for adults and professionals working with diverse LGBTQIA2S+ youth populations.</p>

Strategy	Resources
<p><b>Strengthen Protective Factors and Reduce Risk Factors</b></p>	<p><b><u><a href="#">Family Acceptance Project LGBTQ Youth and Family Resources</a></u></b>  to Decrease Mental Health Risks and Promote Well-being  Develops research-based educational materials, assessment tools, and resources to help ethnically and religiously diverse families support their LGBTQIA2S+ youth.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">Sources of Strength</a></u></b>  Peer and student-led program that brings together trained adult advisors and peer leaders to create school campaigns that focus on positive, uplifting, and hopeful messaging.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">The Trevor Project Fostering the Mental Health of LGBTQ Youth</a></u></b>  Suicide prevention organization for LGBTQIA2S+ young people that provides 24/7 call, text, and messaging support.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">Mental Health America Youth and Young Adult Peer Support: Expanding Community-Driven Mental Health Resources</a></u></b>  Resources that describe the importance of youth peer support in addressing the growing youth mental health crisis.</p>
<p><b>Develop and Strengthen Economic Supports</b></p>	<p><b><u><a href="#">Trans Lifeline Microgrants</a></u></b>  Supplies necessities for justice-involved trans youth and provides trans and nonbinary people with low-barrier funding and support to correct names and/or gender markers on identifying legal documents.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">GLAAD Resource List</a></u></b>  Provides a comprehensive list of resources, broken down by category.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">The Trevor Project Resources for LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness</a></u></b>  Provides resources for LGBTQIA2S+ youth experiencing housing insecurity.</p> <p><b><u><a href="#">To Write Love on Her Arms Resource Finder</a></u></b>  Provides a comprehensive list of resources for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, broken down by location and category.</p>

# Project Spotlight

## The Utah Pride Center

### Description

- A youth community center that provides a safe space, events, and programs that empower and celebrate Utah's LGBTQIA2S+ communities.

### Mission and Vision

- The mission of the Utah Pride Center (UPC) is to unite, empower, and celebrate Utah's diverse LGBTQIA2S+ communities with safe, accessible, and inclusive programs, events, and services.
- UPC envisions an inclusive world where LGBTQIA2S+ people thrive because they feel safe, celebrated, valued, and affirmed, both as individuals and as a community.



## Services

### Youth and Family Programs

Weekly free social groups, special events, and peer support groups to encourage and promote the physical, emotional, and mental health and wellness of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and families.

### Adult and Senior Programs

Weekly free social groups, special events, and peer support groups to encourage and promote the physical, emotional, and mental health and wellness of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and families.

### Mental Health

Affirmative and supportive therapy with a strong focus on LGBTQIA2S+ experiences, using an evidence-based and culturally sensitive approach to psychotherapy.

### Community Health

Provides suicide prevention services, peer-to-peer support, and community health resources for Utah's LGBTQIA2S+ communities.

### Education and Training

Provides educational opportunities for members of the LGBTQIA2S+ and allied communities to promote a greater understanding of topics unique to Utah's LGBTQIA2S+ populations.

### Pride Festival

Utah Pride is an annual event organized by UPC with the mission to unite, empower, and celebrate Utah's diverse LGBTQIA2S+ communities.

### ***What does the Utah Pride Center's Suicide Prevention Program do?***

The UPC's Suicide Prevention Program was created in 2020 to

formalize the suicide prevention services that UPC had been offering for years. The dedicated team at UPC strives to address all aspects of suicide prevention in LGBTQIA2S+ communities—from prevention and early intervention to postvention—throughout the state. In partnership with the Utah Department of Human Services and the Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition, the UPC Suicide Prevention Team helped create the first LGBTQIA2S+ specific suicide prevention plan in Utah.

### ***How does the Utah Pride Center approach each strategy in this resource guide?***

#### **Strategy 1: Create Protective and Affirming Environments**

UPC promotes a safe and affirming environment in which each LGBTQIA2S+ individual is loved and

encouraged to be their authentic self. UPC provides an environment for LGBTQIA2S+ youth to meet peers and friends, explore their identities, and feel safe being their true and authentic self.

**Strategy 2: Increase Competence and Confidence of Professionals**

UPC offers trainings on LGBTQIA2S+ awareness and allyship to individuals and companies. The training topics can be adapted to the specific needs and knowledge levels of participants. UPC instructors introduce groups to key concepts and terminology pertaining to LGBTQIA2S+ communities and create open lines of dialogue for participants.

**Strategy 3: Ensure Services for LGBTQIA2S+ Youth are Racially, Ethnically, and Culturally Responsive**

UPC intentionally promotes equity and inclusion to strengthen diverse LGBTQIA2S+ communities, which include people of all races, ethnicities, ages, abilities, faiths, income levels, documentation statuses, and backgrounds. Services that are provided by UPC account for the diversity and uniqueness of all youth who attend the program, with clinical providers who are confident and competent in providing culturally responsive and affirming services.



**Strategy 4: Strengthen Protective Factors and Reduce Risk Factors**

UPC creates joyful celebratory spaces for all LGBTQIA2S+ youth and allies. Celebrating being LGBTQIA2S+ is a collective act of resistance and unity and serves as a protective factor for the youth and allies attending UPC programming. UPC supports these youth in building confidence, taking pride in their identities, and creating meaningful peer relationships.

**Strategy 5: Develop and Strengthen Economic Supports**

UPC builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy. UPC uses community health workers and health educators to support and empower LGBTQIA2S+ people in different areas, such as finding, applying for, and paying for culturally appropriate services; navigating insurance benefits and coverage; securing legal aid and support; and obtaining food and clothing.

To find programs and interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing suicide or that directly address the factors that impact suicide prevention for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, visit the [Best Practices Registry](#).

# Cultural Considerations

Given the diversity of cultural identities represented among LGBTQIAS2+ people, it is important to consider how to tailor programs, services, and resources to fit the needs of youth and families from different cultural and religious backgrounds. These adaptations should acknowledge and respect the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, faith, and economic status and strive to create positive, appropriate, family-centered approaches that meet the unique needs of these diverse groups. Hiring and training practices should reflect these goals; recruiting and training diverse and representative staff to implement and oversee programming is an important step toward ensuring a more culturally respectful approach. Unique considerations for specific populations are described below.

## American Indian, Alaska Native, and Two-Spirit youth

The suicide rate among the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population has increased nearly 20% since 2015; AI/AN youth are four times more likely to die by suicide than youth in any other group.<sup>37</sup> Results from a recent survey conducted by the Trevor Project showed that AI/AN LGBTQIA2S+ youth were 2.5 times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year than their non-AI/AN peers.<sup>38</sup> They were also more likely to have experienced housing instability or food

insecurity, or to have been in foster care in the past year. Additionally, nearly half of AI/AN youth reported being physically harmed or threatened due to their LGBTQIA2S+ identity, with 70% reporting that they had faced discrimination in the past year.<sup>38</sup>

Approximately 20% of AI/AN LGBTQIA2S+ youth are Two-Spirit; these youth face additional risks including an increased risk for suicide.<sup>38</sup> Two-Spirit is a term that describes the presence of both male and female energy combined with the ability to connect with the spiritual world (ancestors, Creator, higher power). It is a spiritual gift that goes beyond one's SOGIE.<sup>39</sup> Although the term itself became more common around 1990, Two-Spirit people have existed for centuries and have historically been highly esteemed and valued within most tribes, serving as mediators, caretakers, leaders, protectors, and healers (both emotional and spiritual).<sup>39</sup> Some tribes and tribal organizations are moving toward embracing and honoring their Two-Spirit relatives, but many continue to shun, shame, and exclude them from ceremonies and events. As a result, many Two-Spirit individuals face discrimination, stigma, and misunderstanding, which may contribute to the increased risks they experience today.<sup>38-40</sup>

Despite decades of historical violence and trauma, displacement, forced assimilation, and genocide,<sup>41</sup> AI/AN people continue to live, prosper, and thrive. Across the nation, many AI/AN people serve as prominent leaders and innovators in their cultures via



*"It's important to let youth know they can create spaces and communities. Visibility is a huge part of it. Online social media and internet-based resources, including spaces to connect on the internet make a lot of sense, especially for folks in rural areas where they don't have other like-minded individuals."*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**

community healthcare, environmental preservation, traditional language preservation, and other inspiring contributions.<sup>42</sup> Strong family support and LGBTQIA2S+ affirming schools can serve as protective factors and have been shown to reduce suicide risk by more than half among AI/AN LGBTQIA2S+ youth.<sup>38</sup> Efforts to promote the sanctity of Two-Spirit traditions should also be a focus of suicide prevention efforts for this population. Visit the [Parent, Family, Community Focus Guide](#) for more information and action steps for supporting AI/AN LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

## Rural youth

Rural LGBTQIA2S+ youth may face greater stigma, victimization, discrimination, and related health concerns when compared to urban LGBTQIA2S+ youth.<sup>43</sup> In addition, due to the often-homogenous populations in rural areas, LGBTQIA2S+ youth may be more likely to feel a sense of “otherness” than their urban peers. Rural LGBTQIA2S+ youth may also face additional challenges related to school climate, community intolerance, limited medical and behavioral health care, a lack of safe and affirming spaces, and difficulty finding supportive adults.<sup>44-46</sup>

Hostile or unsupportive school environments pose significant challenges for many rural LGBTQIA2S+ youth, as students spend a significant portion of their day at school. When schools do not feel safe or supportive, it can lead to isolation, depression, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Some research indicates that rural

LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience more discriminatory policies, harassment, and anti-LGBTQIA2S+ comments at school than urban LGBTQIA2S+ youth.<sup>4</sup>

Because schools are often the cornerstone of rural communities, it is important to make school environments safe and supportive for LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Creating a Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) can be protective because these groups help promote inclusivity, acceptance, and positive mental health. If the school community is not open to creating a GSA, Sources of Strength is another program to consider. Sources of Strength is a program for all students that focuses on improving school climate and connectedness around mental health and well-being. LGBTQIA2S+ youth can greatly benefit from a better-connected school environment. Sources of Strength is tried and tested in rural communities. It originated in North Dakota and has been successfully implemented in rural schools across the country.

Virtual environments can also be advantageous, as they can help rural LGBTQIA2S+ youth connect with a larger network of their peers. Schools, parents, and supportive others should help promote the safe use of social media and online networking sites such as [Q Chat Space](#) or [TrevorSpace](#).

## Spiritual and religious youth

Religion and spirituality are often viewed as being at odds with LGBTQIA2S+ identities, which can create





*“My [family] is Latina and Filipino and also Catholic. Even though [my child] knows his grandmothers love him, they are not open to talking about his [sexual orientation]. He feels that part of him has to hide, and he shoves it down and almost causes some self-hatred that we have to work to overcome...”*

**Focus Group, Parents of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth**



conflicts for youth exploring their SOGIE while growing up in religious families. While religion may serve as a protective factor for some youth, it can have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of LGBTQIA2S+ youth when their SOGIE is at odds with their religion and the expectations of their family. Parents and caregivers can benefit from education and support focused on navigating conversations with youth about religion and LGBTQIA2S+ status. Health and behavioral health providers can be a good source of information for both LGBTQIA2S+ youth and their families. These providers should have a basic understanding of the intersections of religion, LGBTQIA2S+ identity, and family dynamics.<sup>47</sup> All education and guidance should clearly inform parents and families that religious-based change therapy (such as conversion therapy) is harmful and should never be used.<sup>26</sup>

See the box below for resources focused on integrating religion and LGBTQIA2S+ identities.

### Faith-Based Resources

- [LGBTQ Family Acceptance: Faith Based Resources](#)
- [GLSEN: The Need for Allyship in LGBTQ Faith-Based Communities](#)
- [The Trevor Project: Navigating LGBTQ Identities and Religion](#)
- [The Human Rights Campaign: Faith Resources](#)

### Racially and ethnically diverse youth

Although LGBTQIA2S+ identity development is influenced by many different factors, including culture, race, and ethnicity, research on this topic has typically focused on White youth identity development. For youth of color, the process of identity development may be further complicated by experiences of racism as well as homophobia or transphobia. LGBTQIA2S+ youth of color often face multiple forms of discrimination, including societal racism as well as anti-LGBTQIA2S+ discrimination from their own racial or ethnic community. Black and Latino LGBTQIA2S+ young men,



*"I mentioned issues for LGBTQ young people which are especially true for LGBTQ young people who are at the intersection of other marginalized identities including Black, indigenous, and other folks of color; poor LGBTQ young people; and rural. Unfortunately, a lot of the work that's done in the programmatic and policy space is really done in a vacuum."*

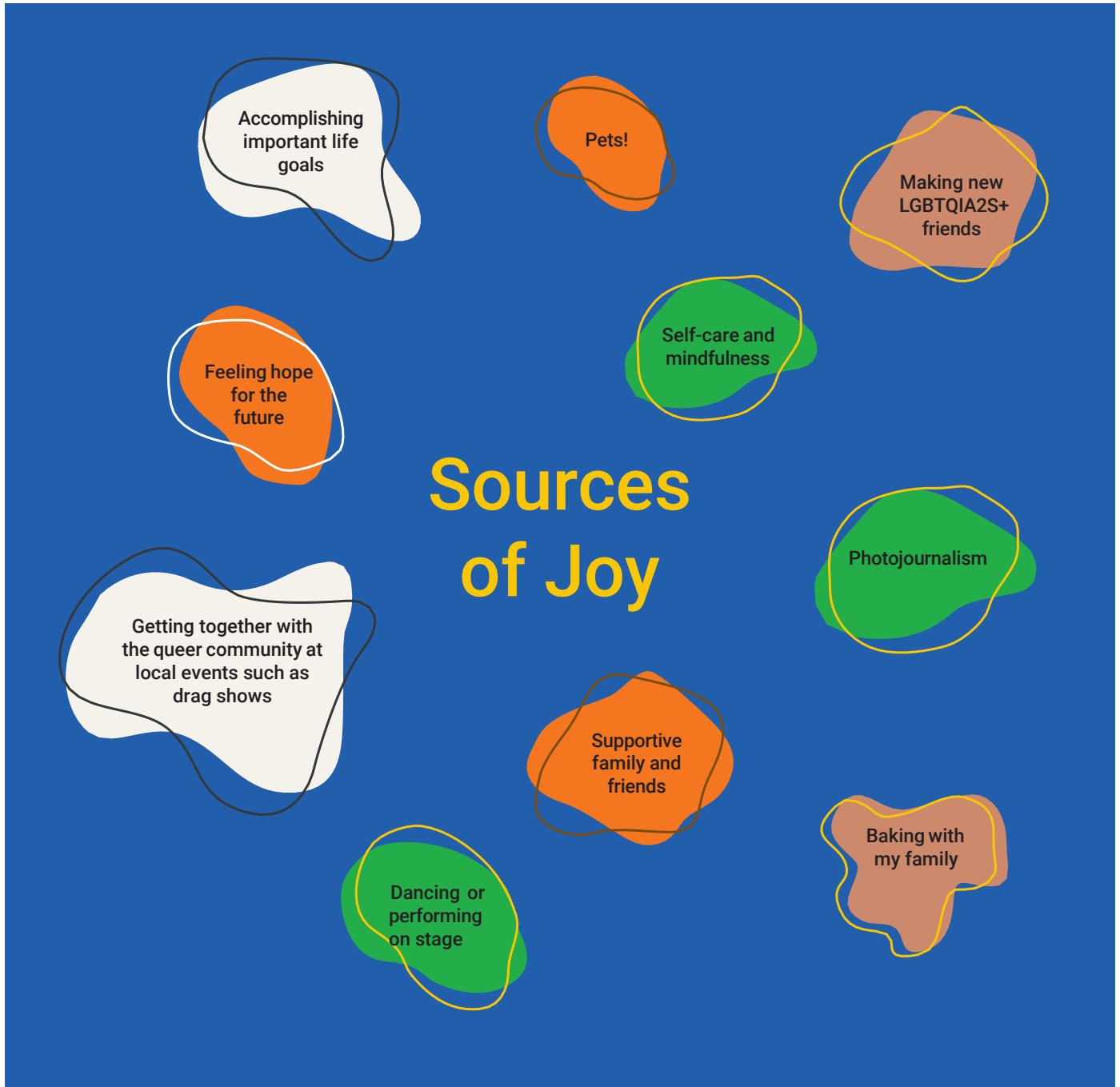
**Key Informant Interview Participant**

in particular, may face increased pressure related to expectations around masculinity.<sup>48-50</sup>

However, research has shown that LGBTQIA2S+ youth of color can develop resilience and take pride in their identities, which serve as protective factors. School-based programs such as Signs of Suicide (SOS) or the Good Behavior Game (GBG) have shown promise in reducing suicidal ideation, enhancing connectedness, and promoting resiliency in diverse populations of students.<sup>51</sup> Areas of opportunity for behavioral health providers include working with youth on reducing negative views of their gender identity development as well as integrating their LGBTQIA2S+ identity into their larger racial/ethnic identity. Additional research is needed to examine the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, faith, and economic status and develop ways to create positive, appropriate, family-centered approaches to addressing these issues.<sup>47</sup>

# Sources of Joy

Thinking back to the overarching themes from the beginning of this resource guide, we are reminded to focus on the positive aspects of LGBTQIA2S+ identities. During our focus groups, we asked LGBTQIA2S+ youth and parents of LGBTQIA2S+ youth what brings them joy. The figure below is only a snapshot of the many activities, feelings, and supports our participants described.



# Conclusions

The most effective way to prevent suicide is to implement comprehensive, community-wide, upstream suicide prevention efforts for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

This can be achieved when adults and professionals:

- Provide financial resources for individuals and programs that help LGBTQIA2S+ youth meet basic needs related to housing, food security, transportation, and medical care.
- Increase the number of service providers and professionals who work with LGBTQIA2S+ youth and are trained in culturally responsive suicide prevention and intervention practices.
- Keep communications focused on hope, joy, and positive experiences.
- Avoid deficits-based messaging focused on increased risk for suicide.
- Amplify diverse voices of LGBTQIA2S+ youth while respecting and highlighting the importance of lived experience.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of LGBTQIA2S+ identities.
- Maintain consistency by regularly checking in with LGBTQIA2S+ youth to build trust.
- Pause and take a step back during emotionally charged times, such as when a child comes out to a parent or caregiver, to help foster a more positive and respectful response.



*“Professionals working with youth should not assume their destination. They should be in the car with them, not driving. They should be helping to make sure youth avoid the potholes and the detours that aren’t healthy or safe and providing support, rather than driving for them and assuming they know the destination.”*

**Key Informant Interview Participant**

This resource guide and the above recommendations were developed with the help and support of many individuals and guided by the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ youth. The guide serves as a starting point for the countless conversations that we can and should have as a society to better support, advocate for, and celebrate LGBTQIA2S+ youth. As a community, it is imperative that we come together to lead with love, compassion, and respect for one another rather than focusing on the things that make us different. LGBTQIA2S+ youth deserve to have adults and professionals working to create more equitable and affirming environments for them, and it is the responsibility of adults to hold

each other accountable in working toward that goal. We hope that this resource guide will be helpful for youth-serving professionals and adults as they seek to create and maintain supportive, loving, and affirming environments in which LGBTQIA2S+ youth can thrive. We suggest you review and share the four companion Focus Guides in the Appendix, which contain specific strategies, approaches, and resources. Each guide is tailored to a specific population including: families and communities; school professionals; health and behavioral health care providers; and state agencies. A multi-tiered approach will support our collective work to achieve positive outcomes for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

# Appendix

## Glossary of terms

- LGBTQ [Resource Center Glossary](#)
- GLAAD [An Ally's Guide to Terminology: Talking about LGBT People & Equality](#)
- SPRC [Talking about Suicide and LGBTQ Populations](#)
- Human Rights Campaign [Glossary of Terms](#)
- Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity [Glossary of Terms](#)

## Implementation Checklist

### Strategy 1: Create Protective and Affirming Environments

- ✓ Create more equitable and diverse programming in your place of work by assessing current organizational policies and programs.
- ✓ Leverage employee onboarding and recurring training to educate your staff. Introduce new curricula, expanded trainings, inclusive programming, updated organizational policies and procedures, and discussions of the importance of kindness and compassion toward LGBTQIA2S+ people.
- ✓ Implement programming that respects the diversity of LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Take inspiration from examples of affirming programming being offered in a variety of settings, many of which are highlighted in this resource guide.
- ✓ Incorporate the perspectives of LGBTQIA2S+ youth when developing policies and programs. Use direct feedback from surveys, conversations, and/or focus group discussions.
- ✓ Be conscientious about the way you interact with LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Make sure to listen, be respectful, and let them tell you what works for them and what they need.

### Strategy 2: Increase Competence and Confidence Among Professionals

- ✓ Identify a champion in your organization to oversee and support routine staff education and training on culturally competent engagement with LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
- ✓ Develop a process for periodically assessing the needs of your staff related to serving and supporting LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
- ✓ Develop an education and training plan that includes initial and recurring trainings for all staff.
- ✓ Implement training requirements for all youth-serving staff and professionals based on current best practices recommendations.
- ✓ Consider assembling an advisory board of LGBTQIA2S+ youth who are involved with your organization or program. This board can offer routine feedback on what is needed to improve staff-client interactions.

### Strategy 3: Ensure Services are Racially, Ethnically, and Culturally Responsive

- ✓ Make an organization-wide commitment to providing culturally responsive and affirming services for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, starting at the leadership level. Communicate this commitment and its importance to all staff using multiple methods such as meetings, emails, and print materials.
- ✓ Conduct interviews, focus groups, and listening sessions with LGBTQIA2S+ youth, their parents and caregivers, and staff that represent diverse and intersecting identities to assess needs. If you have an LGBTQIA2S+ youth advisory board, make sure it is racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse.

- ✓ Educate your staff on what it means to provide culturally responsive and affirming services and walk them through any changes to policies and procedures.
- ✓ Provide initial and recurring training to staff on the delivery of culturally responsive and affirming services. This training should include a module on motivational interviewing and ways staff can ask about and listen to the unique experiences of each LGBTQIA2S+ youth with whom they interact.
- ✓ Have national and local racial, ethnic, and culture-specific resources on hand to provide to LGBTQIA2S+ youth as needed. These should range from informational materials to sources of referral for additional services.
- ✓ Consider hiring staff that represent diverse SOGIE and racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

#### **Strategy 4: Strengthen Protective Factors and Reduce Risk Factors**

- ✓ Explore how your setting can strengthen and promote protective factors for LGBTQIA2S+ youth with whom you engage, such as building community and promoting authenticity.
- ✓ Prepare your staff to recognize signs of distress among youth, focusing on the identification of common risk factors for suicide. Consider accessing trainings such as the [Trevor Project CARE training](#), which provides adults and professionals with information on how to prevent suicide among LGBTQIA2S+ youth by learning how to identify common risk and protective factors.
- ✓ Implement programming that highlights protective factors for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, including supportive families and peers, affirming environments, and access to culturally responsive healthcare. Seek funding from sources that can be used for this purpose.
- ✓ Encourage and work with local media outlets to highlight positive events and outcomes in LGBTQIA2S+ communities and inform viewers about safe spaces, support groups, and upcoming events. Provide guidance on safe messaging and how to minimize focus on negatives such as high suicide rates.
- ✓ Have community and social services resources at the ready for LGBTQIA2S+ youth when needed. These resources may include informational material and contact information for peer support groups, pride centers, employment opportunities, income and housing supports, food banks, and benefits.

#### **Strategy 5: Strengthen Supports to Meet Basic Needs**

- ✓ Hold informational sessions focused on local sources of economic support in your area.
- ✓ Offer and publicize financial support for LGBTQIA2S+ youth through grants, scholarships, and employment opportunities. Make sure application processes are manageable and take into consideration the hardships experienced by these youth.
- ✓ Implement programming dedicated to improving job and interview preparedness, financial literacy, and economic support. This programming might include job application and interview training or providing access to clothing for wearing to an interview. Consider distributing meal vouchers and covering the costs of metro cards, taxis, buses, and other transportation options to help youth access your programs.
- ✓ Identify and connect LGBTQIA2S+ youth with supportive individuals and environments, especially outside the home. Schools are a great option, particularly in rural areas.
- ✓ Sustain efforts by regularly seeking out funding opportunities and grants designed to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth.

### **Focus Guides**

- [Teachers and School Professionals](#)
- [Parents, Families, and Communities](#)
- [Health and Behavioral Healthcare](#)
- [State Agencies](#)

## Talk and Text Crisis Resources

- [The Trevor Project](#)
- [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
- [Trans Lifeline](#)
- [Crisis Text Line](#)

## Resources by Audience

Audience	Resources
<p><b>School-based Professionals</b></p>	<p>For designing and promoting an affirming and inclusive school community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gender Spectrum: <a href="#">Framework for a Gender Inclusive School</a></li> <li>• The Human Rights Campaign:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Resources for an LGBTQ and Gender Inclusive School</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Welcoming Schools Initiative</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Edugraphics: <a href="#">The Genderbread Person Version 4</a></li> <li>• USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work: <a href="#">Proud &amp; Empowered</a></li> <li>• GLSEN Research Institute: <a href="#">LGBTQ Students and School Sports Participation: Research Brief</a></li> </ul> <p>For becoming an affirming and supportive school professional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GLSEN: <a href="#">Developing LGBTQ-Inclusive Classroom Resources</a></li> <li>• American Psychological Association: <a href="#">Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Schools</a></li> <li>• National Association of School Psychologists Committee on LGBTQIA2S+ Issues: <a href="#">Framework for Safe and Successful Schools</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Parents, Caregivers, and Families</b></p>	<p>For parents and caregivers looking for support related to a child’s coming out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PFLAG: <a href="#">Quick Tips on Supporting your LGBTQ Kids and Yourself During the Coming Out Process</a></li> <li>• The Child Mind Institute: <a href="#">How to Support LGBTQ Children</a></li> <li>• Healthy Children: <a href="#">Coming Out: Information for Parents of LGBTQ Teens</a></li> </ul> <p>General resources for families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Family Acceptance Project: <a href="#">Family Video Series</a></li> <li>• The CDC: <a href="#">Parents’ Influence on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Teens</a></li> <li>• Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity: <a href="#">AFFIRM Caregiver: A Compassionate Approach for Caregivers of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender &amp; Questioning (LGBTQ+) Populations</a></li> </ul> <p>For families raising LGBTQIA2S+ foster, adopted, or justice-involved youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a Family: <a href="#">Tips for Raising an LGBTQ Foster or Adopted Child</a></li> <li>• The Dougy Center: <a href="#">Podcast – Grief Is Not the Great Equalizer: Supporting Queer, Trans, &amp; Justice Involved Youth With Lamya Broussard</a></li> </ul> <p>For families seeking healthcare options for their child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Psychological Association: <a href="#">10 Factors to Consider When Searching for a Gender-Competent Therapist for Your Child</a></li> </ul>

Audience	Resources
<b>Advocates and Policy Professionals</b>	<p>For adults wanting to understand more about current anti-LGBTQ legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Human Rights Campaign: <a href="#">Roundup of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation Advancing in States Across the Country</a></li> <li>• American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): <a href="#">Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures</a></li> <li>• GLAAD: <a href="#">Media Guide: State Legislation about LGBTQ People</a></li> </ul> <p>For recommendations on how to become more involved in advocacy efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The White House: <a href="#">Executive Order on Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals</a></li> <li>• Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): <a href="#">Advocacy 101 Resources</a></li> </ul>
<b>Health and Mental Healthcare Professionals</b>	<p>For recommendations on improving family engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAMHSA: <a href="#">A Practitioner’s Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBTQ Children</a></li> </ul> <p>For learning how to better support and care for LGBTQIA2S+ youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Access Project: <a href="#">Community Standards of Practice for the Provision of Quality Health Care Services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Clients</a></li> <li>• Fenway Health: <a href="#">Learning Resources</a></li> <li>• National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center: <a href="#">Learning Modules</a></li> <li>• The Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">E-Learning Modules</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Supporting Trans and Nonbinary Clients in Experiencing Gender Euphoria</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Dougy Center: <a href="#">Holding Heart in Community for Queer and Trans Youth and Those Supporting Them</a></li> </ul> <p>For health professionals interested in joining professional organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality: Resources for <a href="#">Research, Advocacy, and Education</a></li> <li>• World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH): <a href="#">Standards of Care</a></li> </ul>
<b>Technical Assistance Providers</b>	<p>For accessing data to inform programming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Trevor Project: <a href="#">2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People</a></li> </ul> <p>For action-oriented suicide prevention approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDC: <a href="#">Suicide Prevention Resource for Action</a></li> <li>• SAMHSA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">National Strategy for Suicide Prevention Implementation Assessment Report</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Moving Beyond Change Efforts: Evidence and Action to Support and Affirm LGBTQI+ Youth</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Behavioral Health: Results from the 2021 and 2022 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mental Health America: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Addressing the Youth Mental Health Crisis: The Urgent Need For More Education, Services, and Supports</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">LGBTQ+ Mental Health: Insights from MHA Screening</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Audience	Resources
<b>Professionals Interested in Improving Cultural Responsiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Human Rights Campaign: <a href="#">Black and African American LGBTQ Youth Report</a></li> <li>• The Trevor Project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Black &amp; LGBTQ: Approaching Intersectional Conversations</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Supporting Black LGBTQ Youth Mental Health</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Human Rights Campaign: <a href="#">2018 LGBTQ Latinx Youth Report</a></li> <li>• National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (<a href="#">NQAPIA</a>): <a href="#">Resources</a></li> </ul>

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# Suicide Prevention Resource Center

 **NORC** at the  
University of  
Chicago

# Glossary of Terms

Produced by the **HRC Foundation**



SHARE

Last updated: 5/31/2023



Many Americans refrain from talking about sexual orientation and gender identity or expression because it feels taboo, or because they're afraid of saying the wrong thing. This glossary was written to help give people the words and meanings to help make

conversations easier and more comfortable. LGBTQ+ people use a variety of terms to identify themselves, not all of which are included in this glossary. Always listen for and respect a person's self identified terminology.

**Ally** | A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).

**Asexual** | Often called "ace" for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little or conditional sexual attraction.

**Biphobia** | The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, people who love and are sexually attracted to more than one gender.

**Bisexual** | A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.

**Gay** | A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

**Genderqueer** | Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both

male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

**Gender binary** | A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

**Gender dysphoria** | Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

**Gender-expansive** | A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

**Gender expression** | External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

**Gender-fluid** | A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

**Homophobia** | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

**Intersex** | Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

**Lesbian** | A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

**LGBTQ+** | An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer” with a “+” sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community.



**Non-binary** | An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

**Outing** | Exposing someone’s lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender or gender non-binary identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

**Pansexual** | Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.

**Queer** | A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations





that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

**Questioning** | A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Same-gender loving** | A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

**Sex assigned at birth** | The sex, male, female or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

**Sexual orientation** | An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

**Transgender** | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

**Transitioning** | A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition,

such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all or none of these processes.

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The Human Rights Campaign reports on news, events and resources of the **Human Rights Campaign Foundation** that are of interest to the general public and further our common mission to support the LGBTQ+ community.