

LEARNING FROM THE FIELD: PROGRAMS SERVING YOUTH WHO ARE LGBTQI2-S AND EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) by Laura Pannella Winn, The Center for Social Innovation. Contributions to this report were made by Dr. Justine Hanson, Dr. Wayne Centrone, Rachael Kenney, and Jason Wharff under contract number HHS280200600029C, with SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Dr. Frances L. Randolph served as the Government Project Officer.

Disclaimer

The views, opinions, and content of this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of SAMHSA or HHS.

Public Domain Notice

All material appearing in this report is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission. However, citation of the source is appreciated. No fee may be charged for the reproduction or distribution of this material.

Electronic Access & Copies of Publication

This publication may be accessed electronically through the following website:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov>

Originating Office

Homeless Programs Branch, Division of Services and Systems Improvement, Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1 Choke Cherry Road, Rockville, MD 20857.

Questions or comments related to this document should be directed to Dr. Frances L. Randolph, Federal Project Officer, at 240.276.1940; to the SAMHSA's Homelessness Resource Center at 617.467.6014 ext. 200; or emailed to generalinquiry@center4si.com with "LGBTQI2-S Listening Tour" in the subject line.



LEARNING FROM THE FIELD:
PROGRAMS SERVING YOUTH WHO ARE LGBTQI2-S
AND EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Learning From The Field: Programs Serving Youth Who are LGBTQI2-S and Experiencing Homelessness</i>	1
Acknowledgements	2
Commonly Used Terms	6
<i>Part I: Background</i>	7
LGBTQI2-S Youth Experiencing Homelessness: The Nature of the Challenge	8
SAMHSA’s Response	9
» About the Listening Tour	9
» The Purpose of this Report	10
Key Findings	10
<i>Part II: Lessons Learned</i>	13
Develop Trusting Relationships By Fostering a Strengths-Based Approach	15
Develop a Culturally Competent Staff	18
Support Consumer Empowerment	21
Design Responsive Service Interventions	22
Develop Community Partnerships	26
Expand Public Awareness	29
<i>Part III: Next Steps</i>	31
<i>Appendix I: Listening Tour Site Information</i>	33
<i>Appendix II: Best Practices For Serving LGBTQI2-S Youth</i>	37
<i>Appendix III: Programs Serving LGBTQI2-S Youth</i>	39
<i>Appendix IV: References</i>	43

Commonly Used Terms

Unaccompanied youth are a distinct group, often not counted among adults, families, and children experiencing homelessness. Unaccompanied youth include runaways, street youth, youth who have “aged out” of the foster care system, those exiting the juvenile justice system, and those who are thrown out of their homes.¹ This broad definition of youth experiencing homelessness includes those between 12 and 25 years of age.² For the purposes of this report, youth is broadly defined and determined by the authors of the referenced research and service providers. No single definition or parameter of “youth” is proposed.

Additionally, there are many variations on the descriptive acronyms and definitions describing gender and sexual minority populations. Various service providers, researchers, advocates, and consumers use different acronyms when working with different populations. For the purposes of this report, youth who are homeless and identify as sexual minorities will be described with the acronym used by the referenced research or service providers.

Terms cited in this paper include:

LGBTQI2-S: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, or Two-Spirit

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning

LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

LGB: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual

COMMON DEFINITIONS OF THESE TERMS ARE BELOW BUT SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED COMPLETE OR DEFINITIVE:³

LESBIAN: Women who are emotionally and sexually attracted to women only, and may partner exclusively with women.

GAY: Men who are emotionally and sexually attracted to men only, and may partner exclusively with men. The term “gay” is also used as an umbrella term to refer to sexual minority individuals.

BISEXUAL: A man or woman who is emotionally and sexually attracted to and may partner with both men and women.

TRANSGENDER: A person who identifies as a gender that differs from their birth-assigned gender.

QUESTIONING: A person who is exploring his or her sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

INTERSEX: A person born with an indeterminate sexual anatomy or developmental hormone pattern that is neither definitively male or female. Intersex individuals are often “assigned” a gender at birth that may differ from their gender identity later in life. Intersex individuals include a wide range of gender identities and sexual orientations.

Many consider themselves part of the sexual minority, as it is a community that can offer support.

TWO-SPIRIT: A term describing a Native American who possesses the sacred gifts of the female-male spirit, which exist in harmony with those of female and male. Traditionally, a person who is two-spirit is believed to bridge both the social categories of male and female and the spirit and human worlds. Native American people who are two-spirit may also identify as LGBT. The term is not universally accepted among Native American communities and nations; some also use terms from their own nations.



**PART I:
BACKGROUND**

LGBTQ12-S YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS: THE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE

Every year, an estimated 575,000 to 1.6 million unaccompanied youth between ages 12 to 17 experience homelessness in the United States.⁴ It is estimated that between 20% and 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, or two-spirit (LGBTQ12-s).⁵ Gender and sexual minority youth experience multiple risk factors contributing to homelessness, including family conflict, abuse, mental illness, neglect, poverty, and abandonment. Family conflict is the primary cause of homelessness for all youth, both heterosexual and LGBT, but among LGBT youth, family conflict is often related to their sexual orientation.⁶ Twenty-six percent of LGBT youth report being forced from their home upon revealing their sexual identity to their parents.⁷

In general, youth who are LGBTQ12-s face stigma and discrimination, which can lead to higher rates of depression, conduct disorder, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal behavior.⁸ Rejection can be particularly high for African American and Latino youth.⁹ Recent research by the Family Acceptance Project demonstrates a strong link between family rejection of a LGB youth and negative health and mental health outcomes later in life.¹⁰ LGBT teens also report more academic struggles than their heterosexual peers and are at higher risk for dropping out of school.¹¹ These struggles create barriers to future employment, in addition to the complex risks related to violence, trauma, mental health, substance use, and homelessness.

Even when placed in transitional or permanent housing, the supportive services necessary to meet the unique, age-appropriate needs of LGBTQ12-s youth may be underdeveloped. Existing research suggests that service providers frequently misunderstand youth who identify as LGBTQ12-s and experience homelessness, highlighting an urgent need to improve capacity to provide respectful, sensitive, and culturally competent care. Many homeless service providers do not have the knowledge, skills, and language to discuss issues of sexual orientation and gender identity with youth. As a result, they may feel uncomfortable or unable to adequately identify and care for the needs of youth who are LGBTQ12-s and homeless.

Identifying and serving LGBTQ12-s youth who experience homelessness is complicated by the fact that youth may not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. Many youth have had negative past experiences with social services, and LGBTQ12-s youth in particular may not feel safe accessing services. Youth with histories of abuse may have difficulty trusting adults to provide support and assistance.¹⁵

In shelters, sexual and gender minority youth may be exposed to homophobic attitudes among staff and discrimination and harassment from their peers.¹² Hostile shelter situations lead many LGBT youth to life on the streets. Once on the street, youth who identify as LGBT are three times more likely to engage in “survival sex” exchanging sex for anything needed than their heterosexual peers.¹³ The literature also points to the extreme vulnerability of youth identifying as transgender. They appear to be at much greater risk for exploitation, drug abuse, survival sex, and HIV.¹⁴

SAMHSA'S RESPONSE

SAMHSA, through its Homelessness Resource Center (HRC), convened an Expert Panel on February 4, 2010 to better understand the needs of youth who are experiencing homelessness and identify as LGBTQI2-S. SAMHSA sought input from diverse consumers, service providers, researchers, advocates, and policy makers. Given the lack of specialized services available to this population, panelists were asked to envision next steps for moving the field toward a greater understanding of service delivery models that best meet their needs. The panel members recommended a Listening Tour, which would allow SAMHSA to visit programs with effective strategies for serving sexual and gender minority youth. A full summary of proceedings from the Expert Panel can be found on the Homelessness Resource Center website (homeless.samhsa.gov).

About the Listening Tour

The Objectives for the Listening Tour included:

Objective 1: Review model programs serving the needs of LGBTQI2-S youth who are homeless.

Objective 2: Identify promising practices of care delivery and supportive services.

Objective 3: Recommend concrete steps to develop a service model that includes best and promising practices.

SAMHSA selected Listening Tour programs based on geographic diversity and programmatic focus. Selected organizations included (see Appendix I for more information on each organization):

- » Youth on Fire, Cambridge, MA
- » Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco, CA
- » Outside In, Portland, OR
- » The Ruth Ellis Center, Detroit, MI
- » UCAN Host Home Program, Chicago, IL
- » The Drop-In Center at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

SAMHSA collaborated with Expert Panel members to identify and rank programs that offer the most innovative and effective approaches to serving LGBTQI2-S youth. These programs included agencies that served youth who are homeless, with specialized programs geared toward LGBTQI2-S youth or strategies to reach out to this population.

SAMHSA conducted one-day site visits to each program. The agenda included structured discussions with multiple staff and youth consumers. Youth were asked to participate via informed consent. SAMHSA provided incentives to youth to encourage participation. SAMHSA sought feedback from focus group participants in four key areas:

- » **Promising Practices:** Approaches to care that have proven successful with LGBTQI2-S youth
- » **Blind Spots:** How program and community services are missing opportunities to serve youth
- » **Anecdotal Lessons:** Consumer and staff experiences that illustrate practice
- » **Where To Go From Here:** Recommendations for new and existing programs serving youth

The Purpose of this Report

The urgent need to improve services for LGBTQI2-S youth has caught the attention of advocates and researchers across the country. In the past five years, best practices recommendations for serving LGBTQI2-S youth have been identified and published (see Appendix II for more information).

However, conversations with service providers across the country have revealed that these publications are often not sufficient to change practice. The bridge between what we know about serving LGBTQI2-S youth and how to implement culturally competent best practices has yet to be built. The literature might tell us, for example, that safe spaces are important and suggest placing a rainbow sticker in an agency's window to signal that the space is safe. Yet we know stickers do not transform shelters, transitional housing programs, or drop-in centers. Agencies across the country are looking for concrete strategies to improve care for their most vulnerable clients.

The Listening Tour programs and others across the country have developed promising strategies for serving youth who are LGBTQI2-S and homeless. The lessons learned in this report highlight several key strategies as well as approaches to implementation and adaptation.

KEY FINDINGS

SAMHSA found that successful programs create adaptive, flexible solutions to the challenges of their geographic, demographic, and funding climates. SAMHSA identified several common elements among Listening Tour programs including key findings discussed in depth in this report:

- » **Develop Trusting Relationships by Fostering a Strengths-Based Approach**—Creating an environment of acceptance and respect among providers and peers can help improve a youth's self-esteem. Negative experiences can be transformed into strengths.
- » **Develop Culturally Competent Staff**—Youth who identify as LGBTQI2-S and experience homelessness may face discrimination and misunderstanding when accessing services. Hiring the right staff and providing cultural and linguistic competence training can help improve service delivery.
- » **Empower Consumers**—Sexual and gender minority youth provide an invaluable perspective about their service needs and preferences, and can act as effective ambassadors to their peers.
- » **Design Responsive Services Interventions**—The complex and unique needs of sexual and gender minority youth demand flexible, tailored programming. These can include adapted housing models, employment training, and safe and accepting environments.
- » **Develop Community Partnerships**—Connecting with agencies dedicated to LGBTQI2-S issues or homelessness issues can help provide positive role models and alternative safe spaces to LGBTQI2-S youth experiencing homelessness. Partnerships can also help providers with outreach.
- » **Expand Public Awareness**—Providing education about LGBTQI2-S youth and homelessness can help reduce stigma within communities.

A Story of Change

Staff at Youth on Fire (YOF), a youth Drop-In Center in Cambridge, MA, always thought they offered a welcoming and accepting environment. However, they knew there was always room for improvement. Staff sought to understand how their drop-in center was perceived by youth experiencing homelessness and conducted a needs assessment of homeless youth in the Boston area. They were not entirely surprised to find that GLBT youth on the street did not view YOF as an accepting environment. Current GLBT members also felt that they could not find information or services to meet their needs at Youth on Fire, and even cited hostility from some of the staff.

YOF immediately responded by applying for and receiving funding from the Department of Public Health to increase the center's capacity to serve GLBTQ youth. This included hiring an openly gay Safe Spaces Coordinator, who conducted a needs

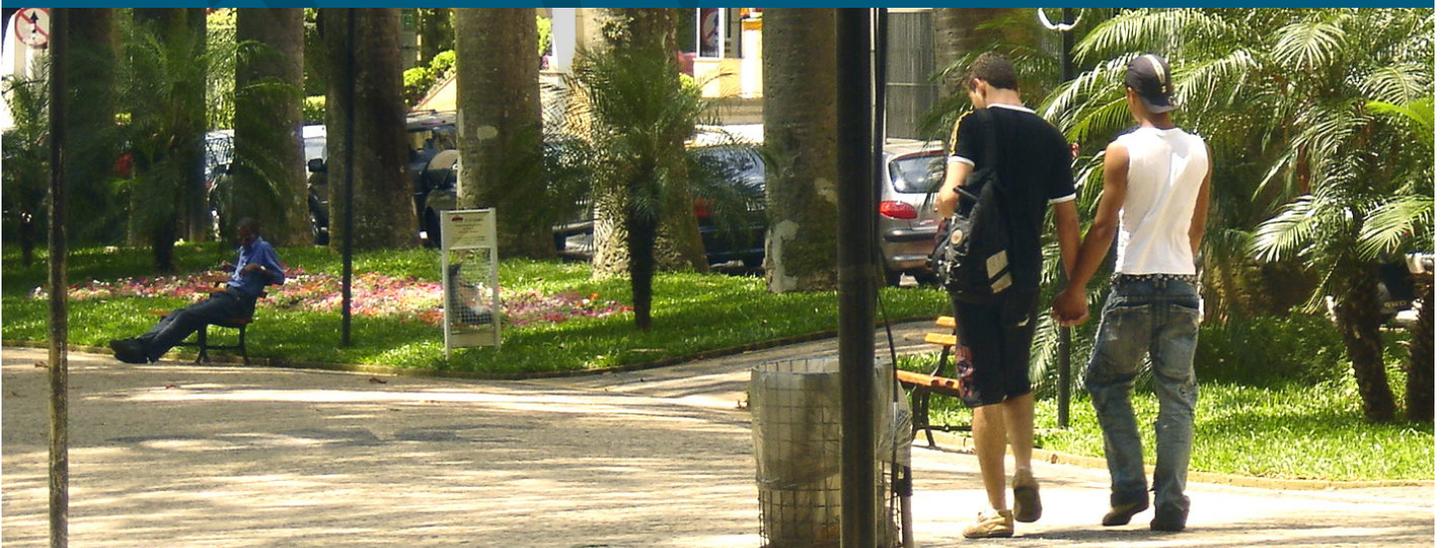
assessment of all members. They learned that 40% of their members identified as GLBT, but there were few services directed towards them. Staff ensured that service or facility changes requested during these assessments were implemented whenever possible. They knew any overhaul implemented from the top down would have felt meaningless to the youth, but consumer-initiated strategies would be positively received.

As a result of the focus groups, YOF made simple changes to meet the needs of their members. First, they addressed the physical space. They painted a pale blue over the bright yellow walls, created more private social spaces, and brought in GLBT friendly magazines, books, and movies. They also made sure all staff knew about GLBT advocacy and support resources in the city, and fostered relationships with those groups. Staff activities such as role-playing in staff meetings helped to bring inappropriate and

discriminatory staff behaviors to light.

It took three years, but staff are confident that YOF now better meets the needs of the community's GLBT youth. It has become a preferred space for many GLBT youth experiencing homelessness. Some GLBT youth resisted specialized attention, fearing it would tokenize their experiences and unintentionally "out" them on the streets. However, staff can tell that culturally competent care makes a difference. GLBT services are now fully integrated with day-to-day drop-in center activities.

Youth on Fire's story highlights how simple, thoughtful changes can improve services for youth who are most at risk. Their story is powerful because it is replicable. Any agency serving youth can start to make their space safe simply by asking youth about their preferences and responding to their needs.



A photograph of two women sitting on a beach at sunset. The woman on the left is seen from the back, wearing a white, sleeveless, crocheted top and sunglasses. The woman on the right is in profile, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and sunglasses. The background is a warm, golden sunset over the ocean. The text 'PART II: LESSONS LEARNED' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the image. A large, faint watermark 'X' is visible in the background.

**PART II:
LESSONS LEARNED**

Youth on Fire, Larkin Street Youth Services, Outside In, The Ruth Ellis Center, UCAN Host Home Program, and The Drop-In Center at Tulane shared lessons learned about serving the unique LGBTQI2-S youth population. Their challenges, experiences, and responses highlight common strategies for care. The following sections will describe these common elements, illustrating the needs of LGBTQI2-S youth and effective service strategies.

Draft

DEVELOP TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS BY FOSTERING A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Families, peers, and social service providers often reject LGBTQI2-S youth, which deeply impacts their self-esteem. Compounding these factors, many LGBTQI2-S youth who become homeless struggle to access housing, services, and employment. Every Listening Tour program recognized the overwhelming experiences of rejection faced by LGBTQI2-S youth who are homeless. These programs provide strengths-based services to buffer the complex difficulties faced by LGBTQI2-S youth. Key lessons learned related to fostering a strengths-based approach are highlighted below:

- » **Create a culture of respect.** All of the Listening Tour programs emphasized the importance of respect from providers and peers. When youth feel accepted and safe, they can begin to heal from repeated rejection and build relationships with providers. Staff can foster this feeling of acceptance and safety by respecting a young person's goals. One staff member at Larkin Street Youth Services observed, "The thing that the youth would say is most important is that they get to take ownership of their lives. All this time they couldn't call the shots and be who they are. This is an opportunity to be who they are." The Ruth Ellis Center also shared in that approach. "Don't use your views as the goal you're trying to obtain. It's their goals."

At Youth on Fire, respect from staff and peers is critical to building a strengths-based culture. Youth on Fire has actively fostered an allies program, educating and creating awareness about LGBTQI2-S issues. "It's important to have a space where people can have an open conversation about who they are. It's also important to have zero tolerance around discriminatory and hateful speech. What I notice here is mutual respect." The Director of the UCAN Host Home program shared, "Often the most damaging harassment comes from peers. However, it is within a diverse community where real learning and growth happens for both LGBT and straight-identified clients and staff. We need to

Drop-In Center at Tulane University New Orleans, LA

Located on the fringes of the French Quarter, the Drop-In Center seeks to improve the quality of life of runaway and homeless youth. This is accomplished by broadening the network of primary healthcare, substance abuse, mental

health, case management and outreach services. The Drop-In Center is affiliated with Tulane University, within the Department of Pediatrics, Section of Adolescent Medicine, which is a part of the Tulane Health Sciences Center.

make sure those settings are empowering for LGBT youth, so that it's a positive experience.”

- » **Promote consumer choice in housing and service models.** The UCAN Host Home Program and Larkin Street Youth Services embody consumer choice within their housing models. UCAN follows the Sanctuary Model, which is a trauma-informed organizational culture approach that emphasizes consumer control. They only enforce the most vital restrictions, such as requiring youth to contribute to utilities when possible and making sure each participant is enrolled in school, employed, or volunteering. Under this model, youth can make choices about when to come and go, and how to care for their own space. As one UCAN staff member shared, “It’s intense to live in the fishbowl environment of shelters and transitional housing, where adults are watching you all the time. This is at the heart of the Host Home model. The youth learn to live in a family setting, while making their own choices about where to live and how to conduct their time.” Larkin Street Youth Services offers a “structured home” model that incorporates resident decision-making. House meetings are conducted by the youth, where residential up-keep and service schedules are made. The young residents are in charge of their own living space, creating choice and ownership. *(For more information on housing models, please see the “Design Responsive Service Interventions” section.)*
- » **Support opportunities for safe, non-judgmental, open dialogues.** Youth on Fire found that an open dialogue between self-identified straight and LGBTQ12-S youth and staff was important to facilitate a strengths-based environment. However, other programs found that efforts to promote a dialogue can only be successful if a program ensures that space will remain non-judgmental and safe. A health educator at the Drop-In Center at Tulane recalled leading a session on masculinity during which some youth expressed hostility at the suggestion that a homosexual male could be considered a man. She became concerned for the safety of herself and her co-presenter as a result of the hostility. At least two of the youth in attendance identified as gay. Since that time, they have not discussed attitudes toward homosexuality in the youth group. This incident raises both the challenges and the importance of creating a safe environment for discussion of these issues.
- » **Explore the meaning of LGBTQ12-S identities among youth.** Fostering a strengths-based environment must begin with understanding the experiences and expectations of LGBTQ12-S youth. Larkin Street Youth Services is keenly aware that the environment in which LGBTQ12-S youth live can feel very defeating. “Young people arrive in San Francisco everyday thinking everything is going to be okay. But their challenges follow them.” Staff explain that images

“It hurts to have to move away from where you live because they don’t accept you. That’s why we need a place just for us so that we can feel safe.”

“I never spoke about my sexuality, because I didn’t like myself. But now I’m comfortable. Being at The Ruth Ellis Center has made me do that. I’m just generally comfortable with myself.”

portrayed in the media reinforce the idea that gay individuals are smarter and have more money, especially in San Francisco. “These images are powerful, and if a young person is not meeting those expectations, they feel let down by society and themselves. Not only are they not fitting into mainstream society, now they aren’t fitting into LGBT society as they see it.” Understanding this context is important for staff at Larkin Street Youth Services. With this knowledge, they can begin to engage youth, break down stereotypes, and redefine success.

- » **View the experiences of LGBTQI2-s youth through a trauma-informed perspective.** One provider shared, “When people come in who identify as LGBT, we see that as a strength and as an issue. They have been through so much, demonstrating their resiliency. But the trauma that results from it has to be addressed.” Understanding trauma and healing from it is a first step toward rebuilding self-esteem. Youth on Fire agreed. “Radical acceptance is really profound. You are who you are. We assume everyone who comes in here is a survivor.”
- » **Find opportunities to reframe negative experiences in a strengths-based manner.** Focusing on strengths and reframing weaknesses help to create environments in which youth who identify as LGBTQI2-s can find safety and thrive. Many staff at the Drop-In Center at Tulane felt that their backgrounds and beliefs could be incorporated into quality, strengths-based care. “Many LGBT youth we see come from religious families, and staff who come from similar backgrounds are better able to understand the internal conflicts that these youth may be experiencing,” observed one staff member. Such a perspective of respect, openness, and acceptance may be helpful to youth who are struggling to understand their identities in the context of cultural and religious norms.
- » **Provide safe spaces for transgender youth to develop positive self-images.** Transcend, a partner organization to Youth on Fire, serves transgender individuals using a strengths-based approach. Body image and self-esteem issues are common with this group as a result of discriminatory or offensive comments from families, providers, and peers. Transcend provides a safe space for trans-women to see their bodies in a positive light. Within the safety of being with other transgender women, Transcend leads beach trips, helping to empower members and giving them the freedom to break out of their comfort zone. It empowers these individuals in ways that could never be replicated in broader group. “I was so scared on my first beach trip. I went in jeans and t-shirt. But I was the first one in! It did a lot for my self-esteem, and was really important for me during that time,” shared one participant.

DEVELOP A CULTURALLY COMPETENT STAFF

Creating a staff of culturally competent providers is one of the most effective ways to provide quality care for youth who identify as LGBTQI2-S. “It’s really hard to tailor program models and strategies for LGBT youth. We look for good staff, not a model, to embody our values,” the Executive Director of The Ruth Ellis Center explained. At the Drop-In Center at Tulane, staff noted a large increase in requests for healthcare for transgender youth in transition. They attributed the increase to a new physician who specialized in these services. Staff noted that, “By giving our young people access to her, they’ve really opened themselves to receive the medical attention they need.” Without culturally competent providers, youth may be less likely to seek much-needed services. Key lessons learned related to developing culturally competent staff are highlighted below:

- » **Hire staff members who reflect the program’s consumers.** Each organization emphasized that hiring staff who identify as LGBTQI2-S is important to building cultural competence. Youth on Fire explained, “Hiring staff that identify as GLBT sets a positive tone for the space. When almost half our members are queer, it is really important to have staff that identifies the same way. You can put up a poster or change the rules, but the best way to signal that you’re a safe space is to have someone on staff that is GLBT. It also helps the young people trust the rest of the staff, because acceptance is now signaled as a genuine priority.” The presence of LGBTQI2-S staff within an organization provides successful adult role models for youth who might otherwise view their situations as difficult or hopeless.

This strategy also encourages disclosure of sexual orientation. As the Director of UCAN shared, “Having staff who are LGBT is so important to help young people disclose who they are right away, instead of waiting until they are comfortable.” At the Night Ministry, a partner of UCAN, staff noted that almost half of LGBT youth often do not disclose immediately upon arrival. “I think having LGBT staff would help our clients be more comfortable right off the bat. Knowing who they are and their needs would help us make the more appropriate referrals and strategies for care earlier on.”

- » **Recruit applicants who are open-minded and willing to learn.** While Larkin Street Youth Services is deliberate in hiring staff that reflect program consumers, they know being LGBTQI2-S does not mean that you are culturally competent. “It’s not about filling quotas—it’s about finding the right people.” They found that the key to a successful staff person is a willingness and openness to learn. When recruiting, Larkin Street states clearly that the program is focused on LGBTQ youth. Staff ask interview questions about

“I used to have my head held down in straight homes. Now I walk down the street with my head held high. It’s me. I accept myself. At Ruth Ellis, they say if you can’t love yourself, how will you love someone else? And I can believe them because they’re like me.”

applicants’ experiences in the LGBTQ community and comfort level working with the population. “It’s important to dive deep into these questions because [even] someone who identifies as LGBT might be working through their own issues.” All programs should include hiring questions that explore the applicant’s opinions about gender and sexual minority youth.

- » **Foster connections with the LGBT community.** UCAN Host Home Program emphasized that there are LGBTQI2-S individuals and others who care about the needs of youth in every community. “The real problem is that agencies may not feel safe or comfortable hiring staff who are LGBT-identified. It takes courage to hire them in some communities, but that’s where it has to start. It’s one thing to be LGBT-friendly and employ culturally competent best practices. But there is a difference between having a rainbow symbol on the walls and not having an LGBT presence. Any agency serving youth needs to have real connections to the LGBT community.” Connections within the LGBT community can help providers connect young people with positive role models, particularly when agencies do not have openly LGBT members on staff. *(For more information about connecting with the LGBT community, see the “Develop Community Partnerships” section.)*
- » **Involve youth consumers in the recruitment process and staff training.** Larkin Street Youth Services uses a purposeful approach to hiring culturally competent staff. When hiring, staff assemble a team of providers to identify the service needs of LGBTQ youth. They also invite clients to teach and inform the program development team about needs and help screen the applicants. Training at Youth of Fire is open to all staff and members, ensuring GLBT youth voices are heard and self-identified straight youth learn about how to respectfully communicate with their GLBT peers. The Drop-In Center at Tulane engages youth in dialogue to keep up to date on language. “The youth love when we ask them questions about LGBT issues. They feel like they’re enlightening us, and it helps us feel like we are in a partnership with the young people.” *(For more information about consumer involvement, see the “Support Consumer Integration” section.)*

Outside In

Portland, OR

The mission of Outside In is to help homeless youth and other marginalized

people move toward improved health and self-sufficiency. Under that mission, Outside In provides a full range of services to provide youth with a home as they move toward independent living.

Approximately 80% of youth who go through the transitional housing program never return to the streets.

- » **Offer staff training that explores the needs of LGBTQI2-S youth.** Training is an ongoing need to improve staff knowledge and skills. Each Listening Tour program offers formal or informal training policies to improve staff capacity related to cultural competence. Many programs struggle to find the time and resources to provide staff training. La Casa Norte, a partner agency to UCAN Host Home Program, employs a teach-back method to overcome this barrier. When training opportunities arise in the city, or when a staff member is invited to visit an advocacy group serving sexual or gender minority youth, they return to the program and teach what they learned to their colleagues. “That way we always stay current.” Outside In partners with The Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC)¹⁶ for their trainings needs. The core of SMYRC’s training approach is to answer questions that staff might be afraid to ask.
- » **Acknowledge biases and stereotypes among staff.** Many of the Listening Tour programs expressed confidence that their staff was open minded and accepting. However, the Drop-In Center at Tulane shared an issue that affects many programs. Among providers and youth, some religious perspectives view an LGBTQI2-S identity as a deficit rather than a strength. The Drop-In Center at Tulane recognized that such beliefs were detrimental to clients. Multiple staff from a conservative religious background shared that it was a shock for them to start working with transgender youth. Staff learned that the more they engaged with sexual and gender minority youth, the more they were able to connect on commonalities. Fostering these relationships helped staff leave limiting beliefs at the door. They explained that it had been an adjustment for them, but that ultimately they believe in accepting youth for who they are.

“You should have at least one person share their experience about coming out. Then we know it’s a safe place with someone you can trust.”

SUPPORT CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT

Many homeless service agencies consider consumer empowerment to be a best practice. Involving consumers in decisions about service design, delivery, and evaluation embodies a strengths-based, person-centered approach. Key lessons learned about integrating and empowering LGBTQI2-S youth consumers are highlighted below:

“Give the young people a voice and you will see positive change in a program.”

- » **Create advisory opportunities.** Including youth in advisory councils is one way that programs can ensure consumer voices are shaping a program. The UCAN Host Home Program has included two youth who identify as LGBTQI2-S in their Advisory Council, where all decisions are made by consensus. This includes the approval of volunteer host families as well as program policies. Youth on Fire has an all-youth advisory board that has a significant role in shaping the culture and making decisions at the drop-in center. “Any kind of situation that’s happening in the center is always pushed to the youth advisory board. They make the final recommendations to do what works for members in the space.” One of the more important roles of the youth advisory board is their applicant-hiring committee. Applicants meet with the panel of members who have the ability to recommend or deny applicants before they are hired. “This level of control is empowering to our members,” said one staff member. “You see a side of applicants that comes out in the youth interviews that does not come out with staff. Sometimes members can better tell if the applicant ‘gets it’ with regard to GLBT issues.” *(For more information about hiring appropriate staff, see the “Develop a Culturally Competent Staff” section.)*
- » **Invite youth to serve as peer outreach workers.** LGBTQI2-S youth consumers can serve as peer ambassadors to other youth who may be weary of social services. Peers can sometimes communicate more effectively about the benefits of service programs than staff can. Larkin Street Youth Services, Outside In, and Youth on Fire recruit program participants to serve as outreach workers among peers. One Larkin Street Youth Services staff member shared, “Young people are the perfect advertisement for the program.” These programs found that youth on the street are often resistant to adults approaching them and providing guidance. For many, help has frequently come with a cost. Yet, when a peer who identifies as LGBTQI2-S shares what has worked for them, their common experience may serve as a foundation to build trust. Additionally, youth experiencing homelessness are often invisible to service providers. Peers can help bring information to an otherwise difficult to reach group.
- » **Engage youth to provide feedback about community programs.** Staff at The Ruth Ellis Center found that eliciting feedback from youth who receive referrals is a powerful way to have their voice heard. After making referrals to clinics or doctors, the program’s Health Navigator will talk with the youth about their experiences. “One of our young people preferred to be called Tamara instead of her given name, Thomas, but the doctor was unwilling to do that. We listen to that feedback and take that into account when making

future referrals. It's really important to us that the young people's experiences inform how we do our work," said the Executive Director. In addition to identifying culturally competent providers for referrals, this is a meaningful way to integrate consumer voices. *(For more information about making culturally competent referrals, see the "Develop Community Partnerships" section.)*

- » Be sure that input is put into action. Programs that seek consumer input must be prepared to respond. The Ruth Ellis Center learned this through their youth advisory council. "We've tried youth advisory councils in the past, but struggled to implement the requests of the youth. It was defeating. We are rethinking our strategy because you can't ask for youth input and ultimately ignore it. They've been through that before, and it's not positive for anyone." Youth advisory councils have the ability to empower young people, but programs must have policies in place to review and take action on their recommendations.

DESIGN RESPONSIVE SERVICE INTERVENTIONS

The introductory section of this report outlines some of the diverse needs of youth who identify as LGBTQI2-S. SAMHSA learned that many programs on the Listening Tour adapted programs and strategies in response to these needs. Key lessons learned for designing responsive service interventions are highlighted below:

- » **Create transitional housing programs that meet the unique needs of LGBTQI2-S youth.** Larkin Street Youth Services has created a transitional housing model to provide a home setting for LGBTQI2-S identified youth transitioning out of homelessness. Castro Housing is located in a traditionally LGBT neighborhood in San Francisco. It offers 22 units of housing with single room occupancy units in a hotel and scattered site apartments. The program offers services geared to gender and sexual minority youth. Housing is based on a "structured home" model, defined as an environment developed in collaboration among youth and house staff. Many shelters and housing programs for youth are sex-segregated, forcing transgender youth to stay in

Youth on Fire

Cambridge, MA

The Youth On Fire drop-in center provides a welcoming and non-judgmental environment for homeless

and street-involved youth. They provide three tiers of services, following Maslow's hierarchy of needs and positive youth development models. Youth on Fire integrates GLBT supports, such as safe space strategies and GLBT community

events, with broader youth services. Youth on Fire is a program of AIDS Action Committee, a Massachusetts-based program working to improve the lives of everyone impacted by HIV/AIDS.

spaces that may be inappropriate or unsafe. In contrast, Castro Housing offers a more flexible approach. Youth determine where they wish to stay, rather than being assigned based on their sex at birth. All bathrooms are unlabeled. Staff working at Larkin Street Youth Services' Castro Housing shared: "Housing programs must be broad enough to encompass all youth. One of the important aspects of our housing program is that there aren't just [spaces for] two genders. We have separate spaces for people who identify as male and people who identify as female. But we have other spaces, too. However, we do have gender separated housing in our other mainstream housing options, available to everyone."

- » **Develop housing options that model healthy home environments.** Youth who identify as LGBTQI2-s leave home at higher rates than their straight peers. Once homeless, they may face discriminatory shelter and transitional housing policies, hostility from shelter staff, or harassment from other youth. There is a need to provide safe, supportive housing paired with caring adults to model healthy home environments. The UCAN Host Home Program sought to respond to this need by creating an alternative to the shelter system for LGBTQI2-s youth. The Host Home model was pioneered by The GLBT Host Home Program in Minneapolis, MN. Host Home programs recruit, screen, train, and support adults who open their homes to LGBT youth in need of safe and stable housing. The UCAN program serves youth ages 18-24. Both the youth and prospective host families are screened extensively. Host Homes are provided with training and support by UCAN's clinical staff.

The Executive Director of the UCAN Host Home Program explained that the Host Home model offers safe and accepting homes for youth who have been rejected by their family of origin. The UCAN staff emphasized that host homes provide a low cost strategy for youth who are ready to live more independently, but still need the support of caring adults. "Within four months of living in a host home, our first youth made so much more progress than [he would have] in the shelter system. The host was able to tell him, 'I'm not getting paid for this. I chose you, just as you chose me.' That's the healing. For a low cost, compared to traditional settings, he gets a community," the Director shared.

The Ruth Ellis Center also recognizes the importance of home for LGBTQI2-s youth. "We try to employ a home life setting as much as possible in our housing program, The Ruth House. We have ten beds in a duplex, with five youth on each side. Typically each youth has a roommate. Youth have to be divided by their biological gender, according to our funding," staff explained. However, the small-scale, home-like setting allows youth to learn to live with others while embracing their own identities.

» **Understand the challenges to LGBTQI2-s youth employment.** Finding consistent employment for any young person lacking skills and stable housing is an overwhelming challenge, especially in the context of the economic recession. Youth who identify as LGBTQI2-s face even more barriers to employment, since they may encounter discrimination from prospective employers on the basis of their sexual or gender identity. Many of the youth who spoke with SAMHSA felt they had to hide who they are in order to obtain employment. Providers shared that employment was a significant barrier for their LGBTQI2-s participants, particularly transgender youth. All of the programs SAMHSA spoke with offered some level of employment services, including skills development, resume support, and placement programs. However, many felt that these services were not fully meeting the needs of LGBTQI2-s youth. Staff emphasized the importance of building relationships with potential employers to identify potential positive working environments for LGBTQI2-s youth.

The Drop-In Center at Tulane recognizes the challenges of helping LGBTQI2-s youth obtain employment. “So many doors are shut on them. It makes you want to go above and beyond. For example, I have a job for a kid, but they have to dress a certain way to get the job. I don’t want [youth] to hide who they are, but they also have to fit in to get a job.” One young person who identified as gender-queer explained, “I’ve been at a point where I put on a dress for a secretary position. Those are the extremes we have to go through just to provide for ourselves. It’s rough on our self-esteem, always asking, ‘is this who I am?’ just to make a living. A lot of times we’ve been pounded down so many times, it’s easier to quit.”

» **Use a strengths-based approach to prepare youth for employment.** Larkin Street Youth Services emphasizes the importance of helping prepare youth for employment. “We have a completely diverse group of youth in the employment program. It normalizes the job search situation for everyone. Youth who think they are having trouble [finding a job] because they are LGBT will see that there is more to the picture. It’s also the job market.” Larkin Street staff also work to build confidence in young people who have trouble imagining success in the mainstream job market. “There is a ceiling that they’ve experienced in their lives before they come here. They have to live a lie. They feel like because of who they are they can only do so much. Then they come here and hear us ask, ‘Where do you want to go? What do you want to do?’ We try to turn all of the past experiences that youth have into real-world skills and strengths. This is particularly true for transgender youth.”

» **Develop relationships with employers.** The UCAN Host Home Program

A young person staying at The Ruth House explained, “It’s a big huge family. I don’t really know my real family so I’ve been out there looking for people to be my family. When they give me a hard time about my appointments, my chores, it’s difficult. But I take that, and I hold on to it. Because that’s what it’s all about it.”

“When someone opens up the space to you, it is personal. It takes a big bite out of your pride to not be with your family. In the Host Home Program, there is always someone right there.”

explained that building relationships can expand employment opportunities for transgender youth. “It’s been about finding allies. We know that even if you find a position, it might not be a healthy place for the young person. Even in cases where the supervisor is an advocate for the youth, peers can create a negative experience.” Outside In focuses on keeping the lines of communication open with employers. Staff emphasized that it is time-consuming to keep track of places of employment that are accepting of LGBTQI2-S youth, but it is important work. Outside In developed a relationship with the Portland Business Alliance. “Through that connection we developed great partners who understood the importance of being role models for our youth.”

- » **Develop training programs for employers and co-workers.** Larkin Street Youth Services believes that training the employer is just as important as training the youth. The program engages an employer in two months of training and assessment, recognizing that relationships with co-workers can be just as impactful as relationships with supervisors. “When the employers think of youth who experience homelessness they think of drugs, AIDS, and mental health issues. We work with them to change their frame of reference. All you have to have is an employer who is willing to listen. There are good people everywhere. You just have to find them and build a dialogue,” reported Larkin Street Youth Services staff.
- » **Create culturally appropriate, welcoming service environments.** Many Listening Tour programs invest in creating culturally appropriate service environments. This includes overtly displaying sexual and gender minority symbols (e.g. pink triangle or rainbow flag). Larkin Street Youth Services considers the impact that the “built environment” has on the youth they serve. “We recognize that youth need a space that invites them, speaks to them, and encourages them to really be themselves.” Outside In suggests that creating a culturally appropriate and accepting environment “goes beyond the ‘pink triangle’ decal.” They make it an important part of their organizational mission to encourage a collective culture of acceptance and support. With culturally

UCAN Host Home Program

Chicago, IL

The Host Home Program is a housing model that provides LGBTQ homeless youth an alternative to the shelter system.

Volunteers temporarily open their home to provide the stability necessary for a young person to work toward their goal of self-sufficiency. The Host Home Program is administered through UCAN, an agency who has served youth for

over a century. They provide a variety of programs aimed at healing trauma, educating youth and families, and preventing violence.

competent staff training and a zero-tolerance hate-speech policy, Outside In works to foster accepting language and attitudes. “We make it a big part of our mission to really let youth know that we are a LGBTQ-friendly and accepting place.”

The Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC), a partner agency of Outside In, believes that one concrete way an organization can create a culturally appropriate environment is to facilitate gender-neutral bathrooms. “The message you share with your clients is stronger in actions than words. Having gender neutral bathrooms is a concrete method to align your words and actions to really culturally support transgender youth.”

» **Train providers in motivational interviewing and trauma-informed care.**

Many programs found that training in trauma-informed care and Motivational Interviewing are particularly useful when working with this population.

Youth on Fire emphasized that trauma-informed care is “... particularly key for queer issues because of the intense proportion of trauma they face.” Outside In found training in Motivational Interviewing useful because it “peels away the layers of the onion” among LGBT youth experiencing homelessness. (*Visit SAMHSA’s Homelessness website, <http://homeless.samhsa.gov> for training tools on these practices.*)

“Some transgender youth feel like all they can do is sex work. We try to show them other strengths, and how to use them successfully in the job market.”

DEVELOP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Youth who are LGBTQ12-S need strong role models who understand the stigma and discrimination they face. Providers emphasized the need for community support and safe places where youth can find acceptance. They identified the following strategies to promote collaborations and community partnerships to support LGBTQ12-S youth experiencing homelessness:

» **Work with LGBTQ12-S stakeholders to identify and respond to youth needs in the community.**

Partnering with the LGBTQ12-S community is at the heart of the Larkin Street Youth Services’ LGBT housing model, Castro Housing. “People in the community were seeing kids on the street and asking what could be done. LGB-specific providers, including our Larkin Street Drop-In Center, came together and thought about the youth that we see and the services they need.” Larkin Street Youth Services recognizes that their housing model was a result of collaboration between “queer-centric” organizations in San Francisco. “If we hadn’t been in partnerships with these groups, Castro Housing would not have happened.”

» **Provide safe spaces through partnership with the LGBTQ12-S community.**

Youth and providers emphasized the importance for safe social spaces just for

LGBTQ12-S youth. “It is good to be around straight youth sometimes. But we need a place just for us,” shared a youth. Positive adult LGBTQ12-S role models are critical to helping a young person realize their own potential. Through partnership with LGBTQ12-S providers and advocacy groups, youth homeless service providers strive to present positive role models.

The Ruth Ellis Center recognized the importance of partnering with LGBTQ12-S adult advocacy groups. “The importance of how integrated we’ve become with LGBT adult advocacy groups cannot be overemphasized,” reports the Executive Director. “They provide the support, advocacy, and role models necessary to make what we do possible.” The Ruth Ellis Center has developed relationships with Black Men Together, PFLAG Detroit, The Bears, and others. These partnerships help youth to develop mentor relationships and find a sense of belonging within the community. One youth shared that he started volunteering with R.E.C. Boyz, a group that promotes safer sex in the gay community, reporting that it gave him a feeling of empowerment and purpose.

- » **Create strategic partnerships to serve specific sub-groups.** Transgender youth represent a small percentage of homeless youth, but have unique emotional and physical needs. Youth on Fire has worked to provide for these youth through a partnership with TRANSCEND, a sister program specifically focused on transgender women. TRANSCEND offers case management, provides support for name changes and gender alterations on identification, makes referrals to doctors who are trans-friendly, and provides physical and emotional guidance during transition. Youth on Fire is limited in being able to provide such specialized services for their transgender members, but this partnership allows for a higher level of care.
- » **Partner with other homeless service agencies in the community.** Many providers emphasized the importance of connecting agencies that serve homeless youth or adults. “Our partnerships with youth housing and drop-in centers are so important to help us identify youth for our program.” Youth on Fire partners with other mainstream programs to conduct outreach with LGBTQ12-S youth. “When agencies providing services to youth experiencing

Ruth Ellis Center

Detroit, MI

When fifteen volunteers from a youth LGBTQ community center in Detroit, MI saw how many young people were

being kicked out of their homes, they knew something had to be done. They started The Ruth Ellis Center, providing short-term and long-term residential safe space and support services for runaway, homeless and at-risk LGBTQ youth. This

mission is predicated on the belief that LGBTQ youth need helpers and advocates who understand their needs to find pathways to safety and independence.

homelessness have conflict, it can feel like divorced parents, undermining the work that we do. We need to become a true community of care.” They felt that fostering good communication between agencies would help providers identify LGBTQI2-S youth who are falling through the cracks for specialized services, and would create a broader range of referrals to meet client needs.

Youth on Fire administered surveys at a community youth pride event in Boston to identify these partners. Responses identified places of worship, shelters, schools, skate parks, and punk shows as common places where GLBT youth spend time. The Safe Spaces Coordinator reached out to those locations as a result. They recently set up an informational table at a punk show and also contacted shelters. If shelters share that they see queer youth or indicate a need for training, the Safe Spaces Coordinator responds with an invitation to refer youth to Youth on Fire and an offer to train their staff. “These connections are not easy to make, but you can have success if you’re persistent.” The Safe Spaces Coordinator networks all possible partners—both homeless services and GLBT groups.

- » **Make referrals to culturally competent agencies and providers.** Most homeless service agencies rely on referrals to health clinics, mental health agencies, and other specialized social services. However, LGBTQI2-S youth may be at a disadvantage when referred to outside services. The referred provider may not be appropriately trained to care for their needs. Most Listening Tour sites were aware of the need to make appropriate referrals in order to maintain trust with their young clients.

Larkin Street Youth Services is building a network of national and regional referrals for youth experiencing homelessness. They do this by reaching out to providers and engaging them in a dialogue about LGBTQI2-S young people. Other programs, such as Outside In, Youth On Fire, and UCAN Host Home Program, also reached out to potential referral services to ensure that they are sensitive to the needs of LGBTQI2-S youth. Larkin Street Youth Services emphasized the importance of honesty when making referrals. “We do what we can to seek out and make appropriate referrals, but we always tell youth that we don’t know if the referral we are giving them is LGBTQ-friendly.”

- » **Make referrals as seamless as possible.** Many programs emphasized the importance of assuring that as many resources as possible are available at the agency. The more services available in the same place at the same time, the more the youth are likely to utilize them. However, if this model isn’t available, and services are scattered around the community, referrals and access to services need to be as seamless as possible. This might include providing transportation, accompanying the youth to an appointment, helping the youth navigate bureaucratic hurdles, and other assistance.

» **Develop relationships with community stakeholders, including police departments and school districts, to improve the community of care.**

Providers report that local police did not know about The Ruth Ellis Center until recently. After repeatedly reaching out and informing the officers about their services, the police are now more aware. “Now they bring kids to us instead of arresting them,” explained the staff. They also emphasized their efforts to build relationships with The Department of Child and Family Services. “We’ve engaged in capacity building with child protective services that was very positive. They have now become the impromptu community ambassador, referring calls from families struggling with their LGBT child to us.”

The Ruth Ellis Center also works to build bridges to schools, meeting with school boards when a young person is re-entering class. “This way everyone, from superintendent to teacher, is on the same page about the student. When we get resistance from educators we try to inform and train the school faculty as much as we can about the issues these kids face, like protecting them from bullying, and listening to their pronoun and name preferences.”

EXPAND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Many Listening Tour programs emphasized that changing community perceptions about LGBTQI2-S youth is important. Across programs, staff and youth are involved in various public awareness activities. “There is such a need for communities to understand the dynamics of LGBT youth homelessness. These young people feel isolation on so many levels—when they look for work, go to school, access social services—it spills everywhere. Increased awareness on a larger scale could help reduce family and community rejection,” one provider shared. Key lessons learned in expanding public awareness are highlighted below:

- » **Create events and opportunities to provide public education.** The Ruth Ellis Center suggested hosting community education panels to support an open dialogue. “Broader education for the public is important for improving the lives of LGBT youth. We need to have more discussion forums for providers and parents to work through issues so that there is a community of support. Understanding follows awareness.” Larkin Street Youth Services has also focused on increasing awareness with the adult LGBTQI2-S community. “We need to build a strong spirit of collaboration between the work that we are doing and the broader gay community. There is a great potential for us to really draw on those resources to expand the work we do.” The UCAN

Host Home Program shared, “We know that we need to mobilize all of our community, our gay, lesbian and trans folks, and our allies, the people who really care and want to help make a difference. Having this team of people helps us extend our message and our reach a hundred fold.” The Ruth Ellis Center also emphasized the importance of “taking any opportunity we can to educate.” Staff often take calls from concerned community members and use the conversations as teaching points. As one staff person shared, “...at times we get calls with urban myths about lesbian gangs disrupting the peace, and we take time to talk with the caller about legitimate LGBTQ issues.”

“We go to high schools and meet with counselors, share information during lunch hours, and engage in dialogues after school. The schools are usually really happy to see us because they see the needs of their students and don’t always know how to help.”

- » **Educate and train fellow service providers.** Larkin Street Youth Services uses training strategies to increase public awareness. Staff conduct “terminology presentations” across the country, hoping to make service providers feel comfortable and knowledgeable about the language of LGBTQI2-S issues. Youth on Fire, UCAN Host Home Program, Outside In, and The Drop In Center at Tulane conduct similar public awareness trainings in their communities. *(For more information about training staff, see the “Develop a Culturally Competent Staff” section.)*
- » **Conduct outreach to community groups, landlords, and employers.** The Ruth Ellis Center reaches out to inform schools, community services, and the child welfare system about their services for LGBTQI2-S youth. The Executive Director explained, “We’ve created a reputation now that if you give us a call, we can help. We get three to four calls a week, from parents who want to remove their kids from home, or from young people who don’t feel safe with their families.” Many of the programs also conduct outreach with landlords and employers to de-stigmatize sexual and gender minority youth.

Larkin Street Youth Services

San Francisco, CA

Larkin Street Youth Services started as a small drop in center in response to a call from the community to meet the

needs of youth arriving in San Francisco everyday. Now, twenty-six years later, it provides a full spectrum of services to help youth move beyond life on the street. These services include emergency shelter,

transitional and permanent supportive housing; education, technology and employment training; healthcare, including mental health, substance abuse and HIV services; and case management.

**PART III:
NEXT STEPS**



NEXT STEPS

The research suggests that service providers are frequently not meeting the needs of youth who identify as LGBTQI2-S and experience homelessness. As a result, all youth homeless service providers should improve their capacity to appropriately serve this vulnerable group. Best practices for serving LGBTQI2-S youth are known, but the bridge between what we know about serving LGBTQI2-S youth and how to implement culturally competent best practices has yet to be built. The strategies developed by the programs SAMHSA visited during the Listening Tour not only offer promising models, but insights for implementation.

SAMHSA is pleased to support homeless service agencies seeking resources to provide culturally competent care for their sexual and gender minority youth consumers. SAMHSA's Homelessness website (<http://homeless.samhsa.gov>) offers various web-based resources including a broad collection of reports, fact sheets, and guides for serving LGBTQI2-S on the Topics page. For training tools, including archived webcasts, providers can visit the Training page. Programs can also access free in-person and virtual technical assistance and training. Email generalinquiry@center4si.com with "HRC Training" in the subject line.

**APPENDIX I:
LISTENING TOUR SITE
INFORMATION**

Draft

Youth on Fire

Primary Services Offered:	Drop-in center, street outreach
Number of Staff: Full Time:	3 Case Managers, 1 Safe Spaces Coordinator, 1 Program Manager; Volunteers: 4
Years of Operation:	10
Number of Youth Served Each Year:	4366 (duplicated); 630 (unduplicated)
Approximate Percentage of Consumers who Identify as LGBTQI2-S:	29% (40% of all women, 12% of all men) (64% of LGBTQI2-S identify as person of color, 30% as Latino/Hispanic, 3% Transgender)
Formal Partnerships:	Formal partnerships with Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center, AIDS Action Committee
Contact	Ayala Livny, Program Manager 17 Sellers Street Cambridge, MA 02139 Phone: 617-661-2803 http://www.ccaa.org/youth_on_fire.html

Larkin Street Youth Services

Primary Services Offered:	Full continuum of services, including outreach, a drop-in center, emergency housing, medical care, transitional housing, education and services, permanent supportive housing, and case management
Number of Staff: Full Time:	135; Part Time: 37; Volunteers: 50-60
Years of Operation:	26
Number of Youth Served Each Year:	3,621
Approximate Percentage of Consumers who Identify as LGBTQI2-S:	32% (13% gay, 12% bisexual, 4% lesbian, 3% questioning/other. Of all youth, 32% are white, 28% African American, 21% Latino, 9% multiracial, 3% Asian American)
Contact	Toby Eastman, Chief of Programs 701 Sutter Street, 3 rd Floor San Francisco, CA 94109 Phone: 451-673-0911 http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org

Outside In

Primary Services Offered:	Transitional housing, education and employment support, counseling, on-site medical care, street outreach
Number of Staff:	Full Time: 90; Part Time: 40; Volunteers: 200
Years of Operation:	42
Number of Youth Served Each Year:	Duplicated: 5,035; Unduplicated: 1,992
Approximate Percentage of Consumers who Identify as LGBTQI2-S:	51% (11% of all consumers identify as African American/Black, 11% as American Indian, 16% Latino/Hispanic)
Formal Partnerships:	Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC), Curbing HIV/AIDS Transmission Among High Risk Minority Youth and Adolescents (CHAT-PDX)
Contact	Angela Hurley, Clinic Manager 1132 SW 13 th Ave Portland, OR 97205 Phone: 503-535-3908 http://www.outsidein.org

Ruth Ellis Center

Primary Services Offered:	Drop-in center, street outreach, residential housing (transitional living (ages 17-21) and semi-independent living (ages 13-17))
Number of Staff:	Full Time: 6; Part Time: 8; Volunteer: 35
Years of Operation:	11
Number of Youth Served Each Year:	Duplicated: 11,000; Unduplicated: 3,000
Approximate Percentage of Consumers who Identify as LGBTQI2-S:	100% (70% male, 20% female, 10% Transgender)
Contact	Laura A. Hughes, MPH, Executive Director 77 Victor Street Highland Park, MI 48203 Phone: 313-252-1950 http://www.ruthelliscenter.org

UCAN Host Home Program

Primary Services Offered:	Host Home (for youth ages 18-24) for one year duration, including clinical case management, job readiness, and counseling
Number of Staff:	Full Time: 1; Volunteer: 6 Counselors, 4 Hosts
Years of Operation:	140 (UCAN agency), 1 year (Host Home Program)
Approximate Percentage of Consumers who Identify as LGBTQI2-S:	100%
Formal Partnerships:	Howard Brown Health Center (drop-in and clinic); Center on Halsted (leadership development, job readiness)
Contact	Bonnie Wade, AM, Associate Director 1340 S. Damen Ave. Chicago, IL 60608 Phone: 312-738-5966 http://www.ucanchicago.org

Drop-In Center at Tulane University

Primary Services Offered:	Drop-In Center and Health Clinic
Number of Staff: Drop-in Center:	4 Full Time; 1 Volunteer Clinic: 5 Full time; 8 Part-time
Years of Operation:	16
Number of Youth Served Each Year in the Drop-In Center:	Duplicated: 1,053; Unduplicated: 220;
Number of Youth Served Each Year in the Clinic:	Duplicated: 1,760; Unduplicated: 861
Approximate Percentage of Consumers who Identify as LGBTQI2-S:	5%
Contact	Edward Bonin, FNP, Director 611 N. Rampart St. New Orleans, LA 70112 Phone: 504-988-1667 http://www.tulane.edu/~dropin

**APPENDIX II:
BEST PRACTICES FOR
SERVING LGBTQI2-S YOUTH**

Draft

The unmet needs of youth who are LGBTQI2-S and experience homelessness have caught the attention of advocates and researchers across the country. In the past five years, several documents recommending best practices for serving LGBTQI2-S youth have become available to providers. Drawing from the expert opinion of researchers and providers, these documents hone in on specific strategies to create environments in which sexual and gender minority youth can thrive.

One of the most recognized of these documents is “National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth,” authored in 2009 by National Alliance to End Homelessness, Lambda Legal, National Network for Homeless Youth, and National Center for Lesbian Rights. It provides recommendations for direct care providers and administrators to:

- » Treat LGBT youth respectfully and ensure their safety
- » Appropriately address LGBT identity during intake
- » Support access to education, medical care, and mental health care
- » Support transgender and gender non-conforming youth participants
- » Inform LGBT youth about local LGBT programs and services
- » Create a safe and inclusive environment
- » Adopt and implement written nondiscrimination policies
- » Provide LGBT competency training to all agency employees and volunteers
- » Establish sound recruitment and hiring practices
- » Develop agency connections to LGBT organizations and the LGBT community

Other documents offering recommendations to improve care for youth who are LGBTQI2-S and experiencing homelessness include, but are not limited to:

- » “On the Streets: The Federal Response to Gay and Transgender Homeless Youth,” Center for American Progress, 2010
- » “Getting Down to Basics: Toolkit to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care,” Lambda Legal, Child Welfare League of America, 2010
- » “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness,” National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006
- » “CWLA Best Practice Guidelines: Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care,” Child Welfare League of America,” 2006
- » “Practice Brief 1: Providing Services and Supports for Youth Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, or Two-Spirit.” National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown, University Center for Child and Human Development, 2007

**APPENDIX III: PROGRAMS
SERVING LGBTQI2-S YOUTH**

Draft

The programs featured in the Listening Tour represent only a small number of programs serving youth who are LGBTQI2-S and homeless. Other organizations serving LGBTQI2-S in diverse capacities across the country are listed below. This list is not representative of all programs serving LGBTQI2-S, and many agencies serving all youth regardless of sexual identity are culturally competent in care for youth who are LGBTQI2-S.

Draft

California

L.A. Gay and Lesbian Community Center

1625 N. Schrader Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90028-6213
Phone: 323.993.7471
E-mail: youthservices@lagaycenter.org
www.laglc.org

San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual Transgender Community Center

1640 Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: 619.255.7854
Email: centerinfo@thecentersd.org
www.thecentersd.org

The Ark of Refuge

1025 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Phone: 415.861.6566
E-Mail: arkofrefuge@hotmail.com
www.arkofrefuge.org

Colorado

Rainbow Alley

1301 E Colfax Ave
Denver, CO 80218
Phone: 303.831.0442
E-mail: rainbowalley@coloradoglbt.org
www.coloradoglbt.org

Urban Peak Denver

730 21st Street
Denver, CO 80205
Phone: 303.974.2900
E-mail: urbanpeak@urbanpeak.org
www.urbanpeak.org

Urban Peak Colorado Springs

423 E. Cucharras Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
Phone: 719.630.3223
E-mail: cospringsinfo@urbanpeak.org

www.urbanpeak.org

Florida

SunServe Center

1480 SW 9th Ave
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315
Phone: 954.548.4602
E-mail: Info@SunServe.org
www.sunserve.org

Georgia

Chris Kids Rainbow Project

3109 Clairmont Rd., Suite B
Atlanta, GA 30329
Phone: 404.486.9034
www.chriskids.org

Illinois

Open Door Youth Center

313 N. Main St.
Bloomington, IL 61701
Phone: 309.827.2437
www.opendooryouthcenter.org

Teen Living Programs

162 Hubbard St., Suite 400
Chicago, IL 60654
Phone: 773.548.4443
E-mail: info@teenliving.org
www.teenliving.org

The Night Ministry

4711 N. Ravenswood Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640
Phone: 773.784.9000
E-mail: info@thenightministry.org
www.thenightministry.org

Indiana

Indiana Youth Group

2943 E. 46th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46205
Phone: 317.541.8726 ext. 224
E-mail: iyg@indianayouthgroup.org
www.indianayouthgroup.org

Iowa

United Action for Youth, Youth Group and Drop-in Center

355 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, IA 52244
Phone: 319.358.9406
E-mail: Amy.Louis@unitedactionforyouth.org
www.unitedactionforyouth.org

Minnesota

Avenues For Homeless Youth

1708 Oak Park Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
Phone: 612.522.1690
E-mail: info@avenuesforyouth.org
www.avenuesforyouth.org

District 202

1601 Nicollet Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55403
Phone: 651.340.6167
www.dist202.org

New York

Ali Forney Center

527 West 22nd St., 1st Floor
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.206.0574
E-mail: mramos@aliforneycenter.org
www.aliforneycenter.org

Green Chimneys

79 Alexander Ave, 42A
Bronx, NY, 10454
Phone: 718.732.1510
E-mail: cquinones@greenchimneys.org
www.greenchimneys.org

Pride for Youth

2050 Bellmore Avenue
Bellmore, NY 11710
Phone: 516.679.9000
www.longislandcrisiscenter.org

Sylvia's Place

446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018
Phone: 212.629.7440
E-mail: jessiedanielsnyc@gmail.com
www.homelesseyouthservices.org/sylviasplace.html

Washington

Lambert House

1818 15th Ave
Seattle, WA 98122
Phone: 206.322.2515
E-mail: activities@lamberthouse.org
www.lamberthouse.org

Wisconsin

Project Q

315 W. Court ST, Suite 101
Milwaukee, WI 53212
Phone: 414-223-3220
E-mail: jbotsford@mkelgbt.org
www.mkelgbt.org

APPENDIX IV: REFERENCES

Draft

1. Farrow, J.A., Deisher, R.W., Brown, R., Kulig, J.W., & Kipke, M.D. (1992). Health and health needs of homeless and runaway youth: A position paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 13*(8), 717-726.

2. Toro, P.A., Dworsky, A., & Fowler, P.J. (2007). Homeless youth in the United States: Recent research findings and interventions. In D. Dennis, G. Locke, & J. Khadduri (Eds.), *Toward Understanding Homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*. Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

3. Gamache, P., and Lazear, K.J. (2009). Asset-based approaches for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, two-spirit (LGBTQI2-S) youth and families in systems of care. FMHI pub. no. 252. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, The Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health.

4. Robertson, M.J. & Toro, P.A. (1998). Homeless youth: Research, intervention, and policy. United States Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved 8, 2010, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/3-Youth.htm>. Estimates that include young people age 18 to 24 suggest that 2 million youth experience homelessness. See National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2009). *Ending Youth Homelessness Before It Begins: Prevention and Early Intervention Services for Older Adolescents*. Washington, D.C.: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

5. Ray, N. (2006). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

6. (1) Ray, N. (2006). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless. (2) Clatts, M.J., Davis, W.J., Sotheran, J.L., & Atillasoy, A. (1998). Correlates and distribution of HIV risk behaviors among homeless youth in New York City. *Child Welfare, 77*(2), 195-207.; Hyde, J. (2005). From home to street: Understanding young people's transitions into homelessness. *Journal of Adolescence, 28*(2), 171-183.

7. Ray, N. (2006). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

8. Ray, N. (2006). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

9. Akerlund, M., Cheung, M. (2000). Teaching beyond the deficit model: gay and lesbian issues among african americans, latinos, and asian americans. *Journal of Social Work Education, 36*(2). 279.

10. Ryan, C.Russell, S.T, Huebner, D., Diaz, R., Sanchez, J. (2010). Family acceptance in adolescence and the health of LGBT young adults. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 23(4), 205–213.

11. Kosciw, J.G., Diaz, E.M., & Greytak, E.A. (2008). 2007 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.

12. Ray, N. (2006). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

13. Van Leeuwen, J.M., Boyle, S., Salomonsen-Sautel, S., Baker, D.N., Garcia, J.T., Ho,man, A. & Hopfer, C.J. (2006). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual homeless youth: An eight-city public health perspective. *Child Welfare*, 85(2), 151-170.

14. Ryan, C. LGBT youth: Health concerns, services and care. *Clinical Research and Regulatory Affairs*, 2003, 20(2):137-158.

15. Hyde, J. (2005). From home to street: Understanding young people's transitions into homelessness. *Journal of Adolescence*, 28(2), 171-183.

16. The Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC): <http://www.smyrc.org>



LEARNING FROM THE FIELD:
PROGRAMS SERVING YOUTH WHO
ARE LGBTQI2-S AND EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS

Draft