



ALCOHOL, DRUG & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
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A letter from ACBHCS

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care is very concerned about instances of school bullying and cyberbullying that have led young people to take their own lives, in extreme instances. This bullying illustrates the growing need for change in our culture as a whole and the support from our Mental Health System to reduce bullying attitudes and the tragic loss of life that, too often, results from that behavior..

Nowhere is such a culture shift more needed than in recognizing and addressing the needs of LGBTQ youth. In the past month, we have witnessed four tragic suicides of young people because of anti-gay bullying or abuse. The list includes Billy Lucas, a 15 year-old from Indiana who hanged himself after constant bullying at school; Asher Brown, 13 years-old from Houston who shot himself after coming out about his sexual orientation; Seth Walsh, 13 years-old from Tehachapi, CA, who hanged himself, after taunting, bullying and other abuse by his peers; and, Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers University freshman, who jumped off of the George Washington Bridge on September 22, after his sexual encounter with another man was broadcast online by his roommate.

Risks are even greater for LGBTQ youth in communities of color, as they are less likely to seek help for mental health issues, because they fear the discrimination will be compounded by the stigma of mental health services. Their silent struggles are less likely to come to the attention of caring adults.

The facts, listed on The Trevor Project's website, regarding LGBTQ youth and suicide are shocking. For instance:

- Of all American teens who commit suicide, 30% are LGBTQ. and LGBTQ youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Massachusetts 2007 Youth Risk Survey).
- LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are more than eight times as likely to have attempted suicide than LBG peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection (Ryan C, Huebner D, et al., Pediatrics 123(1): 346-52).
- Almost 85% of LGBTQ teenagers are harassed in high school because of their sexual orientation, with 61% of gay youth reporting that they felt unsafe in school and 30% staying home to avoid bullying (2009 Gay Lesbian Straight Education survey).
- Nearly half of young transgender people have seriously thought of taking their own lives, and a quarter report having made a suicide attempt (Grossman AH, D'Augelli AR. Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior 2007).



Cultural sensitivity and responsiveness are necessary in the struggle against homophobia. The end to bullying and the need to create a culture of respect for all isn't a one-sided effort. It will take all of us- friends, family, teachers, clergy, physicians, social workers, counselors, and other healthcare providers- to take action to help at-risk LGBTQ. We cannot be overwhelmed. The facts are clear. When a caring adult reaches out to a teen and says "you are ok" and "it will get better" it will make a difference in ending the isolation. We can provide caring services. November 20, 2010 was the Transgender Day of Remembrance, set aside as a time to take action. Everyone can be involved in our communities and in the programs that address the needs of our young LGBTQ community.

If you know any teenager who feels alone or isolated, speak to her. Reach out to him. A few words can save a life. Do not be afraid. Speak !! And Listen.

Please see the attached list of Resources and Supports for LGBT Youth in Alameda County

Thank you,

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Michelle Burns, NP, MPH
Director, Transitional Age Youth

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Cultural Competency Coordinator
Ethnic Services Manager

Resources and Supports for LGBT youth in Alameda County are:

The GLBT National Youth Talkline
(800) 246-PRIDE (800-246-7743)

LGBT Suicide Prevention Line
(866)488-6385

California Youth Crisis Line
(800) 843-5200

Project Eden (Horizon Services)
2246 2nd Street, Hayward
(510) 247-8200-
www.horizonservices.org

Pacific Center for Human Growth
2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley
(510) 548-8283-www.pacificcenter.org

Lighthouse Community Center
1217A Street, Hayward
(510) 881-8167

TriCity Health Clinic
39184 State Sreet, Fremont
(510) 713-6690, 790-2887

OUR SPACE: Where it is safe to be
yourself
LGBTQ Youth Community Center/
BAYC
22245 Main Street, Ste. 200
Hayward, CA 94541
(415)760-6810
www.baycyouth.org