

## **FACTS ABOUT LGBTQ YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Fact Sheet**

#### **There are lots!**

- A recent survey of the NYC foster care system revealed 8% self-identified as LGBTQ.
- General youth population surveys estimate anywhere between 6 – 10% of young people as being LGBTQ.

#### **LGBTQQ may be at higher risk for entering the child welfare system**

- 30% of LGBTQ youth faced neglect or abuse from families of origin<sup>1</sup>
- 26% of LGBTQ youth were forced to leave their families of origin, suggesting that there is perhaps a greater incidence of LGBTQ young people in the child welfare system as a result of discrimination against their sexual orientation or gender identity by their families of origin.<sup>1</sup>
- In some instances LGBTQ young people are removed from a household instead of offered family support services to help the family move past the conflicts precipitated by a young person's disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>2</sup>
- There exists an attitude that LGBTQ young people are to be removed from the home in order "to "protect" other family members who "can not or will not accept such a sexual orientation."<sup>3</sup>

#### **LGBTQQ youth experience isolation, violence and harassment**

- 100% of LGBTQ youth in NYC group homes reported being verbally harassed based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>1</sup>
- 70% reported physical violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>1</sup>
- 78% were removed or ran away from their foster placements.<sup>1</sup>
- 56% said they spent time living on the streets because they felt safer there than in their group or foster home.<sup>1</sup>
- Self-identified gay, lesbian and bisexual students are twice as likely to report feeling unsafe at school; twice as likely to report being in physical fights; and 2 – 4 times as likely to report being threatened or injured with a weapon at school.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Justice Center. (2001) Justice for All? A report on LGBTQ youth in the NY Juvenile Justice System. New York. [www.urbanjustice.org](http://www.urbanjustice.org)

<sup>2</sup> Sullivan, R.T. (1994). "Obstacles to Effective Child Welfare Services with Gay and Lesbian Youths." *Child Welfare*, Vol.73(4) p291.

<sup>3</sup> Mallon, G. P. (1998) We Don't Exactly Get the Welcome Wagon: The Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Adolescents in Child Welfare Systems. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education. Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2003.

**As a result of isolation, violence and harassment, LGBTQ youth:**

- Approximately two to five times more likely than their [straight] peers to report skipping school because of feeling unsafe during the past month.
- Twice as likely to report bingeing on alcohol (5-plus drinks at one time) at least once in the past month.
- Twice as likely to report smoking cigarettes in the past month.
- Twice as likely to report using marijuana in the past month.
- Three to ten times as likely to report having ever tried cocaine.
- Two to three times as likely to report having ever tried inhalants.
- Two to three times as likely to report having ever tried hallucinogens, depressants or stimulants.
- Three to five times as likely to report having made themselves vomit or taken laxatives to control their weight in the past month.
- Nearly twice as likely to be a teen parent.
- Twice as likely to report having seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- Twice as likely to say they made a suicide plan in the past year.
- Three to four times as likely to report having attempted suicide in the past year.
- More than four times as likely to say they made a serious enough suicide attempt in the past year to have been treated by a health care professional.

**LGBTQ youth are resilient, powerful, skillful community builders and are becoming advocates for themselves.**