



WHY WE CHOSE THIS TOPIC

Compared to the general population, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) youth experience higher rates of mental health disorders, often stemming from discrimination. These youth may experience barriers to healthcare as well as homelessness, violence, and a lack of acceptance from family, friends, and the community. LGBT youth need more access to resources and support to increase mental health.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS^{1,2,3}

LGBT youth experience higher rates of mental health disorders in general and have almost twice the rate of death by suicide compared to other youth. Additionally, one study found that more than two-thirds of youth in the LGBT community experienced anxiety symptoms in the two weeks prior to their being surveyed.

In academic settings, LGBT youth are at increased risk for in-person and online bullying. Specifically in Wisconsin, LGBT youth report:

- 46.7% experiencing dating or sexual violence
- 45.9% self-harming in the last year
- 43.8% experiencing bullying of any kind
- 16.4% missing school in the last month due to fear for safety

Many LGBT youth have limited or no access to mental health care. They identify inability to pay for care, concerns about securing parent/caregiver permission for care, and concerns related to the LGBT competency of providers as the primary barriers.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WISCONSIN?

It is not something we can set aside and ignore that I am trans. Saying 'let's just focus on mental health' – part of my mental health is being trans. It is not just an afterthought. It is an integral part of who I am.



NICK KRISKO
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The **PRISM Program** developed by Mental Health America-Wisconsin assists LGBT youth with mental health through peer-support. Specially trained peers talk with youth ages 16 to 26 and provide virtual emotional support.

<https://www.mhawisconsin.org/prism>

Project Q, a program developed by the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center, is devoted to promoting leadership activities, allowing youth to express themselves freely without judgement, and focusing on improving youth mental health and well-being.

www.mkelgbt.org



Wisconsin Office of
**Children's
Mental Health**

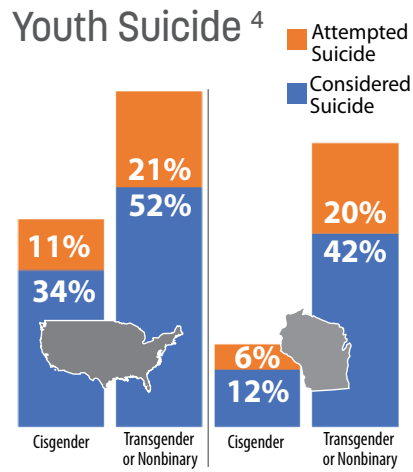
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SUICIDE AND LGBT YOUTH

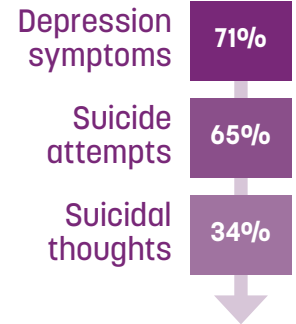
LGBT youth are more likely to consider and attempt suicide when compared to cisgender* and straight youth. A Trevor Project study found that 40 percent of LGBT youth and over 50 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth had serious suicidal ideation.

Youth who had their pronouns used correctly by others most or all the time had lower rates of suicide attempts compared to those who did not. Ability to use gender-affirming clothing (such as shapewear and binders) also reduced suicide attempts among transgender and nonbinary youth.

**someone whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth*



Using a Youth's Chosen Name Reduces:



WHAT WE CAN DO^{5,6}

➔ PARENTS:

- Participate in parent education group and learn more from resources such as The Trevor Project and GLAAD.
- Provide youth access to LGBT support groups.

➔ SCHOOLS/TEACHERS

- Improve bullying policies by incorporating specific language regarding harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Educate staff about creating a positive social climate by using correct pronouns, reducing gendered language, and soliciting feedback from students.
- Create support organizations, clubs, and safe spaces for LGBT youth such as a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), which is a student led group that connects LGBT youth and allies.

➔ POLICY MAKERS:

- Support the Equality Act, which would improve anti-discrimination policies for public spaces and add protections for LGBT people.
- Fund youth peer-led support groups such as Sources of Strength and Hope Squad to reduce risk of suicide.

➔ COMMUNITIES:

- Engage community agencies to promote safe spaces and provide basic needs by fostering partnerships that value diversity and inclusion.
- Provide educational opportunities to support parental acceptance and understanding of their LGBT youth.

REFERENCES:

- ¹ UCLA School of Law, The Williams Institute. (2019, January). Demographic Data [Interactive](#).
- ² Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2019, September 3). Safe Schools for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/safe-schools/lgbt>
- ³ The Trevor Project. (2020). 2020 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2020/?section=Supporting-Transgender-Nonbinary-Youth>
- ⁴ McCoy, K., & Frederick, C. (2020). Wisconsin 2019 youth risk behavior survey comparison tables. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from: https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/WI_2019_YRBS_Comparison_Tables.pdf

⁵ Movement Advancement Project. (2021, January). Looking Ahead to 2021: The Impact of COVID-19 on the LGBTQI Movement. www.lgbtmap.org/2021-covid-impact-report.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School Health Profiles 2018: Characteristics of Health Programs Among Secondary Schools. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2019.

