



WHY THIS MATTERS

Like all children, when LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer/questioning) kids are surrounded by supportive people, they can thrive and their risk of poor mental health is greatly reduced. However, LGBTQ youth often face discrimination, bullying, violence, stigma, and unsupportive environments — conditions that can lead to mental health struggles. Supportive relationships and environments make a real difference – they lessen the negative impacts of discrimination and protect LGBTQ mental health.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

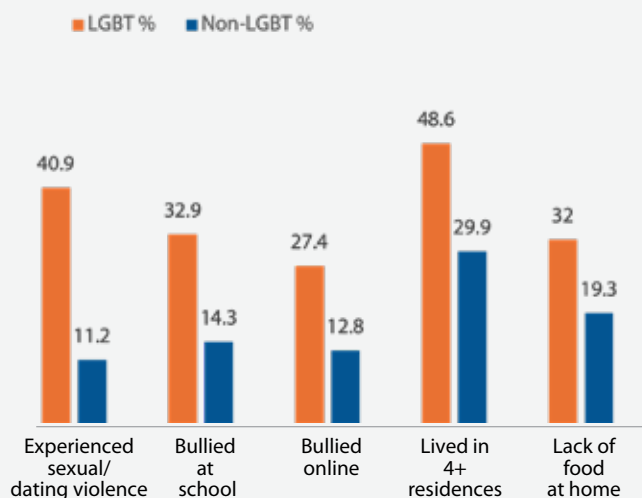
Research consistently demonstrates the significant impact that supportive families, schools, and environments can have on LGBTQ youth mental health. Family acceptance, especially supportive parents, is linked with better self-esteem, fewer suicidal thoughts, and far fewer suicide attempts. Supportive families also help LGBTQ youth cope with the stress of anti-LGBTQ environments.^{1,2}

LGBTQ kids who have just one supportive adult in their lives — such as a teacher, coach, relative, or community member — are 40% less likely to attempt suicide.³

Similarly, LGBTQ young people with supportive health care providers have better mental health; they are less likely to consider or attempt suicide; and their sense of belonging increases.^{4,5}

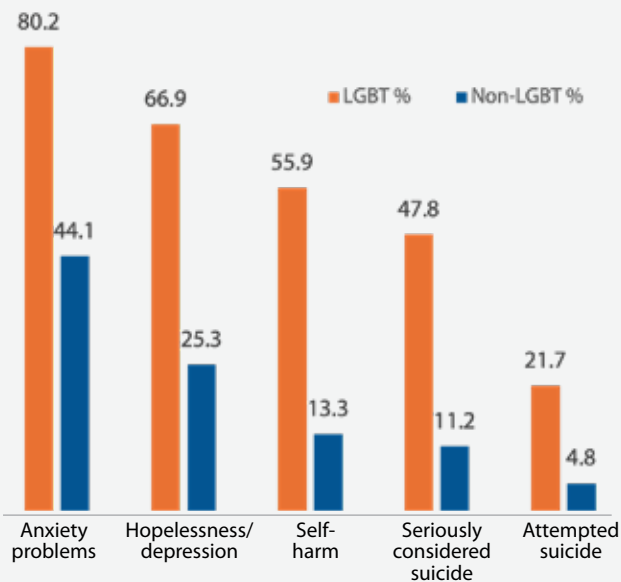
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WISCONSIN?⁶

RISK FACTORS FOR POOR MENTAL HEALTH
PERCENT OF HS STUDENTS IN WISCONSIN*



LGBTQ kids are far more likely to have experienced sexual or dating violence; twice as likely to be bullied; and more likely to face housing instability and food insecurity. Each of these traumatic experiences has a negative impact on well-being. These data mirror national trends.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS
PERCENT OF HS STUDENTS IN WISCONSIN*



LGBTQ teens experience mental health problems at rates far greater than their non-LGBTQ peers. LGBTQ high school students are more than four times as likely to have attempted suicide when compared to their non-LGBTQ classmates. These data mirror national trends.

* 2021 SURVEY

continued

WHAT HELPS

Specialized help lines provide support, connection, and acceptance while reducing suicidal planning. The nationwide [988 lifeline](#) and The Trevor Project's [24-7 crisis line](#) both provide essential support to LGBTQ youth who can text, call, or chat to reach a counselor specifically trained to help them. These confidential help lines provide support for those struggling; resources for those looking for credible information; and tools for those wanting to help someone else – always free and available 24/7.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

➤ PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

- Build a strong bond with your LGBTQ child centered on [acceptance](#) and [support](#).
- Provide a kind and welcoming space to your child's friends and partners.
- Use the [pronouns](#) and names that young people request for themselves. Ask young people if they would like help sharing names and pronouns with others.
- Let your child know about the free and confidential helplines for LGBTQ youth: [988](#) ("Press 3") and The Trevor Project's [helpline](#). Both are available to call 24/7.
- Respectfully discuss LGBTQ issues with your child.
- Explain your child's identity to [family members](#) and ensure relatives treat your child with respect.
- Consider locating an affirming faith community.

➤ SCHOOLS

- Cultivate a safe, welcoming, and inclusive [school culture](#).
- Provide comprehensive bullying prevention instruction with specific attention paid to [preventing LGBTQ bullying](#).
- Educate staff on the ways to [create supportive environments](#) for LGBTQ students.
- Interrupt anti-LGBTQ language and use of identity words as slurs or put downs.
- Implement [comprehensive school mental health](#) frameworks that encourage help-seeking and teach healthy coping skills.
- Ensure every student has a trusted adult in the building. Dedicate staff time to any LGBTQ student without a trusted adult and those who report family rejection.
- Focus on connection and belonging. Offer safe spaces and programming such as a [Gender Sexuality Alliance clubs](#).

➤ COMMUNITIES

- Design [spaces and events](#) for LGBTQ youth that are welcoming and inclusive.
- Invite and model, but don't require, pronoun sharing.
- Consider inclusive facilities such as unisex restrooms.
- Help youth connect with positive, welcoming, and supportive spaces, activities, mentors, and resources.

➤ PROVIDERS

- Provide supportive and strengths-based [health care](#) to young LGBTQ patients.
- Use the pronouns and names that young people request.
- Discuss the power of supportive families with caregivers, and explain the risks of family rejection.
- Ensure your [clinical/therapeutic](#) space is welcoming, inclusive, and non-judgmental.
- Employ clinicians/providers who are knowledgeable about marginalization, trauma, stress, and the impacts on mental health.

➤ POLICYMAKERS

- Support full funding of the 988 option for LGBTQ youth ("Press 3") and crisis services with specialized, evidence-informed support for LGBTQ youth.
- Strengthen and enforce [protections against bullying](#), harassment, and discrimination in schools.
- Support youth-serving organizations that provide mentoring, peer connection, and safe community spaces.
- Invest in youth mental health services that are accessible, affordable, and affirming of LGBTQ youth. Ensure investments reach rural and underserved communities.

Sources:

¹ The Trevor Project. [Behaviors of Supportive Parents and Caregivers for LGBTQ Youth](#) (2022).

² The Role of Family Support in Moderating Mental Health Outcomes for LGBTQ+ Youth in Primary Care. JAMA Pediatrics, 2024. doi: [10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.1956](#)

³ The Trevor Project. [Accepting Adults Reduce Suicide Attempts Among LGBTQ Youth](#) (2019).

⁴ Feeling Like You Matter: LGBTQ Young Adult Perspectives on Affirmative Mental Healthcare. Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 2024. doi: [10.1007/s11414-024-09919-x](#)

⁵ The Trevor Project. [Suicide Risk and Access to Care Among LGBTQ College Students](#) (2022).

⁶ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. [Wisconsin 2021 YRBS Comparison Tables](#)



WISCONSIN OFFICE OF
**Children's
Mental Health**