Fact Sheet: LGBTQ Youth

Understanding the LGBTQ Population

- LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning
  - Lesbian – a biological female with attraction to other females, including romantic, emotional, or sexual
  - Gay – a biological male with attraction to other males, including romantic, emotional, or sexual
  - Bisexual – a biological male or female who experiences attraction to both other males and other females, including romantic, emotional, or sexual
  - Transgender – a biological male or female who identifies with gender norms (man/woman) usually not culturally associated with his or her sex (male/female)
  - Questioning/Openly Questioning – a male or female who is openly questioning his or her sexual attractions, gender identity, or sexual orientation
  (Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.)

- LGBTQ youth account for approximately 9% of high school students
  - 4.5% identify as LGBT
  - 4.5% identify as questioning
  (Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.)

- Suicide rates in the LGBTQ population are disproportionately high
  - An average of 45% of LGBTQ youth report suicidal ideations
  - An average of 35% of LGBTQ youth report suicidal attempts
  - The suicide attempt rates of gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens and young adults are among the highest of all populations
  (Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.)

- Health problems, mental health challenges, and substance abuse are higher among gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens
  (Shapiro, 2008)

Commonly Identified Mental Health Challenges

Among the LGBTQ community, there are a number of mental health challenges that are often identified among members of this population.

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal Ideation/Attempts
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Substance Abuse
- Dual Diagnosis/Co-Occurring Disorders
Risk of Trauma

- LGBTQ youth are more likely to be subjected to traumatic events than their peers
  - Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning are more likely experience homelessness and the victimizations associated with being homeless
    (K-Town Youth Empowerment Network, n.d.)
  - 25-40% of homeless youth may identify as LGBTQ; they are often kicked out of their homes by their parents after disclosing their sexuality/identity
    (Killen-Harvey, 2006)
  - LGBTQ youth who are homeless or runaway report victimization rates on the streets of 58.7% versus 33.4% reported by heterosexual youth who are homeless or runaway
    (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012)
    - Personal and vicarious trauma
      - 45% of LGBTQ youth of color self-report being the victim of physical violence as a result of their sexual orientation
        (GLSEN, 2004 as cited in Killen-Harvey, 2006)

Further Reading and References


