



**Community-based Social Support Programs  
GLBTQ Youth**

**State and Regional Analysis**

**The National GLBTQ Youth Foundation**

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## **Introduction**

Recent research studies have revealed that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth have a higher prevalence of psychological distress and social isolation than their heterosexual peers. Specifically, compared to sexual majority youth, GLBTQ youth experience more depression, anxiety, hopelessness, homelessness, substance abuse, suicide attempts, and suicide completions (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003; Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005). This distress is related to antigay oppression that includes bullying on school campuses, societal messages that sexual minorities are inferior, and religious and political ideologies that pronounce same-sex orientation as immoral. As reported by Moradi, Worthington, Mohr, and Fassinger (2009), the negative social stigma against sexual minorities is so pervasive it would be nearly impossible for a sexual minority to avoid exposure to damaging antigay messages. This is a very heavy burden, both psychologically and socially, for GLBTQ youth to face.

In the 2009 National School Climate Survey, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) reported that nearly 90% of GLBTQ students experienced harassment at school, over 60% felt unsafe at school, and over 30% missed one or more days of school because they feared for their safety. Unfortunately, this toxic school environment continues even after GLSEN has dedicated nearly 20 years to improving the school environments for LGBTQ students through gay-straight alliances and the safe school coalitions. In addition, the U.S. Government funded and implemented the national Stop Bullying Now Campaign in 2004. It appears these efforts have not been able to decrease anti-GLBTQ bullying and discrimination in schools throughout the United States.

In order to promote the mental health of GLBTQ youth, communities need to provide access to social support programs that provide GLBTQ youth with peer support, mentors, and counseling. These vulnerable children are a unique minority considering they rarely have a GLBTQ role model at home. So, after experiencing abuse by their peers because of their sexual orientation, they return to homes and communities that cannot provide effective empathic support. An unknown percentage of the more than 5 million GLBTQ youth aged 10-24 live in homes and communities where homophobic prejudice is widespread. From a psychological perspective, GLBTQ youth need to spend time with peers and mentors who appreciate them for their uniqueness, who can provide them with hope and optimism for the future, and teach them skills to increase their resilience against anti-gay oppression. In addition, community-based social support programs can provide information on sexuality and HIV prevention in an appropriate format for same-sex oriented youth.

The National GLBTQ Youth Foundation conducted this analysis of community support programs for GLBTQ youth because of the continuing homophobic discrimination in schools and communities and lack of success by school-based programs. GLBTQ youth are in critical need of gaining access to effective community-based social support programs so detailed information on the availability of these programs will determine critical gaps in access so social support.

## Methodology and Assumptions

In order to identify community-based GLBTQ youth programs, several databases were reviewed including GLBT Central ([www.glbtcentral.com](http://www.glbtcentral.com)), CenterLink ([www.lgbtcenters.org](http://www.lgbtcenters.org)), and the Safe School Coalition ([www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)). Google searches were also conducted when it was unclear whether a program or center was still in operation. Centers that only provide a sporadic referral line just have adults working to improve youth programming were not included in the list of support programs.

The population estimates were based on 2010 U.S. Census Bureau projections for the specific age range of 10-24 (2009). The estimate of GLBTQ youth included 8% of the total population of 10-24 year olds residing in a state. State ratings were calculated by dividing the number of programs in a state by the state's population of GLBTQ youth. This value was multiplied by 1,000 to produce a more readable rating scale. The regional division ratings were calculated using a similar formula. The geographic area of a state was obtained from the U.S. Census Geography Glossary (2000).

## Results

According to this analysis, there are 119 community-based GLBTQ youth programs covering nearly 5 million GLBTQ youth in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. These programs provide a range of services. The minimum requirement for a program to be included in this analysis was that the program had to offer at least two youth support groups each month. Many of the programs fell into this category. Several other programs included weekly support groups but only a minority of programs had comprehensive services with daily drop-in centers, multiple support groups each week, and referral services.

Thirteen states with a total population of nearly 500,000 LGBTQ youth have no community-based GLBTQ youth support programs. All of these states received a rating of 0. Other states with low ratings included Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas. For example, Georgia has only two centers covering 162,545 GLBTQ youth, Minnesota has just one center serving 87,948 GLBTQ youth, and Texas only has five centers in a state with 420,287 GLBTQ youth (see Table 1).

The regional analysis revealed that the West region of the U.S. had the highest rating with a total of 64 programs or 54% of all the programs in the country. The South region had the lowest rating and includes six states with no programs and 49 programs serving nearly 2 million GLBTQ youth spread over the largest region geographically (See Table 2).

An important consideration that was not factored into the state and regional ratings was the geographic size of an area. However, this information should be considered when viewing the information for states and regions. For example, the five centers in Texas serve a population of over 420,000 GLBTQ youth in a state with over 268,000 square miles.

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## **Discussion**

Considering that GLBTQ youth have limited options when it comes to connecting with their peers, receiving culturally appropriate mentoring, and having access to same-sex specific education, community-based social support programs appear to provide a critical component of the social safety net for sexual minority youth. However, with the exceptions of a few small states with multiple programs or large states like California with numerous programs (i.e., 17), most states fall very short of providing adequate access to social support programs. In addition, the programs vary significantly and, although this was a quantitative analysis, there doesn't appear to be standards or best practices for administrating an effective social support program for GLBTQ youth.

## **Conclusion**

Improving social support for GLBTQ youth is a priority of The National GLBTQ Youth Foundation. This analysis reinforces the need for increasing access to social support programs in nearly all states and developing evidence-based practices so that the limited resources available to support these programs can produce the best results possible.

Table 1

*GLBTQ Youth Social Support State Analysis*

State/ District	Population Ages 10-24	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	State Rating	Notes	Geographic Size in Total Square Miles
Alabama	910,803	72,864	0	0.000		52,419
Alaska	156,007	12,481	2	0.160	Identity Youth Initiative, Anchorage IMRU2 Weekly Support Group by PFLAG (Anchorage)	663,267
Arizona	1,353,812	108,305	2	0.018	1in10, (Phoenix) Wingspan (Tucson) – EON youth program – drop in.	113,998
Arkansas	569,228	45,538	0	0.000		53,179

State/ District	Population Ages 10-24	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	State Rating	Notes	Geographic Size in Total Square Miles
California	8,197,787	655,823	17	0.026	<p>Stonewall Alliance Center Chico (Weekly Teen Group)</p> <p>Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County (Drop in and Support Group)</p> <p>Solano Pride Center (Support Group)</p> <p>The Center Long Beach (Drop in and support groups)</p> <p>Outlet Program, (Mountain View)</p> <p>Jeffrey Owens Community Center, (Riverside)</p> <p>Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center</p> <p>The San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Center (Hillcrest Youth Center (HYC))</p> <p>The San Francisco LGBT Center</p> <p>Billy DeFrank Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center, (San Jose)</p> <p>Gay and Lesbian Alliance of the Central Coast (GALA).</p> <p>Spectrum LGBT Center Serving the North Bay</p> <p>The Center Orange County</p> <p>Pacific Pride Foundation Santa Barbara</p> <p>The Diversity Center Santa Cruz</p> <p>Ventura County Rainbow Alliance</p> <p>LA Gay &amp; Lesbian Center's Jeff Griffith Youth Center</p> <p>Lifeworks, (Los Angeles)</p> <p>Lambda Youth Network, (Hayward)</p> <p>LYRIC San Francisco</p> <p>LOUD Youth, (Berkeley)</p> <p>Positive Images (Sonoma County)</p> <p>Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance, (San Bernardino)</p>	163,696
Colorado	980,478	78,438	4	0.051	Lambda Community Center, (Fort Collins)	104,094

State/ District	Population Ages 10-24	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	State Rating	Notes	Geographic Size in Total Square Miles
					Inside/Out Youth Services, Colorado Springs Outfront Pueblo Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center of Colorado (Rainbow Alley), (Denver)	
Connecticut	702,493	56,199	3	0.053	New Haven Pride Center (youth group only meets 2X each month) Triangle Community Center (CtOutspoken youth program) Rainbow Room, (Hartford)	5,543
Delaware	170,572	13,646	0	0.000	The JUST for Youth Coalition (No regular support groups or drop in center) Does not quality	2,489
D.C.	109,544	8,764	1	0.114	Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL)	68
Florida	3,413,046	273,044	5	0.018	Also Out Youth, (Sarasota) SunServ, (Ft. Lauderdale) Pride Community Center, (Gainseville) (Weekly discussion group only) Compass, Lake Worth (HOPE Program) Pridelines Youth Services, Miami Metro Wellness & Community Centers (St. Petersburg and Tampa)	65,755
Georgia	2,031,808	162,545	2	0.012	Youth Pride (Atlanta) Stand Out Youth Savannah	59,425
Hawaii	264,037	21,123	0	0.000		10,931
Idaho	307,835	24,627	1	0.041	The Community Center, Youth Alliance for Diversity (YAD), (Garden City)	83,570
Illinois	2,645,244	211,620	8	0.038	Rainbow Café (Southern Illinois) Rainbow Youth Outreach, (Peoria) Café Pride (17-21) Uniting Pride (UP) LGBT Community Center of Champaign County Central Illinois Alliance for Diversity and Equality (Weekly youth pride meeting)	57,914

State/ District	Population Ages 10-24	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	State Rating	Notes	Geographic Size in Total Square Miles
					Center on Halsted (Chicago) Quad Citians Affirming Diversity The Phoenix Center, (Springfield)	
Indiana	646,322	51,706	3	0.058	Pride Lafayette, PRYSM Youth Support Group Indiana Youth Group, (Indianapolis) GLBT Resource Center of Michiana, (Queer Out Weekly Youth Support Group)	36,418
Iowa	598,617	47,889	1	0.021	Youth Alliance, Des Moines	56,272
Kansas	581,742	46,539	0	0.000		82,277
Kentucky	844,903	67,592	2	0.030	Louisville Youth Group Encourage Youth Support Group	40,409
Louisiana	964,906	77,192	1	0.013	The Color Kids, Lesbian and Gay Community Center of New Orleans	51,840
Maine	236,048	18,884	2	0.106	Outright/Lewiston-Auburn PRYSM, Proud Rainbow Youth of Southern Maine	35,384
Maryland	1,205,822	96,466	2	0.021	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Community Center of Baltimore, SAIM Youth Program Rainbow Youth Alliance of Columbia	12,407
Massachusetts	1,349,479	107,958	3	0.028	Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth (BAGLY) Gay & Islands Gay and Lesbian Youth Support Group, (Yarmouth Port) Pride Zone GLBTQA Youth Center	10,555
Michigan	2,142,343	171,387	5	0.029	The Lesbian & Gay (LGBT) Community Network West Michigan OutCenter, (Benton Harbor) Affirmations Ferndale Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center Yipsilanti Youth Drop in Center	96,716

State/ District	Population Ages 10-24	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	State Rating	Notes	Geographic Size in Total Square Miles
Minnesota	1,099,353	87,948	1	0.011	District 202 Center of GLBT Youth (phone and email referral only, no drop in, no support groups) Does not qualify Rochester Gay & Lesbian Youth Services	86,939
Mississippi	614,721	49,178	0	0.000		48,430
Missouri	1,197,439	95,795	2	0.021	Growing American Youth (GAY), St. Louis Passages LGBT Youth Center (Kansas City)	69,704
Montana	176,536	14,123	0	0.000		147,042
Nebraska	361,557	28,925	0	0.000		77,354
Nevada	523,789	41,903	2	0.048	Gay Youth Outreach Project, (Reno) RU12 Youth Group, The Gay and Lesbian Center of Southern Nevada, (Las Vegas)	110,561
New Hampshire	260,721	20,858	1	0.048	OutRight	9,350
New Jersey	1,685,633	134,851	4	0.030	HiTops, Princeton Keeping is Safe (KIS), Camden The Pride Center of New Jersey (Drop in only 3X each month) Visage, (Verona)	8,721
New Mexico	394,507	31,561	1	0.032	New Mexico GLBTQ Centers, Las Cruces	121,589
New York	3,939,406	315,152	9	0.029	Capital District Gay Lesbian Community Council, (Albany) Bronx Community Pride Center Gay & Lesbian Youth Services of Western New York The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Community Center, (Manhattan) Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, (Rochester) Pride for Youth Bellmore Brooklyn Community Pride Center Staten Island Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center Harvey Milk School/Hetrick-Martin Institute	54,556

State/ District	Population Ages 10-24	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	State Rating	Notes	Geographic Size in Total Square Miles
					(NYC)	
North Carolina	1,956,729	156,538	2	0.013	OutWilmington Gay & Lesbian Community Center (Only meets 2X/month) Timeout Youth, (Charlotte)	53,819
North Dakota	135,237	10,819	0	0.000		70,670
Ohio	2,316,139	185,291	3	0.016	The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland (Youth Drop In Program) Kaleidoscope Youth Center (Columbus) Rainbow Area Youth, (Toledo)	44,825
Oklahoma	739,042	59,123	1	0.017	OpenArms Youth Project, (Tulsa)	69,898
Oregon	725,503	58,040	5	0.086	Abdill-Ellis Lambda Community Center, (Ashland) COSMYC, Clackamas County Sexual Minority Youth Connection Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, and Questioning Support Group, Eugene Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SYMRC), (Portland) Transgender/Identity Resource Center at Outside In, (Portland)	98,381
Pennsylvania	2,452,073	196,166	3	0.015	Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Pittsburgh (weekly drop in) Attic Youth Center, Philadelphia Main Line Youth Alliance, Wayne	46,055
Rhode Island	238,892	19,111	0	0.000		1,545
South Carolina	903,324	72,266	1	0.014	The Center Project, Myrtle Beach (Rainbow Beach Youth Group)	32,020
South Dakota	158,095	12,648	1	0.079	Centers for Equality Sioux Falls (weekly Drop in Center)	77,116
Tennessee	1,250,913	100,073	2	0.020	Memphis Gay and Lesbian Center (Queer as Youth, only meets 2X/month) One-in-Teen Youth Services, Nashville	42,173
Texas	5,253,591	420,287	5	0.012	Montrose Counseling Center (HATCH Youth	268,581

State/ District	Population Ages 10-24	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	State Rating	Notes	Geographic Size in Total Square Miles
					Program)(Houston) Out Youth (Austin) Out Youth, (Dallas) LAMBDA GLBT Community Center, Youth Group, (El Paso) Youth First Texas (Dallas)	
Utah	657,966	52,637	2	0.038	Utah Gay and Lesbian Youth Group, Salt Lake City Utah Pride Center	84,899
Vermont	130,384	10,431	2	0.192	R.U.1.2. Queer Community Center Outright Vermont	9,614
Virginia	1,656,556	132,524	0	0.000		42,774
Washington	1,329,527	106,362	4	0.038	Lambert House, (Seattle) Vista Youth Center, (Kennewick) The Inland NW LGBT Center, (Spokane) Oasis Youth Center, (Tacoma)	71,300
West Virginia	319,497	25,560	0	0.000		24,230
Wisconsin	1,132,855	90,628	4	0.044	LGBT Community Center of The Chippewa Valley (Weekly Youth Group) OutReach, Inc., Madison (Out there weekly group 18-24) The Milwaukee LGBT Community Center (Project Q Youth Group) LGBT Resource Center for the 7 Rivers Region (GALAXY youth group)	65,498
Wyoming	96,104	7,688	0	0.000		97,814

\*State Rating is a population-based assessment utilizing the number of centers with youth programs. The calculation was adjusted for readability. Higher ratings indicate better access to youth programs within a state.

Table 2

*GLBTQ Youth Social Support Census Division Analysis*

Region	Division	States in Division	Estimated LGBTQ Population	Community LGBTQ Youth Programs	States in Region with No Youth Programs	Division Rating*
Midwest	East North Central	IL, IN, MI, OH, WI	710,632	23		0.032
	West North Central	IA, KS, MN, MO, ND, NE, SD	330,213	5	KS, ND, NE	0.015
Northeast	Middle Atlantic	CT, NJ, NY, PA	702,368	19		0.027
	New England	MA, ME, NH, RI, VT	177,242	8	RI	0.045
South	East South Atlantic	AL, KY, MS, TN	289,707	4	AL, MS	0.014
	South Atlantic	DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV	941,353	13	DE, VA, WV	0.014
	West South Central	AR, LA, OK, TX	602,140	7	AR	0.012
West	Mountain	AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY	359,282	12	MT, WY	0.033
	Pacific	AK, CA, HI, OR, WA	853,829	28	HI	0.033

\*Division Rating is a population-based assessment utilizing the number of centers with youth programs. The calculation was adjusted for readability. Higher ratings indicate higher access to youth programs within a division of the country.

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