



The issue:

YOUTH/ HOMELESSNESS

Between 20% and 40% of homeless youth are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.



damn facts

Each year, between 500,000 and 1.6 million youth in the U.S. are homeless or runaways.²²

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth make up about 3% to 5% of the general U.S. population but 20% to 40% of the homeless youth population.²³

More than 1 in 4 gay and transgender youth are thrown out of their homes when they come out.²⁴

Nearly 60% of gay and transgender homeless youth have been sexually victimized on the street, vs. 33% of straight homeless youth.²⁵

a project of



Left Out in the Cold: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS!

Each year, between 500,000 and 1.6 million youth in the U.S. are homeless or runaways.¹

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth make up an estimated 3% to 5% of the general U.S. population.² But they account for more than 20%—and possibly up to 40%—of the homeless youth population.³

WHY YOUTH BECOME HOMELESS!

Gay and transgender youth may become homeless for number of reasons:

Family conflict. Family conflict is the most common cause of all youth homelessness. For gay and transgender youth, the conflict tends to center around their sexual orientation or gender identity. Half of all gay teens get a negative reaction from their parents when they come out.⁴ In one study, more than one-third of homeless youth had been the victim of violent physical assault when they came out.⁵ More than 1 in 4 are thrown out of their homes.⁶

Abuse. Gay and transgender youth may also leave home because of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Before the age of 12, these youth report sexual abuse at twice the rate of straight youth.⁷ Young people who have come out also report more verbal and physical abuse by their family members than those who have not,⁸ just as youth who did not act within “typical” gender roles reported increased physical and verbal parental abuse.⁹

Other reasons include neglect at home, emancipation from foster care¹⁰ and more.

WHY WE SHOULD GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS!

The deck is stacked against these youth to begin with. Compared to their straight peers, they are:

- Far more likely to be bullied in school¹¹
- Four times more likely to attempt suicide¹²
- More likely to experience depression, use drugs, and experience or witness extreme forms of violence.¹³

But, when they are homeless, gay and transgender youth become that much more vulnerable. They are at greater risk for victimization, unsafe sexual practices and mental health issues than other homeless teens:

Nearly 62% of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender homeless youth commit suicide, compared to 29% of straight homeless youth.



- Nearly 60% have been sexually victimized on the street, vs. 33% of straight homeless youth.¹⁴
- They are more than 7 times more likely to experience acts of sexual violence,¹⁵ and 7 times more likely to be victims of a crime.¹⁶
- They are 3 times more likely to resort to survival sex than their straight counterparts.¹⁷
- About 62% commit suicide, vs. 29% of straight homeless youth.¹⁸

of these youth, and fail to protect them when trouble arises. In some cases, staff are the source of the discrimination.

Youth in shelters have thus been needlessly singled out by staff for their sexual orientation or gender identity, assaulted by other program participants, kicked out of shelters when their sexual orientation became known and more.²¹

WHY SHELTERS CAN'T ALWAYS SOLVE THE PROBLEM!

Finding shelters and assistance is not easy. According to one study, more than 2,500 homeless teens could not be placed in a transitional living program in a single year because of lack of funding.¹⁹ Another 4,200 youth were turned away from emergency shelters.²⁰

Gay and transgender homeless youth who are able to get into a shelter or transitional living program often become victims of discrimination and prejudice once there. Many staff have not been trained in the needs

TIME TO END HOMELESSNESS!

It's time to put an end to youth homelessness, and an end to the epidemic that is gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth homelessness.

Because no one should have to live on the streets.
And no youth should have to worry about their safety once they find help in a shelter.

It's time for things to change.

WE GIVE A DAMN. DO YOU?

I GIVE A DAMN ABOUT HOMELESSNESS! Now What?

- **JOIN THE GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN:** The Give A Damn Campaign is for everybody who cares about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality, especially all you straight people out there!
 - Register now at www.wegiveadamn.org
- **GET INFORMED:** Learn more about the issues.
 - Watch a Damn Video or read people's Personal Stories
 - Check out our Damn Blog, which is updated daily

- **GET INVOLVED:** Spread the word about equality to family and friends!
 - Share a Damn Video or tell us your Personal Story
 - Forward this PDF
- **VISIT OUR NON-PROFIT PARTNER'S WEBSITE**
 - **CENTERLINK:** CenterLink provides an online directory of local resources for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender homeless youth. www.lgbtcenters.org

www.wegiveadamn.org

1 Ray, Nicholas. "Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness," National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006.

2-3 National Coalition for the Homeless. "LGBTQ Homeless," June 2009.

4 The Trevor Project. "Research and Academic Messaging Guide," 2009. www.trevorproject.org

5 See 1.

6 See 4.

7 National Alliance to End Homelessness. "LGBTQ Homeless Youth Fact Sheet."

8-9 See 4.

10 See 7.

11 GLSEN. "From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America," October 2005, and "2007 National School Climate survey," October 2008. www.glsen.org

12-13 See 4.

14 Lambda Legal, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Network for Youth and National Center for Lesbian Rights. "National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth."

15 See 17.

16-17 See 1.

18 See 2-3.

19-20 See 7.

21 See 1 and 7.

22 See 1.

23 See 2-3.

24 See 4.

25 See 2-3.

26 See 1.