

LGBTQ Youth: The Journey to Homelessness and Potential Areas for Intervention

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Background

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) youth face disproportionate health risks including:
 - homelessness
 - substance abuse
 - sexually transmitted infections
 - suicide
- Factors contribute to the increased risk for these negative health outcomes include:
 - familial abuse
 - school bullying
 - internalized homophobia.
- Disproportionate outcomes even more extreme in youth of color and immigrant youth

Background

- Research shows that frequent and consistent interaction with a concerned health professional can positively impact youth risk behaviors
- Despite the high level of need, many GLBT youth do not receive adequate health services.

Opportunities Lost

- Barriers to care for this population related to:
 - Reluctance of some GLBTQ youth to disclose orientation
 - Lack of providers competent and comfortable addressing GLBT issues
 - Lack of culturally appropriate services

Opportunities Lost

- Many of these youth express discomfort in discussing issues of sexuality and sexual orientation with their providers.
- 2006 study revealed:
 - 65% of surveyed adolescents did not disclose their sexual orientation to their physicians, despite the fact that they were “out” to most of the other people in their lives
 - Reluctance resulted from fears regarding stigma, breach of confidentiality, and/or potential negative or homophobic reactions by providers

Meckler GD, Elliott MN, Kanouse DE. Nondisclosure of sexual orientation to a physician among a sample of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2006;160(12), 1248–54.

Study Design

- This study will focus on the residents of a small homeless shelter for young GLBTQ youth in Chicago (age range from 18-24)
- Through structured interviews, this study will pursue the life stories of these young men and women, focusing specifically on:
 - Identity formation, including earliest memories of being different, non-heterosexual or gender normative
 - Disclosure to self and others, including ultimate internal acceptance GLBTQ identity and process of coming out to others
 - Disruption, including potential threats to safety, risk behaviors and eventual path to homelessness
 - Interactions with the health care system, including missed opportunities for intervention

Data Analysis

- Between 5-8 residents will be invited to participate in the interviews.
- The interviews will then be recorded and transcribed word for word
- Transcripts will be analyzed according to the principles of Grounded Theory

Confidentiality

- No names or directly identifying information will be used during the coding process.
- Participants will be ensured that their identities will be protected
- The information garnered through these interviews will be used in the context of research only.

Risks and Benefits

- Study participants will receive no direct benefit except a \$10 gift card for their time
- Risks include emotional difficulty in reviewing past life events.

Benefit to Family Medicine

- This study will help providers understand key points in a young LGBTQ person's life that impact negative health outcomes
- Also, will provide potential moments of intervention