LGBTQ Homeless Youth Prevention Initiative
Houston Funders’ Tool Kit

Critical Points
NEST is The Way Home’s effort to prevent and end homelessness among youth and young adults who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) by 2020. in Houston, Harris County, and Fort Bend County.

www.thewayhomehouston.org
www.montrosecenter.org/hub/nest-home/

Public systems are a critical intervention point: schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice all represent opportunities for risk identification and mitigation for this group.

A range of responses is needed:
Families need support to stay together. Many youth/young adults need trauma-informed services. Shelters need to respond to the needs of youth/young adults, and more affordable housing is needed.

Houston Homeless Youth Facts*:
There are approximately 630 homeless youth and young adults in Houston, Harris County, and Fort Bend County at any given time:

- The mean age of homeless youth and young adults is 21
- 61% are African American
- 93% are born in the USA
- 25% identify as LGBTQ
- 23% have been raped
- 41% from the foster system
- 24% have children
- 51% have spent time in jail or detention
- 22% are employed

* Data courtesy of the YouthCount 2.0!
Terms

Language matters. LGBTQ people come from all walks of life and experiences. It is important for us to understand empowering language related to the LGBTQ community.

Sex:
At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy.

LGBTQ:
About 1 in every 10 people identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning). Identity is not fixed and can change throughout life. To really understand an individual, it is best to ask, “How do you identify?”

Sexual Orientation:
Describes an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Gender Identity:
One’s internal, deeply held sense of one’s gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. This can exist somewhere outside or between the male/female binary.

Gender Expression:
External manifestations of gender expressed through one’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression align with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.
Why is there LGBTQ Youth Homelessness?

Increased Risk Factors:

- Higher risk for family rejection - family forces youth out of home
- Aged out of foster care or juvenile justice system
- Family poverty
- Higher high school dropout risk
- Higher risk for harassment/abuse in schools and in general

Limited Protective Factors:

- Insufficient response in schools to harassment
- Little to no programs for LGBTQ youth/young adults
- Little to no support available to resolve family conflict

Investments are needed in many areas!

**Education & Employment**
- Improved attention in schools toward LGBTQ youth/young adults
- Improved referrals to services
- Attention to graduation rates and dropout risk
- Support for developing career goals and achieving employment

**Stable Housing**
- Decreased homelessness
- Better service models for LGBTQ youth/young adults
- Expanded access to safer housing
- Improved data collection

**Permanent Connections**
- Increasing affirming staff in school services and communities
- Improving family connections

**Social-Emotional Well-Being**
- Increasing culturally-competent and affirming primary and behavioral health care
Effective Grantmaking Questions

Organizational Overview:

- What is your non-discrimination policy? How is it communicated? How are concerns addressed?
- Gender and sexual identity are involved with a lot of youth issues. Does your organization ask and acknowledge Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) among youth/young adult clients?
- What type of training does your staff receive around identifying and serving LGBTQ youth/young adults?

Services & Supports:

- Describe the services you offer to help support LGBTQ youth/young adults and their families.
- What conditions and/or rules do you place on LGBTQ youth/young adults who are accessing services? How do you retain LGBTQ youth/young adults?
- How have you or how do you plan to retrain your staff toward LGBTQ youth/young adults? If you have already retrained your staff, what new outcomes are you seeing as a result?

Connections & Coordination:

- To what extent are you partnering with nonprofits and programs that traditionally serve LGBTQ youth/young adults and families?
- How does your staff help LGBTQ youth/young adults connect to mainstream services such as childcare, health care, education, job training and welfare? Do you take any steps to make sure they feel safe and supported in those other spaces?
- Can you share an example of how your staff have demonstrated skill in supporting LGBTQ youth/young adults?

Data Outcomes & Advocacy:

- Can you measure your success with the LGBTQ youth/young adults you serve? If so, how? What outcomes do you track?
- How do you solicit feedback from the LGBTQ youth/young adults you serve? How do you use this data to improve programs and services?
- How does your organization advocate on behalf of those you serve? Do you actively advocate for services to support LGBTQ youth/young adults?

Resources

- Funders for LGBTQ Issues
- Funder Tools for Supporting LGBTQ Communities of Color
- Toward Equity Training Curriculum
- Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Trauma Informed Care
- At the Intersections