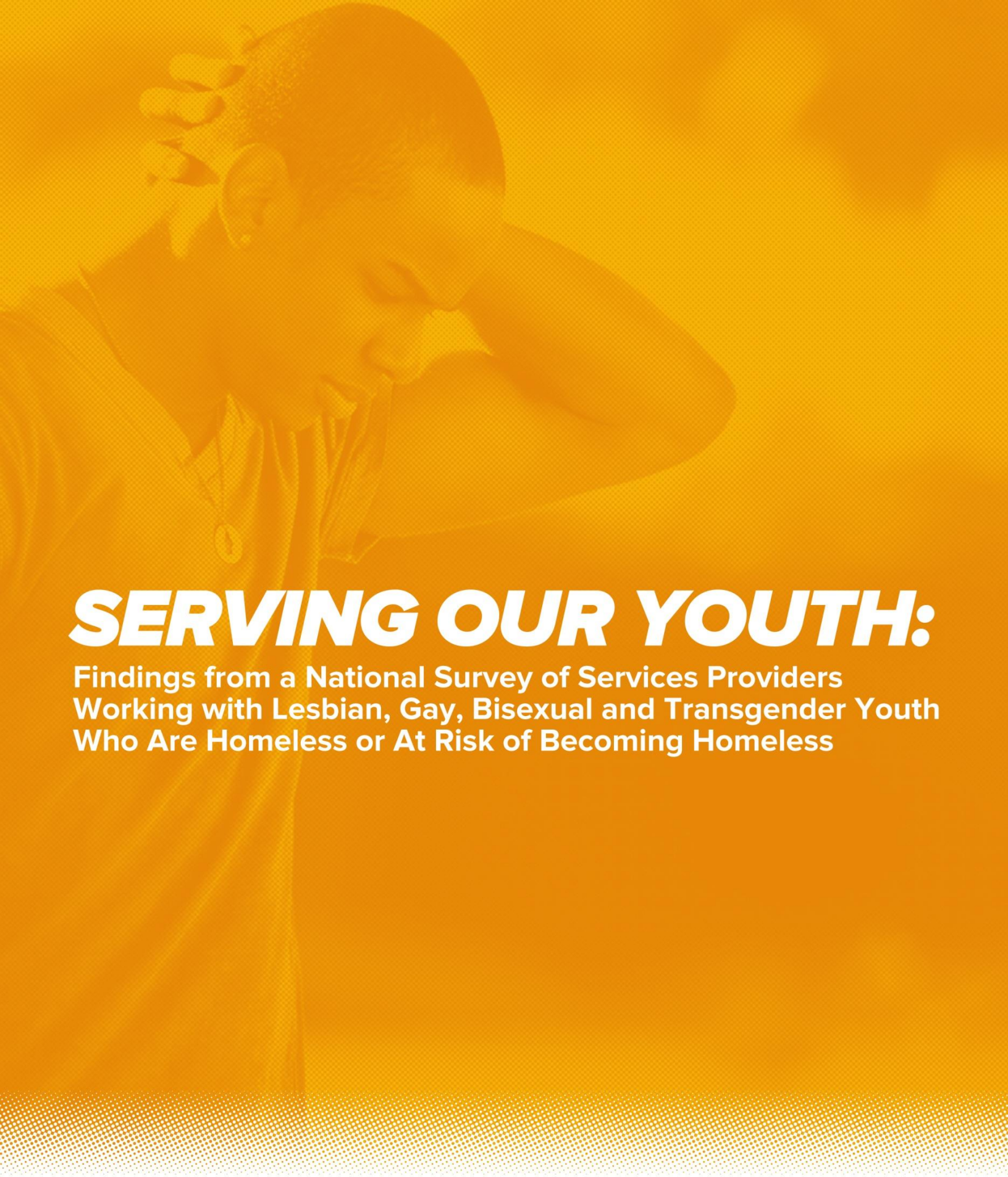


SERVING OUR YOUTH:

Findings from a National Survey of Services Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless

The Palette Fund

TRUECOLORSFUND

the Williams INSTITUTE

www.ThePaletteFund.org

The Palette Fund honors the legacy of Rand Harlan Skolnick through collaborative grantmaking and programs that value human rights and education. The Foundation focuses on Nutrition & Wellness, Patient Navigation, and Queer Youth. Rand committed his heart and soul to his philanthropic work throughout his life, and The Palette Fund seeks to continue and grow his pioneering vision.

www.TrueColorsFund.org

The **True Colors Fund** was co-founded by Cyndi Lauper to inspire and engage everyone, especially straight people, to become active participants in the advancement of equality for all and, through its **Forty to None Project**, raise awareness about and help bring an end to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth homelessness.

WilliamsInstitute.Law.UCLA.edu

The Williams Institute advances sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship, and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media and the public. A national think tank at the UCLA School of Law, the Williams Institute produces high quality research with real-world relevance.

ADDITIONAL PARTNERS



www.1800RUNAWAY.org



www.LGBTCenters.org

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:

Simon Costello, Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Center

Naomi Goldberg, Movement Advancement Project

Richard Hooks Wyman, The Hearth Connection

Jeff Krehely, Center for American Progress

David Vincent, The Door

Youth Enrichment Services (YES), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, New York City

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Laura E. Durso is a Public Policy Fellow at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. She studies the health and wellbeing of the LGBT community.

Gary J. Gates is the Williams Distinguished Scholar at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. He studies the demographic and economic characteristics of the lesbian and gay population.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J. (2012). Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report by the The Palette Fund, True Colors Fund, and the Williams Institute presents data from The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Homeless Youth Provider Survey, a web-based survey conducted from October 2011 through March 2012. The survey was designed to assess the experiences of homeless youth organizations in providing services to LGBT youth. It also assessed the prevalence of LGBT youth within the homeless populations being served by these organizations. In total, 381 respondents completed at least part of the survey, representing 354 agencies throughout the United States.

Nearly all of the agencies responding to the survey (94%) reported working with homeless and runaway youth who identify as LGBT in the past year. The number serving LGBT youth has grown over the past ten years, particularly those serving transgender youth.

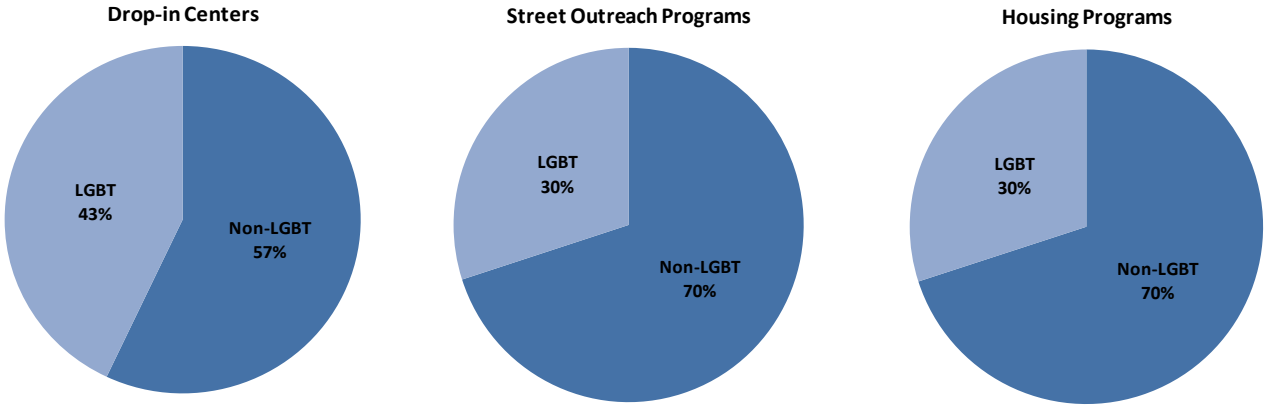
- Ten years ago, 82% of respondents said that they worked with LGB youth, whereas in the past year, nearly all respondents (94%) said that they worked with LGB youth clients.
- While less than half of respondents said that they served transgender clients ten years ago, more than three-quarters of respondents indicate that they worked with transgender youth in the past year.

LGBT youth comprise approximately 40% of the clientele served by agencies represented in the sample:

- Among both homeless and non-homeless clients, 30% identified as gay or lesbian and 9% identified as bisexual
- 1% of homeless and non-homeless clients were identified as "other gender" but at least another percent of the total clientele were transgender youth who were identified on the survey as either male or female
- Nearly all agencies (91%) reported using intake forms to track the demographic information of their clients, including information on sexual orientation and gender identity; around 30% of agencies use staff estimates to approximate the number of LGBT youth. Given that youth may not be willing to self-identify as being LGBT when initially presenting for services, these data may underestimate the proportion of LGBT youth served by homeless youth providers.

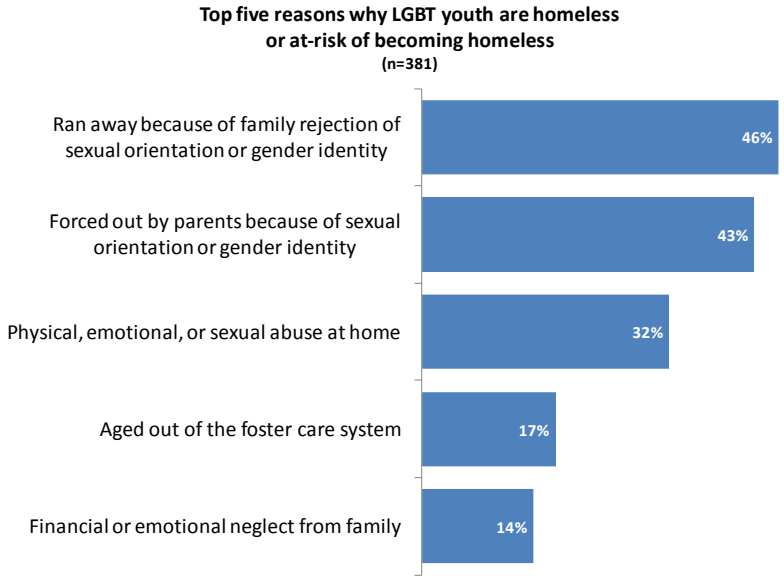
LGBT youth represent between 30% and 43% of those served by drop-in centers, street outreach programs, and housing programs:

Percent of Clients Served – LGBT and Non-LGBT Youth



- 43% of clients served by drop-in centers identified as LGBT; 30% of street outreach clients identified as LGBT
- On average, 30% of clients utilizing housing programs identify as LGBT (26% as LGB and 4% as transgender):
    - Host Home Programs – 42% of clients identified as LGBT (LGB = 37%; transgender = 5%)
    - Permanent Housing Programs - 39% of clients identified as LGBT (LGB = 36%; transgender = 3%)
    - Transitional Living Programs - 22% of clients identified as LGBT (LGB = 19%; transgender = 3%)
    - Independent Living Programs – 22% of clients identified as LGBT (LGB = 19%; transgender = 3%)
    - Emergency Shelters – 21% of clients identified as LGBT (LGB = 17%; transgender = 4%)

Family rejection on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity was the most frequently cited factor contributing to LGBT homelessness. The next most frequently cited reason for LGBT youth homelessness was youth being forced out of their family homes as a result of coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.



Overall, respondents indicated that nearly seven in ten (68%) of their LGBT homeless clients have experienced family rejection and more than half of clients (54%) had experienced abuse in their family.

While family rejection on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity was the most frequently cited factor contributing to LGBT homelessness, over 40% of the agencies do not address these family-based issues. However, agencies were more likely to conduct family-based work if they served LGB homeless youth under the age of 18:

- 75-80% of providers who served clients under age 18 indicated that they are doing family acceptance-related work, compared to 46-51% of providers who work with LGBT clients who were predominantly age 18 or older

A clear majority of LGBT clients receive services that are available to all youth:

- 24% of programs identified in the survey were designed specifically for LGBT youth
- LGBT youth were reported to take part in all types of programs and services offered by participating agencies, including recreational programs, educational programs, and health promotion activities (e.g. STD/HIV testing programs).

The lack of funding, in particular government funding, was identified as the primary barrier to improving services related to reducing LGBT homelessness

- Five of the top six factors identified as barriers to improving services related to reducing LGBT homelessness related to a lack of funding. The top three barriers were a lack of state, local, and federal funding, in that order.
- Only 14% of agencies cited as a barrier that serving LGBT youth homelessness was not central to their mission. Few agencies endorsed barriers related to a lack of support of serving LGBT youth from staff, boards, community, or government.

The findings from the LGBT Homeless Youth Provider Survey indicate that almost all organizations serving homeless youth are serving LGBT youth. In fact, LGBT youth (homeless and non-homeless) make up approximately 40% of their clients, including nearly 30% of clients who utilize housing-related services, such as emergency shelter and transitional living programs.

A majority of the programs that LGBT clients take part in are services that are available to all youth, with 24% of programs specifically designed for them. Importantly, approximately 40% do not have services that address the most commonly cited factor contributing to their homelessness – rejection by their family on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. These agencies did not locate the primary barriers to improving services for LGBT homeless youth in their competency or willingness to provide such services, but in the lack of government, foundation, and private funding to develop them.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Homeless Youth Provider Survey was conducted from October 2011 through March 2012. This survey was designed to assess the experiences of homeless youth organizations in providing services to LGBT youth. It also assessed the prevalence of LGBT youth within the homeless populations being served by these organizations.

Requests to participate in the web-based survey were sent to all providers on the National Runaway Switchboard and CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers resource lists, as well as partner agencies of the True Colors Fund. In total, 381 respondents completed at least part of the survey. These respondents represented 354 agencies that provide services to homeless youth.[1]

These agencies were largely independent, rather than affiliate, organizations (76% vs. 25%, respectively) and were located throughout the United States. Most organizations were located in the Midwest (31%) and West (27%), with nearly a quarter located in the Northeast (24%) and nearly a fifth located in the South (18%).

Nearly all agencies worked in partnerships with other organizations (91%), with approximately three-quarters reporting that they were part of a coalition (73%). The average number of years that these organizations had been operating was 42, with a range of 1 year to 226 years of service. Half of the organizations had been in existence for more than 35 years.

There was a wide range in the number of locations from which these agencies operated, with eight agencies having no dedicated physical space and four agencies with over 100 different locations.

Over 97% of agencies used at least one method of tracking demographic information about the individuals they serve. The most commonly used method was client intake forms, used by 91% of agencies, with 29% of agencies gathering this information through staff or volunteer estimates. A small proportion of agencies (7%) indicated using methods other than intake forms or staff estimates, such as surveys, sign-in sheets, or databases. The majority of agencies served clients within their general geographic area, while 42% of agencies served clients outside of their general geographic area.

Table 1. Agency expenses and revenues.

Agency Expenses	Mean	Median	Range	# Agencies Operating with No Expenses	# Agencies Not Operating During FY
FY 2011 Budget (n=79)	$4,829,780	$ 1,300,000	$1,000-$40,000,000	2	1
FY 2010 Actual (n=65)	$4,903,200	$ 1,391,895	$1,000-$40,000,000	2	1
FY 2009 Actual (n=60)	$5,114,681	$ 1,600,938	$1,000-$45,000,000	2	1
Agency Revenue					
FY 2011 Budget (n=63)	$4,025,152	$ 1,200,000	$400-$37,900,000	4	3
FY 2010 Actual (n=56)	$3,777,263	$ 1,217,500	$400-$38,500,000	2	2
FY 2009 Actual (n=53)	$3,838,349	$ 1,320,000	$300-$41,100,000	3	3

For the 2011 fiscal year, the average expense budget for the agencies represented in this survey was $4.83 million (see Table 1). Half of the agencies had budgets exceeding $1.3 million. Average revenues for the agencies were $4.03 million with half of the agencies reporting revenues that exceeded $1.2 million.

Table 2. Percent of agency funding from source type

Source	Mean	Median	Range
Government (n=83)	60.2%	70%	0-100%
Foundations (n=72)	14..3%	10%	0-80%
Corporations (n=57)	5.9%	5%	0-32%
Public Support (n=74)	26.6%	15%	0-100%

Agencies reported that, on average, 60% of their funding came from government, 27% from public support, 14% from foundations, and 5.9% from corporations (see Table 2).

[1] In the cases where there were multiple responses from a single agency, averages across all responses from a given agency were used. When responses differed with regard to services provided by a given agency, these analyses assume that the service was provided if at least one respondent indicated that to be the case.

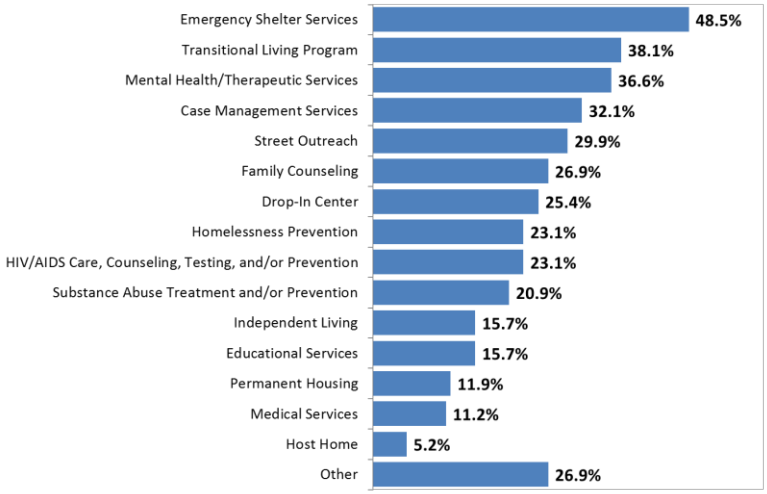
When identifying sources of monetary support, almost 30% of agencies stated that they received no federal sources of support (27%), 20% stated they had no state sources of support, and 23% had no city/county sources of support (see Table 3). Approximately equal numbers of agencies received funding from three or more government sources, either federal, state, or city/county.

Table 3. Number of sources of agency funding

Percent of agencies receiving funding from…	0 Sources	1 Source	2 Sources	3+ Sources
Federal (n=113)	27.4%	24.8%	23.9%	23.9%
State (n=115)	20.0%	37.4%	20.0%	22.6%
City (n=110)	22.7%	30.9%	19.1%	27.3%

Emergency shelter services were most frequently reported as the main service area for which agencies received government support (see Figure 1). Over 30% of agencies reported utilizing government funding for transitional living programs (38%), mental health and therapeutic services (37%), and case management services (32%). Least frequently cited as recipients of funding were permanent housing services (12%), medical services (excluding HIV/AIDS-related services; 11%), and host home services (5%).

Figure 1. Percent of agencies using government funds, by program
(n=134)



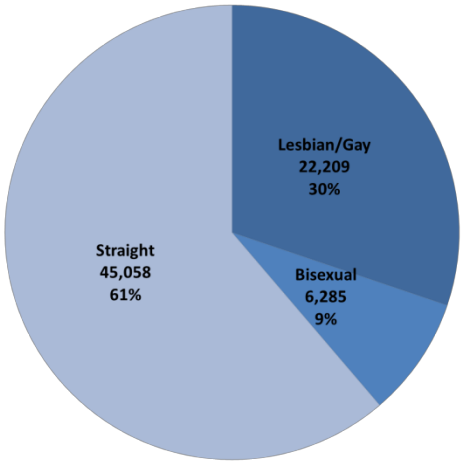
CHARACTERISTICS OF LGBT YOUTH SERVED BY AGENCIES

Responding providers were asked to describe the characteristics of the youth that they serve. In most cases, questions allowed respondents to describe differences by sexual orientation, gender identity, and the homeless status of their clients.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY OF CLIENTS

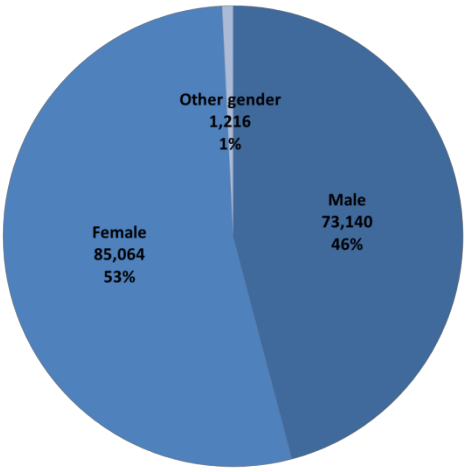
Respondents suggested that a very large portion of their clients were sexual minorities. When asked to give the number of clients that they served (homeless and non-homeless) by their sexual orientation, the figures suggest that 30% of their clients were gay or lesbian and 9% were bisexual (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of youth served in the last year (homeless and non-homeless), by sexual orientation
(n=155)



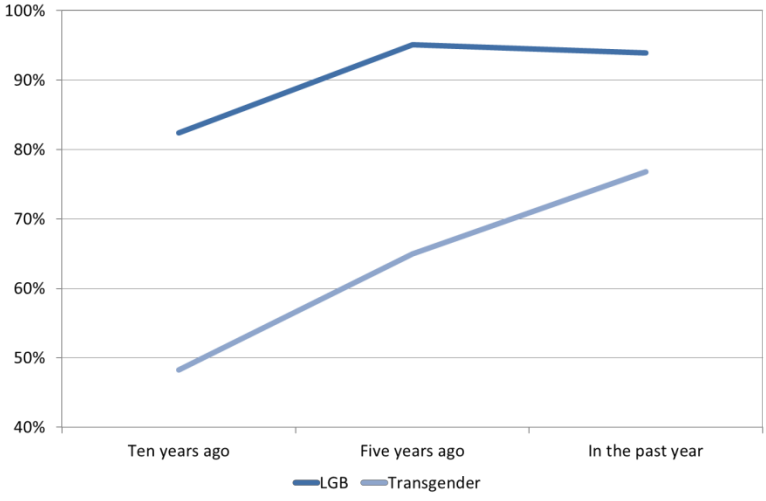
When asked the gender of their clients, the options included male, female, and other gender. Responses suggest that 53% of their clients were female, 46% were male and 1% were described as an "other gender" (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of youth served in the last year (homeless and non-homeless, by gender
(n=159)



Respondents were then asked to indicate how many of their clients they considered to be transgender. In total, they suggested that nearly 3,100 of their clients were transgender. If we assume that most of the clients described as having a gender other than male or female are transgender, this implies that respondents considered about 60% of their transgender clients to be either male or female while 40% were considered to have a gender other than male or female.

Figure 4. Percent who served any LGBT clients, over time
(n=131)



Respondents clearly indicated that they are serving more homeless LGBT clients, particularly transgender clients, today than they were ten years ago.

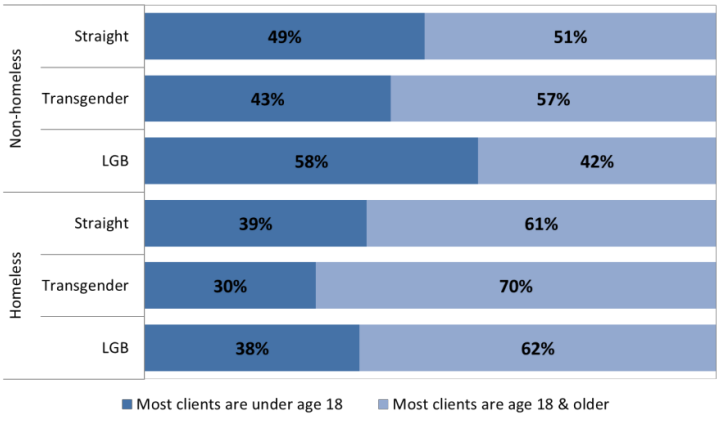
Less than half of respondents said that they served homeless transgender clients ten years ago (see Figure 4). In the past year, more than three-quarters of respondents indicate that they work with homeless transgender youth. Ten years ago, 82% of respondents said that they worked with homeless LGB youth. In the past year, nearly all respondents (94%) said that they worked with homeless LGB youth clients.

When asked how the average age of homeless youth has changed over the past five to ten years, the majority of respondents said that the age of both LGBT and non-LGBT youth had either remained the same or increased. A greater proportion of respondents indicated that the age of LGB homeless youth had "increased modestly" (37%) compared to the age of transgender youth (25%) or non-LGBT youth (23%). Conversely, a greater proportion of respondents indicated that the average age of non-LGBT homeless clients had "increased significantly", compared to the average age of LGB youth (12%) or transgender youth (19%).

SERVICE PROVISION BY AGE OF CLIENTS

In general, respondents working with homeless youth were more likely to be predominantly working with clients who were age 18 or older. Seven in ten respondents working with transgender youth said that they worked predominantly with transgender individuals who were age 18 or older (see Figure 5). About six in ten respondents who worked with straight or LGB homeless clients said that they worked primarily with clients who were age 18 and older.

Figure 5. Percent of respondents who predominantly serve clients under age 18 versus age 18 and older, by sexual orientation and homeless status of clients
(n=142)



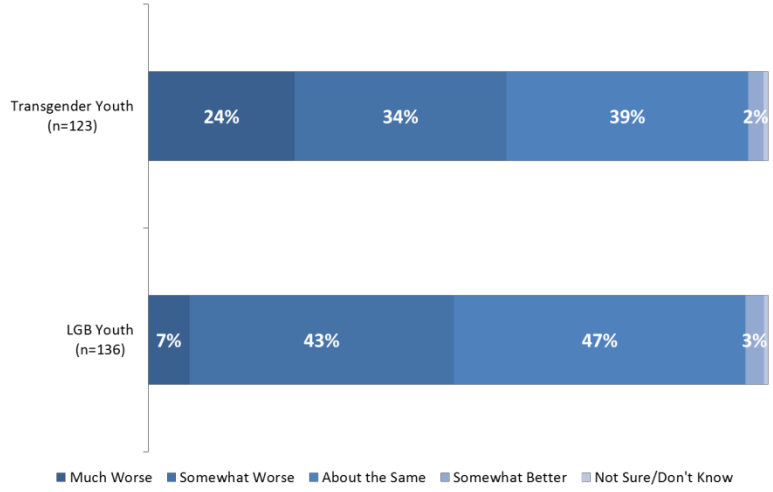
In contrast, among respondents working with LGB non-homeless youth, nearly six in ten (58%) reported that they predominantly worked with LGB youth under age 18.

Respondents working with straight non-homeless youth were more evenly split, with 51% reporting that they predominantly worked with youth under age 18 and 49% reporting primarily working with clients age 18 and older. For those working with transgender non-homeless clients, 57% worked primarily with older clients while 43% worked mostly with transgender youth under the age of 18.

HEALTH OF LGBT HOMELESS CLIENTS

Relative to other homeless youth, nearly six in ten respondents (58%) report that transgender homeless youth have worse physical and mental overall health (Figure 6). Nearly a quarter of respondents thought that the overall health of their transgender clients was "much worse" than other, non-LGBT homeless youth.

Figure 6. Overall health of LGBT clients compared to other homeless youth



Half of respondents also thought that the overall health of their LGB homeless youth clients was worse than other homeless youth.

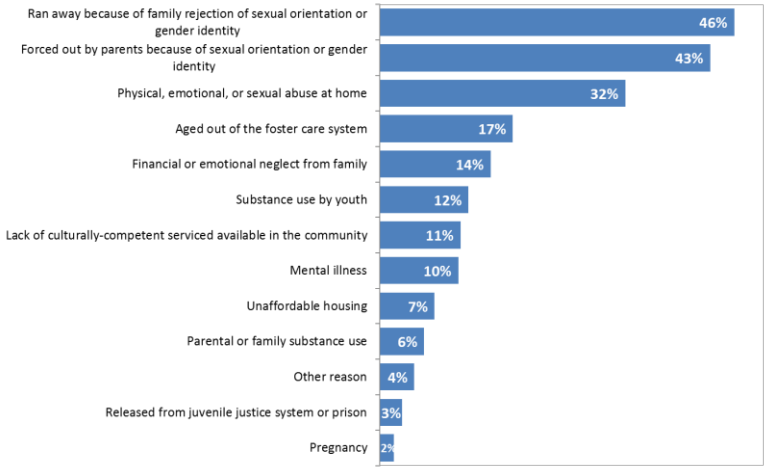
Less than 4% of respondents thought that their LGBT clients had better overall health than other homeless youth clients.

NEEDS AND HISTORY OF LGBT CLIENTS

Family issues were by far the most common reasons respondents cited when asked to name the primary reasons why LGBT clients were either homeless or at-risk for homelessness.

Running away from home because of family rejection was the most frequently cited reason, as 46% of respondents thought that was one of the most important factors in LGBT homelessness (see Figure 7). A similar portion of respondents (43%) said that LGBT youth had been kicked out of their homes. A third of respondents cited physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

Figure 7. Reason why LGBT youth are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless (n=381)



Respondents were also asked about the experiences of their LGBT homeless youth clients. Again, the data suggest a strong connection between family rejection and abuse and homelessness for LGBT youth.

Respondents indicated that nearly seven in ten (68%) of their LGBT homeless clients have experienced family rejection (see Figure 8). More than half (54%) have experienced abuse in their family.

Figure 8. What percentage of the homeless LGBT youth that you serve have a history of the following?
(n=113)

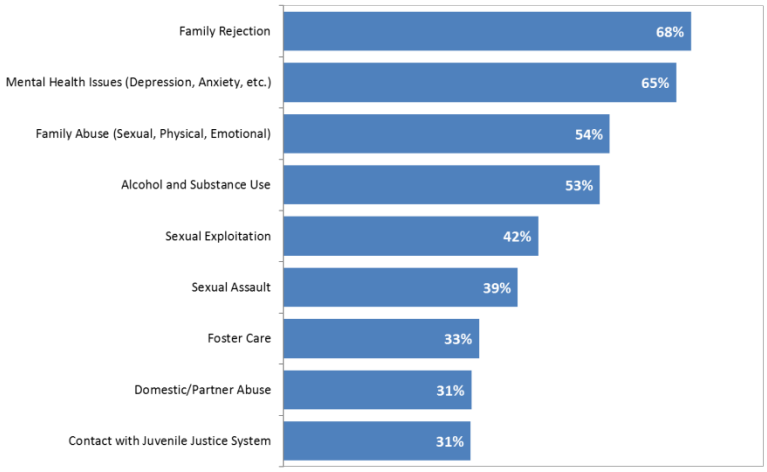
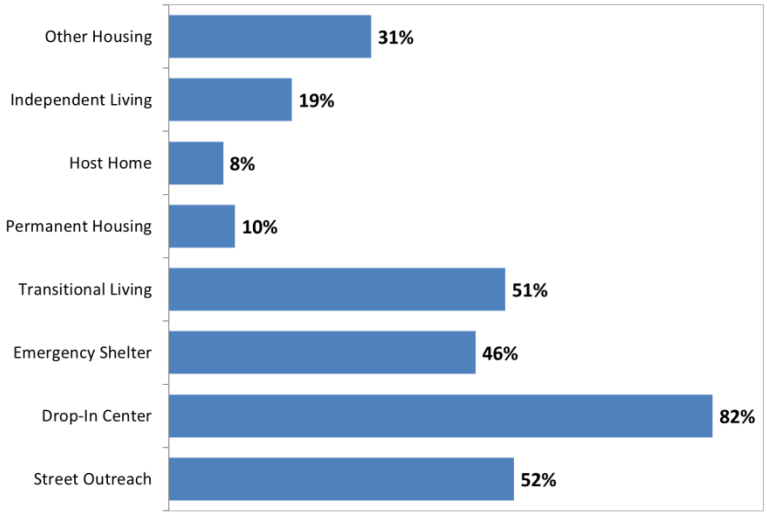


Figure 9. Percent of agencies offering various services



Respondents said that nearly two-thirds of their LGBT homeless youth clients (65%) have mental health issues and more than half (53%) have histories of alcohol and substance abuse.

Respondents say that about four in ten LGBT homeless youth clients have been subject to sexual exploitation and sexual assault. About a third have been in foster care, have experienced domestic partner abuse, and have had contact with the juvenile justice system.

AGENCY SERVICES

More than 50% of respondents reported that their agencies offered transitional living services and street outreach services, as well as having a drop-in center (see Figure 9). Far fewer of respondent agencies offered independent living, permanent housing, and host home services.

Among respondents from agencies who had drop-in centers, 47% reported that the programs were open on weekends and 74% were open after business hours (e.g. outside 8am-5pm), with the mean number of service hours per day reported to be 12.5 (Table 4).

On average, these centers served approximately 22 youth daily, and most reported that they served youth over the age of 13. Among participating agencies, the mean estimate of the percentage of youth identifying as LGBT who were served by drop-in centers was 43%, with a median estimate of 30%.

Street outreach programs served approximately 20 youth per day, with an average of 30% of youth served identifying as LGBT (Table 4).

Table 4. Street outreach and drop-in center service characteristics.

	Service Type	
	Street Outreach (n=176)	Drop-In Center (n=260)
Mean Daily Contact (Median)	27.7 (20)	---
Mean Number Offered Services (Median)	20.2 (11.5)	22.4 (15)
Mean Number of Days Open (Median)	---	5.6 (5)
Mean Number of Hours Open (Median)	---	12.5 (9)
% Open on Weekends	---	47.3
% Open Outside Business Hours	---	73.8
% Serving Youth Under 13	47.4	37.4
% Serving Youth ages 13-17	93.5	94.4
% Serving Youth ages 18 and Up	89.6	86.9
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as LGBT	30	43.2
Median % Youth Served Identifying as LGBT	15	30

The number of respondents reporting that their agencies offered housing services ranged from 20 organizations with host home services to 150 organizations with transitional living services (Table 5). Most programs served youth over the age of 13, though in addition, at least 50% of agencies offered emergency shelter and host home services to youth under the age of 13.

On average, approximately 30% of youth receiving housing services were identified as LGBT. Approximately 37% of youth seeking host home services and 36% of youth seeking permanent housing were identified as LGB. The mean proportion of LGB youth served by emergency shelter, transitional living, and independent living programs was lower and ranged from 17% (emergency shelter services) to 19% (independent living services). It is important to note that the median proportion of LGB youth across programs was reported to be 10% (see Table 5).

For all types of housing programs assessed in this survey, respondents reported that their agencies served a smaller proportion of transgender youth compared to LGB youth, with mean estimates ranging from 3% (transitional living) to 5% (host home services). Again, the median estimates were similar across programs (0.05% to 1% of youth).

Given that the data estimating the proportion of LGBT youth served by drop-in centers, street outreach, and housing programs is derived from either intake forms or staff estimates, it is likely that these numbers represent an underestimate of the true proportion of clients who are LGBT. These youth may not be willing to self-identify as LGBT upon intake, and staff estimates in the absence of youth self-report may be less accurate.

Table 5. Housing services characteristics.

	Service Type				
	Emer. Shelter (n=123)	Trans-itional Living (n=150)	Perm. Housing (n=25)	Host Home (n=20)	Independent Living (n=46)
Mean Maximum Length of Stay (Median)	66.6 days (30)	379.7 days (427.5)	---	*74.9 days (21)*	*396 days (540)*
Mean Number of Beds (Median)	---	27.6 (15)	*31 (24)*	*5.4 (4)*	14.5 (10)
% Agencies with Limited Stay	---	---	*36*	---	---
% Serving Youth Under 13	60.3	18.5	*8.33*	*50*	9.1
% Serving Youth Ages 13-17	84.5	64.1	16.7	85	65.9
% Serving Youth Ages 18+	62.9	96.7	100	60	97.7
% Youth Served Identifying as LGB (Median)	17.4 (10)	18.8 (10)	*35.5 (40)*	36.6 (10)	19.3 (10)
% Youth Served Identifying as Transgender (Median)	3.5 (1)	2.7 (1)	3.3 (0.05)	5.4 (1)	2.9 (0.05)

***Note*. Due to missing data, not all cells contain the column n. Text set in italics indicates cells containing less than 30 observations.**

Over half of the respondents reported that their agencies offered multiple physical and mental health programs, such as STD/HIV testing and counseling services, with a smaller proportion offering alcohol and drug recovery/rehabilitation programs (see Figure 10).

Community outreach/advocacy programs and leadership development programs were the most frequently offered type of cultural, recreational, or civic programs (see Figure 11). The most frequently

offered educational programs were life skills training and tutoring programs, although a significant proportion of the agencies offered additional types of educational programs, including GED programs and vocational training.

Figure 10. Health and well-being services, by LGBT focus

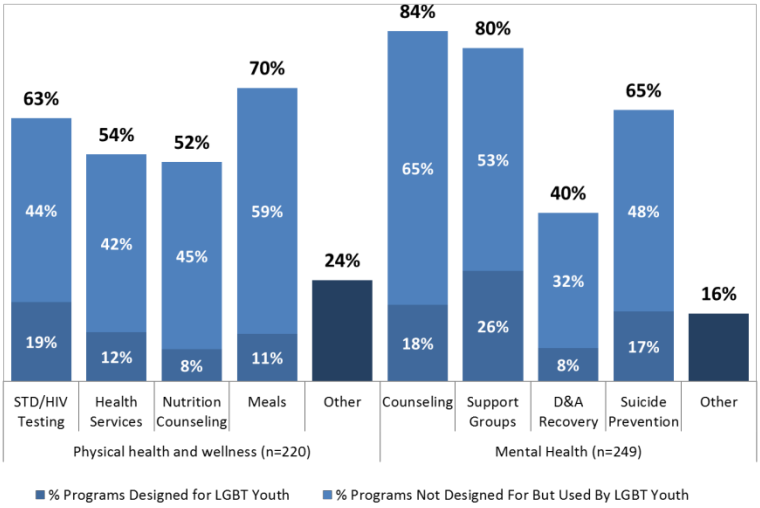
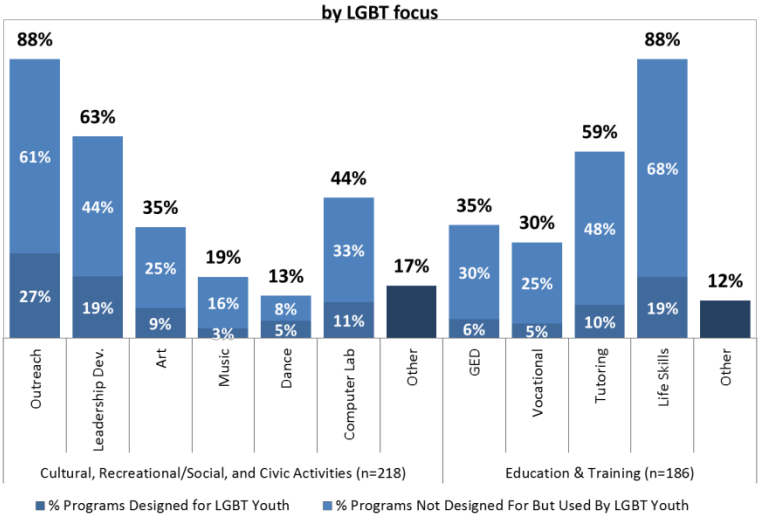


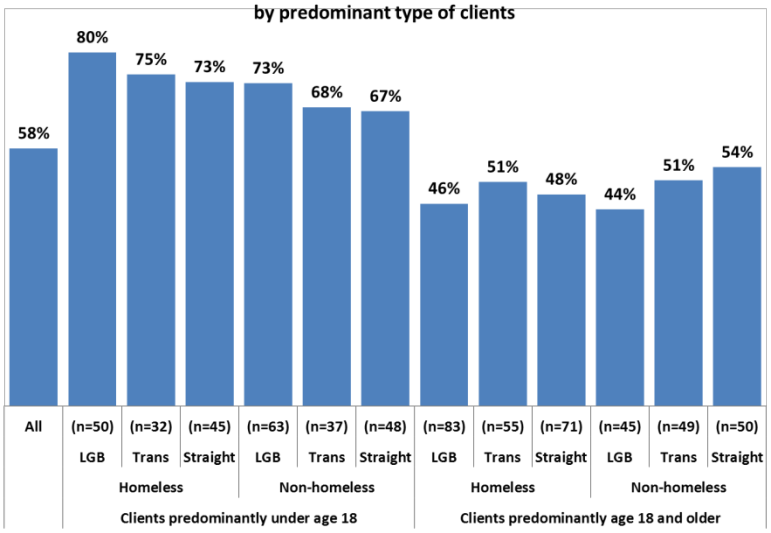
Figure 11. Cultural, recreational, civic, education, and training activities, by LGBT focus



An additional item on the survey asked respondents whether they worked with youth and families around issues of family acceptance or reunification. Of the 266 respondents who responded to the question, 58% stated that they conducted this type of family-based work (see Figure 12).

As noted earlier, family rejection and abuse were among the most commonly cited reasons for why LGBT youth are at risk for homelessness. The data suggest that respondents who indicated that they worked primarily with clients under age 18 were much more likely to say they did family acceptance work. Among those who said that their LGB homeless clients were primarily under age 18, 80% indicated that they are doing family acceptance. For those who said that their LGB clients were predominantly age 18 or older, less than half (46%) did family acceptance work. In general, family acceptance work was highest when clients were predominantly under age 18 and homeless.

Figure 12. Percent of respondents who do family acceptance work, by predominant type of clients



PROGRAMS DESIGNED FOR OR UTILIZED BY LGBT YOUTH.

Respondents were asked whether the programs offered by their agencies were specifically designed for LGBT youth or whether the programs were non-LGBT specific but still used by LGBT youth. In all cases, the programs assessed by the survey instrument were more likely to be targeted toward youth in general but used by LGBT youth, rather than having been designed specifically for LGBT youth (see Figures 10 and 11). Categories of programs with relatively high percentages of activities specifically designed for LGBT youth included cultural, recreational/social, and civic activities (29%).

EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS REGARDING LGBT YOUTH

As noted earlier, 94% of respondents reported working with LGBT youth sometime in the past year. At the time of the survey, approximately three quarters of respondents stated that they currently work with homeless and runway youth who identify as LGBT (75%), and this proportion was largely similar across the country. A majority of respondents in the Northeast (76%; n = 86), Midwest (84%; n = 105), South (76%; n = 63), and West (80%; n = 98) reported currently working with LGBT homeless and runaway youth.

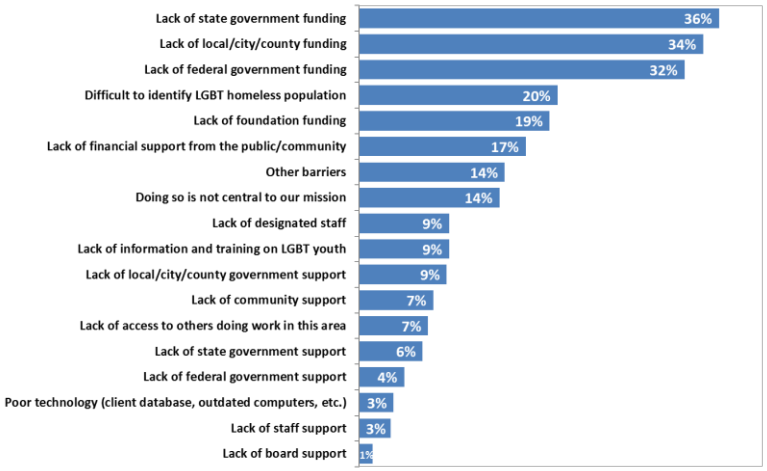
All respondents were asked to rate their agreement with two statements related to their work with LGBT homeless and runaway youth – "I am very knowledgeable" and "I have a great deal of experience" – using a four point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". More than five out of six people either agreed or strongly agreed that they were very knowledgeable about LGBT homeless youth, both in the full sample (85%, n = 355) and among only those who stated that they worked directly with LGBT homeless youth (86%; n = 283). A smaller but significant proportion of the respondents also agreed that they had a great deal of experience working with LGBT homeless youth, with 69% of the full sample (n = 349) and 74% of those working with LGBT homeless youth (n = 278) expressing either agreement or strong agreement.

Though the Midwest had the greatest number of respondents who reported working with LGBT youth, a smaller proportion of those in that region stated that they were "very knowledgeable" about the population (81%), compared to respondents working in the other geographic regions (range 87%-91%). Similarly, 65% of Midwestern respondents who worked with LGBT youth agreed that they had "a great deal of experience" working with LGBT youth, whereas 78% of respondents from the Northeast, 79% of respondents from the South, and 80% of respondents from the West agreed with the statement.

BARRIERS TO SERVING LGBT YOUTH

Respondents were asked to identify the top 3 to 5 barriers to improving efforts to prevent or address LGBT youth homelessness. Table 13 shows the proportion of respondents selecting each of 17 different potential barriers (plus the proportion selecting "other") to improving service provision, with the most frequently endorsed barriers appearing first.

Figure 13. Biggest barriers in improving efforts to prevent or address LGBT youth homelessness
(n=381)



Four of the top five barriers identified relate to a lack of funding, most frequently from government sources. Concerns directly related to the identification and competent care of LGBT youth were among the top ten barriers, as was the concern that addressing LGBT youth homelessness was not central to the organization's mission. Few agencies endorsed barriers related to support from staff, boards, or government, or barriers related to a lack of adequate technology.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings from the LGBT Homeless Youth Provider Survey indicate that almost all organizations serving homeless youth are serving LGBT youth. In fact, well over 80% of providers indicated that they are both knowledgeable about and have a great deal of experience working with LGBT youth. This conceptualization of providers' competency held true regardless of the location of the agency.

That the majority of homeless youth providers included in this survey had experience working with LGBT youth is unsurprising, given the finding that LGBT youth are overrepresented in services for at-risk and homeless youth, relative to population estimates of the size of the LGBT community. Although already sizeable, the estimates provided here may be low, given that the demographic

information provided by respondents was reported to come mainly from intake forms and/or staff estimates. As noted above, LGBT youth may not be comfortable identifying themselves upon first presentation to these agencies, and research suggests that the perception of sexual orientation by others is often influenced by gender-related stereotypes and may thus be unreliable. In addition, the use of a single assessment timepoint, such as an intake form, may fail to capture youth who develop an awareness of their LGBT identity once engaged with services.

Results from this survey indicate that while only a quarter of programs offered by agencies serving homeless and at-risk youth are designed specifically for LGBT youth, they are utilizing the services made available to them. With that in mind, agencies should cultivate inclusive service environments where all youth feel safe and comfortable taking part. Findings from this survey do, however, point to service areas where LGBT-specific programs may be more needed. Data related to the poor health and well-being of homeless LGBT youth and the factors identified as contributing to homelessness among this population suggest that agencies may look to develop and test programs addressing family-based issues, such as rejection or abuse, or mental health and substance abuse issues.

To the extent that providers are able to accurately assess their level of awareness of issues facing LGBT youth, these data suggest that homeless youth providers across the country are equipped to care for sexual minority and transgender youth. Supporting this contention, less than 15% of providers in the present survey identified issues of cultural competence as being barriers to preventing or addressing homelessness among LGBT youth. It will be important for future research to determine whether providers' perceptions of their ability to serve LGBT clients match the perceptions of the clients themselves. Further, future research can explore whether provider awareness is ultimately reflected in the work conducted by these agencies.

Overall, providers in this survey indicated that a lack of funding is the biggest barrier to addressing the needs of LGBT youth who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. Working with limited resources clearly impacts the ability of agencies to provide LGBT youth with services that they may be most likely to require or use. For example, in the present survey, the housing programs identified as having the highest percentage of LGBT clients – host home services and permanent housing – are the ones least likely to be offered by participating agencies and among the least likely to be supported by government funding. Amid the current economic downturn, agencies serving homeless youth (LGBT and non-LGBT alike) are under even greater pressure to do more with less. Future research in this area can help identify interventions which most effectively and efficiently target the reduction of homelessness among LGBT youth and promote the health and well-being of this population.

GLOSSARY

Definitions of selected terms which appear frequently throughout this report:

Agency: A term representing survey responses at the organization-level. When participating individuals worked for the same organization, responses were pooled to create a single observation. This was then used for the analysis of questions asking for programmatic or institutional-level data, such as budget information and services offered. Please see footnote 1 for additional information about how these data were analyzed.

Bisexual: An identity term used to refer to individuals who have emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to both men and women. Please see http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/sorientation.pdf for additional information.

Gay: An identity term used to refer to males who have emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of the same sex. In common usage, this term can refer to both men and women who have attractions to members of the same sex. Please see http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/sorientation.pdf for additional information.

Homeless: The term homeless when it pertains to youth is hard to define due to its broad parameters.For the purposes of this report, the term homeless encompasses unaccompanied youth (up to the age of 24) who are living on the streets, in places not meant for human habitation (including abandoned buildings and cars), in institutional housing (including shelters and transitional living programs), or "couch surfing" (temporarily staying from place to place of friends, relatives, or strangers for a short amount of time).

Lesbian: An identity term used to refer to females who have emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of the same sex. Please see http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/sorientation.pdf for additional information.

LGBT: An acronym used to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, or someone who identifies as a member of that community.

Provider: An umbrella term representing survey responses from those working in organizations serving homeless and at-risk youth, regardless of job title. In this report, the term is synonymous with respondent.

Respondent: A term representing survey responses at the individual-level. In this report, the term is synonymous with *provider*.

Transgender: The American Psychological Association defines the term *transgender* as “an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. Gender identity refers to a person’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else; gender expression refers to the way a person communicates gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, or body characteristics.” Please see http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/transgender.pdf for additional information.

The Palette Fund

www.ThePaletteFund.org

TRUECOLORSFUND

www.TrueColorsFund.org

the Williams INSTITUTE

WilliamsInstitute.Law.UCLA.edu