

EXPECT MORE

Everyone Deserves Good Health

7th Annual National LGBT Health Awareness Week

LGBTQ YOUTH POLICY

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning youth must have equal access to culturally competent health service programs in order to ensure their health. LGBTQ young people face difficulties in accessing age, sexual orientation, and gender identity- appropriate healthcare. Many of these problems are associated with homophobia and transphobia.

Many LGBTQ young people realize at early ages that they are LGBTQ. For some young people, they may engage in same sex behavior, but not identify as LGBTQ due to fear of rejection and harassment. These fears are not without merit. A 2005 national survey released by GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) found:

- Three-fourths of students heard remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" used as an insult frequently or often at school.
- Nearly nine out of ten reported hearing "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" - meaning stupid or worthless- frequently or often.
- Over a third of students experienced physical harassment at school on the basis of sexual orientation.
- More than a quarter experienced physical harassment on the basis of their gender expression.
- Nearly one-fifth of students had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation and over a tenth because of their gender expression.

With such a hostile environment, it is not surprising that studies have shown correlations between harassment and substance abuse, depression and suicide.

School districts should provide sexuality education programs that are not based on abstinence until marriage. Protections from bullying in school should clearly cover LGBTQ youth. "Gay-Straight Alliances" (GSAs) can be a valuable tool in providing support and friendship networks to vulnerable youth in some school districts.

EXPECT MORE: LGBTQ young people deserve equal access to culturally competent healthcare.

For more information, please see:

Advocates for Youth (www.advocatesforyouth.org)

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition (www.nyacyouth.org)

OutProud (www.outproud.org)

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (www.pflag.org)

YouthResource (www.youthresource.com)