Assessing Resources
Benefiting the LGBT Community
in Greater Jacksonville

SERVICES FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES

Introduction

ADOLESCENCE, THE TEEN YEARS and young adulthood are arguably the most challenging periods of our lives. Often exciting, they can also be extremely confusing and sometimes frightening. Yet most of us find ways to navigate the profound physical and emotional changes, the evolving relationships within home and family and the educational progression through high school and beyond.

However, if we layer on to these innate challenges the complexities of being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in a culture where acceptance and tolerance are uncertain, the path from childhood to adulthood becomes daunting indeed.

"LGBT kids need the same things all kids need," said Cindy Watson, CEO of JASMYN. "They need all of the elements of positive youth development. Plus, they need to know they are safe and have safe spaces, they need to learn who they are and that it is OK to be who they are, and they need healthy family relationships."

JASMYN is the only nonprofit organization in greater Jacksonville devoted exclusively to serving LGBT youth and young adults. For many, the presence of JASMYN suggests that the community has the necessary resources to meet the needs of its LGBT youth.

But, like all youth, LGBT youth have a multitude of needs, extending far beyond the scope of any single organization.

In this report we look at the challenges faced by Jacksonville area LGBT youth – and how the greater Jacksonville community is responding - in three key areas:

> The school environment;
>
> Physical and mental health;
>
> Home and family life.

THE LGBT-PARENTED FAMILY faces a unique set of challenges often overlooked in our focus on the LGBT individual. When partners or parents are gay, lesbian or transgender, the minefield that is parenthood becomes even more treacherous. Do we adopt, can we adopt, how do we adopt? How do we raise these children? How do we provide a healthy family and community environment and where are the resources to help us?

In Jacksonville, a small informal network of LGBT-led families have connected through social media since 2013 but there is no formal organization that works to provide support to LGBT-parented families. PFLAG supports the parents of LGBT youth, but is not focused on the LGBT-led family.

In this report, we look Jacksonville's emerging network as well as national organizations and resources that are available in other communities that could be models for Jacksonville.
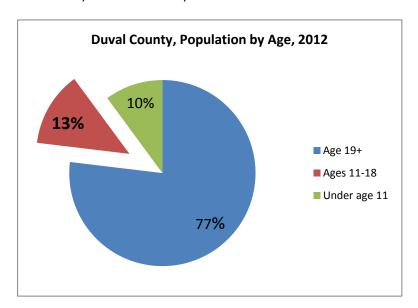
Who Are Jacksonville's Youth?

This report focuses on young people under the age of 18 -- generally middle school and high school-age young people. While those younger may wrestle with their sexuality and gender identity, community-based organizations generally begin to focus on LGBT issues during early adolescence.

It is important to remember that youth under age 18 are not of legal majority – that is, they are not free to make many life decisions; parental consent is often required; they are considered juveniles under the law. This status affects their ability to access health care, make decisions about schooling choices and engage in a host of other activities. Many behaviors that are considered acceptable in the adult population are considered "delinquent" or "criminal" behaviors when exhibited by juveniles.

But "youth" does not magically end at the age of 18. Formal education frequently continues through the early 20s. Private health insurance generally covers family dependents through the mid-20s. And "adolescence" itself -- that period of transition from childhood to adulthood -- lasts until as late as age 24[1]. Thus it is worth noting selected resources in the community that extend services to youth beyond the age of 18.

In Duval County, there are approximately 203,000 young people under the age of 18[2] -- roughly one-quarter of the population -- and about 114,000 of these are between the ages of 11 and 18. Studies suggest that between 2% and 10% of the population self-identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. A 2013 survey of Duval County high school students showed that 10% of respondents identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.[3] Using these parameters, we can expect that 2,300-11,400 youth ages 11-18 in Duval County are or will identify as LGBT.

Duval County, Population by Age, 2012

- ■ Age 19+
- ■ Ages 11-18
- ■ Under age 11

77%

13%

10%

---

[1] The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines adolescence as follows: Early adolescence: ages 11-13; Middle adolescence: ages 14-18; Late adolescence: ages 19-24.
[2] U.S. Census.
[3] Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Duval County Public Schools, 2013

Before We Begin...

Social science research around LGBT youth is a relatively young field and one that historically has tended to view LGBT youth as an "at-risk" population. Recently, however, social scientists have begun to challenge that perspective, suggesting that using the "at-risk" lens may actually "contribute to a social context that views these youth as deficient."[4]

Alternatively, many researchers now seek to study LGBT youth in context – that is, understand the ways in which their experiences with family, peers, schools and the community shape their lives and contribute to their behaviors. While full exploration of these themes is beyond the scope of this report, it is an important frame for the reader.

Consider school bullying. Nationally, LGBT youth report high levels of harassment and bullying in schools, and research routinely documents how "hostile" school climates have negative effects on LGBT youth. But does a "hostile" school climate exist only within the walls of the school, or is it an extension of broader community attitudes?

Could it be said that a community that resists enacting statutory human rights protections for LGBT citizens is, in fact, contributing to a school climate that could result in bullying and harassment of LGBT youth?

LGBT youth today may be the first generation to have positive LGBT role models in television, movies and the popular media, as well as real life role models nationally and in their communities. And yet they continue to battle the everyday challenges that come from their communities and its institutions.

LGBT youth are neither monolithic nor deficient. They have unique needs, as do many others whose uniqueness may be defined by their faith, their physical or mental abilities, their race or their ethnicity, or other factors.

In looking to support these young people, communities may find it useful to look not only at the specific institutions that impact LGBT youth, but at the broader community context that influences these institutions and, subsequently, LGBT youth.

---

[4] "New Research on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: Studying Lives in Context"; Journal of Youth and Adolescence; June 2009.

Education

The quality of the educational environment is critical for all students, and particularly for LGBT[5] youth. Not only do young people spend a large proportion of their waking hours in school, but they do so during a stage in their lives when awareness and attitudes about sexuality and gender roles are in flux.

"The early adolescent years are a period during which awareness of and conformity to gender roles and norms becomes particularly salient…A challenge for many [LGBT] youth is the developmental tension between their personal awareness and desire to come out, and the degree to which coming out may conflict with the social pressures of conformity that appear to be particularly strong during the early and middle adolescent years."[6]

These "social pressures of conformity" often trigger a variety of behaviors among young people, ranging from teasing and taunting to physical assault, that fall under the label of "bullying."

The negative impacts of bullying on LGBT youth can go beyond the obvious pain and embarrassment. LGBT students exhibit higher rates of absenteeism nationally, attributed to fear and discomfort in a hostile school environment. Absenteeism leads to poorer academic performance. A 2007 study by GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), a national organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students, shows a correlation between the increase in harassment and abuse of LGBT students and a decline in the students' grade point averages.[7]

While school culture is influenced greatly by community norms and individual behavior, educators can foster a more inclusive and tolerant environment by:

- Having non-discrimination or anti-bullying policies that specifically include actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Training teachers on effective intervention strategies and using teacher interventions in cases of harassment or bullying;
- Using curriculum that is inclusive and addresses LGBT-related issues;
- Providing library resources that address LGBT-related issues;
- Supporting the established of Gay-Straight Alliances, student-run clubs that bring together LGBT and straight students to support each other, provide a safe place to socialize and work to overcome hostile attitudes.[8]

"LGBT students reported a greater sense of safety and less absenteeism when they had supportive educators, access to GSAs [Gay-Straight Alliances] and were taught about LGBT-related topics in school. In addition, students experienced fewer incidents of harassment and assault, and reported more effective

---

[5] For the purposes of this report, "LGBT youth" refers to students who have identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, those who may be perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and those students who are questioning their sexual orientation and gender identity.

[6] "Safe Schools Policy for LGBT Students"; Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy Report, Volume 24, Number 4, 2010.

[7] The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Middle School Students: Findings from the 2007 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN Research Brief.

[8] "Safe Schools Policy for LGBT Students"; Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy Report, Volume 24, Number 4, 2010.

intervention by school staff when incidents did occur, when the school had a comprehensive anti-harassment policy that explicitly prohibited harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression."[9]

OUR COMMUNITY

What do we know about the quality of the Duval County school environment for LGBT youth?

While Duval County has a large number of private and charter schools, the majority of school-aged children attend Duval County Public Schools, where policies and practices generally are driven by the mandates of the State of Florida. At both the state and the local level, the primary policy to impact LGBT students is the anti-bullying policy, intended to help all students feel that school is a safe environment.

Florida state statute 1006.146 prohibits "bullying or harassment of any student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution:

> "(a) During any education program or activity conducted by a public K-12 educational institution;
> '(b) During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity or on a school bus of a of a public K-12 educational institution; or
> ''(c) Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of a public K-12 educational institution."

"Bullying" is defined as behavior that, among other things, involves "sexual, religious or racial harassment."

Like 32 other states, the Florida statute does not enumerate specific protections for any group of students, such as LGBT students, nor does it specifically identify sexual orientation as a status to be protected from bullying. (Currently, 16 states plus the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination or harassment in schools on the basis of sexual orientation.[10])

Since 2008, all Florida public school districts have been required to adopt anti-bullying policies that conform to standards established by the state Department of Education.

In November 2008, Duval County Public Schools adopted an anti-bullying policy that _does_ specifically reference sexual orientation. Prohibited behaviors include:

> "Illegal harassment [including] verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her actual or perceived identity with regard to race, color, religion, gender, age, marital status, disability, **sexual orientation**, political or religious beliefs, national or ethnic origin, veteran status, any other distinguishing physical or personality characteristics..." (emphasis added)

---

[9] The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Middle School Students: Findings from the 2007 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN Research Brief.

[10] "Safe Schools Policy for LGBT Students"; Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy Report, Volume 24, Number 4, 2010.

> "Bullying and harassment based on a student's actual or perceived identity with regard to race, color, national origin, gender, disability, **<u>sexual orientation</u>**, religion, or any other distinguishing characteristics..." (emphasis added)

In Florida, according to GLSEN, between 87% and 96% of LGBT students in 2011 reported that they regularly heard homophobic remarks and/or negative remarks about gender expression.[11] Of greater concern, 38% reported they had been physically harassed and 20% physically assaulted within the previous year because of sexual orientation.

And while 95% of LGBT students in Florida said there was at least one supportive educator in his or her school, fewer than half had access to a Gay-Straight Alliance (44%), had access to library resources on LGBT issues (35%) or attended a school with an inclusive curriculum (12%).

In Duval County Public Schools, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" (YRBS) is conducted periodically to ascertain student behaviors with respect to sexuality, substance use and abuse, physical activity and diet, violence, suicide and safety behaviors. While students are asked whether they have ever been bullied, Duval County historically included no questions about respondents' sexual orientation, making it impossible to determine the specific experiences of LGBT students and how they might differ from the population as a whole.

In 2013, however, Duval County included the following questions in its YRB Survey, according to Josephine Jackson, executive director of Equity and Inclusion/Professional Standards for Duval County Public Schools:

> Which of the following best describes you? (high school)
> A.   Heterosexual (straight)
> B.   Gay or Lesbian
> C.   Bisexual
> D.   Not sure
>
> During the past 12 months, have you ever been the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought you were gay, lesbian or bisexual? (middle and high school)
> A.   Yes
> B.   No

While most of the 2013 YRBS data was released publicly in April 2014, responses from those students who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual had not been publicly released as of this report (August 2014). JASMYN CEO Watson provided some insight into the survey's findings, however.

Of the roughly 3,000 high school students who participated in the survey, about 300 identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual -- about 10%.

Proportionately, African American males comprised the smallest segment of those who self-identified, and white girls comprised the largest segment. This is in contrast to the makeup of JASMYN's client population, Watson said, which is proportionately dominated by African American males. Watson

---

[11] GLSEN 2011 School Climate in Florida snapshot.

speculated that this disconnect may be because African American males are more reluctant to self-identify because of cultural pressure, or because they are more likely to have dropped out of school and not be present for the survey.

Students who self-identified as LGB were far and away more likely to have been victims of violence -- violence of multiple kinds -- than their straight counterparts. The survey asked students if they had ever been threatened or injured with a weapon, been in a physical fight, been bullied at school or been forced to have sexual intercourse against their will. In each case, the percent of LGB students responding "yes" was two to four times greater than the percent of all students responding "yes."

The one statistic that has been released publicly relates to suicidal behaviors. While 8.8% of straight high school students reported having attempted suicide, 26.5% of LGB students reported having attempted suicide. Only 2.7% of straight students made an attempt at suicide that was serious enough to require medical treatment, while 12% of LGB students made a suicide attempt that required medical treatment.

Similarly, the survey results on student bullying reflect a disproportionate victimization of LGB students, Watson said. Two to three times as many LGB students reported being bullied as straight students, she said.

In 2013, more than 40% of middle schoolers and almost 20% of high schoolers reported being bullied -- the highest number in the past three surveys.

Duval County Students Reporting Being Bullied on School Property

	High School	Middle School
2009	16.3%	33.3%
2011	17.6%	37.2%
2013	19.3%	42.1%

But Duval County officials attributed this increase to greater reporting more than to a raw increase in the number of bullying incidents. "It might not be an entirely bad thing," said Duval County Schools Superintendent Nikolai Vitti, noting that the increase reflects "growing awareness and willingness to report."

Beyond enforcing the anti-bullying policy, Duval County Public Schools has made progress in providing supports for LGBT students, according to Nan Worsowicz, supervisor of guidance services for Duval County Public Schools.

"We have broken the barrier of 'you don't talk about that,' " she said.

At the request of Superintendent Vitti, the district has developed a new Early Warning guide that addresses the appropriate response to concerns about behavior, child abuse and neglect and bullying, Worsowicz said. JASMYN is included in the list of community resources. Every teacher in the district will receive the guide and guidance counselors are expected to do faculty presentations during the first month of school in fall 2013.

Each year, JASMYN provides a day-long teacher conference – using the curriculum *Teaching Respect for All* – that helps educators gain skills and strategies to foster inclusivity and tolerance. Participation is voluntary (the conference is held during a teacher planning day) and teacher participation often is influenced by the attitude of the principal, who can be either discouraging or encouraging, JASMYN CEO Watson said.

Gay-Straight Alliances

A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a student-run club in a high school or middle school that brings together LGBT and straight students to support each other, provide a safe place to socialize and create a platform for activism. According to the GSA Network, there are three typical functions of a GSA:

Providing Support -- Many GSAs function as a support group and provide safety and confidentiality to students who are struggling with their identity as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning or those who are experiencing harassment at school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. These groups often provide one of the few safe spaces for students to express themselves.

Building Community -- GSAs are also social groups. They provide a sense of community and a space for LGBT and straight ally youth to build a social network where their identity is respected. Lots of GSAs organize barbeques or movie nights, attend a local LGBT prom or an LGBT pride parade. GSAs are a great way to build community and lessen the isolation that LGBT students might otherwise experience.

Taking Action to Create Change -- Some GSAs work on educating themselves and the broader school community about sexual orientation and gender identity issues. They may bring in outside speakers, organize a "Pride Week" or "LGBT Awareness Events" or offer educational workshops, panels, and pride celebrations.

In Duval County, GSAs are organized as student clubs and, by law, must be allowed in any school that permits other extracurricular student-led clubs. However, students must initiate their formation. Often, students will reach out to a supportive educator for help in establishing the GSA.In Duval County,

JASMYN offers support to students who wish to start a Gay-Straight Alliance. In fact, it is through the efforts of JASMYN, supported by local philanthropists, that the GSA movement in Duval County high schools has gained traction. By building awareness among educators of the effectiveness of GSAs and supporting interested students' efforts to establish GSAs, JASMYN has helped GSAs blossom

DUVAL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH GSAs		
	2013	2014
Darnell Cookman Middle /High School	x	X
Robert E. Lee High School		x
Frank H. Peterson Academies of Technology		x
Edward White High School	x	x
Douglas Anderson School of the Arts	x	x
Duval Charter School at Baymeadows		x
Atlantic Coast High School		x
Baldwin Middle/High School		x
Duncan Fletcher High School	x	x
Paxon School for Advanced Studies		x
Stanton College Preperatory	x	x
Jean Ribault High School		x
LaVilla Middle School of the Arts		x
James Weldon Johnson Middle School		x
Total	5	14

in Duval County Public Schools.

At the end of the 2013 school year, administrators reported GSAs operating at five of the 47 middle and high schools in the district. By the end of the 2014 school year, than number had grown to 14, and administrators were aware of new GSAs scheduled to come online in the 2014-2015 school year.

CHANGES AHEAD

In coming years, the landscape for LGBT students in Duval County Public Schools likely will change significantly.

Earlier this year, Duval County Public Schools was one of only 19 schools districts nationwide to be awarded a CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) grant, valued at $1.8 million over five years.

According to the district, the grant will support an array of services around student health and behavior, many of which will directly impact LGBT students:

The grant provides $50,000 a year for five years to support the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, administered in odd years, and the School Health Profile, administered in even years. This is the first time the district has received funding for the School Health Profile, which looks at health, physical education and physical activity, tobacco-use and HIV prevention policies, nutrition-related policies and practices, health services, and family and community involvement in school health programs. While the YRBS surveys students' attitudes and behavior, the School Health Profile focuses on district programs and activities.

SAFE SCHOOLS SOUTH FLORIDA

Safe Schools South Florida is an organization of professional educators whose mission is to help create safer schools for LGBT students or those perceived as such and for children of LGBT parents.

The organization was founded in Miami-Dade in 1991 and was the lead organization in creating school board policy and union contract changes in the Miami-Dade school district to include protection from discrimination and harassment with regard to sexual orientation. Miami-Dade was the first school district in the Southeastern United States to include these protections. Safe Schools South Florida also was instrumental in the creation of domestic partnership benefits in the four major South Florida school districts.

Safe Schools South Florida, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is the designated education organization of the Children's Trust-funded Alliance for GLBTQ Youth to provide training in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Its work and programs have been recognized nationally by the American Federation of Teachers and statewide by the Florida Governor's Commission on Best Practices for Youth Suicide Prevention.

In May 2012 SSSF was named South Florida Regional Partner with the National Gay/Straight Alliance Network and a collaborator with the National GSA Network with their Centers for Disease Control grant to help create, nurture and support GSAs throughout South Florida.

SOURCE: Safe Schools South Florida

The School Health Profile is significant in that it collects specific information about Gay-Straight Alliances, professional development for staff around cultural competency, and relationships between the school and community-based providers with expertise in serving LGBT youth. This creates a framework for holding school leaders accountable.

The DASH grant also will fund implementation of a health education curriculum aimed at HIV/STD Prevention -- one for high school students and another for middle school students. It also helps the school system develop connections with -- and thereby facilitate referrals to -- community entities that provide sexual health services. DCPS will be working in partnership with JASMYN, as well as Full Service Schools, Duval County Health Department and the University of North Florida's College of Health.

The grant will support expansion of delivery of Teaching Respect for All, the training for educators to enhance inclusivity and tolerance.

The grant also will provide additional funding to enable JASMYN to expand its health screening services (see HEALTH/Our Community) and expand its support of Gay-Straight Alliances.

According to the District, Duval County Public Schools was successful in the grant application because of a strong collaboration among the partners; data that show the strong need for prevention and intervention programs and services; adequate use of previous funding; and use of evidence-based curricula.

For Cindy Watson, JASMYN CEO, the grant is a "game-changer." "The DASH grant puts JASMYN inside the school system as a funded partner to work on building the internal infrastructure to support the needs of these students."

BEYOND SECONDARY SCHOOL

Among higher education institutions in Jacksonville, the **University of North Florida** has been most progressive in working to create a welcoming climate and resources for LGBT students, faculty and staff.

The university's non-discrimination policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

The university is one of only two universities in Florida with a full-time staffed LGBT Resource Center.[12] The Center provides safe space and support for the LGBT community, educational and leadership opportunities for LGBT students, faculty and staff, and special events for the campus community.

In the most recent campus climate survey (2010), 15% of student respondents identified as LGBT and 64% of those students found the UNF campus to be either very or somewhat accepting.

At **Jacksonville University**, a private, liberal arts university, the Dolphin Allies program provides support to the LGBT community on campus. Dolphin Allies work to create a network of allies for LGBT people and provide safe places, empathic allies and visible support for LGBT individuals. By displaying a placard, individuals signify that they are supportive of LGBT issues and the space is confidential and safe. JU's non-discrimination policy addresses neither sexual orientation nor gender identity.

---

[12] The other is the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Florida Coastal School of Law, a Jacksonville law school, is home to LAMBDA Law Students Association, a support system and social circle for LGBT students and allies who share a vision of equality with respect to transgender experience and sexual orientation. (Nationally, Lambda Legal is the oldest and largest national legal organization working to achieve full recognition of the civil rights of LGBT people.) At Florida Coastal, LAMBDA's programs and events help to advance legal rights for individuals who face wrongful discrimination and to provide charitable assistance to those in need. Florida Coastal's non-discrimination policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation but does not address gender identity.

Florida State College at Jacksonville, a four-year state college, hosts Campus Pride, a student-led organization that strives to identify and address issues that affect LGBT people within both the college and the community. FSCJ's Equal Access/Equal Opportunity policy does not reference sexual orientation or gender identity.

Edward Waters College, an Historically Black College based in Jacksonville, does not publicize any support groups or clubs for LGBT students and its anti-discrimination policy references neither sexual orientation nor gender identity.
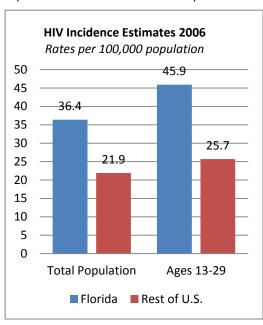
Health

LGBT youth face a disproportionate array of health issues compared with their straight peers and, consequently have unique health care needs. But their age and legal status, limitations on insurance, cost of health care services, and attitudes within the medical community all present obstacles that can prevent LGBT youth from accessing the health care that they need.
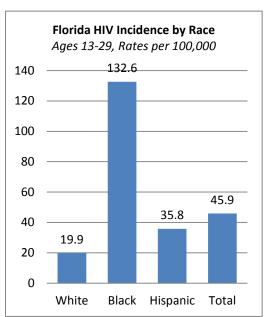
"The social stigma that surrounds lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) teens leads to a variety of health risks such as substance use, risky sexual behaviors, eating disorders, suicidal ideation, and victimization," according to Boston Children's Hospital, the primary pediatric teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School.[13]

But LGBT youth, by definition, are minors and parental consent often is required in order to receive medical care. Moreover, youth generally cannot take advantage of insurance coverage -- whether private insurance or government-funded, such as Medicaid or Florida's Healthy Kids -- without a parent or guardian's support.

Consequently, LGBT youth who are not out to their families, or whose families are hostile to their sexual orientation, or youth who are questioning their sexual identity may find it extremely difficult to access the health services that they need.

In Florida, "youth are likelier to experience negative sexual health outcomes than most U.S. youth, with young people of color and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) most at risk," according to Advocates for Youth, an international organization that works to help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.[14]

HIV Incidence Estimates 2006
Rates per 100,000 population

Florida HIV Incidence by Race
Ages 13-29, Rates per 100,000

---

[13] Boston Children's Hospital Newsroom, Confronting Health Disparities Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth, April 2009
[14] Florida's Youth: Focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Advocates for Youth, www.advocatesforyouth.org.

According to the Florida Department of Health, Florida has the second highest number of pediatric AIDs cases in the nation. The incidence of HIV among Florida persons 13-29 years old is almost 80% greater than in the rest of the United States, with Blacks far more vulnerable than whites or Hispanics.[15]

According to Advocates for Youth, personal behavior is not the sole factor to determine an individual's HIV risk. "Because of high rates in the [African American] community in general, an individual African American/Black youth has a higher risk of acquiring HIV or STIs [sexually transmitted infections] even when they have the same or fewer risk behaviors than white youth."[16]

But there are many other health concerns beyond HIV/AIDS for LGBT youth. According to HealthyPeople2020, the national agenda for health reported via www.healthypeople.gov:

- LGBT youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide;
- LGBT populations have the highest rates of tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use;
- LGBT youth are more likely to be homeless .

The issue of homelessness is particularly critical for LGBT youth. In a survey released in June 2013, the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law, reported that 40% of the clients at organizations working with homeless youth were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.[17] In contrast, 5% to 10% of all youth identify as LGBT. Homeless LGBT youth are more likely to attempt suicide; become victims of sexual violence; be solicited for sex in exchange for food, clothing, or shelter; and have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder than their heterosexual homeless peers.[18]

One of the most revealing indicators of the unique stresses faced by LGBT youth comes from the Human Rights Campaign's "Growing Up LGBT in America: HRC Youth Survey Report Key Findings," released in June 2012. The survey asked youth "What are the most important problems you are currently facing?"

For Non-LGBT Youth, the answers were what one might expect from teens:

1. Classes / Exams / Grades
2. College/Career
3. Financial pressures related to college or a job

For LGBT youth, however, the responses were quite different:

1. Non-accepting families
2. School/bullying problems
3. Fear of being out or open.

---

[15] HIV Incidence, Prevalence and Mortality, Epidemic Snapshot, Florida, Spender Lieb, MPH, Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, February 2011.

[16] Florida's Youth: Focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Advocates for Youth, www.advocatesforyouth.org.

[17] Laura E. Durso, Gary J. Gates, *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 Homeles*s, The Pallette Fund, True Colors Fund, The Williams Institute.

[18] "Health Equity Series: Responding to LGBT Health Disparities," Missouri Foundation for Health, August 2012.

OUR COMMUNITY

In addition to area hospitals and private physicians, a few Northeast Florida organizations provide health resources for LGBT youth.

The Duval County Health Department provides education, counseling, testing and treatment for individuals with, or exposed to, a sexually transmitted disease. The department also provides clinical trials, on-site lab and x-ray exams, mental health and substance abuse counseling for HIV/AIDS patients and offers referrals for case management, dental care and pharmacy services.

For many young people, however, the Health Department can seem intimidating and too "public," said JASMYN CEO Watson. As an alternative, JASMYN offers an evening health clinic at the JASMYN house in cooperation with the Health Department twice a month. The JASMYN clinic offers screening for sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Watson said about 30% of the youth seen at the clinic test positive for STIs, and about 10% test positive for HIV, compared with 4% in the general population.

Under a federal grant received by Duval County Public Schools, JASMYN will receive support to expand these screenings during the next five years. (See EDUCATION/Our Community/Changes Ahead)

River Region Human Services Inc., and Planned Parenthood both offer HIV testing at several locations and will provide referrals for post-testing services. For these services, both organizations generally focus on clients age 18 and older.

Mental health services for LGBT youth are extremely limited. Mental Health America of Northeast Florida provides an 11-page listing of mental health resources in Jacksonville and the only reference to services for gay or lesbian individuals is in the listing for JASMYN.

JASMYN provides some crisis services, case management, peer and group support. In Florida, state law requires parental consent for those under age 18 seeking mental health services. Even for those youth over age 18, Watson said it is extremely difficult to find a mental health counsellor and to find the funding to pay for the counselling.

UF CARES - HIV/AIDS CENTER

The Jacksonville-based University of Florida Center for HIV/AIDS Research, Education and Service (UF CARES) is the only comprehensive pediatric and family-focused HIV and AIDS program in Northeast Florida and South Georgia.

The Center provides primary, secondary and tertiary care for HIV-exposed and infected infants, children, adolescents, women and their families.

In addition to basic medical care, the center provides medical case management, pharmacy services, health education, nutrition and mental health counseling. There is a full-time psychologist and part-time psychiatrist and gynecologist who provide specialty services.

Support groups for adolescents are hosted monthly.

A multidisciplinary approach and strong collaborative network creates a one-stop program where patients receive majority of services in a single, coordinated visit from a team of adult and pediatric infectious disease physicians, advanced registered nurse practitioners, psychologist, nutritionist, educators, medical case managers, and support staff.

Source: UF Cares

For general health needs, the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, a national network of health professionals and supporters who work to improve the health and well-being of LGBT people, lists four physicians in Jacksonville: one practicing obstetrics and gynecology, one providing family medicine and transgender support, one providing child and adolescent psychology (including transgender counselling) and one providing general dentistry.[19]

Watson noted that, to her knowledge, there are no public health services to address the unique needs of transgender youth in Jacksonville. JASMYN does not provide these services. In the absence of professional services, youth are tempted to use "street hormones," which are high risk and can lead to further health issues. "We need education around gender identity issues in the local medical community," she said.

It is worth noting that research suggests LGBT youth do not consider it a priority that their health care provider have the same sexual orientation. In fact, a survey conducted in 2009 showed that LGBT youth's concerns about health care providers and their personal health were more focused on quality, competence and access than on the physician's sexual orientation or gender identity.[20]

**WHAT LGBT YOUTH WANT
IN HEALTH CARE**
(top-ranked responses in 2009 survey of 733 LGBT youth)

The healthcare provider should:
Be competent (i.e. has good medical skills);
Be respectful to me;
Be honest with me;
Listen to me;
Treat LGBT youth the same as other youth;
Make me feel comfortable;
Be nonjudgmental.

The office/health center should :
Be clean;
Accept my insurance;
Have friendly staff;
Offer screening and treatment for STIs;
Allow me to come without my
    parent/guardian;
Offer HIV testing;
Provide confidential care for minors.

Concerns or problems to discuss with provider:
Depression;
Medication side effects;
STIs;
HIV/AIDS;
Preventive health care;
STI treatment and transmission issues for
    partners;
Suicidal feelings;
Taking multiple medications;
Nutrition;
Safe sex;
Family problems;
Risky or unsafe sexual behavior.

Source: Journal of Adolescent Health

---

[19] Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, www.glma.org.
[20] Healthcare Preferences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth, Journal of Adolescent Health, 2009.

Home and Family

The challenges of school, the fear of bullying, the potential health issues -- these and the many other storms of LGBT youth are weathered much more easily when one is surrounded by a supportive family and network of friends.

"Families and caregivers have a major impact on their LGBT children's risk and well-being," notes Caitlin Ryan, Ph.D. A.C.S.W. in a recent report Helping Families Support Their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Children.[21]

In recent years, the age at which LGBT individuals come out has dropped by a full decade. Today, youth typically identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual at about 13 years of age and come out to their families about a year later.[22]

While many families are supportive of their LGBT children and advocate on their behalf, others may exhibit various levels of rejection, from blocking access to friends and excluding LGBT children from family events and activities to physical and verbal abuse and ejection from the home. "Many LGBT youth are placed in foster care or end up in juvenile detention or on the streets because of family conflict related to the LGBT identity. These factors increase their risk for abuse and serious physical and mental health problems."[23]

In its 2013 survey of homeless-youth-serving organizations, The Williams Institute found that 46% of LGBT youth who are homeless or at risk of being homeless experienced family rejection because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.[24]

LGBT teens who are rejected by their families tend to have more problems with drug use, are less likely to protect themselves from HIV or STIs, putting them at higher risk for HIV and AIDS. They also are:

- More than eight times as likely to have attempted suicide;
- Nearly six times as likely to report high levels of depression;
- More than three times as likely to use illegal drugs.[25]

They also are more likely to be homeless. Family rejection and isolation are associated with the increased risk of homelessness among LGBT youth. And homeless LGBT youth are disproportionately youth of color: Nationally, 44% of homeless LGBT youth are Black, and 26% are Hispanic. This disparity is even greater among transgender homeless youth (62% Black, 20% Hispanic).[26]

---

[21] Ryan, C. (2009), Helping Families Support Their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Children, National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Laura E. Durso, Gary J. Gates, *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 Homeles*s, The Pallette Fund, True Colors Fund, The Williams Institute.
[25] Ibid.
[26] "Health Equity Series: Responding to LGBT Health Disparities," Missouri Foundation for Health, August 2012.

OUR COMMUNITY

Parents, families and friends of LGBT youth in greater Jacksonville can receive support and encouragement from PFLAG, the local chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Established in 1992, the local chapter of PFLAG provides information, referrals, resources and peer support, all with the goal of ensuring the well-being of LGBT individuals and their families. (PFLAG Jacksonville also provides scholarships for post-secondary education for LGBT students, the only PFLAG chapter in the state that does so. Since 1996, the Jacksonville chapter has awarded more than $240,000 in scholarships.)

In cases where families are not supportive, and LGBT youth are lacking positive family or caregiver support, local options are limited.

For youth over age 18 who are homeless, the I.M. Sulzbacher Center can provide shelter, though the environment can be particularly intimidating to young people. Sulzbacher does not provide shelter for unaccompanied minors, however, and its health clinic generally serves only uninsured adults.

The Youth Crisis Center provides short-term, residential care for youth ages 10-17 who have been referred by law enforcement, other agencies or schools. Many youth have either run away or been locked out of their homes. Counselors work with youth and their families to address the immediate crisis and provide long-term solutions. YCC also operates Touchstone Village, which helps youth who are aging out of foster care transition to adult independence.

JASMYN, using funds provided by the Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition, sometimes provides temporary shelter for youth in hotels.

Other local organizations, such as Daniel, Children's Home Society and others, provide assistance for youth who are victims of abuse or suffering from mental or emotional distress. While some of these youth may identify as LGBT, the services are not targeted to that population.

Opportunities for Philanthropic Support

At the outset of every philanthropic endeavor, there are two fundamental questions to be answered:

What do we wish to see happen? This could be anything from large-scale systemic change to maintaining the status quo.

Who is most likely to make that happen? What individual, organization or group is best equipped to accomplish the goal?

As we consider philanthropic support for LGBT youth in greater Jacksonville, the first question is relatively easy to answer. There are an array of services and resources that could be sustained and a host of other resources and services that could be augmented and/or added.

The second question is more vexing.

Aside from JASMYN, there is no organized nonprofit entity that focuses on LGBT youth in greater Jacksonville. And while JASMYN has played a central role in the LGBT community for more than a decade, it cannot be all things to the community.

Among the many nonprofit youth-serving organizations in Jacksonville there is widely varying awareness and sensitivity to the needs of LGBT youth. If these nonprofits are to play a role in meeting the needs of LGBT youth, many will require development of the appropriate cultural competencies[27].

Finally, many of the challenges confronting LGBT youth may be best addressed by entities other than nonprofits -- the public school system, for example, or the health care community.

The challenge for philanthropy in this case is to consider both the type of activity to be funded and the capacity of the community and its organizations and institutions to accomplish the goal.

CAPACITY BUILDING

JASMYN was established in 1994 with the goal of building a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth, ages 13-23, by nurturing their health and well-being and enhancing their pride and self-esteem. Today, the organization serves 300-400 youth a year at its headquarters in the Riverside neighborhood. As the community contemplates building out the capacity of many organizations to serve LGBT youth, there must be thoughtful consideration about the role of JASMYN. What are its strengths and how can it build on them? What activities and knowledge does it need to share with others in the youth-serving community? And what activities are best left to others? JASMYN currently is in the midst of strategic planning work that aims to help the organization wrestle with and answer these questions.

---

[27] According to Advocates for Youth: "Cultural competence acknowledges and responds to the unique worldviews of different people and communities. The way an individual views the world comes from her/his life experiences, many of which are shared by others within the same culture. To understand the individual, one must understand these experiences. Besides recognizing cultural patterns of behavior, the culturally competent person must also acknowledge the social inequities faced by others."

Beyond JASMYN, Jacksonville needs to build the capacity and competency of the local medical community, public school system and nonprofit community if it is to fully address the needs to LGBT youth. (The faith community also can be an important resource for youth and will be addressed in a subsequent report.)

There are a number of networks that potentially provide access to these sectors: the Duval County Medical Society, the Jacksonville Kids Coalition, the Jacksonville Children's Commission, the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida

While JASMYN has offered cultural competency training to organizations locally, there also are a number of national organizations that provide such services. And we know that Elder Source has had some success building the cultural competency of elder-serving organizations in the region. (See Assessing Resources Benefitting the LGBT Community in Greater Jacksonville / Services for Elders.)

The task is to identify the desired training resources and the appropriate network, build relationships of trust and support, deliver training and providing followup supports.

In some respects, Elder Source may serve as a model for the youth serving community: Elder Source provides cultural competency training for elder-serving organizations and has developed criteria that determine whether an elder-serving organization is "LGBT-friendly." This enables Elder Source to be confident in referring LGBT clients to organizations and service-providers who will be most welcoming.

A similar model might be established among youth-serving organizations, enabling providers, educators, health care professionals, counselors and others to connect LGBT youth with services that are welcoming and competent.

A COMMUNITY COALITION

In southern Michigan, Calhoun County Coalition for Inclusion (3Ci) brings together an array of community players who want to create a welcoming, inclusive and affirming community for LGBT youth. Led by Planned Parenthood Mid and South Michigan, 3Ci includes churches, mental health professionals, educators, social service agencies and other community members in the effort.

3Ci started in 2008 and, in its first year, 35 active partners and hundreds more on an email listserv. 3Ci held Calhoun County's first Day of Silence/Break the Silence event in April 2008 and the first-ever Peace Prom in October 2008. These two events signified a new movement in the community to provide safe spaces.

3Ci's strategy is three-fold:

The Faith Action Team engages communities to discuss their roles in supporting LGBT youth;

The Service Referral Team maintains an efficient and culturally sensitive support and referral system specific to the needs of LGBT people.

The Youth Action Team works to support Gay Straight Alliances in schools and work with schools about ensuring safe spaces for everyone.

Source: Planned Parenthood Mid and South Michigan

SERVICES & SUPPORTS

In the three realms addressed in this report --school, health care and home and family -- LGBT youth have clear and specific needs.

All middle and high schools students should have access to a Gay-Straight Alliance that provides a safe place, social network and leadership development opportunities. As the network of GSAs grows, there are great opportunities for broad-scale community engagement and advocacy that will benefit not only the youth involved but the broader community as well.

Philanthropy can encourage the establishment and support of GSAs by supporting those organizations, such as JASMYN, that provide the cultural competency training to educators and help school systems create an environment in which GSAs can flourish. Experience has shown that the presence of those nonprofit entities that effectively partner with public school systems is critical as a conduit for philanthropic investment. In most cases, public institution bureaucracy and regulation create high hurdles for philanthropic investments -- a further argument for building the capacity of LGBT-focused nonprofits

Jacksonville may need to expand the resources and opportunities for LGBT youth to receive basic health screenings and care. Jacksonville should find ways to meet the mental health needs of LGBT youth and broaden awareness of available resources.

LGBT youth and their families need to know what resources are available, both locally and nationally. And LGBT youth in crisis need to know where they can go to receive shelter and assistance if they find themselves in need.

> **PHILANTHROPIC STRATEGIES**
>
> In 2007, the ADAM funding collaborative worked with Funders for LGBTQ Issues to launch a matching grants program designed to support and serve LGBTQ youth. In 2011, the group published lessons learned from the experience. Important lessons included:
>
> - Use youth to advise the grantmaking. That does not mean adding a few youth to an adult committee but creating, educating and empowering a committee of youth to guide the grantmaking.
> - Use matching grants. Their capacity to leverage additional dollars *and* engage more people is substantial.
> - Make small grants. Small grants with a matching component redistribute power and ownership and can enhance sustainability.[1]

LGBT-Led Families

While it is not uncommon for communities to address the needs of the straight family with an LGBT child or member, it is less common for communities to focus on the needs of LGBT-led families -- those households headed by an LGBT individual that include other family members, most typically children.

These families have many of the same needs as straight families, but with the overlay of concerns about LGBT acceptance, understanding and support.

HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS?

While local data on LGBT-led households is not readily available, a review of various reports provides some insight.

- The U.S. Census reports that between 2010-2012, Duval County had 8,366 households identified as "family" households in which there were two unmarried partners; sexual orientation is not specified.
- The Census Bureau also reports that in 2010 between 1.7% and 4% of all Florida households were same-sex households; at that rate between 5,800-13,200 households in Duval County would be same-sex households.
- The Census reports that in the nation, 18.1% of same-sex households have children present, with children more likely to be present in female-female households (24%) than male-male (11%) households. That would suggest than between 1,000-2,500 same-sex households in Duval County have children present.

LGBT PARENTING IN THE U.S.

Highlights from a 2013 study by The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law:

- An estimated 3 million LGBT Americans have had a child and as many as 6 million American children and adults have an LGBT parent.
- Among those under age 50 who are living alone or with a spouse or partner, nearly half of LGBT women (48%) are raising a child under age 18 along with a fifth of LGBT men (20%).
- Same-sex couples raising children are four times more likely than their different-sex counterparts to be raising an adopted child; same-sex couples are six times more likely than their different-sex counterparts to be raising foster children.
- Same-sex couple parents and their children are more likely to be racial and ethnic minorities.
- LGBT individuals and same-sex couples raising children evidence some economic disadvantage: Single LGBT adults raising children are three times more likely than comparable non-LGBT individuals to report household incomes near the poverty threshold; the median annual household income of same-sex couples with children under age 18 in the home is lower than comparable different-sex couples ($63,900 versus $74,000, respectively).

OUR COMMUNITY

There are no known formal organizations locally that focus on providing support to LGBT-led families.

In May 2013, Jacksonville LGBT Families was established on the social media site MeetUp. Organizers said they were "creating this group to be able to connect with other LGBT families with children in the Jacksonville, FL area." Currently with 39 members, the site serves as a bulletin board for various social events occurring across Jacksonville. It also is a gateway for newcomers to Jacksonville to connect with the LGBT community.

"Hi! My family is planning to relocate to Jacksonville this summer. We are looking forward to meeting new people and making friends," wrote Alicia on April 30, 2014.

In March, Nicole wrote: "Hello, my name is Nicole. My partner (Colleen) and I have two children, Walker 6 and Etta 2. We are moving to the Jacksonville area in March."

The site allows discussion on specific topics and connection with other community organizations. But its greatest value is in building the network.

RESOURCES IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

The importance of networking for LGBT-led families is evident across communities. Rainbow Families & Friends - The Villages, for instance, connects LGBT residents of The Villages communities in Central Florida for social and recreational activities. Rainbow Families DC similarly provides networking and social opportunities for its members.

But some organizations go beyond networking. Rainbow Families DC, for instance, offers an eight-week class for LGBT prospective parents, as well as adoption support groups and donor insemination support groups.

In Los Angeles, the LA Gay & Lesbian Center provides a full range of services for the LGBT community, from health to legal services and arts & culture programming. Its Parents & Family Services unit provides social events, training, learning opportunities and a library, advocacy and social justice supports and neighborhood and family networks. From hosting a Rainbow Family Camp to Project Fatherhood for GBTQ fathers, the Center touches on the full range of needs of LGBT-led families.

"We help families with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents build strong, vibrant communities," according to the Center. "Your children can meet others with experiences like their own while you create a support system among a diverse group of LGBT parents."

Closer to home, the 32-year-old Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Central Florida – The Center – now hosts the Orlando Gay Parents group, which seeks to:

- Offer our kids the opportunity to get to know children from similar families;
- Exchange insight and advice from personal experiences in various situations such as adoption and other legal procedures, pregnancy, and child-rearing;
- Provide a social atmosphere for non-traditional families to get together and have fun.

South Florida Family Pride, based in Boca Raton, is a volunteer organization offering "support, advocacy and fun for LGBT families in South Florida. The organization welcomes LGBT families at "all stages of parenting, including soon-to-be, wanna-be, single parents and those identifying as LGBT with children from previous marriages or relationships."

The Family Equality Council, a national organization based in Boston, represents LGBT parents and their children "to ensure that all families are respected, loved, and celebrated—including families with parents who are LGBT. " The Council maintains a directory of parent groups, provides advocacy and support on issues of concern to LGBT-led families and tracks the state of laws that affect LGBT Americans state-by state, issue by issue.

Opportunities for Philanthropic Support

The absence of structured entities working in the field creates challenges for those wishing to provide philanthropic support to LGBT-led families. As with support for LGBT youth, addressed earlier in this report, the question of where to invest is vexing.

While both JASMYN and PFLAG provide support to the broader LGBT community in Jacksonville, neither focuses particularly on the concerns of LGBT-led families.

Among mainstream organizations, those providing general support to families include the YMCA, Jewish Community Alliance and various neighborhood and community associations, many of which are all-volunteer and/or unincorporated entities. Are there opportunities to ensure that organizations such as the YMCA are welcoming to LGBT-led families and, perhaps, offer resources specific to their needs?

Given the economic disadvantage of LGBT-led families cited by the Williams Institute research, are there opportunities to ensure that organizations such as Family Foundations and others, which provide financial counseling and financial literacy training, are welcoming and accessible to LGBT-led families?

Finally, are there opportunities to work with youth development organizations, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, and youth health service providers, such as the Duval County Medical Society, to ensure that the children of LGBT parents receive the support and care that they need to thrive?

As always, the challenge for philanthropy is to be clear about what it wishes to accomplish and be responsible about identifying organizations appropriate to the task.