

PREVENTING SUICIDE AMONG LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER & QUESTIONING YOUTH: 2016 POLICY PRIORITIES

LGBTQ YOUTH SUICIDE

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth ages 10–24.ⁱ
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are *four times more likely* to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers.ⁱⁱ
- Nearly *half of all transgender youth have seriously considered attempting suicide*, and approximately a quarter have attempted.ⁱⁱⁱ
- LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are *nearly eight and a half times more likely* to have attempted suicide than LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.^{iv}

OUR MISSION

- The Trevor Project seeks to end suicide among gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people.
- As the nation's leading suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ youth, we serve nearly 200,000 young people every year through our lifeline, chat and text services; a safe social networking site; and our educational programs.
- Trevor runs the only 24 hour accredited suicide hotline specifically for LGBTQ youth.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- The Trevor Project has outlined the top policy priorities that can greatly ameliorate suicidal risk factors and create a sociopolitical atmosphere that supports LGBTQ youth.
- We look forward to working with the new presidential administration to enact these critical changes.



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FEDERAL PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

Increase federal funding for LGBTQ-competent suicide prevention

- Reauthorize the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (S.1299 & H.R.938). This is the nation's most important source of funding for suicide prevention and intervention services. It provides the biggest source of funding for states and tribes and colleges and universities. Funds can be used to provide mental health services, outreach, education and training.
- Increase overall funding for suicide prevention crisis lines by \$55 million and ensure that the Suicide Prevention Resource Center and other national suicide prevention organizations are funded.

Increase federal funding of suicide prevention research, especially LGBTQ-focused research

- Fund suicide prevention research at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) at \$125 million and ensure that there is allocated funding for research on LGBT people and suicide prevention programs for LGBT youth.

Improve data collection on suicide and LGBTQ youth

- Ensure federal/state surveys that measure suicidal ideation and suicide education and prevention include demographic questions on sexual orientation and gender identity, including the Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System (YRBS) survey in all states that administer it.
- Ensure that the National Violent Death Report System, which includes suicides, collects information on the sexual orientation and gender identity of decedents. The NVDRS is currently piloting a program for death investigators to collect this information, which will be the first ever data reported relating to completed suicides in the LGBTQ community.
- Fully fund the NVDRS by appropriating \$25 million to fully fund data collection from all 50 States (states needing to be added to NVDRS include AL, AR, CA, DE, DC, FL, ID, LA, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, ND, SD, TN, TX, WV, WY).



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PENDING LEGISLATION OF HIGH PRIORITY

While these bills do not explicitly deal with suicide, the issues addressed such as homelessness and conversion therapy are factors that contribute to a young person's risk of suicide.

Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2015 (S.311 & H.R.2902)

Ensures that schools and districts clearly and inclusively address bullying and harassment; adopted policies must include explicit prohibition of bullying and harassment based upon a student's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or religion.

Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2015 (S.439 & H.R.846)

Establishes comprehensive federal protections against discrimination (including forms of bullying and harassment) in the public education system on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act (S.262 & H.R.1779)

Continues funding for community outreach programs that support youth who are living on the streets, provides transitional housing for youth under 22 who need temporary assistance and support services, and offers fully inclusive and integrated services for LGBTQ youth.

Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act of 2015 (S.773 & H.R.1421)

Mandates colleges and universities that receive federal aid to establish an anti-harassment policy that prohibits the harassment of enrolled students based upon their actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion; also require colleges to distribute their anti-harassment policy to all students and employees, including prospective students and employees, upon request.

Therapeutic Fraud Prevention Act (H.R.2450)

Confronts the detriments of so-called "conversion therapy" by prohibiting sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts from being provided in exchange for money.



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STATE-LEVEL PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

The Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control can play a leadership role in establishing the following policy changes:

Ensure states require school districts to have an LGBT-competent suicide prevention policy with funding to properly train teachers

- Given that youth spend a majority of their time at school or school-related functions, schools play a unique role in suicide prevention and intervention. Teachers are often the first to recognize signs of distress in students given their day-to-day interactions. The Trevor Project, in partnership with several other organizations, has produced a Model Policy on Suicide Prevention for use in schools.^v The policy, combined with training for teachers on recognizing the warning signs of suicide are vital strategies that must be implemented to combat LGBTQ youth suicide.

Ensure states and major school districts are asking sexual orientation and gender identity questions on the YRBS

Ensure every state is part of the NVDRS and includes sexual orientation and gender identity questions

Questions regarding this document should be directed to Amy Loudermilk, Associate Director of Government Affairs, at amy.loudermilk@thetrevorproject.org or 202.380.1181

ⁱ CDC, NCIPC. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2010) {2013 Aug. 1}. Available from: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars.

ⁱⁱ CDC. (2011). Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

ⁱⁱⁱ Grossman, A. H. & D'Augelli, A. R. (2007). Transgender youth and life-threatening behaviors. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior* 37(5), 527-527. Retrieved from <http://transformingfamily.org/pdfs/Transgender%20Youth%20and%20Life%20Threatening%20Behaviors.pdf>

^{iv} Family Acceptance Project™. (2009). Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults. *Pediatrics*. 123(1), 346-52.

^v The Trevor Project, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Counseling Association and National Association of School Psychologists. Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention. Available at: <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/modelschoolpolicy>

