

Researchers have found that suicide among gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning youth (GLBTIQQ) is comparatively higher than among the general population (Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes, Hasin).

It is important to note that it is not their sexuality or gender identity that causes this, rather experiences of discrimination, prejudice and misunderstanding because of their sexuality that can lead to feelings of despair, hopelessness and isolation.



This fact sheet provides information about the unique issues faced by the GLBTIQQ population in relation to suicide and highlights some strategies and programs that can help to reduce the rate of death by suicide of people in this community.

Issues relating to suicide in the GLBTIQQ community

- It is difficult for researchers to obtain an accurate picture of the number of GLBTIQQ deaths by suicide as sometimes people may not have disclosed their status to others.
- It has been stated that young GLBTIQQ people are up to six times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexuals
- ABS data shows that homosexual and bisexual people have far higher levels of anxiety disorders than their heterosexual counterparts (31% compared with 14%) and more than triple the rate of depression and related disorders (19% compared with 6%).
- Young people who are not confident about their sexuality may engage in risk-taking or self-destructive behaviours such as drug taking, self-harm or social withdrawal (e.g. truancy/homelessness).
- Issues may arise around funerals/memorial services when a GLBTIQQ person has taken their own life but has not yet fully 'come out' to those around them, or their family has been unsupportive/un-accepting of their sexual orientation or identity.

What programs and providers are making a difference?

According to Hillier. L. (2007), when people belong to a group that allows them to socialise and engage in activities with other GLBTIQQ people, they feel less isolated and alienated and ultimately feel better about their sexuality. There are a number of programs and providers that are specifically focusing on improving outcomes for this group, some of which include:

- ACON: Australia's largest community-based gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) health and HIV/AIDS organisation. Their objective is to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for this community. Their programs include counselling services, housing services, drug and alcohol services and education programs. Contact: www.acon.org.au.
- The Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service: a volunteer-based organisation that provides free anonymous telephone counselling, "coming out" groups, "smart substance abuse" groups, training in communication skills and access to face-to-face counsellors to members of the GLBT communities. They are based in Sydney but will also take calls from outside Sydney metro areas. Contact: 1800 144 527

- Minus18: based in Melbourne, this is a safe space for young gay teens to meet and socialise with each other. Their website has a range of resources aimed at helping teens with bullying, “coming out” and links to support services. Contact: www.minus18.org.au
- Twenty10: an organisation for young (under 26's) same sex attracted youth. They provide medium-term accommodation, information, resources and referrals, groups and activities, family support services, counselling, individual support, advocacy and rural support. Contact: 1800 65 2010

What can you do to help?

Suicide prevention:

- Be an advocate for the GLBTIQQ community by educating yourself on the issues they face and sharing your knowledge with others.
- Examining your own beliefs about sexuality and sexual identity and being open-minded.
- Become aware of bullying or homophobic activities around you and be willing to report the behavior of others if required.

Bereavement support:

- Understand that the grief experience for family and friends may be greatly complicated by other issues (e.g. ‘coming out’, social and cultural acceptance etc.).
- Provide links to community support services that may be able to assist survivors in the local area.
- Be aware that those in grief may also be at risk and be ready to provide the necessary support if required.



Useful resources and websites

- www.livingisforeveryone.com.au/Links
- <http://www.opendoors.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Open-Doors-Suicide-Prevention-Project-Final-Report.pdf>
- <http://www.notsotraight.com.au/>
- <http://www.suicidepreventionstudies.org/uploads/ANESSI%20Report%20Publication.pdf>
- <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/factsheets/fact-sheet-14-suicide.pdf>
- <http://www.lgbthealth.org.au/>

Contact Us:

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