

Homelessness and the Unmet Service Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth – Results from the Electronic Survey

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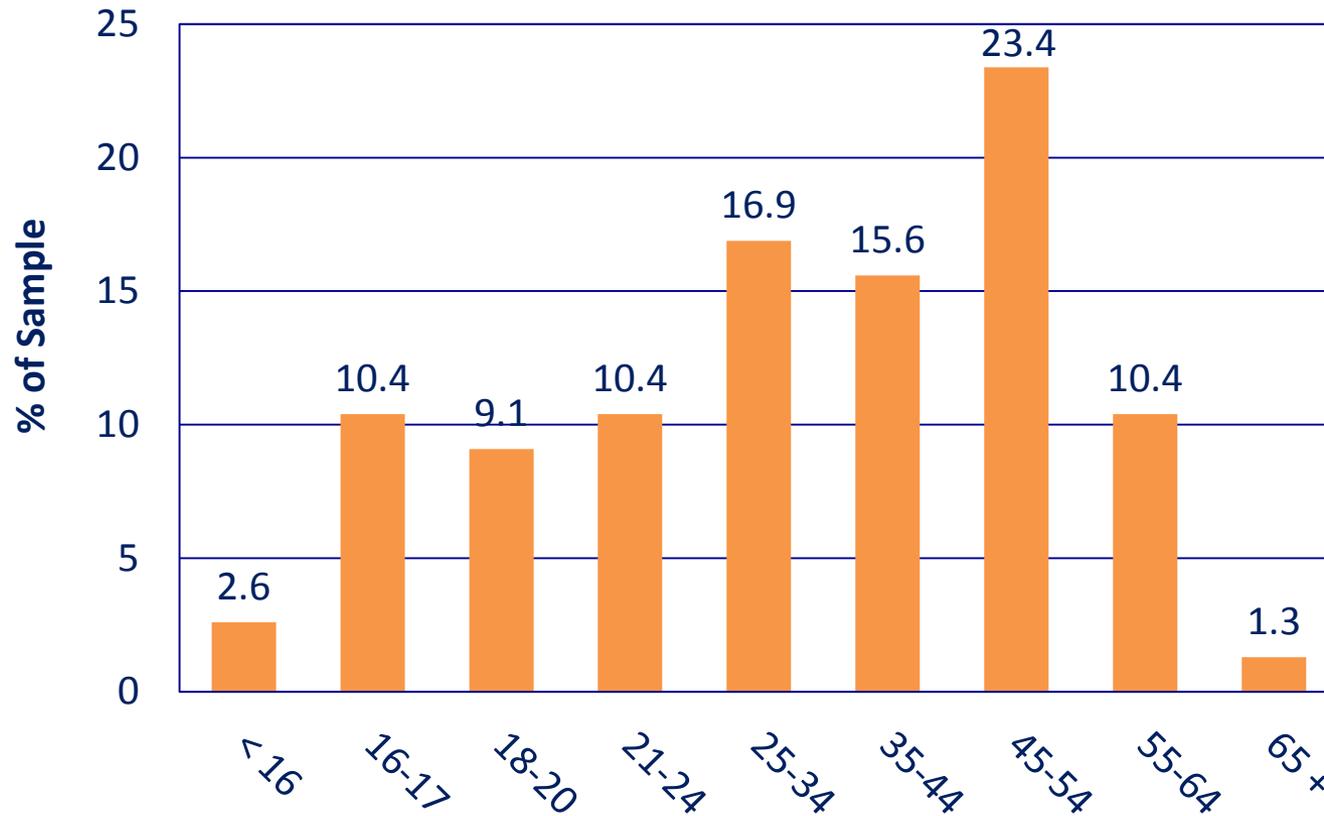
Survey Results

- Sample Characteristics
- Problems faced by LGBTQ youth and young adults in Central New York
- LGBTQ youth and young adult risk of homelessness
- Issues affecting homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults
- Issues specific to trans* youth
- Barriers to service use
- Additional services and suggested agency changes
- Conclusion

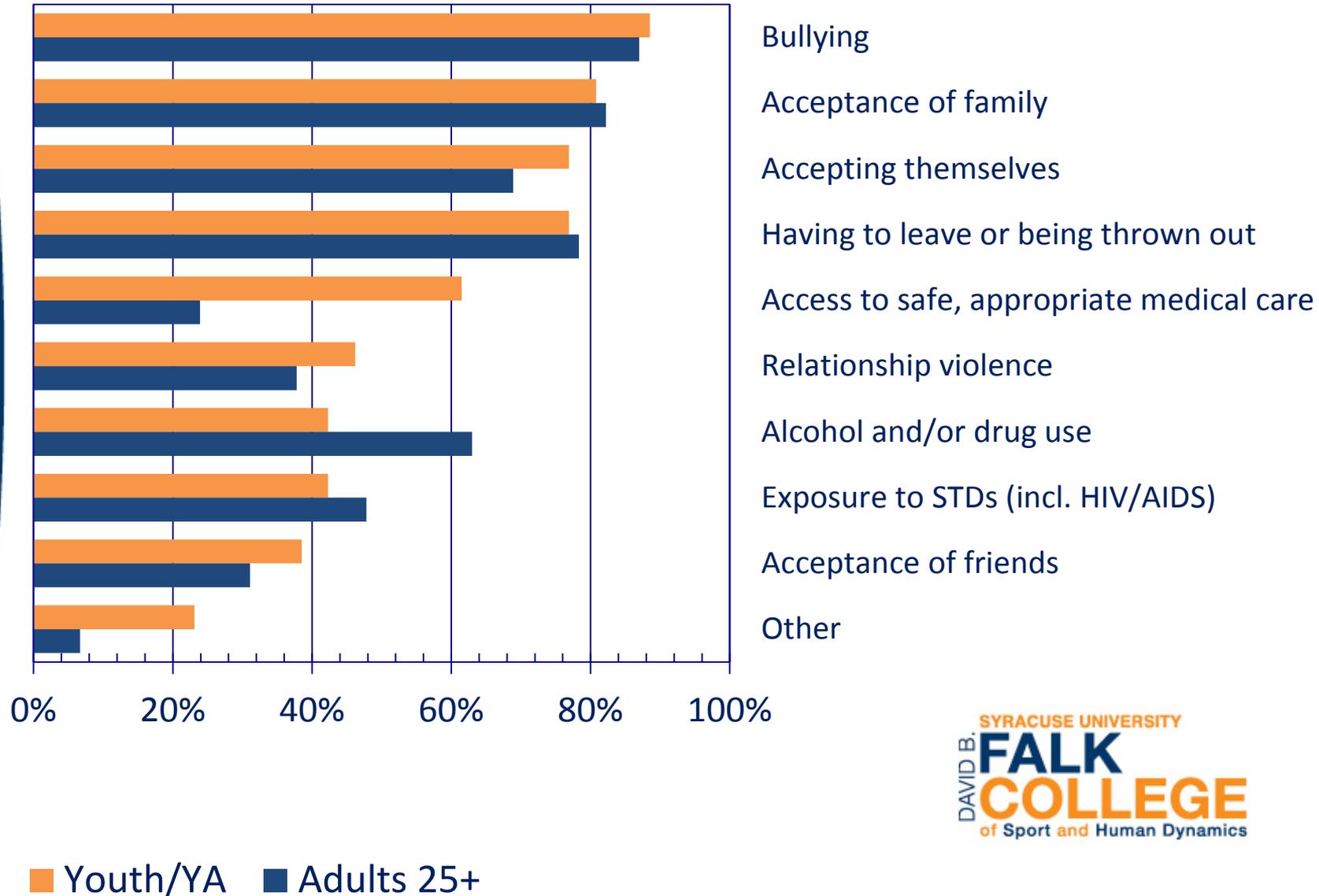
Survey Sample Characteristics

- 72 surveys completed (64% completion rate)
 - Ten participants younger than 18
 - Seven between 18 and 20 years of age
 - Six LGBTQ participants report a history of homelessness
- 75% from Onondaga County
- 45% urban
- 57% female
- 44% heterosexual, 20% lesbian or gay, 29% other definitions
- 80% white, 8% African American
- 59% bachelor's level or more

Survey Participants by Age



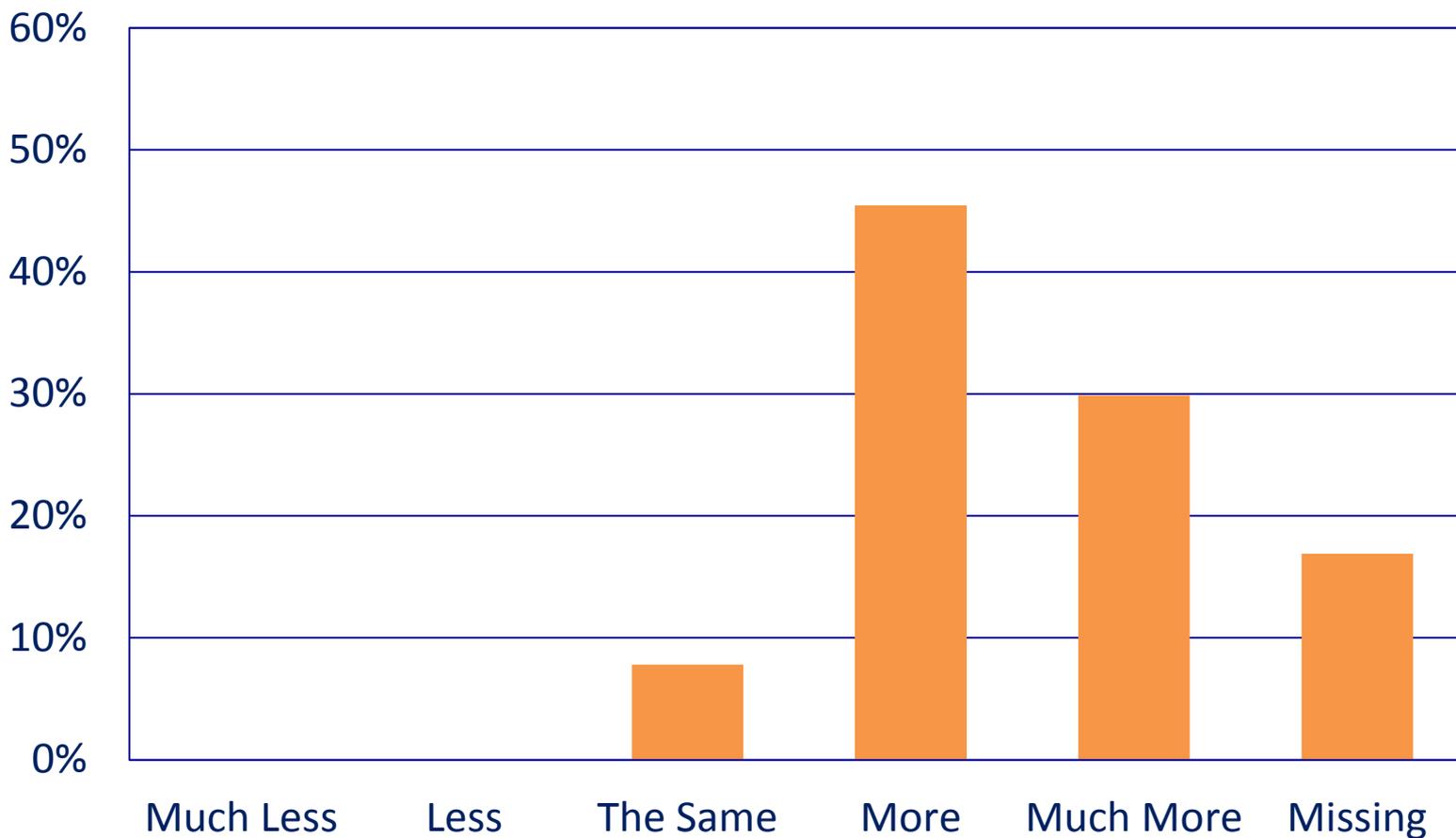
More Important Problems Faced by LGBTQ Youth and Young Adults in Our Community



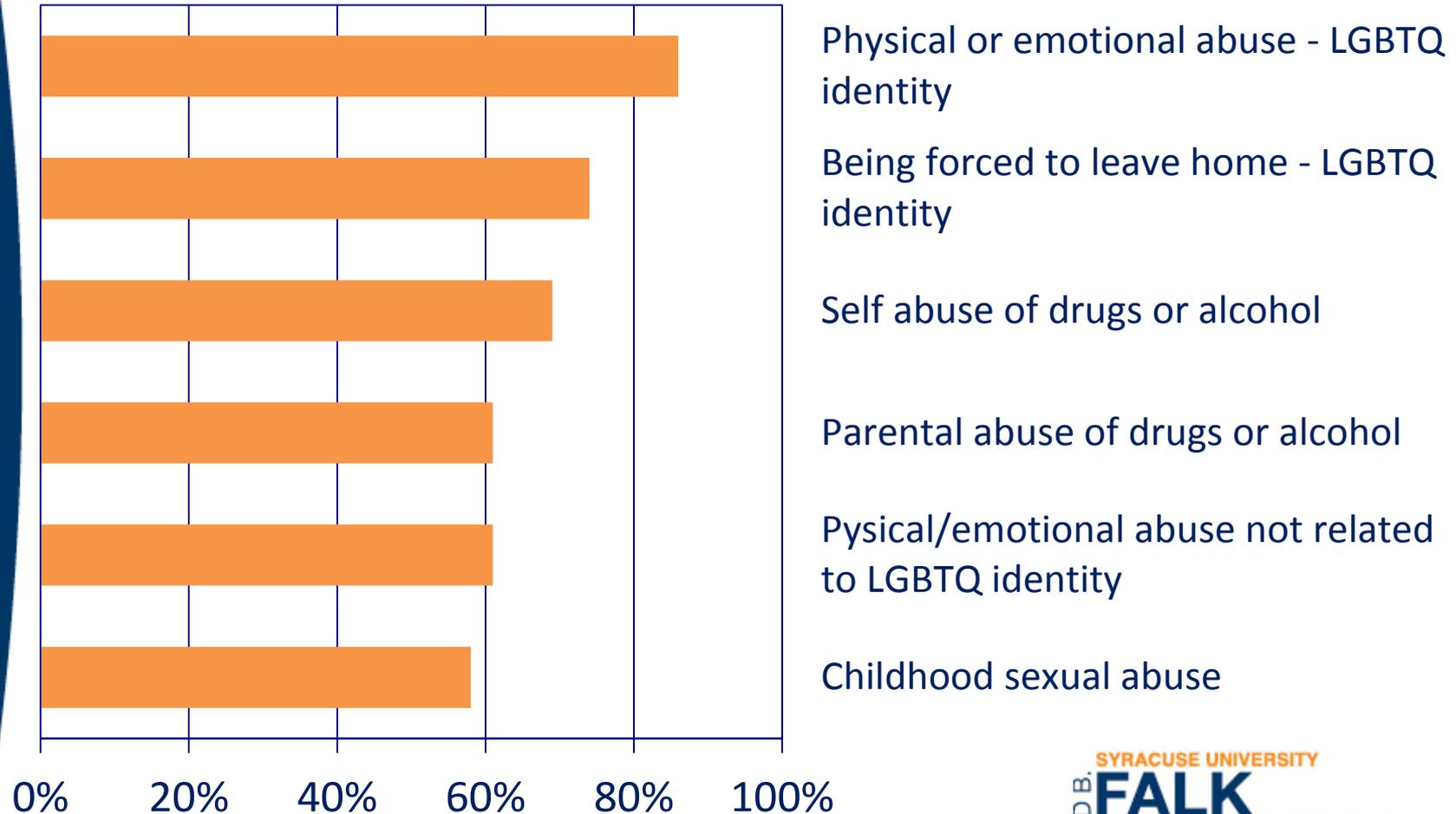
Other Problems Faced by LGBTQ Youth and Young Adults

- Youth responses:
 - Lack of support
 - Mental health issues
 - Stereotypes
 - Need for trans* supportive school administrators
 - Access to employment opportunities
 - Transportation issues
 - Religious discrimination
 - Non-safe homeless shelters
- Adult responses:
 - Suicidal tendencies
 - Emotional abuse and boundary issues
 - Use of facilities in school buildings

Risk that LGBTQ Youth and Young Adults Will Experience Some Period of Homelessness



Issues Putting LGBTQ Youth at Risk for Homelessness or Unstable Housing



Issues Affecting Homeless LGBTQ Youth or Young Adults in Our Community

“Agencies’ unwillingness to be open and culturally competent when it comes to LGBTQ issues.”

“Lack of emotional support, which can lead to engaging in unsafe or unhealthy activities to get emotional support or to deal with the lack of it (i.e., unsafe sexual practices, sex work, criminal activity, self-harm, abusive relationships).”

“...places [that] may house gay youth (even though their mission statement is not inclusive); many there are not trained on diversity and because of this gay youth staying in such facilities are at risk.”

“Suburban areas have fewer resources and higher rent. Case-management and other support services are hard for students to follow through with due to transportation.”

Survival Sex and HIV in Trans* Youth

“We know that a high percentage of our homeless trans* youth, in particular trans* females of color, are engaging in sex work in the city. In recent months, two of these youth have tested positive for HIV, but are not accessing health care due to barriers associated with being a minor. We are concerned that we will see more of these young people end up contracting HIV and feel strongly that prevention efforts need to include meeting the basic needs of homeless LGBTQ young people (food, shelter, clothing, emotional support).”

“Trans* youth who have no home and no way to fund their transition will turn to sex work to raise the money.”

Failure to Reach Young Trans* Women of Color

“The studies done of this community and the work done by service organizations fail miserably when it comes to reaching young trans* women of color who are most at risk for homelessness, violence & HIV. There is a way to reach them but it isn't thru schools, internet or service organizations.”

Barriers to Service Use

- Two-thirds of service providers report providing activities/programs/services specific to LGBTQ youth or young adults
- Almost 80% of agencies who provide these services believe they are not being used by all clients who might benefit from them

"I work with teens and tweens so the main barrier is transportation and support from their parents and guardians. Many families go through denial and students must get support through school counseling or go through it alone. They appreciate the LGBTQ youth center if they are able to get to it."

Barriers to Service Use

- Barriers vary depending on locale - in the rural areas that do not have LGBTQ health outposts, participants report greater stigma attached to being LGBTQ, and lack of services for this population.
- Insufficient safe spaces for LGBTQ youth to congregate.
- Transportation challenges.
- Lack of knowledge and/or understanding among LGBTQ youth, and in the general public.
- Schools need to promote community resources for this population, and not all schools are supportive of their LGBTQ students.
- Unstable housing also serves as a barrier to accessing available programs and services.

Additional Services Needed

- Majority of service providers felt there were additional activities, programs, or services that might benefit their LGBTQ clients.
- Multiple sources recommend **case management services** for LGBTQ youth and young adults, and also talk about how difficult it is for suburban youth to access these services.

“Education for adults and educators in our building. Advocacy for student rights.”

“Emergency shelter, housing assistance, independent living skills, individual and family counseling, food pantry/nutritional assistance, personal care items pantry.”

“...access to appropriate medical care, safe space, access to education, and support advocacy.”

Additional Services Needed

“Not specific to LGBTQ youth but I feel counseling services within the agency would be helpful... instead of being referred out to other programs... Often these youth [do not] receive counseling services in a timely manner.”

“Not sure, exactly, but it seems like we do need more support here.”

“LGBTQ specific groups”

“More outreach into the rural areas and small towns.”

“...would like to have a foundation for ongoing support and not have to worry about patch-working funds together. More health programs, a home specifically for LGBTQ youth with an affirming staff. Emergency housing. An onsite health clinic.”

Changes to Agency to better provide for LGBTQ Youth/Young Adult Clients?

“I would like to see LGBTQ services provided to Cortland County.”

“Education for all adults in the building. A change in policy regarding bathroom/facility use for transgender youth.”

“Satellites. The area the agency exists in is too far away for the at-risk youth to benefit from.”

“I wish I could access rental subsidies for the youth and young adults in order to assist them in finding and securing safe and affordable housing.”

“Increase staffing and programming to include additional drop-in hours at night and on weekends. Installation of a washer/dryer so homeless youth could wash their belongings in a safe place. Develop a relationship with the Food Bank of CNY to provide nutrition assistance to homeless youth.”

Changes to Agency to better provide for LGBTQ Youth/Young Adult Clients?

Representatives of homeless service agencies were interested in more funding for private bedrooms for LGBTQ clients, or did not feel that they were lacking in appropriate services for this population.

“More funding to be able to provide individual room settings for all youth of all gender and gender identity. Current funding typically forces youth to share a room with members of their biological gender. There is not enough funding to create housing programs where every youth might have their own private bedroom or living space.”

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Conclusion

The primary findings from the electronic survey are:

- The most important issues affecting LGBTQ youth/YA are bullying, family acceptance, self-acceptance, and having to leave home.
- The two issues believed to most likely put LGBTQ youth at risk of homelessness are parental physical or emotional abuse because of LGBTQ identity and being forced to leave home because of LGBTQ identity.
- Service providers believe LGBTQ youth would benefit from case management services, particularly rural and suburban youth.
- Both LGBTQ youth and service providers mentioned the need for LGBTQ-specific shelters or safe and stable housing beyond shelters.

Thank You

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