

Connecticut for Healthy LGBTQ Youth

The Connecticut State Department of Education and the Department of Public Health are partnering with the American Psychological Association (APA) as a pilot state for the **Healthy Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Questioning (LGBQ) Students Project**. This project is working to create and ensure a safe and nurturing school climate for LGBQ youth in families, and schools and communities, while **reducing risk behaviors so they can develop emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually into healthy adults.**

Teen sexual behavior, weapon-related violence, substance abuse, and suicidality are certainly among the predominant public health concerns in our nation. However, these same concerns for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youth are particularly alarming. As a group, adolescents who are experiencing same-sex attraction or behavior appear to be at increased risk for a number of health and mental health outcomes when compared to their heterosexual peers. For example: recent data released by the Centers for Disease Control found that young men who have sex with men accounted for 34% of all new AIDS cases among 13 to 24-year olds. Black and Latino sexually active young men are at particular risk for HIV infection. Research also indicates that adolescent females that identify as lesbian or bisexual, or who are questioning their sexual orientation, are at an increased risk of unintended pregnancy.



To best address these concerns for high-school-aged LGBQ youth, **Connecticut has selected and trained a cadre of trainers** consisting of school nurses, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists to (1) **increase the capacity** of professionals to provide health and mental health services specifically addressing the needs of LGBQ students; (2) **encourage consistency** in the use of interventions and service opportunities for LGBQ youth that have proven to reduce risk behaviors and that promote healthy outcomes for youth; and (3) **increase connections** between support services and the LGBQ population.

Professional development is currently being conducted statewide as well as on the school district level. These professional development sessions **train school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, and school nurses in specific modules that provide research-based information and strategies for best addressing the physical and emotional health issues of LGBQ youth.**

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