



LGBTQ Youth and Suicide Prevention

Know the Facts

Societal pressures may make it difficult for many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth to feel safe or accepted. For example, in the national survey conducted by The Trevor Project, two thirds of LGBTQ youth reported that someone tried to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹ A survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that high school youth who identified as bisexual, gay, or lesbian were more than three times as likely in the past year to have seriously considered suicide, to have made a suicide plan, or to have attempted suicide than their heterosexual peers.²

Recognize the Need for Mental Health Support

In light of these statistics, it is crucial to support suicide prevention among LGBTQ youth and young adults—and they are open to such support. The Trevor Project's national survey reported, "76% of LGBTQ youth indicated that they would be likely to reach out for help via text or chat during a crisis."³ The Crisis Text Line recently released data indicating that 75% of their texters were under 25 years old and that 44% of their total 129 million text messages were from individuals who identified as LGBTQ.⁴ Clearly, LGBTQ youth and young adults are seeking support.

Whether you are a friend, a relative, or a member of the LGBTQ community (or all of these), you have concrete ways to help support LGBTQ youth and young adults.

Be an Ally to LGBTQ Youth

- Foster open communication:
 - » Actively listen without judgment
 - » Check in often
 - » Reassure them that it's okay to talk about their feelings
 - » Emphasize to them that you care and there is help
- Promote self-care for LGBTQ people. Encourage them to:
 - » Remember they are not alone
 - » Build their support network
 - » Talk to someone who understands LGBTQ perspectives
- Advocate for policies that support LGBTQ youth:
 - » Establish and support Gay-Straight Alliances, which studies have shown to protect LGBTQ students against depression and suicide⁵

1 The Trevor Project. (2019). *National survey on LGBTQ youth mental health 2019* (p. 3). Retrieved from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2019.pdf>

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. (2017). High school YRBS: Youth online [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/>

3 The Trevor Project. (2019). *National survey on LGBTQ youth mental health* (p. 6). Retrieved from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2019.pdf>

4 The Crisis Text Line. (2020). *Everybody hurts: The state of mental health in America*. Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e332cca19acf37759297614/t/5e404e9a4b6b8940eead303d/1581272741162/Everybody+Hurts+2020.pdf>

5 Ioverno, S., Belsler, A. B., Baiocco, R., Grossman, A. H., & Russell, S. T. (2016). The protective role of gay-straight alliances for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning students: A prospective analysis. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 3(4), 397.



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Look for and Respond to Signs of Potential Risk

If someone is:

- Talking about feeling trapped or being in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of drugs or alcohol
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

Take the following steps:

1. Reach out to the person and ask how they are doing.
2. Mention that you have noticed changes in the person's behavior and are concerned.
3. Listen to what is happening in their life.
4. Suggest that the person talk with a crisis line counselor or a mental health professional who supports LGBTQ people.

Look for and Respond to Signs of Immediate Suicide Risk

If someone is:

- Talking about feeling hopeless, having no reason to live, or being a burden to others
- Talking about wanting to die, be dead, or end their life
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or obtaining a gun

Take the following steps right away:

1. If the danger for self-harm seems imminent, call 9-1-1.
 - Otherwise, contact a mental health professional or The Trevor Lifeline at 866-488-7386.
2. Stay with the person (or make sure another caring person stays with them in a private, secure place) until you can get further help.
 - Provide any relevant information you may have about the person to those who are managing the crisis.
3. Keep in contact with the person after the crisis to provide support and follow-up.

Trevor Lifeline

1-866-488-7386

Trained counselors are available 24/7 for any young person who is in crisis, feels suicidal, or needs a safe and judgment free place to talk.

Resources for LGBTQ Communities and Allies

- **The Trevor Project** provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention support services to LGBTQ youth: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
- **GLSEN** is an education organization working to end discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in K-12 schools: <https://www.glsen.org/>
- **Trans Lifeline** offers a hotline and also connects transgender people to resources and the community support they need: <https://www.translifeline.org/>
- **The Family Acceptance Project** works to prevent health and mental health risks for LGBTQ youth, including suicide: <https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>



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