Transitional Living Programs for At-Risk Runaway and Homeless Youth: Comprehensive Care for the Most Vulnerable LGBTQ Youth and Young Adults

KIMBERLY FULLER, PH.D., MSW, M.ED
CATHLEEN LEWANDOWSKI, PH.D
BENJAMIN WENGER, MBA, MSSA
Importance of Project

• A disproportionate number of LGBT youth, or about 320,000 to 400,000 experience homelessness each year in the U.S. (Quintana, Rosenthal, & Krehely, 2010)

• LGBT youth comprise about 30 – 45% of youth served by homeless youth serving agencies (Durso & Gates 2012)

• Little is known about the causes, correlates and consequences of homelessness among LGBTQ youth (Keuroghlian, Shtasel, & Bassuk, 2014)

• LGBT youth who are homeless have high rates of mental health and substance use problems. Suicidal acts, violent victimization, and range of HIV risk (Tyler 2013)
Importance of Project

- LGBT youth who are also racial minorities may perceive multiple micro-aggressions (Gattis & Larson, 2017)
  - May contribute to depressive symptoms and suicidality
  - Important for mental health professionals to understand the impact of subtle yet pervasive attitudes regarding heterosexism, gender normativity, and racism may affect mental health outcomes among homeless youth

- Many transgender and gender-expansive young people live outside of mainstream society (Shelton & Bond, 2017)
  - Structural barriers limit access to employment, health care, education, and public accommodations
  - Prejudice and discrimination within families and communities
Importance of Project

• An exploratory study of LGBT youth in a transitional living program (Forge, 2012):
  • Majority of youth chose to leave their home of origin
  • Experienced verbal and physical abuse by a parent
  • They reported depression and anxiety

• While in the transitional living program low occurrences of:
  • Having sexual partners
  • Doing sex work
  • Substance abuse
  • Suicidal ideation and attempts

• Though a growing body of research examines LGBT youth homelessness, gaps in knowledge about the specific experiences of transgender and gender-expansive homeless youth remain
Bellefaire JCB

• Est. 1868 as a Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum

• Today: Array of Services
  • Residential, Foster Care, Adoption, Outpatient, Drug and Alcohol, School Based Counseling, Autism, Educational Programs

• 1999 – On-Site and Scattered Site Transitional Living Program

• www.bellefairejcb.org
LGBTQ Demonstration Program - Overview

Federal Demonstration Grant (FYSB)

Purpose:

◦ “24 month project to implement, enhance, and/or support a framework or model that incorporates promising strategies for the effective transition of homeless youth and/or young adults to self-sufficiency.”
Admission Criteria

- Ages 16-21 & Self-Identifies as LGBTQ.
- Homeless, unstably housed, or at risk of homelessness.
- Varying degrees of behavioral and/or emotional problems that have interfered with client’s growth, development, and overall functioning in key areas of client’s life, such as peer/family relations and school.
- In need of independent living skills’ training outside a family setting.
- Willing to maintain a job.
- Not an active danger to self or others.
- Willing and able to maintain an educational and/or vocational program.
- Commitment to abstain from drug and alcohol use; understanding of TLP as a drug and alcohol-free environment.
- Able to live in a coed facility.
- Able to function safely in the community.
- IQ level above severe to profound MR/DD range.
- Willing to meet with case manager 2x per week (including a weekly group session).
Demographics

- 25% (3) 18 years old
- 33% (4) 19 years old
- 42% (5) 20 years old
Demographics

Sexual Identity

- 59% (7) Heterosexual
- 8% (1) Bisexual
- 8% (1) Gay
- 25% (3) Lesbian
Demographics

Gender

- 83% (10) Cisgender
- 17% (2) Transgender
Demographics

Race/Ethnicity

- 75% (9) Black
- 17% (2) Bi-racial
- 8% (1) Unknown

Legend:
- Black
- Bi-racial
- Unknown
Demographics

Prior to Program

- With Family: 33% (4)
- With Relative: 25% (3)
- Couch Surfing: 25% (3)
- With Friends: 17% (2)
Family Life

• Distant \((n = 8)\)
• Chaotic \((n = 5)\)
• Parents had MH issues \((n = 6)\)
• Parents had AOD issues \((n = 6)\)
School

- Five participants enrolled in 12\textsuperscript{th} grade
- Two participants enrolled in 9\textsuperscript{th} grade
- Five participants were not enrolled
- Four participants enrolled in 0-5 schools
- Five participants enrolled in 6+ schools
Abuse HX

• Physical abuse
  • Three by family
  • Three by others

• Emotional abuse
  • Five by family
  • Six by others

• Sexual abuse
  • None by family
  • Seven by others

• Neglect
  • Six by family
Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Intake Mean</th>
<th>6-Month Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ Casey</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Intake Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schwarzer Self-Efficacy Scale</td>
<td>32.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Ohio Scales- Intake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>Mostly unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>Mostly happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort with Power</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>Mostly uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others can effect community</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>Mostly think that change is possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism about life</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>Somewhat optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying anger as a method</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>Somewhat empowered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency/Intensity Symptoms</td>
<td>28.70</td>
<td>A little distressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider assessment of functioning</td>
<td>34.79</td>
<td>Moderate functioning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANSA-T: Resolved from Intake @ 6-Months

- Family relationships
- Residential stability
- School
- Social Functioning
- Recreational
- Intimate Relationships
- Independent Living
- Optimism
# ANSA-T: Unresolved from Intake @ 6-Months

- Sleep
- Family Support
- Interpersonal
- Vocational
- Coping and Savoring Skills
- Talents/Interests
- Spiritual/Religious
- Community Life
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Adjustment to Trauma
- Neglect
- Parental Criminal Behavior*
School/Work Progress

• More than half were enrolled in school-making progress or finishing
• All youth had at least one job
• Several youth were currently employed still
• Other progress with signing up for benefits/food stamps/progress in therapy
Lessons Learned

• Received Referrals from different sources
  • Charter Schools providing online education

• Clinical Intensity of Youth once housed
  • LGBTQ Status is not primary

• Deficiency in social skills and life skills

• Job retention / educational attendance = not priority

• LGBTQ Resources available (Pride Clinic, Legal Services, etc.)
Lessons Learned Cont...

• Importance of Community Partnership
• Assistance with Budgeting and Savings (*Opportunity Passport Program*)
• Importance of Warm Transfers to other services
• Success is measured by other variables besides housing.
• Services & Housing go hand in hand
Next Steps

• Learn ways to empower youth to take responsibility
• Partnering and Collaborating with existing employment resources
• Collaborate with LGBT Center for mentoring relationships
References


