

Suicide Prevention in LGBTQ+ Youth

Risks, Recommendations, Resources & Research for El Paso County Schools

We know that LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning) young people, especially BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), face greater rates of suicidal ideation and attempts than their heterosexual and cisgender peers. These young people rely on adults to create environments that support and protect them. **Schools have a unique opportunity** to interface with these youth, provide resources, and prevent suicide. The measures recommended in this document benefit not only your LGBTQ+ students, but all students within your schools.

Contents

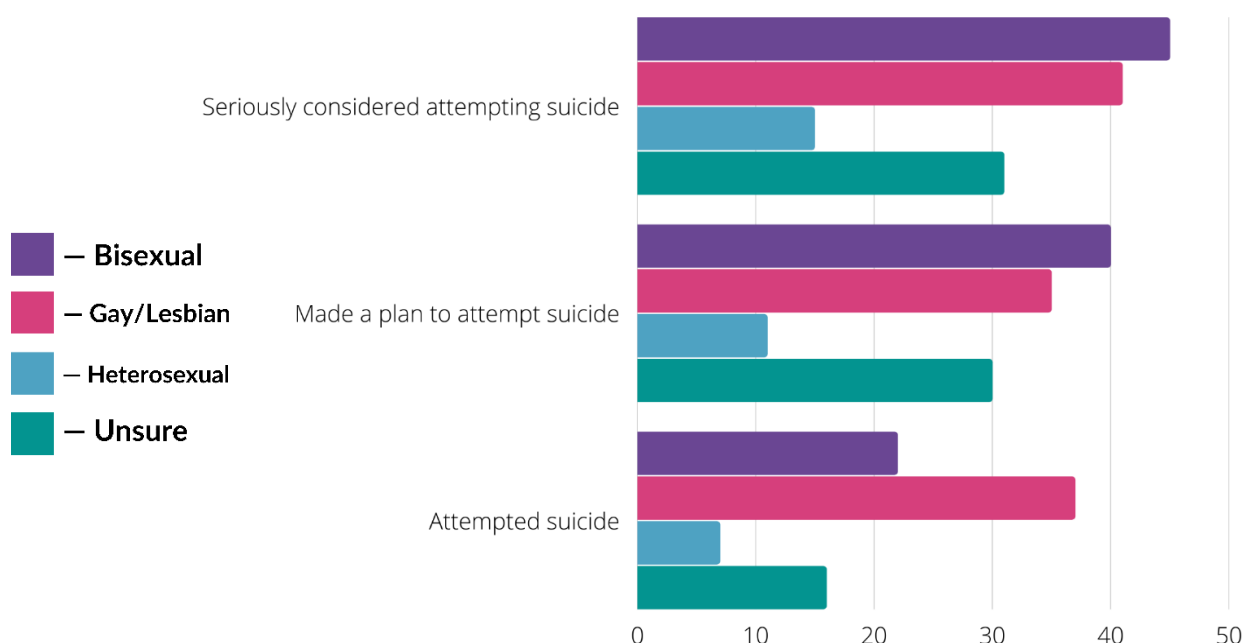
Risks	2
Recommendations	3
Resources	5
Research	5
APPENDIX A: Glossary of terms	7
APPENDIX B: Suicide Prevention Recommendations Poster	8



Risks

According to [El Paso County's Healthy Kids Colorado Survey results of 2019](#), LGB young people, and those who are unsure of their sexual or gender identity, are more likely than their peers to consider attempting suicide, make a plan to attempt suicide, and attempt suicide. (Data are incomplete for transgender youth in each of these categories.)

Percentage of El Paso County youth who...



While the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey data provides an incomplete picture of the challenges facing transgender and nonbinary youth, we can see from national data that conditions are dire for gender-expansive young people.

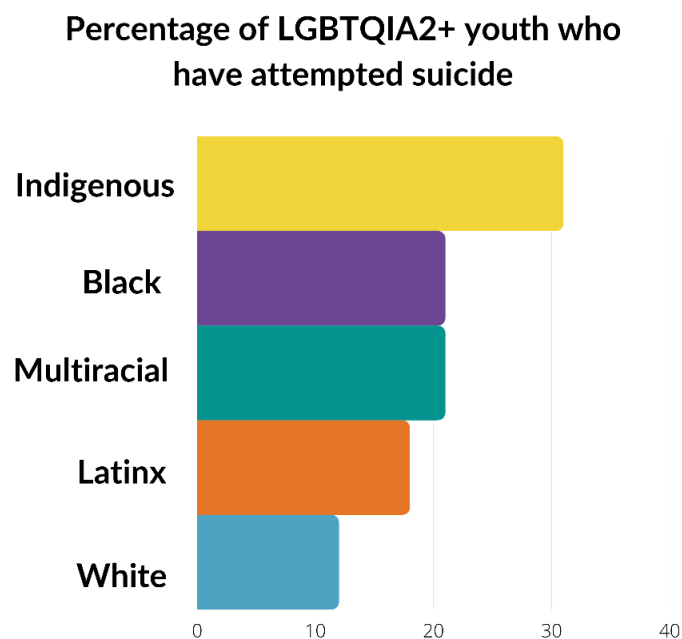
The Trevor Project, a national LGBTQ+ youth-serving organization, conducted a [survey in 2021](#) that found 42% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.

LGBTQ+ young people are overall between four and five times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual and cisgender peers. Discrimination, stigma, a lack of comprehensive sexual education, and increased risk of violence, bullying and substance use all contribute to these numbers.

Each mental health stressor that affects youth, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, creates further challenges for those who already experience discrimination.

LGBTQIA2+ youth who face additional discrimination due to their racial or ethnic identities experience even more pronounced disparities. From [The Trevor Project](#):

According to Children's Hospital Colorado, which declared a state of emergency for youth mental health in 2021, suicide is the leading cause of death for children ages 10-14 in Colorado.



- Native and Indigenous LGBTQIA2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit) youth (31%) attempted suicide at over twice the rate of their white peers (12%)
- Black LGBTQIA+ youth (21%), multiracial LGBTQIA2S+ youth (21%), and Latinx LGBTQIA+ youth (18%) all attempted suicide significantly more than white LGBTQIA+ youth.
- Over 50% of Native and Indigenous LGBTQIA2S+ youth had contemplated suicide.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been adapted directly from the state of Colorado's Suicide Prevention Commission. See full recommendations and supporting research for [LGBTQIA2+ young people here](#), and for [BIPOC young people here](#).

1. Offer evidence-based professional development regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion and anti-racism.
2. Develop and enforce non-discrimination policies that explicitly protect sexual orientation and gender identity.

3. Support Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in schools.
4. Support anti-racist and comprehensive sexual health education in schools.



5. Affirm students' legal right to use their chosen name and pronouns, as well as facilities (such as locker rooms and bathrooms) consistent with their gender identity.

6. Engage LGBTQ+ students in meaningful participation in their schools and communities.

7. Support workforce development to ensure that school-based workforces reflect the populations that they are serving.
8. Collect data through state-wide resources and instruments, such as the [Healthy Kids Colorado Survey and Smart Source](#).
9. Support [restorative justice and transformative justice](#) practices in response to youth substance use, misconduct, and behavioral health situations.
10. Collaborate with youth-serving organizations that intentionally support LGBTQ+ and BIPOC youth.

11. Intentionally seek out input, participation, and leadership from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by building authentic relationships.



12. Raise awareness of suicide prevention and provide community education around mental health.



Resources

[Inside Out Youth Services](#) — Provides programs, a drop-in center, advocacy and more, for and with LGBTQIA2+ youth, ages 13-24.

[Pikes Peak Safe at Schools Coalition](#) — A program of Inside Out, the Coalition is comprised of educators, parents, students and others working to make schools and communities safer for LGBTQIA2+ young people.

[The Suicide Prevention Collaborative of El Paso County](#) — A group of stakeholder organizations working to reduce suicide rates across the county.

[Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention Partnership](#) — Offering support groups, trainings, policy recommendations and more to reduce suicide in the region.

[Colorado Springs PFLAG](#) — A group for parents, friends, and family of LGBTQIA2+ people. Learn to advocate for and support the community.

Research

We recommend the following research for further information on protective factors that decrease the risk of suicide among LGBTQIA2+ and BIPOC young people.

[The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on Youth Mental Health](#)

[Understanding the Mental Health of Transgender and Nonbinary Youth](#) (2020), Journal of Adolescent Mental Health

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey](#)

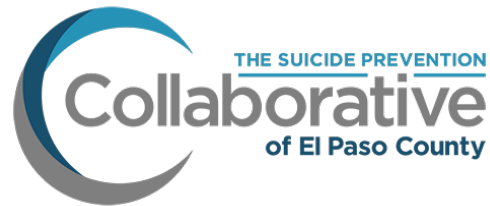
[Chosen Name Use Is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior Among Transgender Youth](#) (2018), Journal of Adolescent Mental Health

[Associations of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning-Inclusive Sex Education With Mental Health Outcomes and School-Based Victimization in U.S. High School Students](#) (2018), Journal of Adolescent Mental Health

[The GSA Study Report from GLSEN \(2021\)](#)

[Improving School Climate for Transgender and Nonbinary Youth, GLSEN \(2021\)](#)

This toolkit was compiled by Inside Out Youth Services in partnership with The Suicide Prevention Collaborative of El Paso County.



APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Cisgender – a person whose sex assigned at birth matches their identity and presentation

Transgender – a person whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth.

Non-binary - An adjective describing a person who identifies as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender expansive - An umbrella term sometimes used to describe people who are outside of gender norms.

Sex assigned at birth -The sex, male, female or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Intersex - term for a composition of anatomy and biology that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female.

Two-spirit – umbrella term traditionally within Native American communities to recognize individuals who possess

qualities of masculinity and femininity and fulfil a third gender social role

Straight/heterosexual – experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of a different gender

Gay – a person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Sometimes refers to men specifically, but women and non-binary people may use this term.

Lesbian – woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.


Bisexual – a person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender and another gender.

Asexual – Often called “ace” for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others.

Queer – an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as straight and/or cisgender







APPENDIX B

SUICIDE PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS POSTER




Recommendations

for prevention of LGBTQ+ youth suicide

- 1.** Develop and enforce non-discrimination policies that explicitly protect sexual orientation and gender identity. 
- 2.** Offer evidence-based professional development regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion and anti-racism. 
- 3.** Support Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in schools. 
- 4.** Support anti-racist and comprehensive sexual health education in schools. 
- 5.** Affirm students' legal right to use their chosen name and pronouns, and appropriate facilities. 
- 6.** Engage LGBTQ+ students in meaningful participation in their schools and communities. 

INSIDE OUT
YOUTH SERVICES


THE SUICIDE PREVENTION
Collaborative
of El Paso County
insideoutys.org | spcollab.org

Download the toolkit at
insideoutys.org/schooltools

