



**BrainGain@PEC**

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BrainGain@PEC provides brief summaries of research or publications on family homelessness and related issues. Previous issues of BrainGain@PEC can be found at <http://bit.ly/2iaczvQ>.

## Summary of Voices of Youth Count's *Missed Opportunities: LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in America*

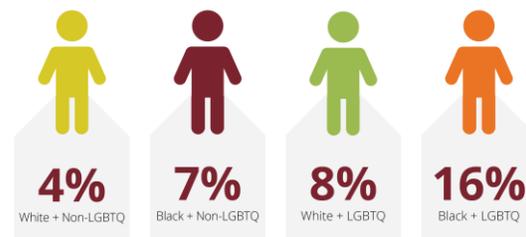
Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count recently published **Missed Opportunities: LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in America**, offering new information on youth identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans and Questioning (LGBTQ) who experienced homelessness, and identifying future implications as well as recommendations for policymakers, leaders of public system, and practitioners.

The report's objective was to provide information on adolescent and young adults who identify as LGBTQ and experienced homelessness. It also provides recommendations to start a dialogue among policymaker, leaders of public health systems and practitioners. The report was published in April 2018 at the Chapin Hall.

Missed Opportunities is a product of Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count, an independent research center of the University of Chicago. More information on Missed Opportunities can be found at [www.voicesofyouthcount.org](http://www.voicesofyouthcount.org). Readers are encouraged to read the full report at <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/lgbtq-youth-homelessness/> to understand the data and various methodologies. (citation: Dworsky, A., Morton, M. H., Samuels, G. M. (2018). *Missed opportunities: Pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness in America*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.)

**Figure 2.** Youth who are black *and* LGBTQ reported the highest rates of homelessness

Explicit homelessness over the last 12 months, self-reported by young adults, ages 18-25. These estimates do not include reports of couch surfing only.

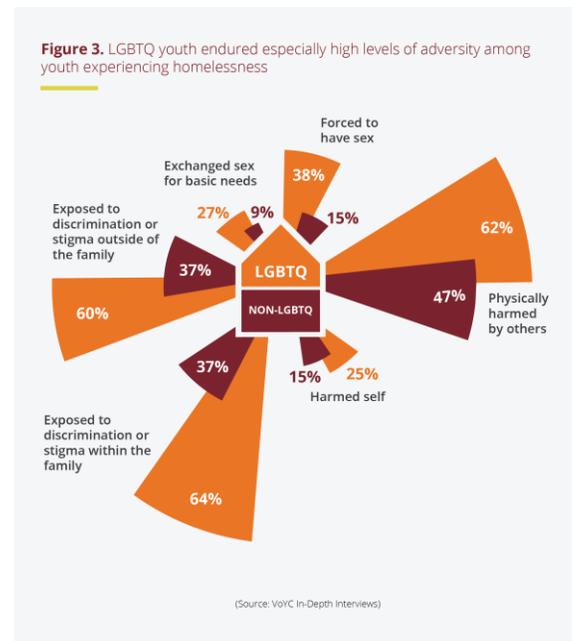


(Source: VYC National Survey)

PEC summarized the report for the Philadelphia emergency housing system.

## Key findings:

- **LGBTQ youth are at high risk for homelessness compared to other groups**
  - LGBTQ youth (18-25 years old) had 2.2 times the risk of reporting homelessness
  - 20% of young adults who reported homelessness identified as LGBTQ
  - Up to 40% of youth identifying as LGBTQ experienced homelessness in one county's youth count
  - Youth who identified as both LGBTQ and black or multiracial had some of the highest rates of homelessness.
    - 1 in 4 young black men (18-25 years old) identifying as LGBTQ, reported explicit homelessness in the past 12 months



- **LGBTQ youth experience high level of adversity, including early death**
  - LGBTQ youth have over two times the rate of early death among youth experiencing homelessness
  - LGBTQ youth had over twice the rate of early death among youth experiencing homelessness.
  - 62% of youth who identified as LGBTQ reported more physical harm from others versus 47% their non-LGBTQ peers
  - 25% of youth who identified as LGBTQ reported more harm to themselves versus 15% their non-LGBTQ peers
  - Identifying as LGBTQ was associated with much higher rates of experiencing discrimination or stigma within the family (64% vs. 37%) and outside of the family, (60% vs. 37%)
  - LGBTQ young people were also more likely to report exchanging sex for basic needs (27% vs. 9%) and having been forced to have sex (38% vs. 15%)
- **Homelessness stems from multiple factors beyond “coming out” among LGBTQ youth**
  - There is a **gradual escalation** of the parent-child conflict over time, or a growing sense of rejection in the home, rather than an immediate reaction to the disclosure that caused homelessness after coming out.

- **Most families face broader issues** of instability such as mental health problems, violence, addiction, or poverty preceding or coinciding with the youth's identity or coming out process.
- **Finding positive connections** outside of the biological family is important for LGBTQ youth.
- Families are **both** sources of hardship and strength.
- **Safe, affirming, responses and services are important for engaging LGBTQ youth**
  - Young people's identity as LGBTQ was **not the only lens** through which they made decisions about engaging services, but it was often an important one.
  - Young people want to be **accepted** and seen not simply for their sexual or gender identity, but as **holistic and valuable human beings** with multidimensional identities and stories of both struggle and resilience.

### Future implication and recommendations

The report identifies recommendations for policymakers, leaders of public systems, and practitioners based on each of the four major findings. These recommendations include:

- **Support and provide incentives** for community organizations and systems to institute **more sensitive data collection** about sexual orientation and gender identity, facilitate positive adult connections in LGBTQ youths' lives, offer enhanced training on issues facing LGBTQ youth, and, most importantly, engage LGBTQ youth as full partners in strengthening systems and services.
- **Equitably** locate LGBTQ-sensitive outreach, services, and housing options in or **near** predominantly **black** and **multiracial communities**.
- Take advantage of programs offered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to **ensure equal access** and housing choice and to aid community efforts to address the needs of minority youth and their families.
- Especially where family engagement can lead to strengthening and support, **develop and use therapeutic approaches** for LGBTQ youth and their families. Ensure that interventions address trauma, stigma, and discrimination.
- **Capitalize** on federally-funded runaway and homeless youth programs, such as Basic Center Programs that offer short-term shelter and family and youth counseling.
- **Add or revise guidance** in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Block Grant on how these resources can better support LGBTQ and minority LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.
- **Increase the competencies and training access** for Medicaid health and behavioral health providers about the added challenges that LGBTQ youth face, including specific professional development for serving youth identifying as transgender.
- **Evaluate** the most promising programs and interventions to determine their effectiveness for LGBTQ youth. The federal government can take the lead by providing evaluation funding for core interventions.

- **Facilitate** peer-to-peer learning and technical assistance across HUD-funded Continuums of Care (CoCs) so that providers can foster more welcoming, nurturing, safe, and trusted options for LGBTQ youth.

**About PEC:**

People's Emergency Center's mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change. PEC offers more than 235 affordable housing units, job training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, life skills and technology coursework for families, children and youth who experience homelessness.

This BrainGain@PEC was developed by Ornella Pitah and Joe Willard. For more information, email at [policy@pec-cares.org](mailto:policy@pec-cares.org).