

The GLBTQ Youth Experience:

Risk Factors for suicide, self harm, and high risk behaviors (some apply to all youth; again these are experienced at a higher rate by GLBT youth):

- Gender non-conformity
- Coming out early AND not coming out to anyone-early can lead to bullying/harassment, issues in the home etc..., not coming out can lead to internal conflict, feelings of isolation etc...
- Internalized homophobia
- Family rejection, low family connectedness, abuse in family- 26% of GLBT youth who come out to their families report being kicked out of the home
- Victimization experiences-home, school, community
- Inaccessible services that are safe and accepting of their identity
- Isolation
- HIV status or fear of AIDS
- Homophobia
- Heterosexism

Protective Factors against suicide, self harm, and high risk behaviors that are of major concern in GLBT youth's lives (which may be important to all youth, but are usually lower for them):

- GLBT youth have proven quite resilient and most are as healthy and as well adjusted as their "straight" identified peers
- Family, community, and school safety and support
- Positive media representation
- Gay/trans or gay/trans friendly social and support networks: GSA in schools (gay straight alliance), PFLAG, and Safe Schools Coalition
- Development of positive coping skills, problem solving
- Easy access to safe and effective healthcare (mental, physical, and substance use)
- Strong connections to family and a community they can relate to (i.e. GLBT)
- Positive messaging around Faith and from the faith community
- Positive role models (very important to GLBT youth)
- At least one caring adult in their lives

Safe Schools Coalition: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/safe.html>

1-866-4 U –Trevor is a National GLBT youth Helpline (for those in crisis or those that have friends in crisis) and they will access local resources for the youth in his/her area.

The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network provides free and inexpensive tools at www.glsen.org including:

- Jump-Start Activity Guides help establish a Gay Straight Alliances
- Safe schools policies, stickers, and do-it-yourself training kits
- Results from the National School Climate Survey, the only national survey to document the experiences of LGBT students