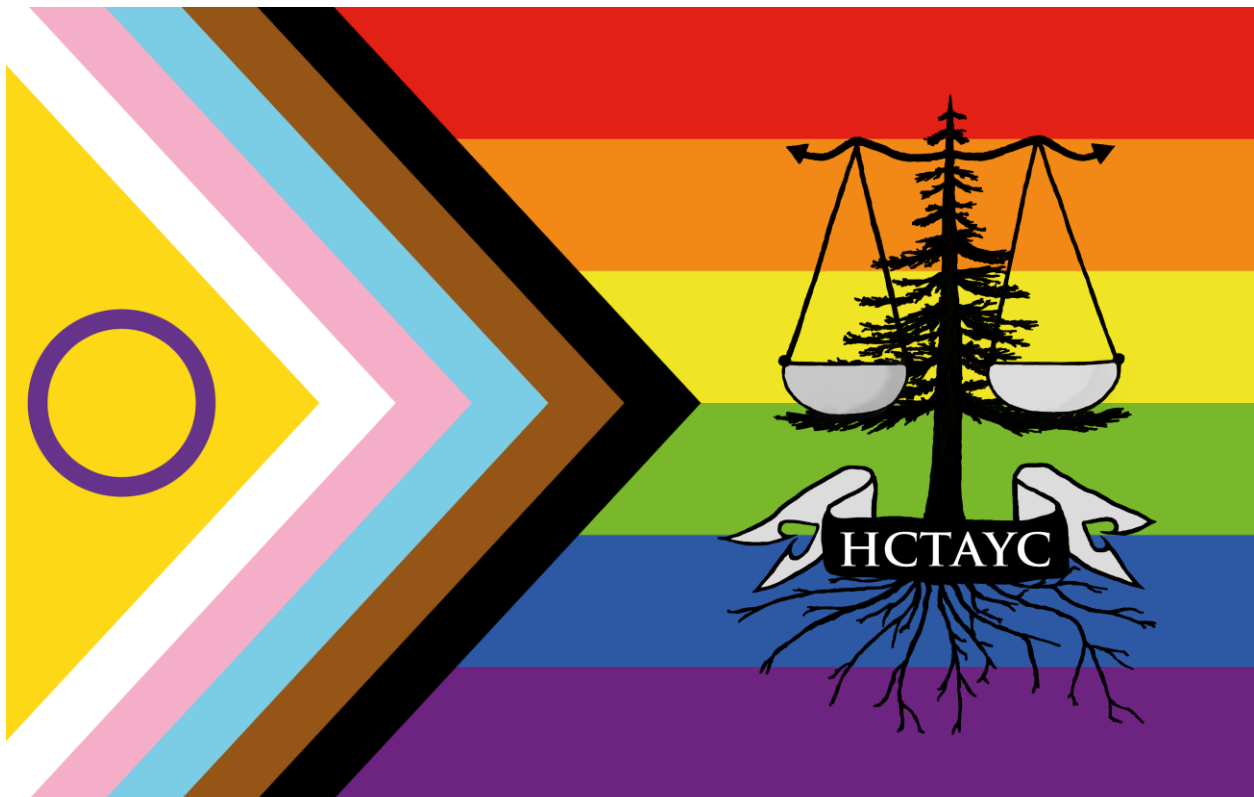


A Safe Place to Go: LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Youth Across Systems.

Policy Recommendations for youth-serving organizations in Humboldt County.



Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration

22 July, 2022

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- Open Door Community Health
- Queer Humboldt
- RCAA Youth Services Bureau
- Redwood Pride
- The RAVEN Project
- Tri Counties Independent Living
- Two-Feathers NAFS
- United Indian Health Services
- Yurok Tribe Prevention Program

Table of Contents



Acknowledgements.....	1
Table of Contents.....	3
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	9
HCTAYC Values Statement	12
LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Youth Across Systems Policy Recommendations.....	13
Recommendations as Narrative with Quotes & Supporting Data.....	17
Background.....	26
These Recommendations.....	26
Evolving Language.....	27
HCTAYC	27
Previous Policy Recommendations (2009-2017).....	29
Contact	29
Suggested Citation.....	30
Methods.....	31
Underlying philosophy & intent	31
Data Gathering	33
Process.....	33
Participants.....	35
Formalization.....	37
Finalization	37
Process.....	37
Participants.....	38
Implementation & Publication	39
Next Steps	40
Closing Remarks.....	42
Alexis, 21 years old, YAB member since 2018	42
Alex, 22 years old, YAB member since 2020.....	42
Elwin, 23 years old, YAB member 2016-2019.....	42
Lucius, 18 years old, YAB member since 2020.....	42
Appendix A	44
Barriers for LGBTQIA2S Youth in Rural Settings.....	44
Health Care.....	46

Education.....	48
Homelessness	50
Juvenile Justice.....	51
Foster Care.....	53
Two-Spirit.....	54
Affirming LGBTQIA2S Youth & Further Recommendations.....	55
References	58
LGBTQIA2S Research Presentation	61
Appendix B	68
Glossary of LGBTQIA & 2-S.....	68
Local Humboldt County LGBTQIA+ & 2-S TAY Resources	70
Community Support, Activity, or Leadership Groups	70
School-Based Groups.....	71
Health Care.....	72
Appendix C	74
HCTAYC 2012 Anti-Bullying Policy Statement.....	74
Committing to Youth Engagement.....	77
Culture Change: Youth as Partners.....	77
Appendix D	80
Focus Group / Interview Questions.....	80
Questions for Professionals	80
Questions for Youth	80
Questions for Healthcare Professionals	81
HCTAYC LGBTQ+ Focus Group/Interview Interest Form	82
HCTAYC LGBTQ+ Youth Experiences with Systems in Humboldt County Survey	85
Informed Consent – HCTAYC LGBTQ+ Policy Recommendations Focus Groups.....	97
Finalization World Café Conversations Prompts.....	98
Young People Summit Agenda - Hybrid	100
Release Appreciations for Young People	101
Public Agenda - Online.....	102
Appendix E	103
Demographic Graphics.....	103
Survey Graphics.....	109



Executive Summary

LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit transition-age youth [TAY] face unique challenges and have specific needs which our communities must be equipped to address. In a time of rapid demographic change, with steep increases in LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth self-identification over the past ten years, it is doubly important for us as youth-serving agencies, youth advocates, and community leaders to adapt to the emerging needs of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY in Humboldt County. These TAY are disproportionately represented in systems such as child welfare, probation, and behavioral health, and have additional unique barriers and needs based on their systems involvement. National research and youth themselves are clear- without effectively responding to the needs of youth, the consequences for youth's lives and futures can be dire.

A recent publication from the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the National Juvenile Defender Center¹ outlines some of the available data around the vulnerability of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY [which are likely to be undercounts]. While this information is national, it is representative of the experiences of youth in Humboldt County.

- 84% experienced verbal threats
- 53% experienced bullying at school
- 57% had been mocked or taunted by their families
- 16% had been sexually attacked or raped – based on their actual or perceived gender identity
- Because of pervasive stigma and discrimination, youth experience disproportionately high rates of psychological distress, homelessness and bullying
- Youth of color, who experience discrimination at the intersections of race and gender identity, experience extraordinarily high rates of violence and mistreatment.

We know that LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth themselves are best positioned to recommend effective changes. From mid-2019 through early 2021, the Humboldt County Transition-Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC) and its Youth Advisory Board (YAB) undertook an innovative youth participatory action research project to gather TAY feedback on the areas of greatest need for supporting LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth in Humboldt County. Youth researchers, all systems-affected TAY between the ages of 16-26, conducted an extensive series of surveys, interviews, and focus groups asking their peers [and to a lesser extent, youth-serving professionals] to describe the experiences of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY in Humboldt County and what they would most like to see change.

This research process provided Humboldt County TAY the opportunity to share their experiences, which clearly identified the need for action. Findings included:

- 36% of youth shared they experienced discrimination, harassment, or bias.

¹ Juvenile Facilities Checklist For Defenders: Advocating For The Safety And Well-Being of Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, And Intersex Young People https://njdc.info/wpcontent/uploads/Facilities-Checklist_TGNCI_Digital-FINAL.pdf

- 74% of youth did not know of any programs in Humboldt County that are specifically for LGBTQ+ youth.
- 34% of youth said they do not feel as comfortable with programs that do not focus specifically on supporting LGBTQ+ youth.
- 69% of youth felt there should be separate programs designed especially for LGBTQ+ youth.
- The majority of foster youth respondents reported having personal negative experiences with resource families regarding LGBTQIA+ & two-spirit identity, or that they knew another foster youth who had.

The message was clear—we need to make significant improvements to adequately support LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.

We worked to translate these urgent calls for change into specific, actionable recommendations. The recommendations that follow reflect both our belief in the potential in Humboldt County to make these changes to meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY and our awareness of the effort and commitment that will be required to do so. Our proposals span sectors and agencies, from families to schools, healthcare, probation, child welfare, and community-based organizations, requiring shared responsibility and coordination. We suggest a variety of methods, including training, outreach, policy change, resource development, and updated employment practices. Most importantly, we call for oversight and accountability by and for the community to ensure that changes occur with fidelity and continuity.

At their core, our recommendations are grounded in a commitment to prioritizing the leadership of youth, at every level and stage along the way, in defining the changes whose effects they will feel most deeply and which they will carry with them into the future of Humboldt County.

We offer the following recommendations as a call to match LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth's investment in this future:

1. Develop a county oversight structure to ensure accountability to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY.

We propose community-led structures such as a youth advisory board and a task force of youth-serving agency ambassadors to both oversee implementation processes and develop accountability mechanisms for transparent reporting back to the community.

2. Youth-serving organizations collaborate to create a new County LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY Resource Center.

An LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Resource Center should be created to serve as an intake point; a place to receive services such as case management and support groups; and a clearinghouse for information and provider referrals, facilitating access to and navigation of resources.

3. Ensure all County youth-serving agencies promote environments in which LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth are safe, treated respectfully, and have access to services.

The existence of agencies and services isn't enough—they must be both hospitable and accessible to those who need them. This requires training, public education, and an

understanding of the experiences of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth and our duties to them.

4. Ensure all County youth-serving agencies follow the laws, requirements, and responsibilities of TAY-serving agencies with respect to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.

Youth-serving agencies must be held accountable for serving LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth through monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. Developing monitoring plans, implementing youth-friendly complaint processes, providing youth in confinement and their families access to information about their rights, and working with advocates to address barriers are important accountability strategies.

5. Develop safe homes for LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Youth.

Youth experiencing family and community rejection must be housed, safe, and well-supported. New housing resources needed include an LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit homeless youth shelter and transitional and permanent housing. Also, child welfare can adopt practices to ensure all resource homes are LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit friendly and that families are supported to nurture youth.

6. Design specialized community health, mental health, sexual health, and substance use services to address the unique challenges of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.

LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit-friendly treatment services should be accessible to youth of all ages, preventative, and not require system involvement, and gaps in existing specialized services should be filled. Training for staff, parents, and youths' other supports can equip them to recognize signs of mental health challenges, effectively support youth who are struggling, and both prevent and respond to crises.

7. Launch an outreach campaign to increase awareness about the services available and ensure youth access.

The county should conduct an outreach campaign, led by the Resource Center listed in recommendation number 2 to enhance opportunities for access by placing services in school sites, increasing the availability of transportation resources, and ensuring online/virtual access options.

8. Increase utilization of diverse peer professionals.

Centering the leadership and presence of those who reflect the communities they serve is also a powerful tool in outreach, engagement, and effective service delivery. The number of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit peer professionals employed within youth-serving agencies should be increased. Agencies must work with youth to address employment barriers and develop transparent, meaningful pathways for peers to advance from entry-level to senior positions.

"I was part of these policy recs from start to finish, and it was heavy and painful to know other youth were having similar experiences to what I had. I hope this document is used to improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ youth, but I specifically hope its used as a base to improve the lives of Two-Spirit Indigenous youth in Humboldt who have previously been forgotten in these conversations of equality."

- Alexis, 21, YAB member since 2018

Introduction



The recommendations developed in this project address an all-too-familiar situation—the demographics of a community have changed over time, and now its services, infrastructure, and policies lag behind, in need of reassessment and redesign to truly reflect the community’s more readily apparent needs. Humboldt County is not unique in facing such a demographic shift in its LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth population nor in the community’s need outpacing resources. In our annual participant demographic reports since 2015, the Humboldt County Transition-Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC) found that upward trends in transition-age youth (TAY) self-identification as LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit in Humboldt County parallels national trends, which show that self-identification more than doubled from 2012 to 2022, with the steepest increases among Gen Z.²

This is not just young people participating in HCTAYC, as it is reflected in other programs and systems both anecdotally in our conversations with colleagues and available data sources as well. For example, the rates of high school juniors throughout Humboldt County who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Questioning increased from 9.8% between 2013-2015 to 14.1% in 2015-2017, with a respective increase from 1.3% to 1.8% in youth identifying as transgender³. And this data is five years old. Looking at national trends, our own demographic data, the near constant training requests we receive, and anecdotal conversations with systems leaders reporting a rapid increase in LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth in crisis across the county, the number may even be higher than we suspect.

Such rapid demographic change is bound to create disconnects between our present reality and the past for which our systems and services were designed. The result of this disconnection are the very stories and experiences which drove us to initiate this round of policy recommendations. Time and time again: in the course of previous rounds of recommendations, providing individual advocacy to youth, hosting workshops, developing digital stories, creating youth-driven trainings, or even just hosting social events; our members and peers brought forward their experiences with discrimination, lack of services, neglect, abuse, bullying violence, crisis, and rejection/exclusion related to their identity as an LGBTQIA+ & Two-spirit young person. The disparity of systems involvement and poor outcomes for this part of our TAY community is a persistent tragedy that for too long has gone inadequately addressed.

We know that the young people who find themselves situated within this gap, in the space between their needs and the fact of what is actually available to them, are best

²Gallup's most recent data show an increase in LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit self-identification among Gen Z from 10.5% in 2017 to 20.8% in 2021. See the February 2022 Gallup report on increased LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit self-identification at <https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>. See also the Human Rights Campaign Foundation report “We Are Here: Understanding the Size of the LGBTQ+ Community” available at <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/We-Are-Here-120821.pdf>.

³ Results from California Healthy Kids Survey. <https://www.kidsdata.org/region/324/humboldt-county/results#cat=6>.

positioned to recommend effective, meaningful changes. From mid-2019 through early 2021, HCTAYC and its Youth Advocacy Board (YAB) undertook an innovative youth participatory action research project to gather TAY feedback on the areas of greatest need—and greatest potential impact—for supporting LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth in Humboldt County. Youth researchers, all systems-affected TAY between the ages of 16-26, conducted an extensive series of surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups asking their peers [and to a lesser extent, youth-serving professionals] to describe their experiences of life as LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth in Humboldt County, the services and environments offered to them in youth-serving agencies, and what they would most like to see change. Our researchers also interviewed professionals in healthcare, mental health, social work, and education, including self-identified LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit peer professionals, for additional perspective and comparison with youth responses.

Overwhelmingly, youth and professionals alike identified clear opportunities for meaningful improvements, including service offerings specific to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth; general County infrastructure supporting resource access; education and training for youth, families, providers, and the general public; and policies and structures to sustain positive changes. Equipped with this feedback, the YAB worked in partnership with HCTAYC staff to distill these urgent calls for improvement into specific, actionable recommendations that both can and must be implemented in Humboldt County to effectively meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.

The title of this publication, “A Safe Place to Go” represents the overriding, repeated message that we heard from youth in our community as we gathered their feedback. Youth in Humboldt County feel they have nowhere safe to turn for help or community. The outcomes for rural system-impacted LGBTQIA+ & 2-S TAY are incredibly worrying. **Appendix A** details some of the findings and experiences rural young people experience around violence, bullying, family rejection, mental illness, homelessness, racism, and stigma or discrimination. However, there were also seeds of hope and change reflected as well.

Our recommendations reflect both our belief in the potential of Humboldt County to make profound changes in support of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY flourishing and our awareness of the significant effort and commitment that will be required to do so. Our proposals span multiple sectors and agencies, from families to schools, healthcare, probation, child welfare, and community-based organizations, requiring shared responsibility and coordination. We suggest a wide variety of methods, including training, outreach, policy change, resource development, funding reallocation, and updated employment practices. We recognize the need for oversight and accountability by and for the community at large to ensure that changes occur with fidelity and continuity.

Our organization focuses solely on the experiences of young people 16-26, yet in the course of creating these recommendations TAY identified concern for younger generations and a desire to support and learn from elders. While our recommendations

are TAY focused, it is our hope that they lead to intergenerational conversations and a broader push across the age-span for similar work and mobilization to be done.

At their core, these recommendations are grounded in a commitment to prioritizing the leadership of youth, at every level and stage along the way, in defining the changes whose effects they will feel most deeply and which they will carry with them into the future of Humboldt County. We offer these recommendations as a call to match LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth's investment in this future.

we are seeds of change
grow with us

- Youth Advocacy Board Motto

HCTAYC Values Statement

HCTAYC VALUES STATEMENT



Leadership

- **LEADERSHIP** FOSTERS WELLNESS, RESILIENCE, AND PROSILIENCE
- **LEADERSHIP** IS POWER, DECISION MAKING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY SHARED COLLECTIVELY AND WITH TRANSPARENCY
- **LEADERSHIP** CENTERS THE VOICES OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED BY SYSTEMS, SUPPORTING AND COMPENSATING THEM TO PARTICIPATE AS EQUALS IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Intersectionality

- **INTERSECTIONALITY** RECOGNIZES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE DESERVE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR WHOLE SELF, NOT LABELS OR BEHAVIORS OR ASSUMPTIONS OR DIAGNOSES
- **INTERSECTIONALITY** INCLUDES CULTURAL PRACTICES AND TRADITIONAL HEALING ALONGSIDE WESTERN EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES
- **INTERSECTIONALITY** SEES EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS, INTERVENTIONS, AND PRACTICES AS BEING HOLISTICALLY FOCUSED, INCLUDING FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND ALL DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Community

- **COMMUNITY** KEEPS YOUNG PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THEIR NATURAL SUPPORTS, IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE AND MOST HOME-LIKE SETTING POSSIBLE
- **COMMUNITY** ENSURES THAT LOVE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND BELONGING ARE AT THE CORE OF ALL YOUTH WORK
- **COMMUNITY** SHARES RESOURCES, ENSURING EVERYONE HAS THE MEANS TO ACCESS WELLNESS AND SAFETY AND THAT OUR PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES DO NOT WORSEN THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY, COLONIZATION, AND OTHER OPPRESSIONS

Transformation

- **TRANSFORMATION** ASSERTS THAT INCARCERATION, INSTITUTIONALIZATION, CRIMINALIZATION, ISOLATION, AND RETRIBUTION COMPOUNDS TRAUMA AND DECREASES WELLNESS
- **TRANSFORMATION** BRINGS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, RELATIONAL HEALING, CULTURAL CONNECTION, AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FORWARD AS THE BEST WAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES, AND THEIR COMMUNITIES TO HEAL FROM CYCLES, AND INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES, OF VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA
- **TRANSFORMATION** CLARIFIES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING, AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE RISK-TAKING AND EXPLORATION, BUT SHOULD NOT BE PUNISHED, STIGMATIZED, OR CRIMINALIZED FOR SUCH

[HTTPS://HUMBOLDTGOV.ORG/HCTAYC](https://humboldt.gov/hctayc)



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LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Youth Across Systems Policy Recommendations

1.) **Develop a county oversight structure to ensure well-being and accountability to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Transition Age Youth.**

- ❖ Work with youth, youth-serving organizations, and appropriate county entities to identify needed structures/processes for oversight and accountability - for example:
 - A task force with ambassadors from each youth-serving organization, county agency leads, a county ombudsperson position, a lead organization like Queer Humboldt, and/or a youth advisory board that can lead youth surveying/data collection and reporting.
- ❖ Ensure oversight structure is community, rather than county agency led, but includes county agency representatives and county roles/responsibilities.
- ❖ Work with youth to develop an accountability process to report back to the community on the services developed and delivered and their impact on improving the lives of youth.
- ❖ Work with probation, behavioral health, CWS, advocates and youth stakeholders to develop an accountability plan for public reporting on agency and facility efforts to comply with laws, requirements and responsibilities.

2.) **Youth-serving organizations collaborate to create a new Humboldt County LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY Resource Center with youth-friendly hours, staff, and a central location for youth on public transportation routes.**

- ❖ A Resource Center could address needs including:
 - maintaining up-to-date information on appropriate and welcoming services,
 - ongoing outreach to youth on available supports;
 - supporting youth in navigating specialized services/addressing access barriers;
 - providing case management and advocacy;
 - facilitating peer groups and peer leadership;
 - coordinating regular trainings and information dissemination to all relevant county youth-serving organizations;
 - providing opportunities for intergenerational connection and activities.
- ❖ The Center could be modeled after Los Angeles County's LGBT Center, which provides a range of supports to youth including host homes, transitional housing, mentoring, therapy, educational assistance, and support for trans community members.

3.) Ensure all Humboldt County youth-serving agencies promote environments in which LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth are safe, treated respectfully, and have full access to services.

- ❖ Develop & deliver youth-led training to youth-serving agencies on addressing the needs of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth, including relevant policies & model practices.
- ❖ Trainings should address the impact of a hostile culture on LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth, suicide rates, and risk factors such as lack of access to basic needs.
- ❖ Training should address the laws, requirements, and responsibilities of TAY-serving agencies with respect to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth, including the legal obligations of all agencies to provide equal access and not discriminate, and any agency - or system-specific laws and requirements protecting LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth, such as the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and housing laws.
- ❖ Training should also include:
 - creating an inclusive culture within systems and the community;
 - combatting stigma against LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY youth;
 - the relevance of sexual orientation and gender identity;
 - the experiences of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY youth within each system; and
 - the resources available to youth.
- ❖ Trainings and resources should be offered to parents, schools, employers, community-based programs, after-school programs, sports organizations, and other groups.
- ❖ Require all youth-serving organizations to have visible consistent signage/posters/flags and rights posted (including decoration/signage that is focused on an inclusive, welcoming culture).

4.) Ensure all Humboldt County youth-serving agencies follow the laws, requirements, and responsibilities of TAY-serving agencies with respect to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.

- ❖ Ensure that probation and mental/behavioral health facilities comply with existing laws and protect the safety and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.
- ❖ Work with local and statewide advocates to provide training to all relevant probation and behavioral health staff regarding the laws and requirements for protecting LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth, such as Title 15 Minimum Standards.
- ❖ Work with local and statewide advocates to develop a plan for ensuring monitoring and enforcement of youth rights.
- ❖ Create information for youth and families about youths' rights in confinement, how youth can address rights violations and mechanisms to enforce youth's rights.
- ❖ Work with HCTAYC and advocates to develop methods for systems to implement simple and youth-friendly ways to report complaints and gather youth feedback. Solicited feedback should address both compliance with legal requirements and assess whether LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth experience a culture of respect and support in facilities.

- ❖ Work with local advocates to address access challenges that create barriers to basic needs—such as lack of trans-friendly healthcare providers and lack of programming/services/access for tribe-affiliated youth.

5.) Develop safe families and living environments for LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Youth.

- ❖ Ensure youth who experience family rejection (from birth family or resource family) immediately receive supports and are provided with a safe living situation if needed- for example establish and train a parent partner (cultural coach/peer) to work with birth and resource families.
- ❖ Work with CWS and their Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) process to set expectations and provide supports so all resource families are willing and able to meet the unique needs of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY Youth and provide them excellent parenting. For example:
 - as needed, recruit additional families from the LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY and ally communities to provide nurturing homes for youth in foster care;
 - require specific training such as the Family Acceptance Project's curricula; and
 - consider additional certification for families to be added to a list of "LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit expert homes" that can provide peer coaching and support for other families.
- ❖ Ensure LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit homeless TAY youth and young adults have access to safe shelter supports and receive assistance to transition to permanent housing - for example: create a LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit shelter and/or temporary and permanent housing program.

6.) Design specialized community health, mental health, sexual health and substance use services to address unique challenges of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.

- ❖ Work with youth stakeholders, community health, behavioral health, and substance abuse treatment services to create youth-centered action plans to ensure LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth are able to access appropriate physical, mental and sexual health and substance abuse.
- ❖ Provide treatment services that specialize in meeting their needs. Ensure services are accessible to youth (and targeted to both younger and older ages), preventative, and do not require system involvement for eligibility.
- ❖ Develop training for child welfare and probation staff, resource and birth parents, and others to educate them on signs of suicidality, depression, and anxiety; how to access help; and how to effectively support youth experiencing mental health challenges.
- ❖ Prioritize training for youths' natural supports (resource/birth parents, community members, friends) with the intent to prevent youth from getting to a point of crisis.
- ❖ Identify existing and new needed specialized services to build such as expansion of Open Doors trans support groups, or a new intergenerational mentoring program.

7.) Launch an outreach and access campaign to increase awareness about the programs and services available in Humboldt County and ensure youth access to those supports.

- ❖ Work with youth and agencies/organizations to develop an initial and ongoing outreach campaign led by the new Humboldt County LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY Resource Center (see Rec. #2) / community agencies to ensure youth and their supports are aware of resources, and develop a targeted outreach plan to locations that young people frequent.
- ❖ Develop plan to ensure youth access such as locating resources on school sites or connecting school staff, providing transportation (including expanding contracts with public transportation to add bus routes and frequency) and ensuring online/virtual access.

8.) Increase utilization of peer professionals who reflect the diversity of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Transition Age Youth.

- ❖ Work with agencies that employ peer mentors or peer professionals to increase the number and diversity of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY staff.
- ❖ Ensure effective utilization of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit peer professionals that reflect the youth population in Humboldt County. A diverse peer professional network can allow for increased outreach, support for youths' specific needs and perspectives, and experiences that are most aligned with those of the youth being served.
- ❖ Work with youth to address any barriers to applying or holding these positions that may discourage or limit applicants (pay, training, morale).
- ❖ Develop a more robust and transparent professional development program to allow peer professionals to move into senior leadership roles.
- ❖ Identify agencies that do not currently employ peer mentors/professionals and ensure a plan for creating these roles within those agencies.

Recommendations as Narrative with Quotes & Supporting Data



1. Develop a county oversight structure to ensure well-being and accountability to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Transition Age Youth.

Finalization Data

- We had 23 instances of participants specifically recommending the creation of an oversight or accountability body.
- We had an additional 13-to-16 instances, depending on interpretation, of questions regarding responsibility and accountability for implementation of nearly all recommendations.

Participant Quotes

“[We need] some kind of oversight board checking compliance of organizations, with buy-in from leadership, multiple-lenses, identifying overlapping expectations & behavioral compliance.” - finalization participant

“Having [an] external source of accountability is necessary, [it’s] hard for organizations to do that self-evaluation. Having a group of youth, for example, assist [Agency Name] in eval / accountability.” - finalization participant

“[We need an] [e]xterior agency, not mired in the county.” - finalization participant

Background

In the process of finalization, participants expressed frustration on the lack of accountability for systems to ensure that they are actually following mandates. There was an overall desire for someone or something to perform audits, evaluations, and assess training needs for youth-serving organizations or provide some sort of certification. There was also the need for something to guide/oversee the implementation of recommendation #2. The sentiment overall was that it should be something that exists independently of county agencies, and include broad representation. In Humboldt County, there are several organizations that focus on the LGBTQIA+ & 2-S community, yet none of which provide this type of oversight or broadly span systems and community organizations. The creation of collaborative oversight bodies, specifically task forces, for ensuring the wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth is a recommended practice to address disparities in youth-serving systems by influential agencies such as the National Council on Crime & Delinquency⁴ and Center for the Study of Social Policy⁵.

Details

A community-based oversight structure created with participatory-design could provide needed guidance for community agencies and increase accountability to ensure they are best able to meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S young people. This structure would work to bridge youth, youth-serving organizations, and relevant county programs to create processes for oversight and accountability. This could take the form of a task force with organizational ambassadors hosted by a lead, non-county organization.

⁴ https://www.evidentchange.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/practice-guide-lgbtq-task-force.pdf

⁵ <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Out-of-the-Shadows-Supporting-LGBTQ-youth-in-child-welfare-through-cross-system-collaboration-web.pdf>

Additionally, youth-serving organizations should engage in participatory evaluation to increase accountability and transparency regarding implemented solutions and their impacts on the lives of young people. Specifically: behavioral health, juvenile probation, and child welfare services should create [with stakeholder guidance] public reporting methods that detail compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and responsibilities.

2. Youth-serving organizations collaborate to create a new Humboldt County LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit TAY Resource Center with youth-friendly hours, staff, and a central location for youth on public transportation routes.

Survey Data

- 36% of youth stated they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or bias.
- 34% of youth said they do not feel as comfortable with programs that do not focus specifically on supporting LGBTQ+ youth.
- 69% of youth feel there should be separate programs designed especially for LGBTQ+ youth.
- 74% of youth do not know of any programs in Humboldt County that are specifically for LGBTQ+ youth.

Participant Quotes

“I think that specifically there should be more groups, like group counseling, things for the lgbtq community. Things like that, more community based things not as much professional help, but places where youth of that community can meet other youth of that community and fall into stuff. Peer support groups.” - youth participant

“I know that in the highschool I went to there was a club that felt like a safe space, but for kids like me who have graduated by now to have groups that get together and go do things in the community. That would be nice, feel like a safe space especially for people who can't be themselves at home due to their family.” - youth participant

“...if there was a building that had places for people to stay and food and go to hang out or escape abusive parents. Somewhere that is always there with a hotline for someone who is being discriminated against or felt unsafe that would be great.” - youth participant

“...like definitely a center in, like, every town, just like the Boys and Girls Club. You know where folks can go after school and find...like minded peers and support systems that maybe they don't have at home... just kind of an all around, like, service organization... I think a lot of other big cities have, like, a specific center to do that work and to give those trainings and to provide that funding, um, there's a lot of organizations up here that are willing to help...” - peer provider participant

Background

While the number of youth that come to HCTAYC have become exponentially more openly queer-identifying over time, based on HCTAYC's annual demographic report, LGBTQIA+ resources in Humboldt County have not grown with the population. Youth described challenges related to employment, family relationships, homelessness, substance abuse, education, access to adequate and inclusive mental and physical healthcare, building community, addressing bullying and discrimination, and self-love.

This is reflective of a long-term need identified in the 2014 needs assessment by the Humboldt Grassroots LGBTQ+ Community Space Project⁶.

Details

A Humboldt County LGBTQIA+ & 2-S TAY Resource Center could address a wide array of needs, including systematically maintaining up-to-date information on appropriate and welcoming services; supporting youth in navigating specialized services; providing case management and advocacy; facilitating peer groups and peer leadership; and coordinating trainings and information dissemination to all relevant County departments regarding compliance with law and regulations and how to improve the treatment of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth. The Center could be modeled after Los Angeles County's LGBT Center, which provides a range of supports to youth including host homes, transitional housing, mentoring, therapy, educational assistance, and support for trans community members⁷. Another center referenced during finalization was the Rainbow Community Center in Contra Costa.

Our finalization process vocalized the need for decentralized and integrative forms of accessibility to meet the needs of our geographically diverse county, such as a mobile/traveling center, or hub and spoke design. Also vocalized was the desire for spaces of intergenerational connection, learning, healing, and support while still maintaining youth-specific safer spaces/times. These needs mirror the earlier findings of the Humboldt LGBTQ+ Grassroots Community Space project mentioned above.

3. Ensure all Humboldt County youth-serving agencies promote environments in which LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth are safe, treated respectfully, and have full access to services.

This recommendation was identified as a top 3 priority by youth participants.

Survey Data

- 74% of youth do not know of any programs in Humboldt County that are specifically for LGBTQ+ youth.
- 36% of youth stated they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or bias.
- 34% of youth said they do not feel as comfortable with programs that do not focus specifically on supporting LGBTQ+ youth.

Participant Quote

"...less so than places that are explicit in their support. I can go there [a non-LGBTQIA+ specific service] and if someone gets a certain vibe from me.. [I know] I'm not guaranteed safety in that situation. That is just something I can feel... It's something I worry about a lot when I'm in a place that isn't specific about their support." - youth participant

"...it felt really unwelcoming...my [service provider] is supposed to be LGBTQ friendly and I went to use the bathroom the other day, and they told me I was in, like, the wrong bathroom..." - youth participant

"...it can kind of be obvious that you're a part of the community... I looked up if there was a history of LGBT violence at a [service] that I was going to... why not double

⁶ This organization is no longer active as of 2018, but the assessment can be found at <https://humboldtgbtq.wordpress.com/>.

⁷ See <https://lalgbtcenter.org/social-service-and-housing/youth> for reference.

check if I get yelled at if I walk into this space. That isn't something someone should have to worry about, like hey is this a safe space for me?" - youth participant

Background

Staff of agencies working with LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth report that there has been some effort made to ensure their agencies are able to effectively serve these populations, but more training and changes in procedure are needed. Youth reported a number of areas where agencies need training and information to provide equal access to services, recommending topics including the differences between sex and gender; integrating into society; understanding sexuality; mental health services; addressing bullying; safe sex; opportunities for engaging with the community; social skills; addressing suicide; specific transgender issues; current resources and information; and the history of LGBTQ community. Additionally, youth reported access issues in particular areas of the county and around particular needs including community health, probation, substance abuse, and Indigenous youth.

Details

Cross-agency youth-led training should be offered to all youth-serving agencies on addressing the needs of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth, including relevant policies and model practices. Training should address the laws, requirements, and responsibilities of TAY-serving agencies with respect to queer youth, including the legal obligations of all agencies to provide equal access and not discriminate, and any agency- or system-specific laws and requirements protecting LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth, such as the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and housing laws. Training should also cover topics including creating an inclusive culture within the systems and within the community; the continuing stigma against LGBTQ+ youth; the relevance of sexual orientation and gender identity; the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth within each system; and the resources available to youth.

Additionally, any access challenges that create barriers to basic needs—such as lack of trans-friendly healthcare providers, lack of programming / services/ access for tribe-affiliated youth, and procedures that violate the rights of youth such as a lack of private showers in facilities—should be discussed with local advocates and attorneys such as California Indian Legal Services. Finally, training and resources should be offered to parents, schools, employers, community-based programs, after-school programs, sports organizations, and other community organizations, groups, and systems.

4. Ensure all Humboldt County youth-serving agencies follow the laws, requirements, and responsibilities of TAY-serving agencies with respect to LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth

This recommendation was identified as a top 3 priority by youth participants.

Survey Data

- 36% of youth stated that they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or bias.

Participant Quote

"[Program] at [youth-serving system] were supposed to help me [acquire a resource] but instead they harassed me to wear a [article of clothing of assigned gender at birth] and ridiculed me for my appearance. [Program] basically sexually harassed me and refused

to help me because I wouldn't [dress in a certain way] and the [system] did nothing about it." - youth participant

"I'm sure if they knew I was trans I wouldn't be able to stay at the shelter that I am staying at." - youth participant

"...it's really difficult for queer youth in the foster care system to get services. I think that people get really wrapped up in this, like, weird fragility of not being able to, like, talk about it. And so no one talks about it. And the foster parents don't help and the biological parents might not be supportive and there's just really it's not a nice situation... Same with obviously any sort of relation to the prison industrial complex, whether that be juvie or like, you know, rehabilitation services." - peer provider participant

Background

"Pervasive rejection and discrimination in their homes, schools, and communities contribute to the overrepresentation of TGNCI youth in confinement facilities. According to recent national data, 12% of youth in juvenile facilities identify as transgender or gender nonconforming, and 85% of LGBTQ and GNC youth are of color. These youth experience higher levels of sexual abuse and other mistreatment in confinement settings, particularly when facilities lack clear, enforceable guidance on how to protect their safety and promote their well-being. The extreme vulnerability of TGNC youth in confinement facilities has led many local and state jurisdictions to adopt nondiscrimination policies."⁸

California Title 15 Minimum Standards for Juvenile Detention Facilities require detention facilities to provide special protections to LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth. These protections must include a nondiscrimination provision that all youth within the facility have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and that youth will not be subject to discrimination or harassment on the basis of their actual or perceived gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation (among other protected categories), including that youth not be assigned to restrictive housing or classification decisions based solely on those categories. Title 15 standards also require that facilities maintain written policies and procedures ensuring respectful and equitable treatment of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth.⁹

⁸ Wilber, S. & Szanyi, J. (2019) Model Policy: Transgender, Gender Nonconforming and Intersex Youth in Confinement Facilities, National Center for Lesbian Rights and Center for Children's Law and Policy. Available at: <https://www.nclrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TGNCI-Model-Policy.pdf>.

⁹ Title 15: § 1352.5 Transgender and Intersex Youth. The facility administrator shall develop written policies and procedures ensuring respectful and equitable treatment of transgender and intersex youth. The policies shall provide that:

(a) Facility staff shall respect every youth's gender identity, and shall refer to the youth by the youth's preferred name and gender pronoun, regardless of the youth's legal name. Facilities may prohibit the use of gang or slang names or names that otherwise compromise facility operations as determined by the facility manager or designee, and shall document any decision made on this basis.

(b) Facility staff shall permit youth to dress and present themselves in a manner consistent with their gender identity, and shall provide youth with the institution's clothing and undergarments consistent with their gender identity.

(c) Facility staff shall house youth in the unit or room that best meets their individual needs, and promotes their safety and well-being. Staff may not automatically house youth according to their external anatomy, and shall document the reasons for any decision to house youth in a unit that does not match their gender identity. In making a housing decision, staff shall consider the youth's preferences, as well as any recommendations from the youth's health or behavioral health provider.

(d) Facility administrators shall ensure that transgender and intersex youth have access to medical and behavioral health providers qualified to provide care and treatment to transgender and intersex youth.

(e) Consistent with the facility's reasonable and necessary security considerations and physical plant, facility staff shall make every effort to ensure the safety and privacy of transgender and intersex youth when the youth are using

Details

Work with advocates to provide training to all relevant probation and behavioral health staff regarding the laws and requirements for protecting LGBTQ+ and TGNCI youth, such as Title 15 Minimum Standards and model practices for serving these young people, such as the joint Center for Lesbian Rights and Center for Children's Law and Policy model policy cited above. Engage in a comprehensive evaluation process to design and sustainably implement monitoring methods specific to this population. This monitoring should extend beyond mere compliance, but to the emotional/behavioral climate of the program.

This recommendation calls for readily available information for LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth and families about youths' rights in confinement and how to address rights violations, and the implementation of feedback gathering mechanisms informed by stakeholder involvement. Additionally, work to address barriers that prevent the meeting of basic needs such as healthcare and tribally-specific wellness and cultural activities.

5. Develop safe families and living environments for LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Youth.

Survey, Focus Group, and Finalization Data

- 36% of surveyed youth stated that they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or bias.
- Roughly a quarter of youth participants across all engagement strategies identified family rejection and family ignorance as significant challenges that young people face, especially in relation to homelessness.
 - The majority of foster youth respondents reported having personal negative experiences with resource families regarding LGBTQIA+ & two-spirit identity, or that they knew another foster youth who had.
- There were 22 instances of participants during finalization identifying training for resource families as being inadequate around this topic, with an additional 13 stating the need for a form of screening or certification process to ensure youth safety.

Participant Quote

"I'm not even their kid. I don't understand why they care so much, like I'm not their biological kid, even if I was, you shouldn't treat your kid like that. I feel like you need to explore more as a child growing up, so that you know who you are by the time you're an adult. Instead of like, instead of having to question your gender as adults and have like a bunch of internalized transphobia or homophobia, or anything. Because if you do it as a kid, you'll know who you are and then you could live your best life growing up." - youth participant

Background

Rejection from families of origin and foster/adoptive families is an impactful factor for current & former foster youth, a direct contributor towards them experiencing double the rate of homelessness of the general population. They are relatedly at a much higher risk for increased: depression, anxiety, substance use, risky sexual behavior, victimization,

the bathroom or shower, or dressing or undressing. Facility staff shall not conduct physical searches of any youth for the purpose of determining the youth's anatomical sex. Whenever feasible, the facility shall respect the youth's preference regarding the gender of the staff member who conducts any search of the youth.

and criminalization.¹⁰ In general, family acceptance is a significant mediator for LGBTQ+ youth wellbeing and their growth into adulthood, controlling for other factors. Accepting families provide protective factors that increase self-esteem, social support, overall health, and lower risks of depression, substance abuse, and suicidality¹¹. Additionally, in the process of our data gathering young people shared stories of rejection and lack of safety from local shelters as a result of their identity, or having nowhere safe to go as they were above the age of 18.

Details

This recommendation would see that young people who experience family rejection [from birth or resource family] would be able to receive support to mitigate their circumstance and immediately have somewhere safe to sleep. Part of this mitigation effort would be the provision of coaching or mentorship to help move families from a place of rejection to one of affirmation. This recommendation would see the requirement of targeted, intensive training for resource families to move all families towards acceptance and celebration of LGBTQIA+ youth. It would also establish a database of “expert” through something like a certification process in addition to the resource family approval process, which would then be able to provide peer support to other families or be utilized as a trusted respite placement. This recommendation also seeks the creation of transitional housing and shelter services specifically for LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth ages 16-26.

6. Design specialized community health, mental health, sexual health and substance use services to address unique challenges of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit youth.

This recommendation was identified as a top 3 priority by youth participants.

Survey Data

- 74% of youth reported some involvement with the mental/behavioral health system.

Participant Quote

“...experienced mental health workers reduc[ing] your feelings and your identity to what was on their files and the trauma they have had in that system... These places are supposed to be trauma informed but even when they are they aren't necessarily compassionate... workers ask for your gender identity on forms and only give you 2 options which can be really hurtful... A lot of the workers see being LGBTQ+ as a choice like dying your hair, not something that can mean life or death...” - youth participant

Background

Young people reported that LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth disproportionately experience suicidality, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse disorders, but the availability of welcoming (or any) services in Humboldt County is extremely limited, particularly by

¹⁰ Per the federal Child Information Gateway: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/lgbtgyouth.pdf> .

¹¹ Per research from the incomparable Family Acceptance Project's Dr. Ryan and colleagues <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21073595/> .

geography. This lack of services may push youth into more restrictive placements in foster care or the juvenile justice system. Furthermore, youth who experience barriers to health care due to transphobic medical providers may go without healthcare due to limited access to safe and supportive providers.

Details

Work with community health services, county behavioral health services, and substance abuse treatment services to create action plans to ensure LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth are able to access appropriate and necessary physical and mental health and substance abuse treatment services that specialize in meeting their unique needs. This also implies the expansion of existing, effective programming such as Open Door's trans support groups, or the creation of new programming such as intergenerational mentoring.

Additionally, develop training for child welfare staff, probation staff, resource parents, birth parents, and community members to educate them on signs of suicidality, depression, and anxiety; how to access help; and how to effectively support youth experiencing mental health challenges. These should include training and support for young people's natural supports so that they can intervene to assist youth in not reaching a state of crisis.

7. Launch an outreach and access campaign to increase awareness about the programs and services available in Humboldt County and ensure youth access to those supports.

Survey Data / Background

- 74% of youth are unaware of any LGBTQIA+ or 2-S program offered to them in Humboldt County.

Participant Quote / Background

"I'm asking what this question means. I don't know any." - youth participant

Details

Work with youth and agencies/organizations to develop an outreach campaign to ensure youth and their representatives—agency staff, advocates, lawyers, and families—are aware of existing resources in Humboldt County, and develop a targeted outreach plan to locations that young people frequent.

8. Increase utilization of peer professionals who reflect the diversity of LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Transition Age Youth.

Survey & Focus Group Data

The majority of youth survey respondents were either white or Indigenous/Native American/American Indian, while nearly all of the responding peer professionals in the data sample were white.

Participant Quote

“Peer[s] increase legitimacy, sense of safety.” - finalization participant

“Creat[e] a larger, more robust track from entry level to senior leadership. Beyond 1, 2, 3 level[s]. Job ladder for peer support [is] stigmatizing... by having that language be only line-level.” - finalization participant

“Peers become professionalized/institutional, how can we keep real authenticity while making sure p[people] get paid?” - youth participant

“[We need] targeted recruitment for peers that reflect the community.” - finalization participant

Background

The earliest documented evidence of a specific youth peer workforce in Humboldt County that we have access to is the youth educator positions at RCAA’s Raven Project in the mid 00’s. DHHS followed many years later with peer coaches after HCTAYC’s advocacy led to the creation of the Transition Age Youth Center which opened the doors to its first building in 2012. While it was a considerable success to create peer job ladders in non-profit and county agencies, peer educator positions are time-limited and peer coach positions have historically been more easily available to those peers that have a college education/more resources. While both positions have experienced refinement over the years, the job sites are located in Eureka and exist in long-standing bureaucratic social service agencies, which come with all of the barriers inherent to a history. Research demonstrates the invaluable role that peer providers play in services for LGBTQIA+ & 2-S young people, especially those in rural areas¹². While more agencies are adopting peer positions in recent years, such as Two Feathers’ peer mentorship program, they are few and far between here, with even fewer focusing on specifically recruiting specifically Indigenous youth.

Details

Work with agencies that employ peer mentors or peer professionals to recruit LGBTQIA+ & 2-S peer professionals that better reflect the youth population in Humboldt County. A more diverse peer professional network will allow for increased outreach, support for youths’ specific needs and perspectives, and experiences that are most aligned with those of the youth being served. Work with young people to address barriers that prevent them from reaching sustainable employment in peer positions, such as education, pay barriers, and opportunities for career progression. Added qualifications regarding cultural/traditional knowledge forms and lived experience in addition to or substitution for mainstream qualification metrics. This involves an increase in transparency and the conscious development of peer job ladders that are able to bridge peer professions into senior management positions within organizations, valuing the forms of expertise that they bring with them. Additionally, this recommendation calls for a census of youth-serving organizations to ascertain where and how many peer professionals are employed. Supporting organizations that do not currently have peer positions to develop them in collaboration with the young people using their services.

¹² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4957399/>

Background



These Recommendations

In the process of implementing our last round of Policy Recommendations [our Alcohol & Other Drugs Policy Recommendations was originally published in 2017] , YAB members discussed the experiences of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth members. One of our core leaders [and current alumni] Tristin, talked about the invisibility of two-spirit youth in his tribal community [Yurok], and how as an ally he wanted to do more. He suggested that our next area of focus be on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S across our systems. The HCTAYC Youth Advocacy board voted to set in motion a process resulting in this document.

The following year, one of our youth organizers was at a queer community pancake breakfast in Fortuna and ran into a former HCTAYC Intern and long-time ally, Yvonne Doble, the Director of Field Education for the Social Work department, at then HSU [now Cal Poly Humboldt]. Yvonne inquired if HCTAYC had any projects that could use a masters-level community project and through the magic of conversation the idea of a research project to lay the groundwork for the next round of policy recommendations was born. Our organizer took the idea back to the other HCTAYC staff and then to the YAB, and work began.

We were blessed to have the passionate support of Eugene Williams as our graduate student intern, who dedicated not only his time for his community project but also changed his internship mid-semester to support the process. With the partnership of the YAB and HCTAYC staff, Eugene helped prepare the youth for the research design process by presenting on the findings of his literature review and assisting with the other initial stages of our data gathering process talked about further in our **Methods** section.

Eugene's graduation in May 2019 left HCTAYC with only a single staff person for a prolonged period of time, and as a result the rest of our data gathering had to be put on hold. Fortunately by mid-September we were once again fully staffed, and after a three month orientation/training period, did a refresh of the initial data gathering process. We had done a couple focus groups and interviews and had several more booked by the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Our staff switched our full energy to maintaining the YAB and responding to the crisis and all of the following political and environmental issues that followed before finally hitting our stride and re strategizing as to how to continue our data gathering in this new context.

This round of recommendations is a first of many for us. The first time using new digital technologies, the first time using a stakeholder finalization process, the first time putting together a publication booklet, and certainly the first time [and hopefully last time] it has taken over six months to create a round of recommendations. This is also the first time that we have created policy recommendations that are not directed towards a specific system, set of programs, or agency, and are in the process of learning how to gain successful implementation of such far reaching needs. Regardless, we have certainly

learned a lot, look forward to learning more, and could not be prouder of the document that you have the pleasure of reading now.

Evolving Language

Language, terms, initialisms, and symbols shift in meaning and form over time. Throughout the course of creating these policy recommendations, as well as an updating of our TRANSforming Organizations training, we have grown and shifted our understanding of the ever-expanding panoply of queer terminology. For example, when we started this process the initialism that we used was LGBTQ+, but through the process of dialogue we recognized the need of centering three other umbrella categories to authentically reflect the experiences of the young people in our data collection process, and we added the IA and two-spirit. Thus bringing us to LGBTQIA+ & 2-S¹³. We felt it important to not lump two-spirit in with the initialism LGBTQIA+, as to recognize its place as a non-western pan-Indigenous umbrella rooted in traditional cultures of this continent, as too often it is treated as just “LGBTQ but for natives” when in actuality it is a discrete culturally-specific experience¹⁴.

Our understanding and relationship to these terms is based both in research¹⁵, current cultural consensus, and the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of our youth leaders. As a youth-adult partnership based in lived-experience advocacy, we know that the lived reality of LGBTQIA+ & 2-S youth identities is constantly shifting and expanding at a speed that is unable to be reflected by any existing knowledge base. As a result, we do not forward the notion that our choices in regards to language are the best or most correct way, but rather that this language reflects this moment in time for our youth-adult partnership.

HCTAYC

The Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration is a youth leadership and advocacy development program dedicated to empowering young people 16-26 with lived experience in the Foster Care, Juvenile Justice, Homelessness, and Behavioral Health systems to transform those very same systems that shape their lives. We also include secondary focuses, issues that are disproportionately relevant to systems-impacted youth, such as substance dependency & healing, education, sexual health, parenting, racial justice, indigenous rights and culture, and lgbtq+ identity to name some. All of our work is grounded in the youth-adult partnership model, lived experience as expertise, and positive youth development philosophy.

¹³ For an accounting of what each letter in this initialism means, please see **Appendix B** *Glossary*.

¹⁴ For more on two-spirit history and meaning, see this video by Geo Neptune [Passamaquoddy] a two-spirit activist, artist, and youth prevention coordinator for Wabanki Public Health. <https://www.them.us/video/watch/geo-neptune-explains-two-spirit>

¹⁵ **Appendix A.**

HCTAYC has four programming aspects: training & technical assistance; policy & advocacy; peer coaching; and youth leadership & wellness development. The core of our program is our Youth Advocacy Board, a body of young people with lived-experience who are stipended volunteers. The YAB has graduated levels of participation through which they gain the skills and experience necessary to be effective change agents. The YAB holds committees and projects relevant to ongoing issues impacting youth in Humboldt, and ensures that our program is living into our intention and values.

Founded in 2008, we originated as a public-private partnership between Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, the YOUTH Training Project, and the California Youth Connection. Planning was initiated in response to the powerful advocacy of current and former foster youth and adult allies. They spoke of the horrible outcomes foster youth experienced in Humboldt County, and the focus of the collaboration was broadened as those same youth spoke to how they were impacted by the mental health, homelessness, and juvenile justice systems, and that their peers in those systems also had negative outcomes.

Then Director, Phil Crandall, a leader in the state for systems integration and braided funding, listened and dedicated 5 million dollars over five years from the Mental Health Services Act and Child Welfare Outcomes Improvement Project funds. Swiftly, our founding youth organizer Rochelle Trochtenberg, with the support of founding program director Jamie Lee Evans and administrative staff Laurel Forrest, put in the work to create the framework for HCTAYC and recruited the first members of the Youth Advisory Board [now Youth Advocacy Board].

Then began our long legacy of leadership development, community organizing, and wellness workshops that continue to this day, including our Digital Storytelling Retreat and a few years later our multi-award winning Wellness Week. It was that first YAB that identified the system most in need of reform as being Sempervirens and the Psychiatric Emergency Services [now Crisis Stabilization Unit] & Crisis Line. It was this intrepid team that set the foundation for the many years of policy recommendations to follow, and the creation of the TAY Center as well.

Over the years HCTAYC has gained and lost partner organizations, staff, and youth leaders to the circumstances of life, changes in leadership, state politics, organizational shifts, aging out, and shifts in funding. Yet what remains is our dedication to centering youth voice and lived experience to make lasting change to the systems that affect the transition-age youth of Humboldt County. We are currently solely operated by Humboldt County DHHS staff and youth volunteers, with support of contractors and strong collaborative relationships with local, state, and national partners, but are in the process of identifying a new primary private partner.

We should make note also, that these recommendations are not the first time that HCTAYC has addressed LGBTQIA+ & 2-S Youth needs, and this work follows in the history of our organization's dedication to ensuring inclusivity and fair treatment for all system-impacted youth. We draw upon the work of our TRANSforming Organizations training, our Anti-Bullying Policy Statement included in **Appendix C**, our collaboration with other advocates to enshrine protections in legislation and policy, and our consideration of this population in our previous policy recommendations available below.

This is also not the first time we have participated in a data gathering process of this scope, central to our work listed above was our participation in the California LGBTQ Reducing Disparities Project which produced the seminal 2012 report *First Do Not Harm*¹⁶, in which our youth leaders, staff, and other county colleagues participated heavily in. More locally focused, we participated in the needs assessment processes associated with the no-longer-active Humboldt Grassroots LGBTQ+ Community Space Project in 2014¹⁷, as well as an unpublished Masters of Social Work capstone project in 2019/2020.

It is incredibly telling that the results of these three efforts and our former policy recommendations, which have collectively spanned well over a decade, are mirrored in this publication. Aspects of our recommendations were replications almost verbatim of the findings of the 2014 needs assessment mentioned above. This demonstrates that while much work has been done, not enough progress to meet the fundamental needs of our community's LGBTQIA+ & two-spirit youth has been made.

Previous Policy Recommendations (2009-2017)

- [Sempervirens/PES](#) .
- [Children's Center](#) .
- [Independent Living Skills Program](#) .
- [Homelessness Services](#) .
- [Juvenile Justice General](#) .
- [Juvenile Justice Facilities](#) .
- [AOD](#) .

Contact

If you are interested in the work that HCTAYC is doing and want to learn more, or wish to request training or technical assistance, please utilize the information below.

<http://hctayc.org> .

¹⁶ This report is an incredibly comprehensive and ground breaking look at mental health in the diverse queer community of California, we highly suggest taking an opportunity to review it: https://cpehn.org/assets/uploads/archive/lgbtq_population_report.pdf .

¹⁷ To read the findings of this assessment, visit <https://humboldt-lgbtq.wordpress.com/> .

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Methods



Underlying philosophy & intent

Despite what the format, length, and scope of this document may lead one to believe, it has never been our intention, nor within our organizational capacity, to create academically rigorous research able to be published in peer-reviewed journals. Rather, our goal is to amplify the lived experiences of transition-age youth in Humboldt County that deserve to have their voices heard. We believe that by centering these voices we are collectively able to transform youth-serving systems to improve outcomes, engagement, efficacy of programming, and the wellness of system-impacted young people and as a result, our communities. This belief is supported by a growing body of research on youth-run organizations¹⁸ as championed by ourselves and our peer organizations in the youth movement, such as the California Youth Connection & Youth MOVE National.

This work to recognize and welcome youth as experts in their own lives and the systems that impact them, is grounded in positive youth development [PYD] approaches as well as the youth-adult partnership model. PYD asserts that through empowering youth to develop and demonstrate their strengths, take leadership roles in their communities, and actualize justice in their lives and community, that they are better equipped to thrive in adulthood and have fewer negative developmental outcomes. Central to the PYD approach are the Five C's¹⁹:

1. Competence: intellectual ability and social, behavioral, and leadership skills;
2. Connection: positive, meaningful bonds with caring adults, peers, communities, and youth-serving institutions;
3. Character: integrity and moral centeredness;
4. Confidence: positive self-regard, a sense of self-efficacy, and courage; and
5. Caring/Compassion: humane values, empathy, and a sense of social justice.

¹⁸ As detailed in Youth MOVE National's 2018 "Commentary on the State of the Science" <https://youthmovenational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/state-of-the-science-articles-2018-youth-move.pdf> .

¹⁹ As identified by Richard Lerner in *Liberty* (2004); of course the 5 C's are a simplification of this complex approach that necessitates a grounding in community. For a comprehensive review of PYD see this resource guide: <https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/PosYthDevel.pdf> .

Necessary for actualizing the PYD approach are effective, ethical, and non-tokenizing youth-adult partnerships [Y-AP]²⁰. These youth-positive Y-APs are characterized by:

- consistently engaging young people at every level of decision making that affects them;
- initiating participation at the outset, and not as an afterthought;
- providing them material supports to participate (e.g. stipends, transportation);
- actively and consistently preparing and processing with them;
- establishing clear roles and expectations; and
- ensuring that their participation is meaningful, impactful, and validating.

HCTAYC's approach to these partnerships is reflected in our 2009 publication, *Committing to Youth Engagement*, included in **Appendix C**. Positive youth development and youth-adult partnerships form the core strategies of how we engage in this work historically and currently. It is our intention for our policy recommendation process to be one that strengthens young people's skills, validates their experiences, honors their voice, and ultimately is something that they are proud of and find meaningful.

All this being said, we do draw inspiration from research methodologies commonly used by other justice-doing organizations.

Our foremost inspiration is participatory-action research²¹. Participatory-action research [PAR] is a way of doing research that empowers communities to gain, sustain, and leverage knowledge for and by themselves. It is knowledge that is relevant to taking action that actively betters the material conditions of the community and empowers the community to have a stronger voice and understanding of power and positionality. PAR is in opposition to extractive research, which studies community and then leaves with its findings. Central to PAR are 7 core principles:

1. Commitment, to using one's work for the betterment of the people and to understand its impact;
2. Analysis, utilizing intersectionality and context specificity;
3. Critical recovery of history, using depthful investigation to go beyond surface issues and revive oppressed / invisibilized stories, lives, people, etc. in favor of the community;
4. Systematic devolution, returning the findings to the community from which the research is grown;
5. Action-reflection-action rhythm, the information gathered spawns action which then gathers more action and so on and so forth;

²⁰ For a comprehensive toolkit for understanding what Y-APs are, and how to implement them in an organization, see this guide with worksheets, assessment tools, models, and more by the Ford Family Foundation: <https://www.tfff.org/sites/default/files/Youth%20Adult%20Partnership%20Resource%20Kit.pdf> .

²¹ For more on participatory action research see: <https://organizingengagement.org/models/participatory-action-research-and-evaluation/> .

6. Modest science and dialogic techniques, rigor paired with accessible methods of research;
7. Research-education-action model, rejecting linear progression of researcher engagement that translates into meaningful change for communities.

HCTAYC embodies our commitment to PAR through our data gathering process, compensating youth advocates, being a lived-experience driven program, and engaging in ceaseless advocacy to improve the lives of all TAY in Humboldt.

New to this round of policy recommendations is our effort to more effectively operationalize *Principle 7*, adding in a new element of our process that will be talked about below in **Finalization**. This process was importantly informed by cyclical postcolonial Indigenous research methodologies such as community-based participatory research²², returning to the community from which knowledge was gathered to reflect on its accuracy and interpretation, and ensuring that the knowledge created is owned by the community and in good relationship to the community and its needs.

Data Gathering

Process

Pre-COVID 19

Typically, once a topic has been identified by the Youth Advocacy Board [YAB] for a round of policy recommendations, we begin the process of preparation. This starts with a focus group facilitation training for YAB members and any other interested TAY in Humboldt County. The training lasts three-days, over which participants are educated on research ethics, establishing group agreements, facilitation skills, documentation, and question crafting. All participants are compensated for their participation.

At the end of the training, those young people interested in the topic will generate the initial draft of the questions to be used in our data gathering with assistance from staff. That draft is then taken to the larger YAB meeting, refined, and approved²³. After which, HCTAYC Youth Organizers identify from those that took the training, and are interested, which 3-4 will be the focus group/interview facilitators. Facilitators are paid per facilitation at a standard rate.

After the facilitators have been identified the YAB, or YAB Committee, will create a list of identified spaces, organizations, and/or specific individuals to do outreach to based on their previously existing knowledge, or pertinent community sources.

²² For more on community-based participatory research see: <https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/iipj/article/download/7515/6159/13608> .

²³ Final version of these questions can be found in **Appendix D**

At minimum two open focus groups for any interested transition-age youth are scheduled, in this instance we held three, and are advertised through flyering, social media, attending community events, and outreach to youth-serving organizations.

Organizations that respond to outreach attempts have specific focus groups scheduled for them that occur in their spaces. We ask that only the youth participants be present, unless the youth unanimously state to us otherwise. Historically, this has not been possible for young people in confinement at the Juvenile Hall and Regional Facility, and thus we facilitate in the presence of at-most two correctional officers. To ensure participant safety, we had arranged prior to the pandemic to hold individual interviews with detained young people due to the risks related to disclosing one's LGBTQIA+ & two-spirit identity in that context. As a result of the pandemic these interviews did not occur.

Part of our outreach is also getting a sampling of line-level staff and administrators from the youth-serving organizations separately from the youth data gathering. We hold interviews or focus groups of line staff separate from administration, to ensure the most neutral environment possible.

Typically youth participation in our data gathering prior to the pandemic ranged from 40-65 youth with our set goal being 45 youth depending on the round; whereas staff participation is around 10-20 individuals, with our set goal being 15.

All participants sign consent forms²⁴ that outline our confidentiality precautions which are also given verbally. All transcripts and notes from the data gathering are only seen by the facilitators and HCTAYC staff before being scrubbed of any potential identifying information that was disclosed and then sent to be **Formalized**.

Post-COVID 19:

We revisited our outreach list and sent individual email and phone requests to those that had yet to participate in data gathering at that point to see if they were interested in, or had capacity to, schedule focus groups to be held through video conferencing. Understandably, we didn't get much traction as we too were struggling to adjust to the reality of work during a global pandemic.

Knowing that the least barriers to participation as possible were key to getting participation, we created a broad interest form²⁵ that was distributed through email, flyering, and social media which allowed people and organizations to indicate their interest and availability. After which an HCTAYC staff person followed up to do the

²⁴ This informed consent document can be found in **Appendix D**.

²⁵ A version of the interest form is found in **Appendix D**.

direct scheduling. However, this resulted in us getting far more responses and interest from youth-serving professionals than young people.

We re-strategized once again to create a survey based upon our focus group/interview questions, but with some additional specificities to ensure that the survey format was easy to use and able to get the most information as possible²⁶. In our experience, having a bunch of open-ended questions with boxes to write responses tend to be returned without much being written, so we included as many likert-like questions, check-box questions, and multiple choice questions as possible. A flier with information about the survey was distributed via the same means as the interest form. We coordinated with Juvenile Probation staff to schedule individual computer time for those at the Hall or Regional Facility so they too could complete the survey. All participants received compensation for their participation in the form of gift cards mailed to them, while for young people in custody we gave the gift cards to staff to put in the young people's possessions.

Following the end date of the survey, we began the **Formalization** process. However, in the process, Youth Law Center staff suggested that our data collection would benefit from gaining insight specifically from healthcare providers as it seemed to be a large topic mentioned in the data thus far. So, the Youth Advocacy Board's LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Leadership Committee developed a modified version of the original research questions for use with healthcare professionals, and strategized on the essential organizations and experts we wanted to ensure participated. We then engaged in outreach to those identified, and were able to schedule some interviews.

Participants

We of course acknowledge this is not a random nor comprehensive sampling of the intended populations. Rather, it reflects interested and motivated participants who felt safe enough to engage in the data collection process, and were able to participate²⁷. We were additionally limited by our primary outreach means occurring through transition-age youth-focused programming that we were aware of, and acknowledge that a more comprehensive media campaign could have garnered additional participants. However, HCTAYC's focus is on systems-impacted young people, and thus our outreach reflects this focus. It is also important to acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We made every attempt to surmount the digital divide in our outreach and facilitation efforts, offering the use of tablets to those participants who may have needed access, yet access to the internet is a noted concern for the demographic of young people that we support, particularly those in outlying areas.

²⁶ A version of this survey is found in **Appendix D**.

²⁷ We specify this point to acknowledge the young people who were unable to participate as a result of suicides in our community.

Participation was open to any young person 16-26 with lived experience in foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness, and behavioral health systems; as well as youth-serving professionals and administration that work in those systems and/or health care. Overall, we had a total of 66 youth participants and 28 youth-serving professionals across all methods of data gathering for the creation of the recommendations, not including youth facilitators and HCTAYC staff. We had a total of six (6) focus groups, sixteen (16) interviews, and forty-two (42) survey responses.

Experience with youth-serving systems were demonstrated nearly equally between homelessness services, juvenile justice, and foster care, with a larger majority of participants having involvement in the mental/behavioral health systems. However most common was multi-system involvement, in particular mental health and other systems. Of note, and reflecting our program's historical demographic information²⁸, half of participants that had experience in juvenile justice also had experience in foster care and homelessness.

Participants' demographics reflect the disproportionalities present in youth-serving systems in Humboldt County, with an overrepresentation of Indigenous, Black, and Latine participants in comparison to Humboldt County's general population²⁹. The vast majority of participants were from the Humboldt Bay area, and almost exclusively spoke English. While this demographic representation reflects other data points regarding the County, it is our hope to engage in better outreach in particular to the eastern and southern parts of the county as well as those whose primary language is not English, while acknowledging the limitations regarding the pandemic and technology mentioned above.

As to be expected in a project focusing on this population, the vast majority of participants were LGBTQIA+ & two-spirit. Approximately 65% of participants were LGBQA+, with the most participants identifying as queer and secondmost as bisexual. Approximately 23% percent of participants identified as trans, non-binary, genderqueer, questioning, and/or intersex.

Graphs depicting this demographic information in more detail can be found in **Appendix E**.

²⁸ These demographic reports can be found as part of Humboldt County's Mental Health Services Act yearly reporting.

²⁹ According to 2021 census data, Humboldt County's general population is 72.6% White (non-Hispanic), 12.9% Hispanic/Latine, 6.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, 6% Multiracial, 3% Asian, 1.5% Black or African American, and 0.4% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders. There are disparate sources documenting disproportionality in Humboldt County's youth-serving systems, but the CA Healthy Kids Survey Data encompasses multiple systems in one resource.

Formalization

The actual policy recommendations themselves are created through a collaborative process. First, we de-identify the data and then compile the full text of the transcripts and comments into a single database. That database is then shared with our colleagues at the Youth Law Center [YLC]. YLC staff review the data and perform qualitative analyses to identify themes regarding policy, practice, and unmet needs from that data. They then craft an initial draft of the policy recommendations and then we bring it back to the YAB and other youth facilitators to ensure that the policy recommendations align with what we heard as we were collecting the data. Ensuring that nothing is left out.

Typically, this occurs in the context of a weekend retreat in which YLC staff, youth facilitators, and HCTAYC staff meet in Sacramento. We have a few trainings, to ground the YAB and staff in policy advocacy processes, as well as the data pulled from the recommendations themselves. We then review each recommendation to ensure that the language reflects the data and other nuances that may have not been captured in the process of transcription.

As a result of the pandemic, this happened over video conferencing and in the space of existing, virtual YAB meetings, particularly our LGBTQIA+ & 2-S Leadership Committee.

Finalization

Process

However, as a result of the scope of these particular recommendations and the evolution of our organizational practice, we decided that more work needed to be done to ensure that the recommendations fully reflected community needs. So while we settled on our preferred draft of the formalized recommendations, we needed more work to come to a final product that could be owned and driven by the community.

We first organized a stakeholder summit, sending individual email and phone invitations to all individuals and organizations that participated in the data gathering process to invite them to a two hour, world café³⁰ style engagement to review the draft of the recommendations. Included in this email was a request to complete an interest form to assist in identifying the date, time of day, and means of participation. Response to the requests was pretty great, and we moved forward with scheduling a fully digital summit as few indicated comfort with in-person meetings at that time of the pandemic.

³⁰ The World Café method is a non-hierarchical, open-source, open-dialogue facilitation technology that centers visual and auditory communication for cyclic, collaborative feedback. It is a favorite of ours, and we find that it is even successful in a video-conference format using digital whiteboards. More about this method can be found at <http://theworldcafe.com> .

Staff and YAB members were trained on the world café facilitation method prior to the summit, and co-developed the conversational prompts³¹ used. We decided that pairs of HCTAYC staff and YAB members would serve as the café hosts for each station. In total there were four (4) stations, in which the recommendations were divided in thematically related pairs. Rotations were roughly thirty (30) minutes each.

During the summit, we reviewed the intention of the recommendations, our recommendations, process, and a brief overview of the text of that draft of recommendations. We then entered breakout rooms to begin world café facilitation, during which the participants and hosts had the opportunity to document their feedback on the digital whiteboards. It was these digital whiteboards that the table host reviewed after each rotation of participants, and to which participants had the opportunity to respond to or build off of to cyclically grow the conversation for each “table”.

Unfortunately, many invited participants were unable to attend this summit. As a result of low turn out, we moved away from the breakout room format and instead engaged in a collective dialogue. Following this, the YAB identified the need to continue our engagement and outreach. We reviewed important stakeholders that had not had the opportunity to participate at that time, and made a list with priorities for outreach and scheduling. We also created another survey, this one youth focused, to document interest and ease scheduling.

These small focus groups and interviews utilized a modified world café method, and built upon the conversations already existing as documented on the digital whiteboards³². This created a non-linear modality of conversation and feedback that we found helpful for generative conversation.

After these conversations were completed to the satisfaction of the YAB, HCTAYC staff shared the digital whiteboards with YLC staff and performed a preliminary affinity mapping analysis to share with them. HCTAYC and YLC staff met to edit the recommendations to reflect the gathered community feedback, and then presented that draft for final approval to the YAB. Minor edits and refinements were made, thus bringing us to the final recommendations presented further afield in this document.

Participants

For the initial stakeholder summit, we received 20 responses to the interest form that was disseminated. In total we had three (3) participants that ended up attending the summit, one (1) youth, one (1) peer professional, and one (1) youth-serving professional to the five youth facilitators and three staff. We coincidentally also received 20

³¹ These prompts can be found in Appendix D.

³² However we noted that the whiteboard technology we used (Google Jamboards) did not allow for sufficient space to document in ways that were accessible to all participants. As a result we will be looking towards technologies that are less spatially constrained (such as Miro).

responses to the youth-specific outreach form, and engaged in individual outreach to organizations and youth-serving professionals.

In total we had 23 small group and individual conversations, totaling approximately 47 participants. In addition to young people, we had direct service staff, peer providers, and administrative staff from several youth-serving organizations as well as organizers from local LGBTQIA+ & 2-S organizations. Organizations represented included: Behavioral Health, Child Welfare, Humboldt County DHHS Administration, Humboldt County Juvenile Probation, Humboldt County Office of Education, Juvenile Diversion Services, Open Door Community Health, Project Rebound, Teen Court, Transition Age Youth Center, Two Feathers Native American Family Services, Queer Humboldt, and Yurok Tribe Social Services.

For the sake of a more fluid, dynamic form of engagement we did not collect demographic information from those that participated in the finalization process. However, we had significantly more participants that were youth-serving professionals or community members than we had young people or peer professionals in comparison to the initial data gathering process to create the recommendations. Of the total participants in the finalization process we estimate that approximately 14 of those participants were young people/peer professionals.

Implementation & Publication

Our typical implementation process of recommendations entails scheduling presentations to the relevant systems, usually the leadership of the program or system in question as well as community stakeholder bodies that may have influence with that system. Then we request a formal response from that system, and then have continued meetings with leadership to provide feedback and insight on the implementation of the recommendations.

For example, scheduling presentations with Juvenile Probation administration, the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission, and the Multiagency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, requesting a formal response from Probation administration, and then working with them to implement the recommendations as we did with our Juvenile Justice policy recommendations. In doing this, the YAB usually highlights three-to-four specific recommendations as being the most urgent or personally impactful to them.

As the recommendations in this publication were much broader than previous rounds, we strategized to have a multi-phase implementation process to try and build community engagement while centering youth voice and leadership. This entailed three components: youth visioning, community engagement, and implementation workgroups.

The first step was planning a youth-only release summit³³, during which we reviewed the recommendations and the process of their creation, and once again engaged in a world cafe dialogue responding to those recommendations to see how the young people envisioned their implementation. After this, the young people engaged in rank choice voting³⁴ to prioritize which recommendations they wanted to ensure were the initial focus of the implementation push. This provided us with a youth-driven foundation [beyond just YAB members] with which to engage the general public, as in our experience we know how easy it is for young people to be eclipsed in larger processes. The event was hosted in a hybrid manner, with some young people attending virtually and others in person. We had a total of 8 youth participants for this summit.

We then had a general release to which we invited all youth-serving organizations as well as the general public³⁵. This included a press release and flier. At this release, we began with a general overview of the recommendations and recommendation process and the underlying intent with our release of the recommendations. We followed this with a panel of two YAB members and the director of the youth law center, talking about the particulars as to why these recommendations are important and what their implementation means for young people in Humboldt County, drawing from both their lived experiences as well as data and policy trends. We then shared the prioritization that the youth had done, and broke into discussion groups that focused on participant's individual and organizational commitments to the recommendations. All information, similar to our digital world cafe facilitations, was documented using a virtual whiteboard. The release ended with beautiful expressions of gratitude towards the young people who labored to create these recommendations and guide their release, some of which were documented on the virtual whiteboard³⁶. In total, not including staff and youth facilitators or presenters, we had 26 participants from a broad coalition of local organizations.

Following this, we sent a follow up email to participants and those that had expressed interest in participating that included a copy of the recommendations, a doodle poll for a follow up meeting, the link to the virtual whiteboard, and a recording of the convening.

Next Steps

In order to most authentically represent a community-driven process, and to ensure that this project is not solely driven by HCTAYC, it is our intention to initially work towards the implementation of policy recommendation #1.. This will begin with the scheduled follow up meeting, and through that process we anticipate that a county-wide, diverse oversight body will be created that is able to drive the implementation of the rest of the policy recommendations. We know this won't be an easy task, however we feel that we have garnered significant interest and powerful momentum and engagement thus far.

³³ See youth event agenda in **Appendix D**.

³⁴ In this process the young people identified **Recommendations 3, 4, & 6** as priorities.

³⁵ See public event agenda in **Appendix D**.

³⁶ A screenshot of this is found in **Appendix D**.

We plan to circulate this publication broadly, not only to be a useful tool to our local organizations working to address these topics, but also to serve as an example for other localities to engage in similar initiatives. The empowerment of LGBTQIA+ & two-spirit young people with systems experience is of the utmost importance to our collective future and the wellbeing of our community, especially in light of the recent legislative efforts to erode rights. We hope that this publication, and all of its included materials, will help other youth advocates create something specific for their own communities.

Following this publication, it is also our intention to create specific implementation guides in collaboration with local youth-serving systems. In these guides we will aim to connect and ground the recommendations in specific system needs and challenges, current legislation and mandates, and opportunities for policy development. This will be another new project for our collaboration, but we are excited to meet the challenge to ensure that systems have the most useful tools to implement systems change.

Closing Remarks



Alexis, 21 years old, YAB member since 2018

“I was part of these policy recs from start to finish, and it was heavy and painful to know other youth were having similar experiences to what I had. I hope this document is used to improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ youth, but I specifically hope its used as a base to improve the lives of Two-Spirit Indigneous youth in Humboldt who have previously been forgotten in these conversations of equality.”

Alex, 22 years old, YAB member since 2020

“When we pay attention to part of our community, it helps our community as a whole. I love being queer and feeling like I belong in Humboldt County. I hope these recommendations help us intentionally and lovingly create space for the next generation of young people who need a safe place to exist.”

Elwin, 23 years old, YAB member 2016-2019

“Given the recent event of Roe V. Wade being overturned, and the recent politics that have been actively going after youth’s trans and LGBTQ2A+ rights, I feel that policies like these are vitally important and that youth of these disenfranchised groups [need to] receive additional support and care.”

Lucius, 18 years old, YAB member since 2020

“I joined the Youth Advocacy Board in June of 2020, by this time the policy recs had already been started, but for the 2 years following I am glad I got to help with the creation of this. Working on these recs made me see just how much it's possible for youth to give input if people ask for it, actualizing how important it is to include the voice of those being talked about.

Personally, going through this process meant making a definite positive change and impact with a community that I am a part of, which my overall goal as an advocate is to help make these positive changes. Interacting with other youth and our community to see where we need to make change, and creating this finalization is inspiring for me to see. I really hope this can be used as a staple for companies, community partnerships, schools, anything that involves the 16-26 age range, so that we can be treated fairly as members of the LGBTQ+ and Two Spirit community.

I want us to be safe, heard, supported, housed, and uplifted. I really see these recs as a way to do that. To anyone who gets to read this document over, please know you are reading 3 years worth of voices, suggestions, decisions. We as youth & community put as much time and effort as we did to make sure we could get as much as possible

addressed and set up to have a better present and future. I hope you can see that, and hear us. Thank you.”

Appendix A



Barriers for LGBTQIA2S Youth in Rural Settings

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Barriers for LGBTQIA2S Youth in Rural Settings

Research by Ryan (2009), shows that there are still many myths surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. Many families and providers believe that being gay is a “phase” or that youth will grow out of it as they get older. Through research done by the Family Acceptance Project (FAP), Ryan (2009) hopes to dispel myths with evidence-based research on sexual orientation and gender identity.

According to Ryan (2009), FAP researchers measured behaviors to show how family reactions affect LGBTQIA2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, & Two-Spirit) youths risk and well-being. LGBTQIA2S youth who were rejected by their parents or caregivers are more than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide; Nearly 6 times as likely to have high levels of depression; More than 3 times as likely to use illegal substances; and more than 3 times as likely to be at high risk for HIV and STDs (Ryan, 2009). Some family behaviors that increase an LGBTQIA2S youths risk for health and mental health problems include physical abuse, verbal harassment, exclusion from family events and activities, access to other LGBTQIA2S friends, events, and resources, and victim blaming when a youth is discriminated against because of their LGBTQIA2S identity (Ryan, 2009).

In addition, Ryan (2009), states parents and caregivers that pressure a youth to be more (or less) masculine or feminine, telling a child that God will punish them or telling them they are ashamed of them because of how they look or act, and making a youth keep their identity a secret, are ways LGBTQIA2S youth can be subjected to increased health and mental health-related problems. LGBTQIA2S youth who are accepted by their families are much more likely to believe they will have a good life and become happy, healthy, productive adults (Ryan, 2009).

Health Care

In a report by Kano, Silva-Banuelos, Stum, and Willging (2016), they looked at themes from participants in rural New Mexico to create recommendations to improve LGBTQIA2S primary care. They found that many participants reported struggles with “fear” and “anxiety” due to perceived discrimination and bias during health care encounters, and as a result, choose to withhold relevant information about themselves as a strategy to ensure access to care and avoid discomfort with staff/providers. The researchers recommended immediate improvements for LGBTQIA2S patient-centered care by creating safe, welcoming environments through LGBTQIA2S positive visual representations with the use of people/families of differing gender/sexual, cultural, and racial backgrounds in pamphlets and such.

Also, the use of culturally appropriate/specific terms on intake forms that reflect patient preference such as “two-spirit,” “queer,” “gay,” etc., as well as preferred pronoun options. Other recommendations included the development of culturally competent medical staff through updated medical training and using video/web conferencing for consulting LGBTQIA2S specialists from out of the area; acquirement of info for specific health needs, and participation in research to improve LGBTQIA2S health care (Kano, Silva-Banuelos, Stum, and Willging, 2016).

Research by Willging, Melina, and Miria (2006), states the risk of mental illness is more significant for LGBTQIA2S persons because of repeated exposure to psychosocial stressors associated with discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Such attitudes and behaviors include discrimination, stigmatization, and in some cases, violence (Willging, Melina, & Miria, 2006). The researchers indicate that as a result of exposure to these challenges, particularly in rural areas, they may be exacerbated. This

is an outcome of scarce mental health care services that are often insufficient for the general public and virtually non-existent for LGBTQIA2S people.

Willging, Melina, and Miria (2006), list geographical isolation, lack of insurance, and confidentiality concerns as common barriers to care for rural residents. Using exploratory ethnographic research to conduct their study in rural New Mexico, the researchers interviewed 20 providers of mental health-related care to see how they work with LGBTQIA2S clients. The results of their study found that providers commonly reported institutional and individual forms of anti-LGBTQIA2S bias. Through the interviews, they found that the bias exists from inadequate knowledge of LGBTQIA2S mental health care.

Willging, Melina, & Miria (2006), stated, “only one provider that we interviewed was formally trained to work with LGBTQIA2S clients; the others were broadly trained in culturally relevant care.” Of the several interviews conducted for the research study, there were ones that highlighted the experiences of LGBTQIA2S people seeking services in a rural community. One client described being “laughed” at when they disclosed their sexual orientation status, another LGBTQIA2S client described a heterosexual provider blaming them for “deciding” to be in an interracial relationship with another woman while living in a rural community. The result was the client feeling socially isolated, depressed, and reluctant to seek care locally. Lastly, another observation included a provider telling an LGBTQIA2S client that they didn’t think their sexual orientation was okay and that if they’d “get over it”, things would fall into place.

Research done by McCabe & Rubinson (2008) found that 300 psychologists and counselors surveyed in a study possessed a low-to-moderate level of knowledge related to LGBTQIA2S issues. Approximately 85% of participants in the survey reported not receiving specific training in LGBTQIA2S issues in their graduate education. McCabe &

Rubinson (2008), recommend graduate training in psychology and counseling include a focus on LGBTQIA2S concerns because of the unique challenges this population faces.

A study of LGBTQIA2S youth interaction with medical providers by Hoffman, Freeman, & Swann (2009), found that interpersonal skills of providers and how they interact with clients were more important to youth than providers' specific competencies. Additionally, the highest ranked health concerns from LGBTQIA2S youth were risky sexual behavior, depression and suicidal ideation, harassment or violence in the community or school. Lastly, preventative healthcare, nutrition, and safe sex were among the highest ranked health concerns.

Education

Over 90% of LGBTQIA2S teenagers surveyed in an online survey reported being verbally or physically harassed, or assaulted as a result of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, appearance, gender, gender expression, race/ethnicity, disability, or religion—compared to 62% of non-LGBTQIA2S teenagers (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008). Another survey McCabe & Rubinson (2008) cited, indicates that LGBTQIA2S students are three times more likely to feel unsafe at school compared to non-LGBTQIA2S students. Furthermore, 90% of principals revealed they had heard anti-gay slurs in their school; however, only 21% have engaged in efforts to foster a safer school environment for LGBTQIA2S students specifically.

According to McCabe & Rubinson (2008), most schools have anti-harassment and/or nondiscrimination policies in place, but only half of the student, teacher, and principal respondents indicated these policies include sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Additionally, school staff may be inadequately trained to intervene in situations of harassment towards LGBTQIA2S youth. McCabe & Rubinson (2008) suggest, “additional support and training on issues specific to LGBTQIA2S youth are

needed so educators can more effectively prevent harassment, intervene during harassment situations, and ensure a safe, equal learning environment.” Additionally, LGBTQIA2S youth struggles include feeling unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

McCabe & Rubinson (2008), reported close to 30% of youth who felt unsafe skipped at least one day of school in the past month due to safety concerns. Youth who reported more verbal and/or physical harassment were more likely to indicate that they did not plan to go to college compared to LGBTQIA2S students who were not harassed (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008). Other risk factors due to adverse effects of harassment in schools include LGBTQIA2S students being two to three times more likely to have suicide ideation; Also, boys who are bullied and called “gay” are more likely to experience greater psychological distress, verbal and physical abuse, and negative perceptions of school than boys bullied for other reasons (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008).

McCabe & Rubinson (2008), describe other risk factors such as excessive alcohol and substance abuse, and risky sexual behaviors. The authors highlight the importance of teacher and student relationships as one of the best indicators of school success for LGBTQIA2S youth. They state: “Students with positive feelings about their teachers report significantly fewer school difficulties related to their LGBTQIA2S status.” Their research indicates students who worried about their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression were more likely to reach out to teachers than their heterosexual peers. They conclude that a positive school environment appears to be among the best protective factors for depression and drug use for LGBTQIA2S youth (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008).

Similarly, research by Wagaman (2016), shows that the existence of a gay, straight alliance (GSA) in schools has a positive impact on the perceptions of school experiences among LGBTQIA2S students, whether or not they participate in the GSA.

The GSA on a school campus has been associated with long term effects on mental health outcomes (Wagaman, 2016).

Research by Marshall, Yarber, Sherwood-Laughlin, Gray, and Estell (2015), looked at the experiences and perspectives of bullied LGBTQIA2S youth. The study found that bullying is serious; gender nonconformity is a common factor in being bullied; resilience among victims (or survivors) is noteworthy; support systems are crucial; and bullying survivors use power language as resilience (Marshall, Yarber, Sherwood-Laughlin, Gray, and Estell, 2015). The researchers found three primary subthemes: (1) supporting marginalized teens is critical; (2) supporting marginalized teens in the school setting by school staff is essential; and (3) preventing and intervening in instances of bullying are recommended for school personnel.

Marshall et al., (2015), found that substantial support of LGBTQIA2S teens determined whether or not they were able to cope with and eventually overcome the difficulties of being bullied. Supportive school personnel such as teachers, counselors, or principals that demonstrated caring and acceptance of youth allowed for youth to be successful in the school setting. Also, youth who participated in the study expressed the need to educate and prevent bullying by taking it more seriously in school settings. According to their research, youth want school personnel to show support and intervene during instances of harassment. Lastly, the youth expressed wanting a support network for victimized youth such as school counselors or psychologists.

Homelessness

According to Cray, Miller, & Durso (2013), LGBTQIA2S youth are consistently overrepresented among homeless youth in the United States. Research suggests that anywhere from 9 percent to 45 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQIA2S (Cray, Miller, & Durson, 2013; Hussey, 2015). Research by Cray, Miller, & Durson

(2013), confirms that family rejection based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a driving force behind LGBTQIA2S youth becoming homeless. Transgender youth in particular report high rates of homelessness with one estimate indicating 40 percent of homeless youth do not identify as either male or female (Hussey, 2015).

LGBTQIA2S homeless youth experience extremely high rates of victimization and criminalization (Cray, Miller, & Durson, 2013). Figures from research by Cray, Miller, & Durson (2013), show nearly 30 percent of LGBTQIA2S youth had been robbed; 28 percent had been physically assaulted; 22 percent had been sexually assaulted or raped, and 1 in 3 LGBTQIA2S homeless youth had been a victim of a hate crime. Violence against LGBTQIA2S youth in shelters results in emotional and behavioral problems (Hunter, 2008). When such physical assaults happen, LGBTQIA2S youth are more likely to attempt suicide or turn to drugs or alcohol to cope. Similarly, Bassuk, Keuroghlian, & Shtasel (2014), state that LGBTQIA2S youth who are homeless have particularly high rates of mental health and substance use problems, suicidal acts, violent victimization, and a range of HIV risk behaviors. Hunter (2008), suggests high-risk sexual activity among homeless LGBTQIA2S youth increase the likelihood of contracting HIV and/or STDs.

Juvenile Justice

Emerging research states that approximately 13 percent of youth in detention facilities across the US identify as LGBTQIA2S (Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes, 2009). Evidence exists that police regularly target LGBTQIA2S youth for an arrest and selectively enforce laws against them. LGBTQIA2S youth are disproportionately charged with sex offenses that the system typically overlooks when heterosexual youth are involved (Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes, 2009). The authors go on to state that in cases involving nonsexual offenses, courts will sometimes order LGBTQIA2S youth to

submit to sex offense risk assessments or undergo sex offender treatment programs based merely on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Medical and mental health professions have condemned these methods because they are ineffective and damaging (Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes, 2009).

Research done by Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes (2009), found that over 90 percent of survey respondents identified a lack of family support as a severe problem for LGBTQIA2S youth in the juvenile justice system. Things such as family rejection have a negative health and mental health outcome that can lead to homelessness, which can result in a youth's risk for court involvement. Youth who experience troubles at home are at risk for entering the system due to status offenses such as domestic disturbances, and survival crimes such as shoplifting and prostitution (Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes, 2009).

Pervasive harassment and bullying can result in LGBTQIA2S students entering the system due to skipping school, disorderly conduct, or assault charges when trying to defend themselves against attacks by classmates (Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes, 2009). Their survey of interviews from professionals that work with LGBTQIA2S youth in the juvenile justice system found that secure facilities are dangerous and hostile places for LGBTQIA2S youth and are often unprepared to provide competent and equitable services for the youth. The outcome is staff and other youth regularly subjecting LGBTQIA2S youth to shocking physical, sexual, and emotional abuse due to their perceived or identified sexual orientation or gender identity (Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes, 2009). Additionally, transgender youth are inflicted with additional harm of physical and emotional well-being from being denied medically necessary transition-related medical care.

Majd, Marksamer, & Reyes (2009), presented eleven core recommendations to improve how juvenile justice professionals work with LGBTQIA2S youth. (1),

professionals (including judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, probation officers, and detention staff) must treat and ensure others treat all LGBTQIA2S youth with fairness, dignity, and respect; (2), promote the well-being of transgender youth by allowing them to express their gender identity including providing necessary medical care; (3), provide training and resources to staff; (4), provide appropriate individualized responses to the behavior of LGBTQIA2S youth in the system; (5), enforcement of policies that prohibit discrimination and mistreatment of LGBTQIA2S youth; (6), juvenile court committing to using the least restrictive means to avoid unnecessary detention and incarceration; (7), development and maintenance of programs, services, and placements that are competent to serve LGBTQIA2S youth; (8), adequate development, oversight, and monitoring of services that are competent to help this specific group of youth; (9), ensurement of qualified and well-resourced counsel to provide defense advocacy at all levels of delinquency proceedings; (10), juvenile justice professional take responsibility for the protection of civil rights of LGBTQIA2S youth; and (11), professionals must adhere to all confidentiality and privacy protections afforded to LGBTQIA2S youth in the system.

Foster Care

In the article *Developing Relationship-Building Tools for Foster Families Caring for Teens who are LGBTQ2S*, the researchers conducted focus groups with youth in foster care and child welfare workers to find the unique challenges and needs of this population. A child welfare worker pointed out that LGBTQIA2S identifying youth in foster care already belong to a system that is stigmatized; as a result, these youth are discriminated against based on both their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as well as their foster care system involvement.

One worker expressed how many of their available placements are faith-based homes where they may struggle with being able to take youth with LGBTQIA2S identities into their homes. Another participant discussed how caregivers connecting with adults in the community who identify as LGBTQIA2S could be beneficial to both caregivers and teens. Other recommendations from the study include caregivers advocating for youth, caregivers facilitating youth learning and growing, use of appropriate language and terminology, giving youth space to make choices, and caregivers resisting stereotypes and being open-minded (Salazar et al., 2018).

Two-Spirit

Research done by Elm, Lewis, Walters, and Self (2016), defines two-spirit people as a contemporary, unifying, intertribal term adopted by some American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN), First Nations, and Aboriginal peoples to signify their spiritual, sexual, gender, cultural, and community identities. Many two-spirit identified people embody feminine and masculine duality; gender identity or expression that does not fit well into Western notions of binary gender representation, but one that is more aligned with traditional indigenous understandings of a non-female or non-male gender (Elm, Lewis, Walters, & Self, 2016).

Essentially, the term two-spirit has been known to reconnect an individual with tribal understanding, ceremonial roles two-spirit people have traditionally held, which in turn helps reaffirm their identities. The colonization of the Americas brought about the destruction of traditional Indigenous ways of living and genocidal policies that have impacted Native people, particularly two-spirits.

According to Elm, Lewis, Walters, and Self (2016), boarding schools inflicted one-way, strict binary gender norms instilled in Indigenous people. Today, two-spirit people face three worlds of conflicting ideologies—Indigenous culture, LGBTQ+

community, and the dominant culture. Two-spirit people face microaggressions, bias attitude, racism, sexism, and violence (Elm, Lewis, Walters, & Self, 2016).

According to Lehavot, Walters, and Simoni (2009), two-spirit women in particular experience high rates of sexual (85%) and physical assault (78%). Historical trauma resulting from Western colonization causes prolonged suffering for two-spirit people today including depression and anxiety symptoms, as well as substance misuse (Elm, Lewis, Walters, & Self 2016).

Affirming LGBTQIA2S Youth & Further Recommendations

Poirier, Francis, Fisher, Williams-Washington, Goode, & Jackson (2008), researched the best ways to provide culturally and linguistically competent programs to meet the needs of LGBTQIA2S youth. The authors define systems and organizations that meet cultural competence to have a set of values and principles and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively with people of diverse backgrounds. In addition, linguistically competent systems and organizations communicate information in a way that is understood by diverse audiences that include limited English, literacy skills, and other communication hindrances (Poirier et al., 2008). The implementation of cultural and linguistic competence principles is ideal because LGBTQIA2S youth are commonly misunderstood and underserved.

Poirier et al. (2008), provide several recommendations and strategies to better serve LGBTQIA2S youth. The authors suggest creating a “welcoming environment” by developing mission and vision statements that highlight an agency’s commitment to serving youth who are LGBTQIA2S—in addition to providing LGBTQIA2S specific services, displaying symbols of support, and ensuring agency location and service hours are accessible to youth (Poirier et al., 2008). Additionally, inclusion of protections

for the sexual orientation and gender identity of youth in agency nondiscrimination policies, maintaining confidentiality and privacy, assessing foster care families to ensure they are supportive of LGBTQI2S, and offering safe places to identify health-related resources and information are the recommended ways to protect LGBTQIA2S youth (Poirier et al., 2008).

Agencies and systems that work with LGBTQIA2S youth are recommended to strengthen staff and supports by having non-discrimination policies for employees and volunteers, promote positive attitudes as well as updated training about LGBTQIA2S youth issues. In addition, Poirier et al. (2008), recommend encouraging staff to conduct self-assessments to determine their current level of cultural and linguistic competence and ensuring youth advocates are available as support for LGBTQIA2S youth (Poirier et al., 2008). Providing training for staff who work with youth who identify as transgender, designing or revising agency forms with gender-neutral language, and providing safe, non-gendered bathrooms for youth are recommended when working with youth who are transgender (Poirier et al., 2008).

Lastly, Poirier et al. (2008), recommend enhancing practice and service delivery as well as engaging communities to better serve LGBTQIA2S youth. Enhancing practice and service delivery by discussing sexual orientation and gender identity issues with youth in a supportive manner, not assuming youth are heterosexual; similarly, do not assume youth are distressed or troubled because of their non-heterosexual identity. Exhibit an open and positive attitude about this population of youth to promote a positive therapeutic relationship and offer services and supports to entire family units with LGBTQIA2S youth (Poirier et al., 2008).

Poirier et al. (2008), recommend engaging communities by developing competence of how these identities are perceived within the community; provide information about alternative services and supports outside of their local community;

and, provide a community center or safe meeting space for youth as well as build relationships with other organizations that support the LGBTQIA2S youth community.

Similarly, Poirier, Fisher, Hunt, & Bearse (2014), present tips for creating a welcoming environment for LGBTQIA2S youth. Tips such as: “Be guided by young people and respect their coming out process”; “Use appropriate and inclusive language”; and, “Recognize that bias experienced by young people who are LGBTQIA2S may contribute to anxiety, depression, other mental health challenges, and/or substance use” (Poirier, Fisher, Hunt, & Bearse, 2014). Respecting a youth’s identity and respecting their coming out process and timeline allows youth to feel safe.

Poirier, Fisher, Hunt, & Bearse (2014), state that it can be dangerous for young people to come out in unsafe situations, so it is important to not disclose the identity of young people who identify as LGBTQIA2S without their permission. Asking youth, “what name do you prefer to be called?” and “what is your preferred gender pronoun” provides an example of using appropriate and inclusive language when working with LGBTQIA2S youth (Poirier, Fisher, Hunt, & Bearse, 2014). Bias experienced by young people can be challenged by systems and agencies supporting youth by emphasizing self-acceptance and being courageous by challenging bullying behavior and openly addressing biased language and offensive humor (e.g., “that’s so gay”) (Poirier, Fisher, Hunt, & Bearse, 2014).

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LGBTQIA2S Research Presentation

LGBTQIA2S

Lesson Plan for presentation by Eugene P. Williams

Section: LGBTQIA2S

- “Who would like to take a stab at the abc’s of the acronym?”

Section: Introduction

- I am here because I love research and advocating for the needs of LGBTQIA2S youth.

Section: Respect for Indigenous Land & People

- One thing that I really value about my education in a rural and Indigenous county is that we always acknowledge Indigenous land and people during gatherings.
 - The HSU social work program curriculum maintains an emphasis on working with Indigenous and other rural peoples and is designed to assist our students to engage in "**decolonizing social work**," which refers to (1) recognizing that most social work practice approaches and theories in the United States have been developed from Western paradigms that, in many cases, are not relevant to, or supportive of, Indigenous Peoples values, beliefs, culture, and rights; (2) privileging and actively supporting the sovereignty, well-being, and cultural, spiritual, and land rights of Indigenous Peoples; and (3) working with Indigenous communities to implement traditional practices and philosophies in the contemporary context for the purposes of healing and empowerment of the community.
 - With that said, I would like to respectfully acknowledge that we are on Wiyot land, and also recognize the other tribal communities on the North Coast and in the northern California region that existed pre-colonization and continue to exist today.

Section: Two-Spirit People

Ask: What is two-spirit?

Play video:

Feminine & masculine duality

- Two-Spirit people embody both male and female traits.

Western notions of gender

- Only two genders--male or female.
- “What are some other examples?”

Traditional Indigenous understanding

- Two-Spirit embody’s tribal ways of thinking where there is a third space when it comes to gender that is non-female or non-male.
 - “Essentially, the term two-spirit has been known to reconnect an individual with tribal understanding, ceremonial roles two-spirit people have traditionally held, which in turn helps reaffirm their identities.”

Traditional Roles of Two-Spirit

- Additional roles (depend on the specific tribe)
 - Boy’s & Girl’s Puberty Ceremony
 - Peace-Makers for the Tribe
 - Joined war parties
 - Doctors/medicine people

Colonization

- Manifest Destiny
- Genocide
- Historical trauma from Western Colonization
 - Or “prolonged suffering” today
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Substance misuse
 - “Two-spirit women in particular experience high rates of sexual (85%) and physical assault (78%).”

Boarding schools

- An “assimilation” tool - what does that mean?

- “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”
- Forced Native people to give up their children and sent them off to boarding schools, cut their hair, forced them to speak English, dress “western”, physical abuse/sexual abuse, gave them new names, all in an attempt to rid them of their Indigenous identities/traditions.

Conflicting ideologies

- Indigenous culture
- LGBTQ+ community
- Dominant culture

Section: Healthcare

Rural LGBTQIA2S

- In a study on health care as it affects LGBTQ+ young people in New Mexico, the researchers asked participants to share their experiences with health care providers.

Fear & Anxiety

- This came up a lot for participants.
- Many participants felt discrimination and bias during health care encounters

Withholding information

- As a result the LGBTQ+ people choose to withhold relevant information about themselves to avoid the fear and anxiety.
- Ex. from study: heterosexual male provider “laughed” in disbelief when person disclosed his gay status.
 - Another example: Provider was observed by colleague saying: “If they’d get over “it” things would fall into place”—assumes that sexuality is a choice.

Mental illness

- Risk is higher for LGBTQ+ people
- Result of discrimination, stigmatization, and in some cases, violence.

Rural realities

- Geographical isolation, lack of insurance, and confidentiality concerns
- Bias and lack of knowledge on issues pertaining to LGBTQ+ people from providers
- “These seem to be common barriers to care for rural residents, have you or someone

you know experienced similar experiences?”

Highest ranked health concerns

- Risky sexual behavior
- Depression and suicidal ideation
- Harassment or violence in the community or school
- Preventative healthcare
- Nutrition
- Safe sex

Section: Education

Online survey of LGBTQIA2S teens

- 90% surveyed reported verbal or physical harassment
 - Assault based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation, appearance, gender, gender expression, race/ethnicity, disability, or religion

Non-LGBTQIA2S teenagers

- Compared to 62%

@school

- 3x more likely to feel unsafe at school
 - Compared to non-LGBTQ+ students

School staff

- 90% of principals revealed they had heard anti-gay slurs in their school
- Only 21% have engaged in efforts to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ+ students

Gay Straight Alliances

- Make a positive impact on school experience for LGBTQ+ students
 - Whether or not they participate in the GSA
 - “Just knowing there is a support group in place for LGBTQ+ students is beneficial for students.”

Section: Foster Care

Stigma

- “Can anyone tell me what ‘stigma’ means?”
- In the context of foster care, youth already belong to a system that is stigmatized
 - Ex. people in foster care are perceived negatively by their peers/society—bad parents; therefore, bad seed...
- The result is youth are discriminated against based on both their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as well as their foster care system involvement.

LGBTQIA2S youth in care

- Disproportionate number: few studies are able to offer precise data on the percentage, but estimates are between 15 - 19% (number is “disproportionate” because 3 - 8% of youth in the US identify as LGBTQ+).

Faith-based resource homes

- Are you familiar with the term “Resource home”?
- Many recruitments for resource homes are done in churches
 - Large number of resource homes are religious
 - “Why would that be challenging for a LGBTQ+ youth?”

SCPs & LGBTQ+ community members

- This study discussed the benefits of creating connections between caregivers and community members in order for caregivers to learn more about the challenges their foster children face.

Section: Homelessness

9% to 45% of homeless youth are LGBTQIA2S

- “Why do you think this is?”
 - Family rejection based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a driving force behind LGBTQIA2S youth becoming homeless.
- Transgender youth
 - 40% percent of homeless youth do not identify as either male or female.

Challenges

- High rates of victimization and criminalization
 - Targeted more than straight counterparts by law enforcement

- Nearly 30% of LGBTQ+ homeless youth had been robbed
- 28% had been physically assaulted
- 22% had been sexually assaulted or raped
- 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ homeless youth had been a victim of a hate crime
- Additionally: high rates of mental health and substance use problems, suicidal acts, violent victimization, and a range of HIV risk behaviors.

Section: Juvenile Justice

Youth in detention facilities

- 13% of youth in detention facilities across the US identify as LGBTQ+

Law enforcement

- Evidence exists that police regularly target LGBTQ+ youth for arrest and selectively enforce laws against them
- Disproportionately charged with sex offenses that the system typically overlooks when heterosexual youth are involved

Nonsexual offenses

- Courts will sometimes order LGBTQ+ youth to submit to sex offense risk assessments or undergo sex offender treatment programs based merely on their sexual orientation or gender identity

Family support

- 90% of survey respondents identified a lack of family support as a severe problem

Harassment and bullying

- Listed as another reason why youth ended up in detention facilities

Recommendations

- Professionals (including judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, probation officers, and detention staff) must treat and ensure others treat all LGBTQIA2S youth with fairness, dignity, and respect.
- Promote the well-being of transgender youth by allowing them to express their gender identity including providing necessary medical care.

Section: Affirming LGBTQIA2S Youth Identities

Systems and organizations

- Meet cultural competence to have a set of values and principles and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively with people of diverse backgrounds.

Implementation of cultural and linguistic competence principles

- An understanding of LGBTQ+ culture and language/terms because youth are commonly misunderstood and underserved.

Welcoming environment

- Create a welcoming environment by developing mission and vision statements that highlight an agency's commitment to serving youth who are LGBTQIA2S—in addition to providing LGBTQIA2S specific services, displaying symbols of support, and ensuring agency location and service hours are accessible to youth.

Protections

- Inclusion of protections for the sexual orientation and gender identity of youth in agency nondiscrimination policies, maintaining confidentiality and privacy, assessing foster care families to ensure they are supportive of LGBTQIA2S, and offering safe places to identify health-related resources and information.

Caregivers

- Advocate for youth
- Facilitate youth learning and growing
- Use appropriate language and terminology
- Giving youth space to make choices
- Resisting stereotypes and being open-minded

Appendix B



Glossary of LGBTQIA & 2-S

Lesbian: A woman who is primarily attracted to other women.

Gay: A person who is attracted primarily to members of the same sex. Although it can be used for any sex (e.g. gay man, gay woman, gay person), “lesbian” is sometimes the preferred term for women who are attracted to women.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to both people of their own gender and at least one other gender. Also called “bi”.

Transgender: This term has many definitions. It is frequently used as an umbrella term to refer to all people who do not identify with their assigned gender at birth or the binary gender system. There is also a wide variety of what identities/experiences are included in this umbrella. The most broad application of transgender as an umbrella term includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, genderqueer, drag kings, drag queens, two-spirit people, and others. Some transgender people feel they exist not within one of the two standard western gender categories, but rather somewhere between, beyond, or outside of those two genders.

Queer: 1) An umbrella term sometimes used by LGBTQ+ people to refer to the entire LGBT community. 2) An identity that rejects the stable boxes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc. and emphasizes liberatory relationships with sexuality, gender, and society. It is important to note that the word queer is an in-group term and a word that can be considered offensive to some people, depending on their generation, geographic location, and relationship with the word.

Intersex: A person whose sexual anatomy, chromosomes, or endocrine system vary from the mainstream belief in a binary of “Female” and “male” bodies. For example, a person born with both “female” and “male” anatomy (penis, testicles, vagina, uterus); people born with XXY chromosomes.

Asexual: A person who generally does not feel sexual attraction or desire for any group of people. Asexuality is not the same as celibacy.

Two-Spirit: A modern, pan-Native American term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe certain people in their communities who fulfill a traditional third-gender (or other gender-variant) ceremonial role in their cultures. As an umbrella term, it may encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender variance, including people who might be described in Western culture as gay, lesbian, bisexual,

transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, cross-dressers or who have multiple gender identities.

Local Humboldt County LGBTQIA+ & 2-S TAY Resources

As of 9 June, 2022. Information is subject to change and was gathered for the express purpose of the Youth-only Convening. HCTAYC makes no commitments to maintaining this list past the date of publication of this document.

Community Support, Activity, or Leadership Groups

Queer Coffeehouse at the RAVEN Project

QCH is a place to: hang out, chat, make art, get educated, talk about what's going on, watch documentaries and movies, eat snacks, and more. Two separate groups for different age ranges.

On ZOOM currently.

facebook.com/ravenproject

Email lsiebhur@rcaa.org for zoom.

18-24 yr olds: Tuesdays 5:30-6:30 PM

12-17 yr olds: Thursdays 5:30-6:30 PM

Hoopla High Rainbow Collaborative

A space to get support and celebrate 2SLGBTQIA+ identity and culture. Open to Two-Feathers clients and Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District students 13-19.

In person. Hoopa Valley High room 11.

Email tai.p@twofeathers-nafs.org

Thursdays from Noon to 1pm.

Transgender & Gender Expansive Youth Support Group

Support group through Open Door Health. Open to young people 12-22 and their support systems.

In person at Open Door Arcata.

Call Aisha at 707-826-8610 ext. 1112.

Every 3rd Monday of the month from 3:45-5pm.

Youth Advocacy Board LGBTQ+ & 2-S Leadership Committee

Committee for young leaders with lived experience in foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness, and behavioral health systems to advocate for system transformation and create community. Open to young people 16-26.

On zoom currently.

hctayc.org
Email staff@hctayc.org to sign up.

Every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 4-5:30 pm.

School-Based Groups

Academy of the Redwoods - GSA
Gender and Sexualities Alliance.

In person, Advising Center.

Thursdays from 11:30-12:05.

Arcata High - SAGA
Sexualities and Gender Acceptance Club.

In person, room 107.

Advisor: Julie Angles - jangles@nohum.k12.ca.us

Thursdays at Lunch.

Cal Poly Humboldt

Queer Student Union

In person, Klamath Room.

Thursdays at 7 pm.

Trans Support Group

Over zoom.

Contact lisa.turay@humboldt.edu.

Tuesdays, 11 am - noon.

Fridays, noon - 1 pm.

College of the Redwoods - QSU

Queer Student Union.

Online over zoom. <https://redwoods-edu.zoom.us/j/93591939057> Passcode:
480702

Tuesdays at 3 pm.

Eureka High - YEAH

Youth Educating Against Homophobia Club.

In person, room M118.

Wednesdays at lunch.

Hoopla High - Rainbow Collaborative

A space to get support and celebrate 2SLGBTQIA+ identity and culture. Open to Two-Feathers clients and Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District students 13-19.

In person. Hoopa Valley High room 11.

Email tai.p@twofeathers-nafs.org

Thursdays from Noon to 1pm.

McKinleyville High - Diversity Club

Supported by Queer Mentorship and Advocacy Program (QMAP) from Cal Poly Humboldt.

In person, room 402.

Advisor Sarina BVG - sgarb@nohum.k12.ca.us

Fridays during lunch.

Health Care

Open Door

Provide extensive LGBTQ+ - affirming care. Teen clinic, Hormone replacement therapy, STI testing and treatment, counseling and case management, HIV/AIDS care, and more.

Accepts MediCal and Private Insurance. Many locations across the county, but gender affirming/trans care is at the Arcata location specifically.

<https://opendoorhealth.com/services/>

United Indian Health Services

Doesn't have specific ongoing programs right now, but does provide services like hormone replacement therapy, STI testing and treatment, counseling, and HIV/AIDS care. Also has Two-Spirit specific activities and events sometimes!

Provides care for Federally-enrolled tribal members, direct descendants of enrolled tribal members, and partners/spouses of enrolled members.

<https://unitedindianhealthservices.org/>

Two Feathers Native American Family Services

Provides counseling, crisis intervention, substance abuse treatment, case management, peer mentorship, domestic violence support, wellness and cultural activities, and more. Includes specific focus on 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in programming.

Provides care for anyone that identifies as Native American. Accepts MediCal and most insurances.

<https://twofeathers-nafs.org/programs/>

Queer Humboldt

Has a specific counseling program for sliding-scale pay. Also a specific therapy group for young people called Rainbow Youth Support that is a group of 10 young people with everyone getting individual monthly sessions as well.

<https://www.queerhumboldt.org/programs/mental-health-services>

Individual Therapists - Too Many to List!

There are a few good ways of finding therapists in Humboldt that specifically serve our community. You can find links below.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/ca/humboldt-county?category=gay>

<https://erc.humboldt.edu/trans-knowledgeable-therapist-list>

<https://ncamhp.org/member-health-directory/>

–For this, in the search area use a term like: lgbtq, lgbtq+, queer, gay, trans, transgender, etc. Each therapist's description is different unfortunately. Used to have the ability to search by specializations.

Planned Parenthood

Provides STI testing and treatment, and hormone replacement therapy.

Accepts MediCal, Family PACT, and most insurances.

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center/california/eureka/95503/eureka-health-center-2301-90200>

Appendix C

HCTAYC 2012 Anti-Bullying Policy Statement

A Youth-Positive Approach to Bullying

An Approach to a Complex Issue

November 2012 Policy Statement

Creating a safe, inclusive environment is an important aspect of promoting positive youth development and ensuring that youth are able to reach their goals. Within the past few years there has been a national focus to create safe spaces for youth, in specific schools, and topic has been centered upon the issue of Bullying. With nearly 30% of students nationally facing being bullied, engaging in bullying behavior themselves, or both; the outcomes and effects of Bullying are pervasive and readily visible as increased suicidality and youth-on-youth violence like that which is portrayed in the Media.

In particular, Bullying is an issue which disproportionately affects some groups of young people. LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, Two Spirit, Gender Non-Confirming/Gender Expansive) Youth, with over 8 out of 10 experiencing harassment due to their identity/expression.

What is Bullying?

Commonly thought of, Bullying is a set of intentional aggressive behaviors that persist over time, perpetrated by one youth to another. These behaviors are most readily visible in the form of “physical bullying” such as pushing and hitting, or “verbal bullying” in the form of teasing and name-calling, but extend to acts of intimidation such as gestures and social exclusion with what is deemed “emotional or nonverbal bullying” as well as “cyber-bullying.”

We understand Bullying to implicate more than individual interactions between youth, as research on bullying demonstrates that youth engaging in bullying behavior are themselves most often struggling with environmentally induced insecurities and social messaging. With this definition, **Bullying is an environment** in which *hostility* and *alienation* are viable means to gain and assert power, the **most visible symptom** being aggression between youth. This environment extends to the way that staff interact with youth, and is a significant contributor not only to violence, acting out, and self-harm; but to the decrease in academic achievement and increase in dropout rates, higher incarceration rates, and increase in mental health issues.

What doesn't work?

Policy, via the structure and culture that it creates, is a major contributor to the ways that youth interact with and perceive their school/program environment, of particular importance being their sense of connectedness, with punitive policies diminishing

youth's feeling of connectedness and safety. The primary body of research on punitive policies focuses upon the approach made de-facto as a response to Columbine: "Zero-Tolerance." Despite their intent **Zero-Tolerance Policies do not** meet their intended outcome of making school safer, and **instead criminalize and traumatize youth**, taking from them the ability to receive the education and services they need, and the opportunity to learn better ways to interact with their peers and navigate society.

What Works?

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social Emotional Learning is a School-Wide approach that emphasises the usage of social skills to create a positive developmental environment, and addresses bullying through the implementation of a culture of respect, in which adult modeling is partnered with a framework to teach students skills in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making.

"Home" Spaces (Identity/Affinity Groups e.g. GSAs)

Prejudices are difficult things to erase from a culture, and while it is ideal to try and make our environments as accepting as possible, it is extremely important to provide spaces for social minorities to gather and be around their peers so that they can recuperate and support one another in similar struggles and issues. These are of particular import for LGBTQ youth, who may experience prejudice, discrimination and violence from their families as well. These spaces' impacts are far reaching and often life saving. Their effectiveness is increased when coupled with a similarly-identified or ally-identified staff person, who would have the ability to advocate and provide support for the youth who may not have another adult willing/able to do so.

Educated, Trained, and Accountable Staff

Staff inaction when confronted with a situation of bullying is a pervasive problem, as often staff lack the training to effectively handle matters directly (or under Zero-Tolerance are told instead to rely upon a Police Officer to handle the situation, leading some staff to not report incidents for fear of harsh consequences for the youth); they do not understand how to identify bullying or the identities that are often bullied (especially around constantly evolving LGBTQ terminology and identities); or they do not feel compelled to do anything, sometimes due to their own prejudices. Schools/programs need to develop comprehensive and explicit trainings and mandates that ensure that staff intervene in ways that are developmentally appropriate for the youth they are serving and ensure safety and well-being.

Peer Educators/Mediators

Youth have a powerful influence upon each other, and whereas often bullying is used to gain/exert power within the peer group, it is expected often that it is the responsibility of adults/staff to manage those interactions. This takes from youth the opportunity to develop much needed social navigation and conflict resolution skills, where these are teachable moments that can empower and build empathy amongst them. A program in

which interested youth are supported, educated, and trained to act as Peer Mediators and Educators provides an opportunity for youth that are bullied to gain power and create a better environment for themselves and give youth that bully the opportunity to work to repair the harm they have done by preventing/intervening bullying, while facilitating cross-peer group relationships and skill-building.

Restorative Justice

The effectiveness of Restorative Justice to create meaningful change within the lives and communities of people that commit harm is well researched, and provides ample opportunities to meet youth that bully at their developmental level, repair and grow relationships, and build skills for their future. In contrast to punitive forms of Justice, it allows those who have been harmed to participate and have their concerns and needs addressed meaningfully.

JUNE 2019 ADDENDUM:

This policy statement was created specifically for the 2012 Stop the Violence Start the Healing Breakfast. The National, State, and Local conversation regarding this topic was specifically surrounding LGBTQ+ youth bullying and HCTAYC was invited to speak on such.

HCTAYC recognizes that unaddressed in this document is the issue of bullying of Youth of Color and Youth with Disabilities. As we have learned in the years between our creation of this document and now, bullying against Indigenous and African-American young people has been well documented as being endemic in Humboldt County. It is HCTAYC's mission to ensure that justice for all youth is served, particularly those impacted by interlocking systems of oppression, and that public service systems are transformed to best support these young people.

The HCTAYC Youth Advocacy Board & Youth Organizers plan to continue our conversations, advocacy, and strategizing around this topic and the emergent issues impacting our community. Possible revision of this document, or the publishing of a subsequent document, may occur.

Source documents, research, and notes:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1baC14FMb3zTh51BGU5BjH26QWmWaKosW9G01-rE89Ps>



Committing to Youth Engagement

Creating an Environment that Encourages and Respects Youth Voices in Meetings and Decision-Making.

Culture Change: Youth as Partners

Making a genuine commitment to youth engagement requires most adult-run programs to make cultural and structural adjustments to calling and running meetings. Too often youth participation is seen as a gesture of good will, an easy way to demonstrate an agency's commitment to youth rather than viewing youth participation as a necessity for sound decision making and a significant asset to the decision-making process. Youth should be invited to meetings early in the decision-making process and be included in every step. Youth should not be invited to meetings only when their opinions will be "interesting," or only when it is convenient for staff to host youth. A culture shift toward seeing youth as partners is the first step that needs to be taken as agencies invite youth to their tables.

1. Welcoming Youth to Meetings

Youth participation requires additional attention to scheduling and logistics. Most youth are unable to attend meetings during school hours, and are unable to get to remote locations that are not serviced by public transit. It is important that when preparing agendas for youth-focused discussions, meetings are scheduled at times of day when youth can attend. It is also helpful to group agenda items so that youth do not have to be present for the entire meeting if there are completely unrelated agenda items youth may not need or want to be present for.

When youth arrive at a meeting or event, it is important that they are welcomed in a way that gives them equal footing in the room. Welcome youth as equals, and treat their presence and input as you would any participant. Efforts to welcome youth with fanfare, such as pizza parties or games, can actually prove to tokenize youth and minimize their status in the group. Youth may need a staff member to mentor or provide guidance through meetings. Mentors should engage youth in professional development and avoid approaching the relationship as direct service oriented.

2. Identifying Youth Participants

An ongoing relationship with a youth organization, or individual youth, will help with recruiting appropriate youth to be present at appropriate meetings, events and committees. The main goal should be to connect youth with causes that they are familiar with, have an interest in, and have input on improving. Staff should become familiar with local youth organizations and include their staff on email distributions and mailing lists. Once a partnership has been formed with a group or individual, keep the parties aware of meetings and send minutes afterward.

Ensure that youth with a diversity of experiences and viewpoints are being engaged. If only the highest functioning, formally educated youth on your committee, you're missing

out on some very important contributions from other youth consumers. No one individual youth can represent the voice or experience of all youth.

3. Preparing and Supporting Youth in Effective Participation

Ensure youth have the preparation needed to learn your meeting procedures, expectations, and roles. Ensure that a youth is clear on the role they will have as a member of a committee or meeting attendee. It is important to remember when inviting youth to participate in meetings and committees that they are coming to the table with less structural support than other members. Youth often lack support that other participants may take for granted such as: years of experience and growth, supportive relationships and financial security built over time, or readily available physical and mental health care, etc. Therefore, it is important to make space for a learning curve and don't unfairly expect transition aged youth to NOT be transition aged youth.

Make an effort to provide youth with feedback privately so that they can learn and grow from their participation. If work is being assigned, make sure to give youth appropriate work for their unique abilities, the technology they have access to, and the time they have to give. Youth will be able to give specifics on what they can do. It is important that the work given to youth is legitimate, and is not "busy work."

4. Building Youth Participation into Your Meetings

Youth are eager to share their personal and collective experiences, but need the space to do so in a meeting environment. Meetings must be structured thoughtfully for any consumer participation, so make sure to build time for youth input into the meeting, and allow youth to suggest remedies for any issues they bring up. Youth input can guide the process of finding ways to improve the system or policy being discussed.

In order to increase youth's successful participation at meetings, be mindful about clarifying professional language used in meetings, refrain from making inside jokes that are alienating and confusing to youth who are not "in the know," create a handout on commonly used acronyms, and find out if your youth participant has use of email. If they don't have access to e-mail then send communication via snail mail, etc. Most people attending meetings are also aware of and intimidated by power dynamics and chain of command. It's always a good idea to have the person with the most institutional power in the room make a special effort to greet the youth and check in with the youth before she/he leaves the meeting.

5. Compensating Youth For Participation

Youth are often asked to sit in committees or on boards alongside paid professionals. The youth offer unique experiences and give the same time and attention to a committee as others, and yet often they do not receive payment for their time and efforts. This creates an inequality that may communicate that a youth's input is less important. So, whenever possible, youth should be compensated for their participation in a manner that matches the expected time and effort of their commitment level. Just as for other participants, the compensation is also for youth's travel and time spent preparing for participation.

When a youth is paid to serve, it gives youth a sense of ownership of the work and a sense of pride in the accomplishments. It is essential that youth are respected for the

unique experiences and position they bring to the meetings and the value they lend to the decision-making process.

Appendix D



Focus Group / Interview Questions

Questions for Professionals

- 1. What services do you know exist for LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County?**
2. What does your agency do to help make LGBTQ+ youth comfortable?
- 3. Which unique needs of LGBTQ+ populations in your system/program are you aware of?**
4. How comfortable do you feel working with LGBTQ+ youth? Would you like to share where your comfort or discomfort comes from? All answers are welcome.
- 5. What training/resources/education have you been provided to inform you about the LGBTQ+ youth in your programs/systems/community?**
6. What changes do you think your agency can make to improve services to LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County?
- 7. Is there anything else you want to share on the topic of supporting the LGBTQ+ youth?**

Questions for Youth

- 1. What do you think helps make LGBTQ+ youth comfortable with creating new friendships and support systems?**
2. What services do you know exist for LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County? Do you know if any exist for Indigenous/Tribal/Native LGBTQIA2-S youth?
- 3. Do you think LGBTQ+ youth feel comfortable accessing services not made for them and why?**
4. What experiences with discrimination/bullying/abuse do the LGBTQ+ youth face in Humboldt County?

5. **Do you feel systems** (like Foster Care, Juvenile Justice System, Mental Health, Health Care, etc.) **have a clear understanding of LGBTQ+ youth experiences and issues? What more should they know?**
6. What resources do you believe are missing for the LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County?
7. **If you could create an ideal world for LGBTQ+ youth living in Humboldt County what would it look like?**

Questions for Healthcare Professionals

1. **What services do you know that currently exist or have existed for LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County?**
2. What have agencies you've worked with or advised done to help make LGBTQ+ youth comfortable?
3. **Which unique needs of LGBTQ+ youth in the programs or spaces you've participated in are you aware of?**
4. What training/resources/education have you been provided to inform you about the LGBTQ+ youth in your programs/systems/community?
5. **What changes do you think youth-serving agencies you've worked with can make to improve services to LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County?**
6. What barriers have you specifically experienced as a healthcare provider and advocate serving LGBTQ+ youth?
7. Is there anything else you want to share on the topic of supporting the LGBTQ+ youth?

HCTAYC LGBTQ+ Focus Group/Interview Interest Form

Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC) is interested in gaining feedback from young people in Humboldt County, ages 16-26, with personal experience in foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness, or mental health about the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in these systems. We are interested in hearing from young people who are LGBTQ+ as well as young people who are not. We are also interested in talking with professionals who support young people and administrators who oversee these systems and programs.

We will use this feedback to create formal policy recommendations, allowing us to transform systems and programs to best meet the needs of the young people in our communities. This is HCTAYC's 7th round of policy recommendations in our over 10 years of existence, and we greatly appreciate the support of our community and all the powerful young people who have made our work possible.

All of your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used by HCTAYC to contact you regarding this project.

A \$20 gift card to a local business will be provided to young people that successfully complete a focus group or interview. Professionals will receive our gratitude and a virtual hug.

If you prefer to instead complete a survey, and not an interview or focus group, please visit the survey found at <https://tiny.cc/HCTAYCLGBTQSURVEY>

* Required



H C T A Y C
HUMBOLDT COUNTY TRANSITION AGE YOUTH COLLABORATION

433 M st., Eureka CA 95501 facebook.com/hctayc (707) 476-4922 humboldtyouth@gmail.com

What is your name?*

Your answer

Would you consider yourself a...*

Young Person (ages 16-26)

Professional (Works Supporting Young People)

Peer Provider (Young Person 16-26 who is also a Professional supporting other youth)

Other:

Do you have personal lived experience with...*

Mental Health System

Homelessness

Foster Care

Juvenile Justice

Substance Misuse/Abuse

N/A

Other:

Do you have professional experience with...*

Mental Health System

Homelessness

Foster Care

Juvenile Justice

Substance Misuse/Abuse

N/A

Other:

Why are you interested in participating in a focus group or interview?*

Your answer

Would you prefer a...*

Digital Focus Group (3-8 people total)

Individual Interview

Either is fine <3

What is the best way to get ahold of you?*

Text, call, facebook, email, etc. Please include number, email, etc.

Your answer

Are you able to do video conferencing?*

Do you have good wifi or other internet, a smart device or computer with a webcam, etc?

Yes

No

Other:

HCTAYC LGBTQ+ Youth Experiences with Systems in Humboldt County Survey

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out this survey! Your participation is incredibly helpful to us being best able to advocate for the needs of systems-impacted young people in Humboldt County. Since 2008, HCTAYC has researched, created, and presented youth-driven policy recommendations to systems and services in Humboldt County. We draw from the experiences and expertise of young people and youth-serving professionals to advocate for improvements, change, and transformation of these systems. This, our 7th round of policy recommendations, will focus on the experiences of LGBTQ+ Youth across systems.

LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning, and plus (+) can include intersex, asexual, two-spirit, pansexual, and many many others.

Please be as honest and detailed as you possibly can. The only people who will see this data are HCTAYC staff and our collaborators at the Youth Law Center. Please know we take confidentiality incredibly seriously, and all data we gather will be combined so nobody's individual answers are used.

If you have taken part in an in-person or online focus group or interview for this round of policy recommendations already, we ask that you not take this survey so we can make sure our data is as representative as possible.

If you would rather participate in an interview or focus group, please let us know by filling out this interest form: <https://tiny.cc/HCTAYCResearch> . Young people receive a \$20 Target gift card for participating in an interview or focus group.

All young people who complete this survey will receive a \$10 Target gift card, if they want one and provide a mailing address.

Please direct any questions or concerns to 707-476-4922 or humboldtyouth@gmail.com

What is your current or previous Humboldt County, California ZIP Code?*

Your answer

Would you consider yourself a:*

Young Person (Ages 16-26)

Professional (Works Supporting Young People)

Peer Professional (Both of the Above Categories)

Informed Consent

Purpose

This study investigates the participants' opinions on LGBTQ+ youth experiences. As part of this study, you will complete the following survey questions. This survey shouldn't take longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Participants' Rights

I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will be available only to HCTAYC and Youth Law Center staff. No one will be able to identify me when the results are reported and my name will not appear anywhere in the written report.

I also understand that I may skip any questions or tasks that I do not wish to answer or complete.

I may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time during the study.

I understand that I am participating in a study of my own free will.

Consent to Participate

I acknowledge that I am at least eighteen years old and that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. If I am under the age of eighteen years old, I have received permission from my guardian or parent to participate in this study. I acknowledge that my participation is fully voluntary.

Do you consent?*

If yes, please also select the "Other" option below and type your initials there. If you are under the age of 18, please have your caregiver select yes and put their initials in the "Other" field.

Yes

No

Other:

Youth Questions

How well do you feel the needs of LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County are being met?*

Great! - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 -Terrible!

What are the the top 3 challenges you feel LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt Face?*

Your answer

Which systems do you have personal experience in?*

Foster Care / Child Welfare

Mental / Behavioral Health

Juvenile Justice

Homelessness Services

Criminal Justice

Substance Misuse/Abuse

Health Care

Tribal Government Services

Native/Indigenous Non-Profits or Clinics

Other:

Do you feel that the programs and services you've received did/do a good job of supporting LGBTQ+ Youth?*

Yes

No

Other:

Is there anything you wish to say about your answer to the previous question?

Your answer

In the systems you have experience in, have you experienced anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination, harassment, or bias?*

Yes

No

If yes to the previous question was there a way to report that? If so, can you give an example?

Your answer

How knowledgeable of LGBTQ+ youth issues, culture, and needs do you think the staff who worked with you were/are?*

Ignorant - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 - Hella Woke

Do you think that LGBTQ+ Youth feel comfortable when programs don't specifically say that they focus on supporting LGBTQ+ youth?*

Yes

No

Other:

Do you know of any programs in Humboldt County that are specifically for LGBTQ+ Youth?*

No, I know of none

I know of one or two

I know of three to five

I know of more than five

I know of more than a dozen

If yes to the previous question, please list them below:

Your answer

Do you feel that there should be separate programs (Mental Health, Health Care, Social Services, Homelessness Services, etc.) designed especially for LGBTQ+ Youth?*

Yes

No

Other:

What topics do professionals, parents, and others need training or education on the most to improve their support of LGBTQ+ youth?*

Your answer

What resources or programs for LGBTQ+ Youth do you wish existed in Humboldt County?*

Your answer

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Your answer

Gift Card Information

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey! All young people who wish to receive a gift card will do so by completing the information below. It might be a good idea to go back now and review your answers to make sure that all of your thoughts have been captured.

All information will be kept with the utmost confidentiality, and deleted after used.

Name

Your answer

Mailing Address

Your answer

Did you select peer professional?*

Yes

No

Professional Questions

How well do you feel the needs of LGBTQ+ Youth in Humboldt County are being met?*

Great! - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 -Terrible!

What are the top 3 challenges you feel LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County face?

Your answer

Which systems do you work in or have you worked in?*

Foster Care / Child Welfare

Mental / Behavioral Health

Juvenile Justice

Homelessness Services

Education (Secondary)

Education (Post-Secondary)

Criminal Justice

Substance Misuse/Abuse

Health Care

Tribal Government

Tribal Health Care

Other:

Approximately how many hours of training and/or coaching specific to working with LGBTQ+ Youth has your agency provided?*

None, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 10 or more hours

What topics related to supporting LGBTQ+ youth would you like more training around?*

Your answer

How many LGBTQ+ youth specific services do you know of in Humboldt County?*

Choose: Very much so Mostly Here and there Not really Not at all

Please list the ones that you do know of below:

Your answer

Do you know if your agency has policies and procedures regarding working with LGBTQ+ young people?*

Yes

No

Other:

Do you feel that LGBTQ+ young people in your agency are receiving affirming and supportive services?*

Choose: Very much so Mostly Here and there Not really Not at all

How many staff at your agency do you feel understand and are able to meet the unique needs of LGBTQ+ Youth?*

Everyone

Almost all

Some

A few

Only me

How comfortable are you working with LGBTQ+ youth?*

Uncomfortable – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 - Very comfortable

What are some unique needs that LGBTQ+ young people accessing your agency have that may be different than other LGBTQ+ youth?*

Your answer

Does your system/program have a process to handle anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination, harassment, or bias?*

Yes

No

If yes to the previous question, please give an example.

Your answer

What changes do you think your system or agency can make to improve services to LGBTQ+ youth in Humboldt County?*

Your answer

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Your answer

Demographics

Thank you so much for completing this survey, it will help us create the best, most effective policy recommendations possible! The demographic information you provide below is entirely optional and will be kept anonymous. We would appreciate it if you could fill it out, as it will help our reporting to our funders!

Your Race:

If you select American Indian / Alaska Native please put your tribal affiliation in the "other" option below.

American Indian / Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African-American

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

White

I prefer not to answer

Other:

Your ethnic identity:

African

Asian Indian / South Asian

Cambodian

Caribbean

Central American

Chinese

Eastern European

European

Filipino

Japanese

Korean

Mexican / Mexican-American / Chican(a/o)

Middle Eastern

Puerto Rican

South American

Vietnamese

I prefer not to answer

Your Age:

Younger than 16

16-18

19-25

26+

I prefer not to answer

Your Primary Language (Used Most Often):

English

Hmong

Spanish

I prefer not to answer

Other:

Your Sexual Identity:

Bisexual

Gay / Homosexual

Lesbian

Pansexual

Queer

Questioning / Unsure

Straight / Heterosexual

I prefer not to answer

Other:

Do you have a disability (a physical or mental impairment/medical condition lasting at least 6 months that substantially limits a major life activity):

Chronic Health Condition

Hearing

Mental / Learning (not including mental illness)

Physical / Mobility

Speaking

Vision

None

I prefer not to answer

Other:

Are you a veteran:

Yes

No

I prefer not to answer

Your Sex Assigned at Birth:

Female

Male

I prefer not to answer

Your Current Gender Identity:

Female

Genderqueer

Male

Non-Binary

Questioning / Unsure

Transgender woman

Transgender man

I prefer not to answer

Other:

Have you ever been homeless, lived on the streets, in a shelter, or couch surfed:

Yes

No

I prefer not to answer

Have you experienced a mental health condition:

Yes, diagnosed

Yes, undiagnosed

No

I prefer not to answer

Do you have a family member with a mental health condition:

Yes, diagnosed

Yes, undiagnosed

No

I prefer not to answer

Have you ever been involved in the juvenile justice system:

Yes

No

I prefer not to answer

Your ZIP Code:

Your answer

Informed Consent – HCTAYC LGBTQ+ Policy Recommendations Focus Groups

Purpose

This study investigates the participants' opinions on LGBTQ+ youth experiences. As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group and answer structured and open-ended questions. This study will take approximately 60 - 90 minutes.

Participants' Rights

I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will be available only to HCTAYC staff. No one will be able to identify me when the results are reported and my name will not appear anywhere in the written report.

I will not share other people's identities or responses from the focus group with others to maintain the anonymity of the participants outside of the focus group.

I also understand that I may skip any questions or tasks that I do not wish to answer or complete.

I understand that the consent form will be kept separate from the data records to ensure confidentiality.

I may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time during the study without penalty. I agree to have my verbal responses tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis with the understanding that my responses will not be linked to me personally in any way. After the transcription is completed, the tape recordings will be destroyed.

I understand that I am participating in a study of my own free will.

Consent to Participate

I acknowledge that I am at least eighteen years old and that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. **If I am under the age of eighteen years old, I understand that I will require a guardians signature.** I acknowledge that my participation is fully voluntary.

Print Participant Name: _____

Print Guardian Name: _____

Participant/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Finalization World Café Conversations Prompts

- **Breakout Room #1 - Rec #1**

- ***Create a new Humboldt County LGBTQ+ & Two-Spirit TAY Resource Center with youth friendly hours, staff and a central location for youth on public transportation routes.***

- If you waved a magic wand and could have the center be anything, what would it look like?
 - Where would you see it being best located?
- Who do you think should create this resource center?
 - If HCTAYC is not mentioned, ask if they think we should be part of this collaboration?

- **Breakout Room #2:**

- ***Policy Rec #2: Ensure all Humboldt County youth-serving agencies promote environments in which LGBTQIA? youth, are safe, treated respectfully, and have full access to services.***

- ***Policy Rec #3: Ensure all Humboldt County youth-serving agencies follow the laws, requirements, and responsibilities of TAY-serving agencies with respect to LGBTQ youth***

- What do you think is the best way to make sure that organizations are doing these things?
- How do you think organizations and facilities should be assessed for their environment and compliance with laws in regards to lgbtq+ rights
- Are there trainings that you are familiar with that you think would help these two recs?
- Note-make sure LGBTQ+ rights are posted in youth serving orgs/county

- **Breakout Room #3:**

- ***Policy Rec#3: Develop safe families and living environments for LGBTQ+ & Two-Spirit Youth***

- ***Policy Rec#4: Launch an outreach and access campaign to increase awareness about the programs and services available in Humboldt County and ensure youth access to those supports.***

- If you are or have been in foster care or alternative housing, what would you want to see in those homes to create a safe environment?
- What barriers have you or your peers/loved ones been faced when accessing resources and what would remove those barriers?
- What would an effective outreach campaign look like in Humboldt?
- Which collaborator do you think would be best to design and lead this campaign

- **Breakout Room #4:**

- ***Policy Rec #5: Design specialized community health, mental health, and substance use services to address unique challenges of LGBTQ+ & Two-Spirit youth.***

- ***Policy Rec #7: Increase utilization of peer professionals who reflect the diversity of LGBTQ+ & Two-Spirit Transitional Age Youth***

- *Make sure they know what a peer professional is (in our intro/acronym portion of the intro)
- What do you think the role of peers are in these services?
- What needs to be different about community health, mental health, and substance use services that are specifically for LGBTQ+ youth?
- What are your thoughts/feelings about the specialized services currently provided to LGBTQ+ & Two-Spirited youth in Humboldt County?
 - Do you find them to be safe and accessible?
- What is your vision of how peer support would aid LGBTQ+ & Two-Spirited youth services
- Their experience with outreach and its effectiveness



LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Policy Rec Release

Young People Summit Agenda - Hybrid

June 9th 3-6pm

Time	<i>Agenda Item</i>
3-3:20	<i>Welcome & Drumming w/ Bruce Kaye</i>
3:20-3:30	<i>Introductions / Ice Breaker</i>
3:30-3:40	<i>What is HCTAYC / Review Policy Rec Process</i>
3:40-4:25	<i>World Cafe Session 1 - Initial Visions</i>
4:25-4:35	<i>Why Does This Issue Matter to Us?</i>
4:35-5:10	<i>World Cafe Session 2</i>
5:10-5:30	<i>Dinner Outside/Delivery & Flag Design Activity</i>
5:30-5:50	<i>Harvest & Q & A</i>
5:50-6pm	<i>Wrap up / Check out</i>

Release Appreciations for Young People

Without saying thank you, what would you like to say to the youth that participated in this policy recommendation process?

I hear you, I dedicate my work to uplifting your voice, I am so proud of every youth that participated in this groundbreaking work :)

Honestly y'all give me so much hope for the future. I'm excited to support your visions of advocacy and joy.

Feeling hopeful

It's so impressive to hear what youth leadership is doing for our youth

Your commitment to protecting your communities will help so many

Resilient and dedicated!

Please keep doing the good work- there will always be youth like us. We will always need safe spaces and policy



appreciated and taking action is key and inspiring!

Honest

Glad you are the youth of the future!

I am constantly in awe of the courage with which you all live your lives every day and the consistent effort you make to transform our culture to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Alex and Lucius, your advocacy and eloquence is amazing. And inspirational.

You've exhibited so many amazing skills that are transferrable to your future work. If you need career assistance, Garrett can help you put all those skills on a resume!

This leads to more good and less harm!

You Rock!!

Your dedication to making improvements and changing the community for the better is truly inspiring!

We are committed to making the changes you lifted up! Thank you for your leadership!

Your bravery in sharing is so appreciated!!!

LGBTQIA+ & Two-Spirit Policy Rec Release

Public Agenda - Online

June 15th 1-3pm

Time	<i>Agenda Item</i>
1-1:20	<i>Introductions & Welcome w/ Bruce Kaye</i>
1:20-1:30	<i>What is HCTAYC / Review Policy Rec Process</i>
1:30-1:45	<i>Share Youth Identified Guidance & Read Policy Recs</i>
1:45-2:15	<i>Why is this Important/Experience & Visions from Expert Panel</i>
2:15-2:30	<i>Q & A</i>
2:30-2:50	<i>Break out rooms</i>
2:50-2:55	<i>Jam Board Appreciation Activity</i>
2:55-3pm	<i>Next Steps / Check-out</i>



Appendix E

Demographic Graphics

Chart A: Race of Participants

% of participants

- Black / African American
- American Indian / Alaska Native
- Asian
- Hispanic / Latine
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White (non-Hispanic)
- I prefer not to answer

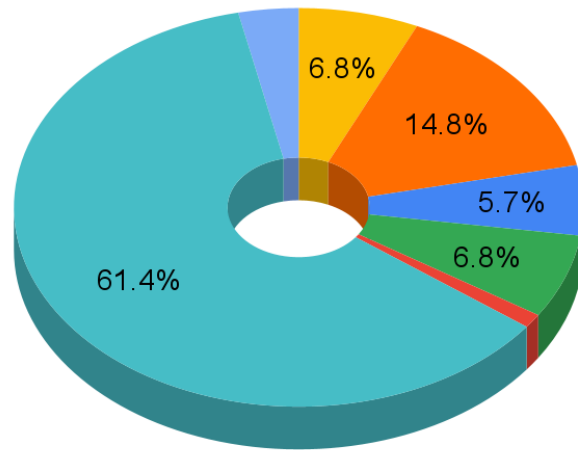


Chart B: Tribal Affiliation of Participants

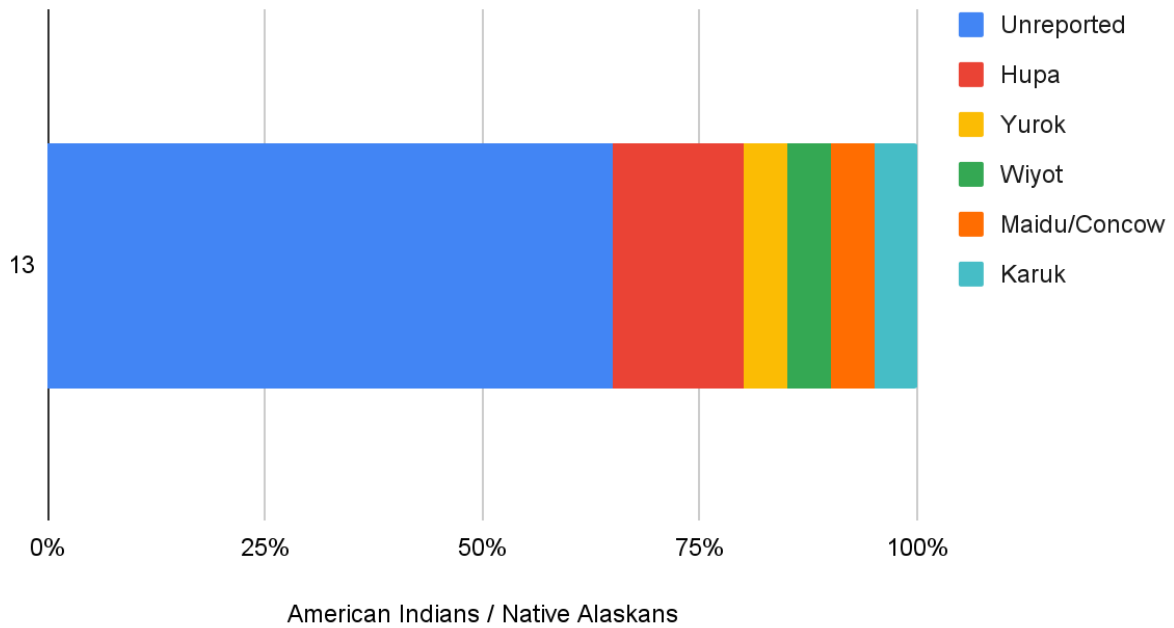


Chart C: Ethnic Identity of Participants

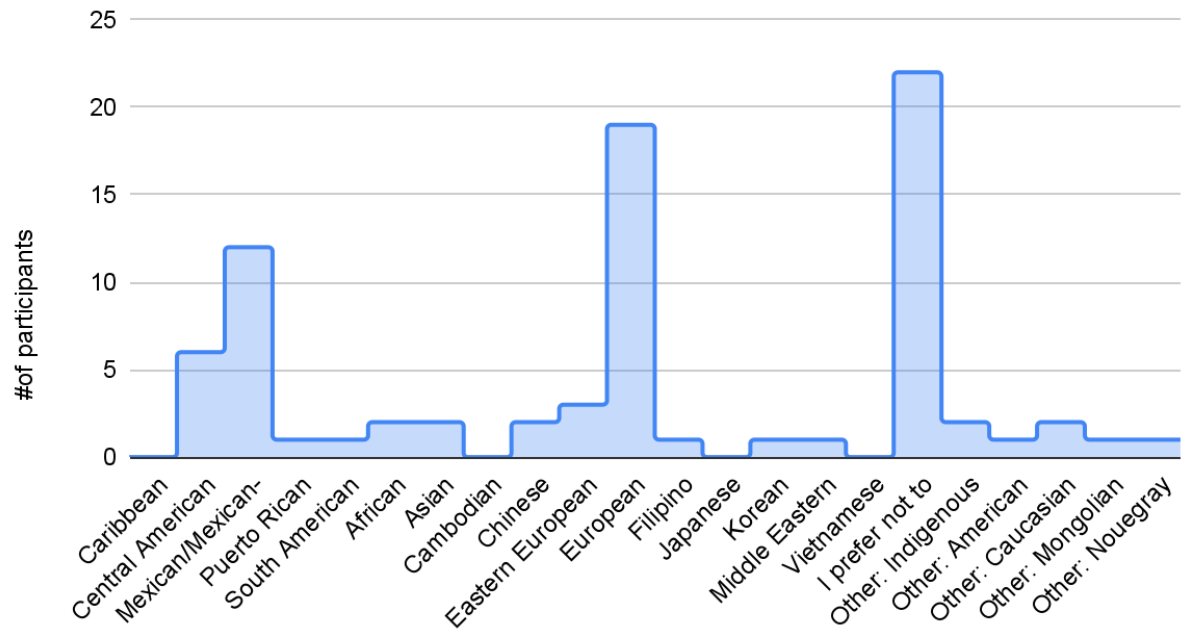


Chart D: Age of Participants

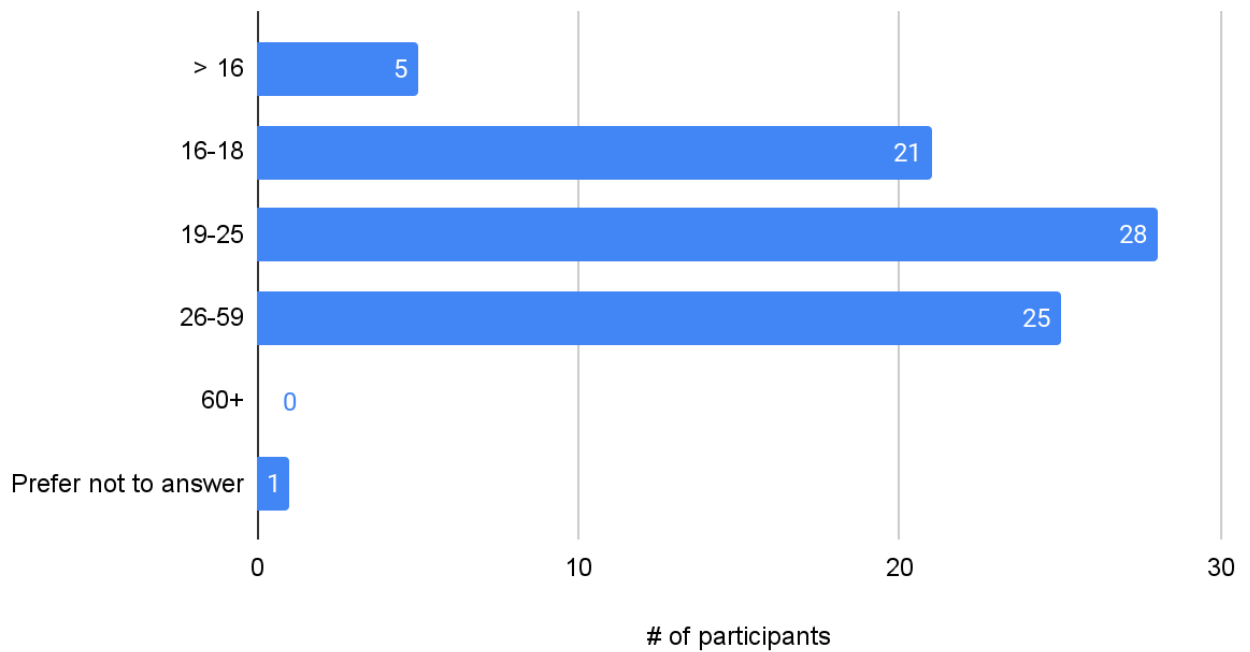


Chart E: Participant's Primary Spoken Language

% of participants

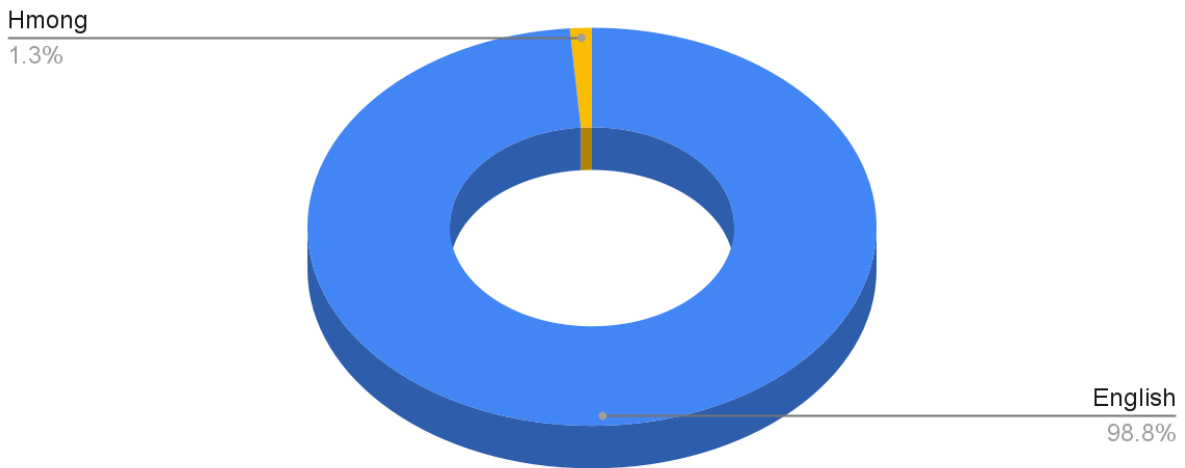


Chart F: Sexual Identity of Participants

% of participants

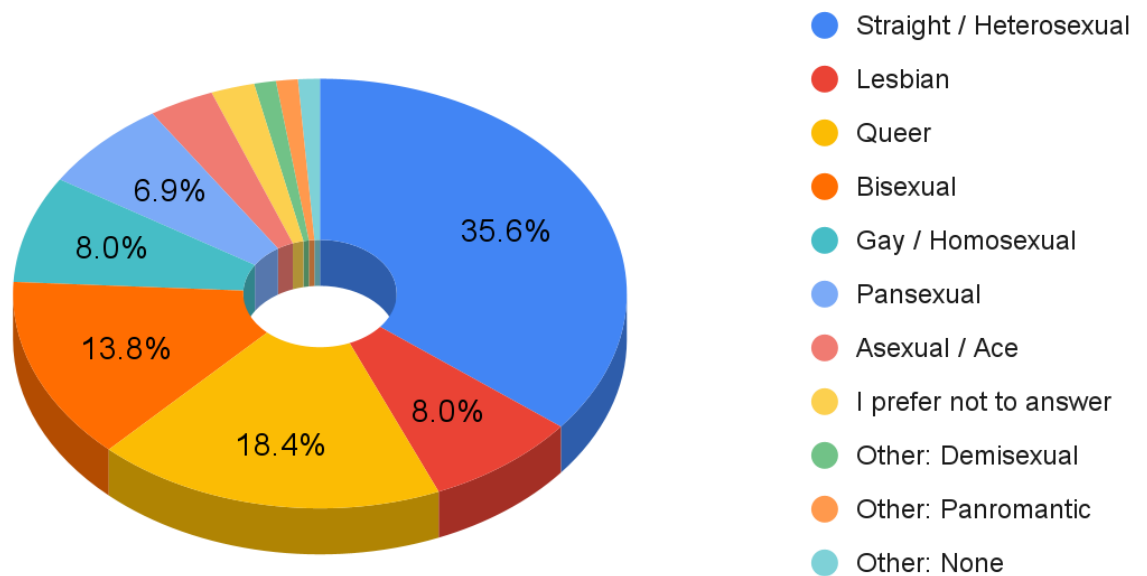


Chart G: Sex Assigned at Birth & Current Gender Identity

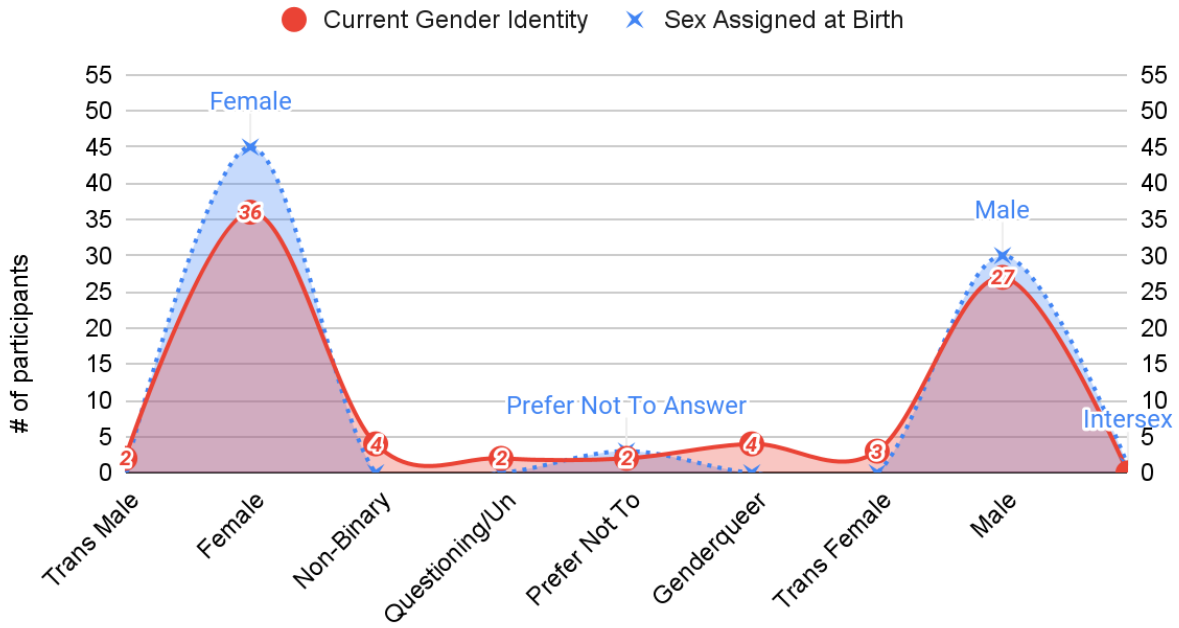


Chart H: Disclosed Disabilities of Participants

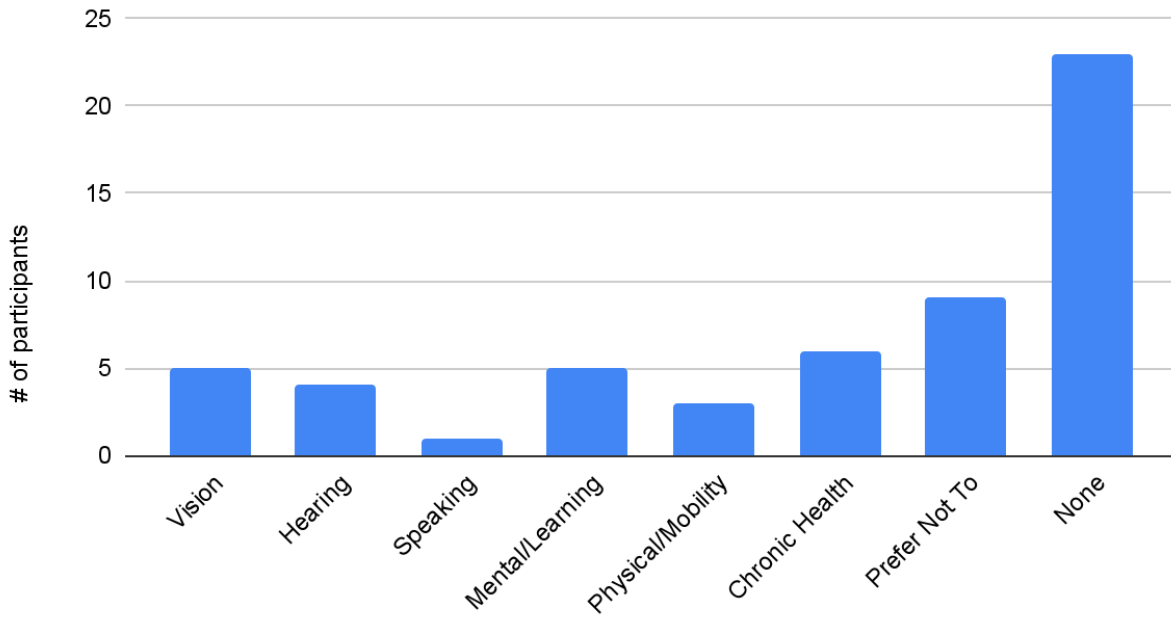


Chart I: Participant Experience w/ Mental Health Challenges

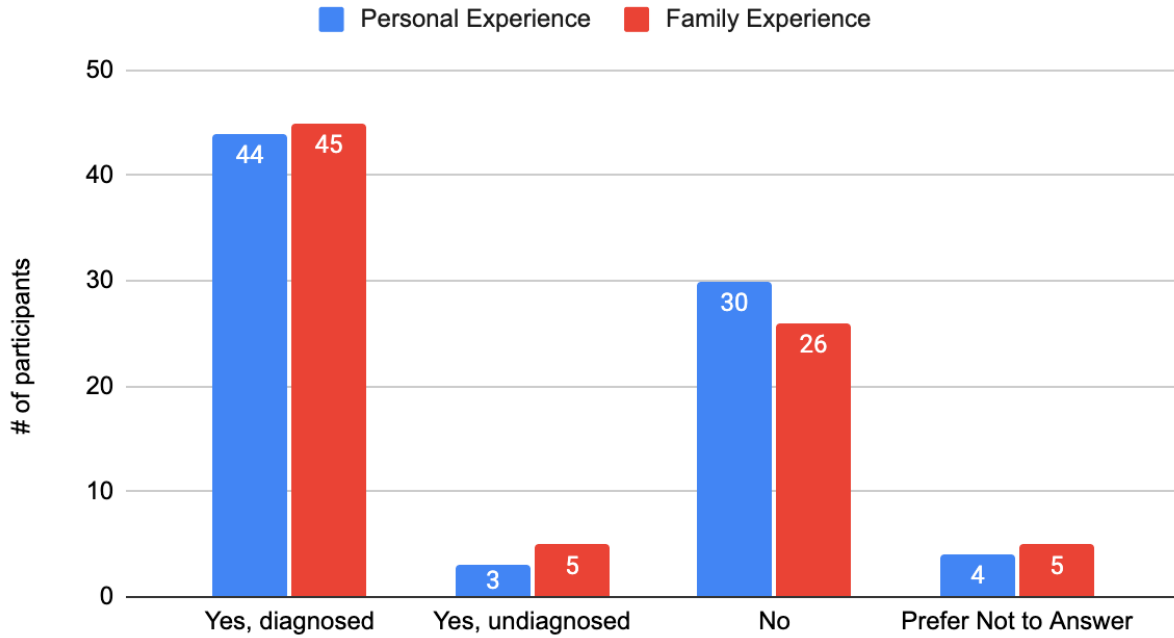


Chart J: Participant System Experience

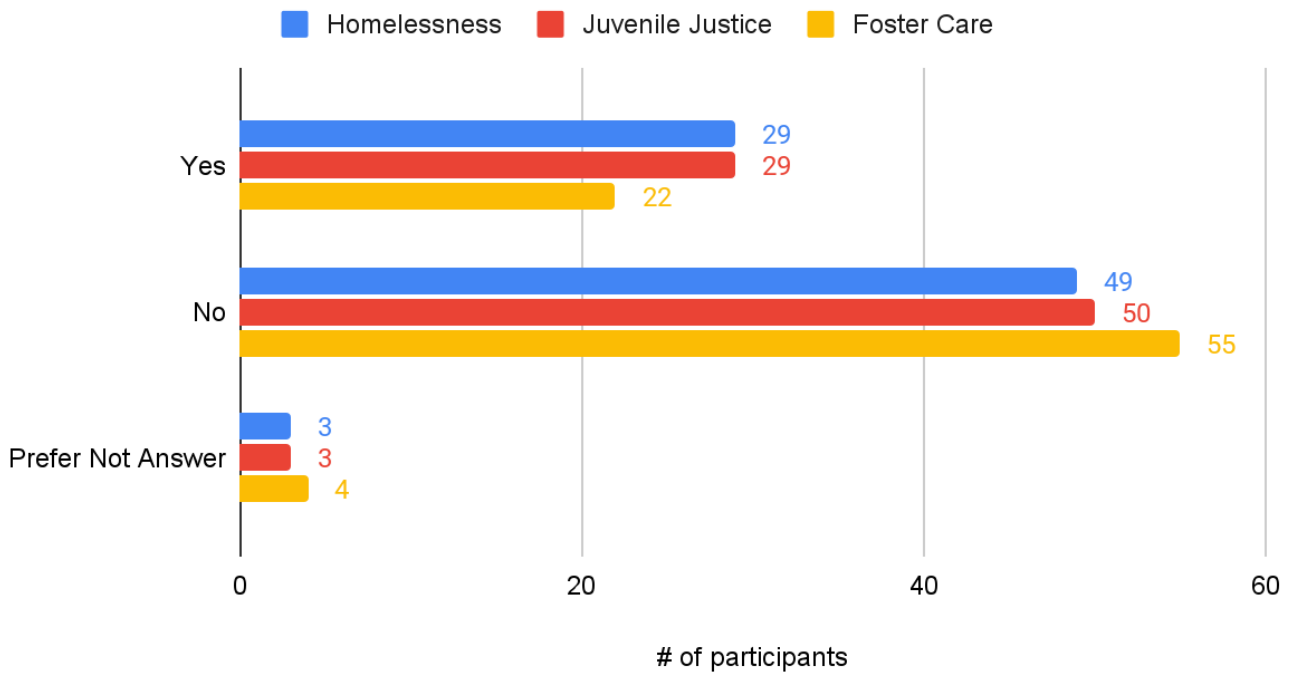
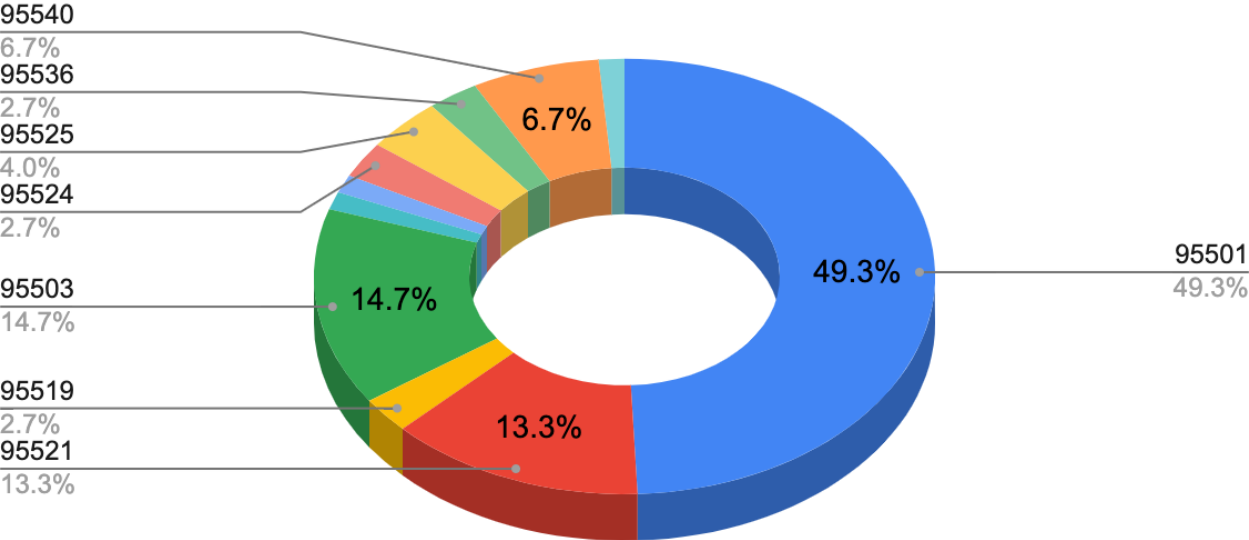


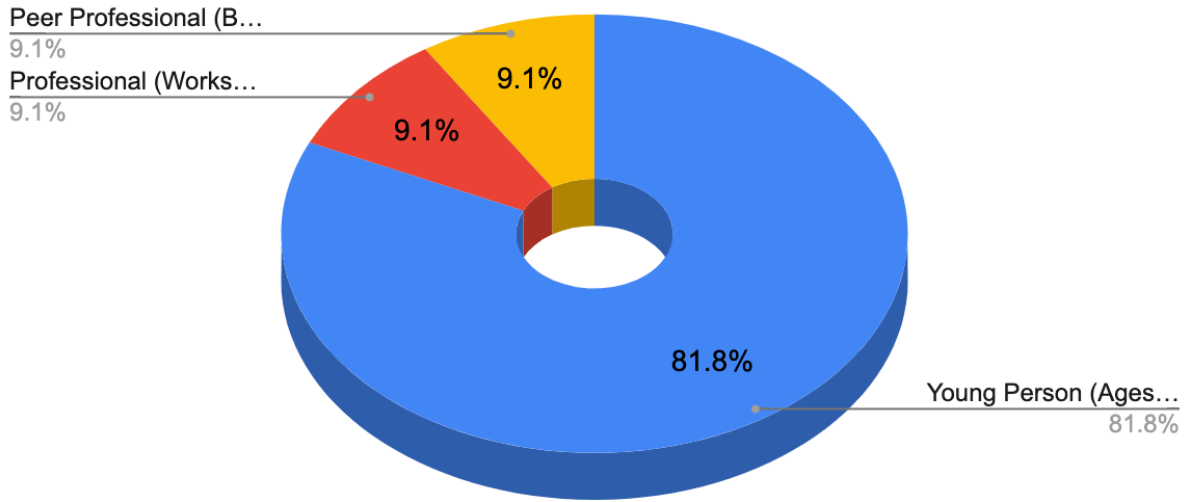
Chart K: Participant ZIP Codes

% of participants



Survey Graphics

Would you consider yourself a:



Which systems do you have personal experience in?

40 responses

