



# Huron County Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services

2 Oak Street • Norwalk, Ohio 44857 • 419-681-6268

## LGBTQ+ and Mental Health

June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month. LGBTQ+ Pride Month is an important time to bring awareness to the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community and focus on supporting their mental health. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning community represents a diverse range of identities, expressions of gender, and sexual orientation. In addition to these identities, members of the community are very diverse in terms of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, and socioeconomic class. The LGBTQ+ community face challenges just like everyone else. However, they often experience even more hurdles to caring for their mental health due to stigma, which keeps many individuals from seeking help.

### How do mental health conditions affect the LGBTQ+ community?

While belonging to the LGBTQ+ community can be a source of strength, it also brings unique challenges. For those who identify as LGBTQ+, it's important to recognize how the experience of sexual orientation and gender identity relates to mental health. Although the full range of LGBTQ+ identities are not commonly included in large-scale studies of mental health, there is strong evidence from recent research that members of this community are at a higher risk for experiencing mental health conditions, especially depression and anxiety disorders.

- LGBTQ+ adults are more than twice as likely as heterosexual adults to experience a mental health condition.
- Transgender individuals are nearly four times as likely as cisgender individuals (people whose gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned at birth) to experience a mental health condition.
- A recent study found 61% of LGBTQ+ have depression, 45% have PTSD and 36% have an anxiety disorder.
- Additionally, 40% of transgender individuals have attempted suicide in their lifetime. This is nearly 9 times the overall rate in the United States.

LGBTQ+ youth also experience greater risk for mental health conditions. LGBTQ+ youth are more than twice as likely to report experiencing persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness than their heterosexual peers. Transgender youth face further disparities as they are twice as likely to experience depressive symptoms, seriously consider suicide, and attempt suicide.

- In 2015, it was reported that out of 10,528 middle and high school students surveyed:
  - 85.2% LGBTQ+ students experienced verbal harassment at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
  - 57.6% felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
  - 31.8% skipped a day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.

There is no single answer for why these disparities exist but it is important to recognize that stigma and trauma are certainly contributing factors.

### *Important Risk Factors Of LGBTQ+ Mental Health*

**Rejection:** For many in the LGBTQ+ community, coming out can be a difficult or even traumatic experience. It can be incredibly hard to cope with rejection of something as personal as one's identity from family or close friends, within the workplace, or in a faith community.

**Trauma:** Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, bullying and feeling identity-based shame is often traumatic for people. The LGBTQ+ community face many forms of discrimination, including; labeling, stereotyping, denial of opportunities or access, and verbal, mental and physical abuse. Such discrimination can contribute to a significantly heightened risk for PTSD among individuals in the LGBTQ+ community.



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**Substance Use:** Substance misuse or overuse, which may be used as a coping mechanism or method of self-medication, is a significant concern for members of this community. LGBTQ+ adults are nearly twice as likely as heterosexual adults to experience a substance use disorder. Transgender individuals are almost four times as likely as cisgender individuals to experience a substance use disorder. Illicit drug use is significantly higher in high school-aged youth who identify as LGBTQ+ or are unsure of their identity, compared to their heterosexual peers.

**Homelessness:** It is estimated that LGBTQ+ youth and young adults have a 120% higher risk of experiencing homelessness. This is often the result of family rejection or discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

**Suicide:** Many people in this community struggle in silence and face potentially worse health outcomes as a result. The LGBTQ+ population is at a higher risk than the heterosexual, cisgender population for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.

**Inadequate Mental Health Care:** The approach to sexual orientation and gender identity in mental health care often groups together anyone in the LGBTQ+ community. This method can be problematic as each sub-community faces unique challenges, rates of mental illness and experiences. Other identity factors including race and economic status can affect the quality of care LGBTQ+ receive. Additionally, members of this community may face lack of cultural competency from potential providers. These experiences can lead to a hesitancy to seek professional help.

## How can we help someone who might be struggling?

- Give support in a way you would give it to anyone else.
- Approach the conversation with an open mind.
- Be willing to understand.
- Show compassion.
- Actively listen to them.
- Ask how you can help.
- Show respect and affirmation through words and actions.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Educate yourself on how to be a good ally.

The Huron County Prevention Coalition is currently working towards increasing supports and services available for the LGBTQ+ community. Below, we invite you to take a brief survey to assess the needs in Huron County related to LGBTQ+ services and supports. We greatly appreciate your input and we will use this information to help drive decisions around services, supports, trainings and resources in Huron County.

<https://a5qw9px7t21.typeform.com/to/z7L9U9mj>

## Additional Resources for Support:

MHAS LGBTQ+ Support Page: <https://www.hcbmhas.org/lgbtq>

Huron County LGBTQ+ Facebook page below: <https://www.facebook.com/hclgbtq>

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/lgbtq/>

The Trevor Project: 866-488-7386 <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

List of local mental health treatment providers: <https://www.hcbmhas.org/treatment>

Sources: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/public-awareness/lgbtq-pride-month>

<https://youth.gov/feature-article/june-lgbt-pride-month>

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/LGBTQ/>

<https://www.healthpartners.com/blog/mental-health-in-the-lgbtq-community/>