



## Mental Health Issues Facing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Youth

### Depression and Suicide

- LGBT youth ages 14-21 were significantly more likely to report depression and anxiety than heterosexual peers
- Multiple studies show that LGBT youth are more likely to **attempt** suicide
- Rates of suicide attempt among LGB youth are 20 – 40% higher than among heterosexual youth
- One study showed that 33% of all transgender youth have attempted suicide

### Bullying

- Youth that experience verbal, physical, or sexual assault or the threats of such assault are more vulnerable to mental illness such as depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder
- A 2007 study showed that:
  - ▶ Nearly 90% of LGBT students were harassed at school in the past year
  - ▶ 60% felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation
  - ▶ About 33% skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe
- A 2005 study of Michigan teens found that 99 percent of students heard anti-gay slurs and 88 percent heard comments such as a boy not acting “masculine enough” or a girl not acting “feminine enough”
- Studies have also demonstrated that youth who are *perceived* to be LGBT consistently face intense victimization in school settings

## Did you know that Michigan.....

- Is the 3<sup>rd</sup> worst state in the nation when it comes to laws that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people?
- Has NO laws to protect youth that are bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender identity?
- Has NO hate crime laws that protect LGBT people?
- Has NO laws that protect LGBT people from being discriminated against in the workplace, in housing, or public accommodations?

## What can you do?

- Mental health professionals working with LGBT youth need to be aware of the aforementioned issues and the role that such family and peer-related stressors can play in the creation of depression, anxiety, and even suicidality.
- Additional suggestions for working with LGBT youth include:
  - ▶ Creating a supportive environment
  - ▶ Emphasizing that stigma related to sexual orientation is socially created and that youth are not to blame for others' negative reactions
  - ▶ Building coping skills to manage stigma
  - ▶ Helping to identify other supportive and affirming environments

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