Assessing the Needs of Transgender and Gender Expansive (TGE) Runaway

and Homeless Youth (RHY): Supplemental Report on Recommended

Responses and Strategies for Providing Affirming Supportive Services

Supplemental Report

3/40
BLUEPRINT

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Assessing the Needs of Transgender and Gender Expansive (TGE) Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY): Supplemental Report on Recommended Responses and Strategies for Providing Affirming Supportive Services

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Assessing the Needs of Transgender and Gender Expansive (TGE) Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY)

Introduction

Background and Significance

Stigma, exclusion, and unfair treatment from social service providers are all obstacles negatively impacting the well-being of transgender and gender expansive youth (TGE). The LGBTQ community at large experiences many barriers to services and supports, but TGE youth experience even more forms discrimination and transphobia due to the lack of relevant education and capacity of providers (Ray & Berger, 2007). When leaving home, TGE youth are more likely to end up living on the streets and not get access to federally funded housing services. Thus, TGE youth experiencing homelessness are in a particularly marginalized and vulnerable position that must be addressed by public systems (Choi et al., 2015).

The 3/40 Blueprint: Creating the Blueprint to Reduce LGBTQ Youth Homelessness

In 2014, a team of technical experts began a larger project, *The 3/40 Blueprint: Creating the Blueprint to Reduce LGBTQ Youth Homelessness.* That project was funded as a collaborative agreement with the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families to build the capacity of transitional living programs (TLPs) that serve LGBTQ youth who are homeless. As a part of this project, a Technical Expert Group (TEG) was assembled to provide ongoing consultation and input on all tasks throughout the project's four years. The TEG consisted of 14 national experts in the runaway

and homeless youth (RHY) and LGBTQ fields, including LGBTQ RHY providers, consumers/youth, advocates, and researchers.

The TEG initially conducted focus groups with direct service staff, providers, and youth in nine transitional living programs around the country. The preliminary findings from these focus groups confirmed a historical pattern of transgender invisibility. The results of the focus groups highlighted the experiences of this broader, larger population, and did not capture the particular needs of TGE youth who enter into these systems. The TEG also noticed from the Needs Assessment results, a separate report from *3/40 Blueprint,* that TGE youth have unique requirements and needs, and unfortunately face greater adversity

and challenges in achieving positive outcomes when they enter into, and are served by, TLPs in the RHY system.

To respond to this gap in knowledge, an additional, smaller number of focus groups were conducted that specifically focused on TGE youth. The team for this supplemental project also reviewed the transcripts from the Needs Assessment interviews and isolated the specific findings that pertained to transgender youth and their unique needs. The TEG believed this supplemental work to be critical in increasing the capacity of TLPs to better meet the needs of the entire LGBTQ population, and in particular, improving the experience within this community that has been consistently, systemically

abandoned and historically left out of the narrative.

This report presents those results so as to better understand the unique challenges of TGE youth experiencing homelessness. These results may be used to inform the creation of developmentally appropriate and affirming services and to guide the implementation of integrated, culturally responsive strategies to address the needs of this population.

Objective of this Supplemental Report

The purpose of this report is to discover the existing gaps related to TGE youth in regards to the *3/40 Blueprint,* so that federally funded TLPs are better equipped to address the specific needs of all youth experiencing homelessness, specifically those youth who are most marginalized. To accomplish this goal, it becomes essential that TLPs begin to understand how sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) impact the experiences of many youth who enter into care. This is especially important, as recent studies have identified that nearly 40% of youth who experience homelessness identify as LGBTQ (Durso & Gates, 2012). The primary objective is not only to develop a comprehensive understanding of the unique needs of TGE youth experiencing homelessness, but also to identify how those needs are being addressed within the context of federally funded TLPs. The research team gathered feedback concerning the strengths and needs of this group and also identified resources, gaps in existing services, and areas of opportunity for continual improvement in programming and service provision. The outcomes of this assessment may help to inform homeless youth service providers and staff/administrators working in TLPs in the development of affirming practice and service provision models, as well as provide recommendations for culturally responsive strategies to meet the unique needs of this vulnerable population.

Methodology

As part of *3/40 Blueprint,* the TEG conducted a needs assessment to develop a comprehensive understanding of the needs of LGBTQ RHY, and the resources, services, and strategies that respond to those needs. Toward the goal of highlighting the unique needs of the TGE population, we revisited this needs assessment to outline the specific challenges experienced by this population.

Site Selection

The initial round of focus group interviews was conducted at nine TLPs across the United States with three population groups. These groups included youth who were receiving services from 1 of the 9 identified TLPs, staff who provided direct services to LGBTQ youth, and administrative staff. The nine sites were selected to reflect: 1) the major geographic areas of the country, 2) diversity in population size, 3) sites that served predominantly youth of color, 4) sites that had experience serving LGBTQ youth, and 5) a mix of sites that provided services to exclusively LGBTQ populations and mixed populations of LGBTQ youth and youth who are not LGBTQ.

As a part of the supplemental work to identify the unique needs of TGE youth, the project revisited two of the nine TLPs to target this population, conduct an additional round of focus groups, and gather their particular perspective.

The TEG considered it important to uplift the voices of TGE youth in an exclusively safe and affirming transgender focus group. The TLPs through this second round of focus group were: Los Angeles LGBT Center in Los Angeles, with ten participants and Latin American Youth Center in Washington DC, with seven participants.

Data Collection and Synthesis

The recommendations in this brief are driven by the narrative and guidance from TGE youth who were receiving services from the two identified TLPs. Youth (N=17) whose views were expressed in focus groups were asked to share their experiences with TLPs including, but not limited to, elements related to predesignated outcomes areas. These included safety, well-being, housing, education, employment, and permanent connections. Other topics that were brought up during the focus groups included the intake process, ability to participate in affirming and supportive activities, and health care. Focus group and interview protocols were developed through a youth-informed process by the TEG. Youth participation in the supplemental focus groups were voluntary and contingent upon their understanding that their identity would remain confidential and the information they shared with the TEG regarding their experiences would be used in written products and other forms of communication.

Results

Results have been organized into four main content categories. The first content area discusses the needs identified by TGE youth. The second covers how youth conceptualize a safe and affirming environment, and how providers are currently working to create a safe and affirming space for TGE youth within TLPs. The third section describes how TGE youth experience the discussion around SOGIE and disclosure while receiving services at the TLP. The final section discusses strategies for providing services for youth.

Section I: Examination of the Needs of TGE Youth Experiencing Homelessness

There is a lack of accurate data about the needs of TGE youth impacted by public systems. Data are usually only known when a youth self-identifies and/or when their sexual orientation are a presenting issue that has resulted in their system involvement. There are some data from the runaway/homeless systems. A recent study by the Williams Institute found 40% of homeless youth identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and gender non-conforming; 68% of those youth identified family rejection as a factor in their homelessness and 54% identified abuse in the family as a factor (Price, Wheeler, Shelton, & Maury, 2016).

Toward the goal of identifying the unique needs of TGE youth experiencing homelessness, focus group participants discussed what they want for their lives once they leave TLPs. Youth were also asked to describe whether TLPs were meeting their well-being needs. Those needs included receiving adequate education, proper health and nutritional practices, and building long-term social connections. Nearly all of the participants spoke about their goals in the short- and long-term related to how their SOGIE has impacted their needs and well-being outcomes.

Key Findings from TGE Youth Discussion of Needs

TGE youth goals and needs were focused on the following:

- Gender-based goals in terms of gender expression and identity, including self-efficacy goals, how transgender youth successfully transitioned, and their comfort level with their body
- Legal support related to gender identity
- Health care support related to gender identity
- Education
- Employment and job training that are gender affirming
- Permanent connections
- Funding support
- Combating stigma, exclusion, and discrimination in their daily lives

Youth Voices: Illustrations of Key Findings

The TGE youth who participated in the focus groups discussed the importance of providing legal support so they could work on their gender based goals and change their legal gender markers.

> "Having our lawyers downstairs help us with the name and gender change definitely helped me a lot to feel more confident as a woman."

> "I recently got my legal name changed. And there's just something about when you have that ID, you know, and it's like damn nobody really got to look because I know, I remember going to restaurants and they won't know it or be able to tell about something like that. And then they'll take my ID and you can just feel the whispering start going on behind you. You can just feel it. But now they just spend their attention on the date. Definitely, when I was able to get my gender changed and we got it done like that, it was like a great affirmation."

Many youth spoke about the importance of having specific programming and services tailored for the LGBTQ community. This allowed them to feel supported and also presented a greater chance the desired outcome would be achieved.

> "I don't like when LGBTQ places start catering to straight places or the heterosexual world because they're taking those benefits from somebody who may really need them—you have everything at your feet when you're straight, it's easier for you to get this."

> "When LGBT people have real benefits that are catered to us, it's perfect. It's what it's for. It's definitely important."

One of the primary barriers to getting their needs met was the discrimination experienced in and outside TLPs. Youth felt that they could not get jobs, receive support services, and often experienced stigma when trying to get into educational institutions. Several transgender youth spoke about the importance of the transition process and how they experienced a greater amount of oppression during that period. Youth spoke about needing an affirming space to develop if they were going to get their needs met by TLPs.

> "You're going for an interview or something and they want to judge you based of you not being fully figured, I guess, not being fully formed yet. So 'I can't have you working here until you have yourself figured out completely'—just because you're in a process but you're not fully at the end of the process doesn't mean you have the right to judge me, to say I'm not compatible enough for this position"

> "We need help with money flow, having a job or something. It takes trans girls a long time to get comfortable enough to go get a job or to go do something else besides working on the streets."

> "For me, [I'd like] transitioning to be a healthy process—since you're in this [center] and you're LGBT, especially T, you want to fully transition as soon as possible."

Implications for Policy and Practice: Responding to the Needs of TGE Youth Experiencing Homelessness

REVAMP TOOLS AND TRAINING TO SUPPORT WORKERS IN ASSESSING TGE YOUTHS' NEEDS

- Improve assessment tools for workers to assess for needs and goals.
- Improve competency and training of workers.
- Align services and improve connections to service providers that can meet needs.
- Address challenges related to achieving positive outcomes for TGE youth and meeting their needs.
- Work with TGE youth to understand the language they use to talk about their needs and goals.
- Assess and work to support TGE youths' personal goals, such as getting married and having a family, finding happiness, owning a home, getting off assistance such as Section 8 and/or Supplemental Security Income.
- Assess and support TGE youths' professional goals, such as owning a business, creating a scholarship for transgender students, and/or helping other youth.

PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SERVICES FOR TGE YOUTH THAT HAVE BEEN HELPFUL FOR THEM IN ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS

- Providing connections to community-based services can be helpful, especially transgender-specific organizations.
- Offer help navigating systems and setting goals with deadlines.
- Recognize that physical appearance matters and can help affirm and support a youth's identity. Some youth would like help with hygiene, hair, nails, clothing, etc. as they transition. These concrete supports might seem superficial but are very important. This help is particularly useful when provided by another transgender person. A clothes closet would also be helpful.
- Develop and sustain peer networks/peer support, mentoring opportunities, and empowerment groups.

PROVIDE TRAINING AND COACHING TO UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT UNMET NEEDS FOR TGE YOUTH

- Support gender-based goals—a broad term that includes social, medical, and legal assistance. Because gender-affirming transitions are individualized processes, they may include any combination of these interventions.
- Provide medical help to youth, including services covered by Medicaid such as top surgery and hormone therapy.
- Offer financial support, including help building savings so as to not live paycheck to paycheck.
- Track and offer transgender-specific employment services, especially in states that allow workforce discrimination.
- Provide employment support such as guidelines on when is it safe to come out to the employer, as well as about finding safe and accepting employers.
- Provide additional support in the following areas: legal, education, mental health, housing, and transportation.

ADDRESS CHALLENGES IN MEETING TGE YOUTH NEEDS

- There is a lack of funding and resources to meet the needs of TGE youth.
- A criminal record is a barrier to accessing services and supports.
- There is a lack of education regarding issues experienced by trans communities.
- There is a lack of training and coaching around effectively serving TGE communities.

Section II: Creating a Safe and Affirming Space for TGE Youth In TLPs

Research shows that transgender youth of color have poorer outcomes and face greater risks because of bias, rejection, and stigma experienced at the individual and system levels, which lead to youth feeling their safety is at risk (Ecker, 2016). This also creates an atmosphere where spaces do not feel very affirming for the transgender population. TGE youth often do not feel safe because they are disproportionately entangled in deep-end systems because of severe trauma and rejection by family, peers, and community institutions (Choi et al., 2015). This stigma, and related physical and emotional abuse, often compels youth to run away, become homeless, and find themselves entrapped in a hostile criminal justice environment. Compounding this is the lack of reliable information about the prevalence of TGE youth impacted by deep-end systems and how they impact the safety of youth. Many TGE youth are fluid in how they articulate their SOGIE, yet they still face transphobia and gender-based violence from the systems that are intended to help and support them (Spicer, Schwartz, & Barber, 2010).

Safety is a critical need for TGE youth. If these young people do not feel safe, it is extremely difficult for them to complete the developmental tasks of late adolescence and early adulthood. Scientific studies about healthy child and adolescent development emphasize the critical significance of safety and well-being in order for youth to achieve optimal development. These tasks include finishing school, sustaining long-term and healthy relationships, developing permanent connections and support networks, finding employment, and achieving independence into adulthood. (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). The TGE youth participating in these focus groups highlighted safety as a top priority for building a welcoming and affirming environment for them. Developing and sustaining a safe and affirming environment requires not only staff capacity and cultural education, but also relies on believing in the worth and dignity of diverse identities. TLPs must begin to focus more acutely on building safe physical and emotional spaces that support healthy identity development. Emotional safety was described as confidentiality, feeling at ease around those with whom they live, having people around who share their identities, and feeling validated in their identities by TLP staff. Safety also depended on the use of inclusive and affirming language, and the option to freely express all parts of their identities, including SOGIE (Marshal, Dietz, & Friedman, 2011).

Key Findings from TGE Youth about Safety and Affirmation

TGE youth felt the following impacted feelings of safety and affirmation:

- Staff should be supported in affirming all aspects of a youth's identity, including race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, religion, and culture.
- It is critical to attend to physical and emotional safety, particularly because TGE youth face higher risk of experiencing physical and emotional violence.
- TGE youth emphasized the significance of having practices, policies, and accountability measures in place to ensure physical and emotional safety with regard to their identity.
- TGE youth would like to experience freedom from stigma, discrimination, harassment, and violence.
- TGE youth would like to go to TLPs that are located in low-crime neighborhoods.
- Emotional safety was viewed as important and depended on interacting with culturally competent social workers, feeling identity validation, and TLP staff using inclusive language.
- TGE youth would like access to staff members who share parts of their identity with regard to gender expression, gender identity, race, and ability.

Youth Voices: Illustrations of Key Findings

TGE youth spoke about safety mostly in terms of having safeguards from physical violence, intimidation, street harassment, and other forms of threats to their physical well-being. For TGE youth, TLPs provided a mixed response in terms of safety for this population. If the TLP was affirming, then it provided a greater sense of safety and security. If the TLP was not affirming, sometimes youth experienced forms of gender-based violence and would leave the TLP because they did not feel safe. Similar to the LGB community as a whole, youth spoke about the critical connection between their physical safety and their social and emotional well-being.

> "I feel like, at the end of the day, the Center still like keeps it at a norm, you know, it's not at a high-risk of something. No one is going to get cut up or shot, you know, here. But out on the street, it can possibly happen."

> "Sometimes I would have to call another staff while they were off work because you have some people who just lie and want to get you out of certain programs because they are transphobic. I watched it happen to someone. So, sometimes the TLPs are safe if you trust the staff, and sometimes they can be just as dangerous as couch surfing."

> "You start avoiding them. You know the morning staff that don't like them. I would stay in my room until like 10 or 11 and then I would leave and do something throughout the day until that next staff get in."

> "No one is ever safe in a transitional facility. I'm just going to say that. People are people and people are going to be people. There's always something going on."

Youth also described the experience of being TGE and often not feeling safe just being in the world. Youth would feel a greater sense of safety when they are around people they know and trust, but felt at greater risk being around other residents who didn't share their identity.

> "We get all the stares. Not people, like, because she's beautiful, like, 'Look at her, girl.' But, like, we get like harassed sometimes. I do, at least. Not that much, but that's when I feel unsafe."

> "You may feel safe just because you're surrounded by people who are like you."

> "I didn't feel safe in the house because when we come into a situation like that, they could at least do background checks on [other residents]. Some people came in with serious problems. They came in with psychological problems, and I don't support all sorts of drugs either."

TGE youth also spoke about the importance of having LGBTQ-identified police officers and police officers who support their gender expression.

> "They started responding to the calls, and they was nicer, and you form friendships with certain ones. They'd come check up on us most of the time, just to see how we were doing."

Youth also spoke about the importance of being in an environment where they have built strong social connections and relationships with people in the community. This increased feelings of safety for youth.

> "Well so-and-so threatens me or is being disrespectful, and I feel unsafe. No one damn well is—nobody's doing nothing because by then the person has gone upstairs into their room, minding their business."

> "I don't know if you're a killer, I don't know if you're a rapist, I don't know if you're, like, going to rob banks and stuff and come home and bring that back to the house. I don't know what you do in your spare time, I don't know who you're having sex with round here, who will come and kill you. Which I felt safer around people I knew and trusted—because if I didn't know you, then you could be another risk to my safety."

Implications for Policy and Practice: Safe and Affirming Agencies

YOUTH DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF FEELING SAFE AND AFFIRMED IN A TLP

- Housing programs should provide stability in a youth's life and have calm, rather than chaotic, environments. Youth support having rules such as no cursing, profanity, or fighting, and expressed the importance of alone time, privacy, and personal space. Boundaries are very important and single rooms are preferred.
- Along those lines, some youth spoke of creating safety by sticking to a routine and avoiding risks. As a means of survival, youth learned how to remove themselves from bad situations or change their behavior and/or mannerisms depending on the situation.
- Housing programs should not feel like jail or detention facilities; however, this should be balanced with the need for privacy, such as having locks on the doors and requiring a key to enter the building. Efforts should be made for programs to feel safe and inclusive. Random room inspections are not

appreciated. Youth did not like overly strict rules, such as no physical contact whatsoever (including handshakes) and absolute silence after bedtime (including no music or phone use).
- Feelings of safety can change as the residents and staff come and go.
- Sheltering or protecting youth does not help, since that is not what happens in the real world.
- Placements should be according to gender identity.

HOW PROVIDERS CREATE A SAFE AND AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENT FOR TGE RHY

- Intersectionality is key, and staff should be supported in affirming all aspects of a person's identity. This means a focus on race, ethnicity, and other aspects of a youth's identity must be incorporated into responses to the needs of these youth. Providers need to bring equitable policies and practices into their workplace.
- Extremely important is for staff to respect a youth's preferred name and gender pronouns.

BARRIERS TO CREATING A SAFE AND AFFIRMING AGENCY FOR TGE YOUTH

- Youth expressed focusing on safety is a privilege and luxury not afforded to all. They spoke about how their primary focus is on surviving.
- Sometimes the program rules conflicted with the youths' need to feel safe. One youth said the program did not allow weapons, but that he felt the need to carry a knife due to being a Black transgender man. It is important to acknowledge such feelings while clearly enforcing the rules, such as "no weapons allowed."
- Most feelings of being unsafe come from other peers, not the staff.
- One youth was told by staff not to disclose their transgender identity, and to say they were a cis man instead.

Section III: Discussion of SOGIE within Transitional Living Programs

There is a lack of accurate data about the incidence of TGE youth who enter into homelessness systems. Compounding the lack of accurate data are the experiences of marginalization that youth have while in care. Research has found, although lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth experience similar forms of discrimination, stigmatization, and negative perception, the intersectional identities held by TGE youth who experience homelessness must endure even worse consequences related to gender-based violence, ignorance, and stigma (Yu, 2010). What's more, many youth with these complex identities are deemed invisible in these systems; currently most systems do not ask about the SOGIE of the youth in their care. Even when some TLPs try to make the identities of these young people visible, they often do not have the capacity and education to properly ask youth to disclose their SOGI; Cochran, Stewart, & Ginzler, 2002.

Due to the multitude of barriers TGE youth experience when interacting with systems, it becomes even clearer that gaps in SOGIE education and coaching for staff at TLPs is creating worse outcomes for TGE youth. TLPs cannot adequately provide services to youth if the identities of many TGE youth and the issues they experience remain vastly invisible to the frontline staff workers and system leaders. Moreover, when these issues do surface, systems must focus on building the capacity of staff to be able to respond to the challenges experienced by this population. Youth from both agencies recalled providers asking them about SOGIE either on some form of documentation or during the intake interview. As also reflected in Toro, Dworsky, and Fowler (2007), youth had a wide range of perspectives concerning whether they wanted to disclose SOGIE information, and if so, to whom and under what circumstances.

Key Findings from TGE Youth Regarding SOGIE Disclosure

TGE youth expressed a range of views about discussing SOGIE with TLPs:

- There is not one centralized perspective about SOGIE disclosure for TGE youth; disclosure often depends on whether youth are in a safe and trusting atmosphere.
- The majority of TGE youth in the focus groups reported they would disclose SOGIE information to providers at TLPs only after they deemed the environment as safe and affirming.
- Trust and having staff members TGE youth could identify with often dictated when and if youth disclosed their SOGIE.
- Youth thought it important to know how information would be used before they disclosed their TGE identity.
- When staff were more knowledgeable and skilled on handling gender identity issues, it was more likely that TGE youth felt safe to disclose
- Many youth did not want to identify as transgender, instead preferring to be counted within the binary as male or female, even if they did not hold a cis identity.

Youth Voices: Illustration of Key Findings

When youth were asked how staff inquired about their SOGIE, and how they would like SOGIE-based inquiries to occur, they described having negative and positive experiences, depending on whether the TLP was affirming or not. The affirming TLPs usually were trained in how to respectfully ask about SOGIE, and youth felt comfortable disclosing in some of those circumstances.

> "I came here before I even transitioned and, you know, they just made me feel really comfortable. They always wanted me to know that I was welcomed for whomever I was. And I remember it being hard for me to tell them that I was transitioning and

wanting to change my name because I came full beard, completely pre-transition and everything. And you know, I remember when I was literally deciding and I was, like, wanting to change everything. And you know, the day I told them my name, they started respecting it right away, every single staff member throughout all the [center] that I know."

For a TLP to ensure they create a safe and affirming environment for disclosure, they must have zero-tolerance policies for disrespecting someone's gender identity.

"If another person misgenders you in the center, they will restrict you and tell you to not come back, because this is an open place and somewhere where people need to be respected, no matter who they are—if it's a girl with a beard, they will still be like, 'Call her a girl.'"

TLPs that aimed to be affirming and create a welcoming environment allowed youth to use their chosen names and pronouns, as well as the flexibility if youth wanted to change them. If staff made mistakes, supervisors would correct the staff.

"It's in the packet when you first come in here. They give you the options and as soon as they read it, that's what you're called and that's what it is until you leave or decide to change it. They never ask you if they're not sure, they will have you do it on the paper and then will let everyone know."

"I couldn't use the staff female bathroom. Certain staff wouldn't call me 'she,' they would use the pronoun of 'he' or 'him.' But you know, there was a lot of female staff who were understanding, they would, like, definitely correct it, but not necessarily because they were a supervisor. They were not trained to handle that specific situation."

Several youth in the focus groups spoke about what it was like to be asked to disclose their SOGIE in an unwelcoming environment. Youth described how many staff just went along with the process, but still felt stigmatized. Youth described this as the norm if they were not in a TLP that had the capacity to meet their specific TGE-related needs and goals.

"It was like, 'Are you gay? Are you bi?' And it was shaming for it, like, does that really matter? Because, like, they already had me sign all this paperwork—that question did come up in the paperwork, but the way that they would ask afterwards, they would look at it, would see it and be like, 'So, just to let you know, the boys are over here, the girls are over here.' They were trying as they were going along but at the end it didn't really come to much acceptance."

Implications for Policy and Practice: Discussing SOGIE

UNDERSTAND HOW YOUTH DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES DISCLOSING THEIR SOGIE TO TLP STAFF

- Youth discussed their favorite staff who built trust by treating the youth as a friend or equal and was a good conversationalist.
- One youth felt embarrassed when the TLP made too big of a deal out of his transgender identity and got the county involved. In general, he tried to be stealth as much as possible.

UNDERSTAND HOW YOUTH WANT TO BE ASKED ABOUT SOGIE

- Youth mentioned discomfort at intake, which was run by a cis White man and was exacerbated by the stress and emotion of the situation.
- Staff should give affirmation and support as they ask questions, so the process doesn't feel so clinical. Youth want staff to have the knowledge and language to be able to communicate well.
- While the timing can be uncomfortable, basic questions (and no more than basic) should be asked at intake so the best placement can be discussed.

RESPOND TO CHALLENGES IN COLLECTING SOGIE DATA

- Staff should not conflate sexual orientation with gender identity.
- Recognize that youth who are just starting their transition might be insecure and not want to recognize their sex assigned at birth.

LISTEN TO YOUTH AND UNDERSTAND HOW SOGIE IMPACTS THEIR ABILITY TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

- One youth discussed the difficulties in maintaining gender presentation while homeless, and then not being accepted to a homeless shelter that matched their gender identity.
- Youth want to be seen as a whole human being.

Section IV: Strategies for Service Provision at TLPs to Meet the Needs of TGE Youth

It is crucial that TLPs create new strategies and tools to meet the needs of TGE youth, especially given the increased rates of TGE youth who are receiving services from various deep-end systems. Youth of color in general are disproportionately represented in deep-end systems, particularly runway/homeless systems. Given the prevalence of youth of color involved in deep-end systems, we know there are many LGBTQ youth of color in the system as well. A recent survey of foster youth in care in Los Angeles County by the Williams Institute noted a disproportionate number of LGBTQ youth in care and that their demographics were consistent with those of the foster care population, predominantly youth of color (Choi, et al., 2015). Even worse are service provisions meant to help TGE youth who touch deep-end systems, which include mental health, child welfare, criminal justice, and homelessness systems (Wilson, Cooper, Kastanis, & Nezhad, 2014).

Research has shown approximately 1 in 5 transgender individuals either need housing or are at risk of losing housing (Minter & Daley, 2003). The realities of systemic oppression only exacerbate this atrocity. Several studies posit when transgender youth experience homelessness, they are particularly vulnerable to marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination by systems that are supposed to be providing services to help this community (Ray & Berger, 2007). Not only are TGE often not receiving proper standards of care and service provision, but increasingly problems for these youth can range from discrepancies in bathroom usage, bed assignment, and safety requirements, especially because additional measures must be taken when offering services to TGE youth who are experiencing homelessness (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). Thus, is it critical that we start with the voices and experiences of transgender youth and lead with their recommendations for change to address the many barriers they must navigate when seeking support from youth-serving systems. TLPs must begin to create gender-affirming goals that give transgender youth access to health care, legal assistance, and employment opportunities. We must speak to youth and learn more details about their gender-related goals and how we can best support them in achieving those goals (Hendricks & Testa, 2012).

Key Findings from TGE Youth Discussing Service Provision

TGE youth thoughts on service provision included the following:

- TLPs need to mandate staff to respect, honor, and affirm the identity development of all youth.
- Preferred gender pronouns of TGE youth must be respected.
- Legal services usually provide much-needed assistance to undo many of the barriers experienced by TGE youth.
- Employment services need to be integrated into TLP programs to move youth forward.
- Health care services are critical to identity development within the TGE community, so these services should be integrated into TLP programs.
- Most feelings of being unsafe come from other peers, not the staff.

Youth Voices: Illustrations of Key Findings

The TGE youth spoke about how many of the TLPs they experienced did not have the capacity to meet their needs, particularly gender-based goals related to legal services, employment, and health care. However, these were the primary services youth said were most helpful at the TLPs that did support the specific needs of TGE youth.

> "I got my last job through YEP [Youth Employment Partnership]. Sometimes when you go with the groups in YEP, because they go on a weekly job search trip, I went for three months straight before I got my job, every single Thursday. Sometimes it's a little weird because there's seven or eight of you going, multiple people applying for the same job—but they take you to places that are very accepting, no matter what."

> "The facility has our clinic and our pharmacy in-house. So we live at TLP, so we get our hormones there, they help us switch our insurances over, everything. For example, I'm doing my SRS surgery in September—they helped me get the insurance into what I have to do and the steps to get there."

Youth also emphasized the importance of having emotional, physical, and mental health service providers that are able to respond to needs when they arise. Having resources that ranged across these outcome areas resulted in positive well-being outcomes for TGE youth.

> "There's groups going on if you want to talk about your problems encountered in the real world, there's educational help. There's emotional and physical and mental services here at this TLP. If you get into some kind of trouble or you're encountering something and you don't know what to do, there's resources, especially as an LGBTQ youth."

> "I was like, I want to finish my Bachelor's, can you please help me and she did. I came and I told her, 'Listen, my family is not going to be able to help me, I need financial aid and scholarships, what is the steps that we can take?' and she helped me fill out my financial aid because she was like, 'You're good, you're 20, we got you, we can do this,' and she helped me fill out scholarships that paid for it."

Youth expressed the importance of a TLP providing more than just housing services. TLPs can be the lifeline for TGE youth to access a host of services that they need to achieve their goals in life. However, youth often experienced programs that did not want to worry about anything but finding them housing, while abandoning all of their other needs.

> "They could have definitely been more involved with where I came from, educational wise, instead of worrying about, you know what I'm saying, 'We need to get you housing because this is only a short-term program.' They were mainly worried about that, they weren't really worried about getting you to where your goals are."

> "Alternative housing was very supportive of getting me where I needed to be because they just wanted me out the house."

> "Helping us get jobs—I could have got a job back then, I was fourteen, I could have got a job working somewhere up there but they really didn't help me figure out what I need to do to get the job or, like, future-wise, what I would need to do to get a job. They didn't really give us opportunities to do better by ourselves."

Implications for Policy and Practice: Strategies for Service Provision

HONOR AND RESPECT TGE IDENTITIES
- If chosen names, pronouns, and expression are not honored, fair and affirming policies and procedures need to be implemented at each incidence of noncompliance, as well as at instances of hate speech.
- Further examination is needed to determine what may be considered hate speech as well as anti-transgender language.
- Staff make assumptions about youth, for example, expressing surprise that a youth does not have HIV.

- Create affirming environments by specifically building the presence of providers who share similar gender identities and expressions, as well as use of gender-affirming and non-cisnormative language in all TLP environments.

PROVIDE GENDER-AFFIRMING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
- Some factors to consider include access to affirming providers as well as gender-affirming medical interventions such as hormone blockers, hormones, or various types of surgeries in addition to safe and affirming general medical care.
- TLPs may prevent often-experienced health care discrimination in this population by facilitating access to health professionals who are knowledgeable and skilled in providing medical care affirmative of diverse gender identities and expression. However, more information is needed regarding youths' experiences with health care, as well as what youth consider supportive and affirming characteristics in their health care providers.

PROVIDE LEGAL ASSISTANCE
- Exploration regarding this population's goals related to gender-affirming legal assistance is warranted to determine how TLPs may meet these needs.
- Facilitating access to services for name and gender marker change may also enhance access to affirming education, as well as employment opportunities for this population.

CREATE AFFIRMING EMPLOYMENT PIPELINES
- Limited access to legal document changes may significantly impact these individuals' access to employment, especially if the documented name and gender marker impacts employers' perceptions of the TGE RHY applicant.
- Factors specifically impacting TGE youth access to employment, as well as employment experiences, are essential when considering the needs of this population.

Summary and Conclusion

Through this supplemental report, we have found there has indeed been much progress by service providers to build their capacity to meet the needs of this population; however, there is still much work to be done. Mandated training on SOGIE would be a great benefit for staff members who have very little interaction with this community. Even more important, however, is hiring qualified staff members who share the multiple and complex identities of these youth.

Given there is an over-representation of TGE youth in this system, it will be critical to provide additional funding mechanisms and specialized services to respond to the current invisibility that exists within TLPs. TGE youth are some of the most vulnerable, experiencing double and triple marginalization and barriers from multiple systems. Focusing on race, ethnicity, and other aspects of youths' identities must be incorporated into responses to the needs of these youth if providers seek to bring equitable policies and practices into their workplaces. By building safe and affirming environments, TLPs have an opportunity to lead the field by making visible the voices and experiences of TGE youth and move toward the greater goal of healthy childhood development.

If systems seek to create and sustain safe, supportive, and affirming TLPs, then they must first build their capacity to better understand how young people are currently surviving and navigating these systems. With a closer look at the experiences of these youth, it is not difficult to find conflicting policies and practices that do not support positive youth development and ultimately create greater risk in the lives of TGE youth. TLPs must create accountability and enforcement measures so that systemic issues do not continue to further marginalize innocent youth. If even some of the recommendations in this supplemental report are implemented in TLPs around the country, it would serve as a catalyst for creating affirming, supportive, loving, and safe environments that all youth need in order to survive and thrive in this world.

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3/40
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