

To: All Providers
From: PerformCare
Date: July 1, 2022
Subject: Suicide Prevention #6: Considerations in Working with LGBTQIA+ People

In our introduction to the Provider communication on this important topic, it was stated that information related to vulnerable populations would be disseminated. June was Pride Month! For July, we would like to provide some information related to vulnerabilities for suicide for people who identify as LGBTQIA+, as well as recommendations for assessment and treatment.

We do not have exact prevalence rates for suicide among those who identify as LGBTQIA+, but know that the rates are higher amongst this population. According to CDC (2016) data, suicide attempts occurred in 1/3 or 33% of LGBTQIA+ school students compared to 6% of non-LGBTQIA+ school students. LGBTQIA+ adults are two times more likely to attempt suicide than those who do not identify in this population.

Research indicates that there are mediating variables and not a direct correlation to suicide attempts and deaths that increases vulnerability for this population. When conducting a risk assessment for any person for suicide, the clinician works with the individual to identify their risk and protective factors. When assessing individuals, the clinician recognizes there are uncontrollable risk factors and helps the person to acknowledge that. This makes it necessary to identify those factors in one's life that are controllable through the therapeutic process. Certain risk factors increase vulnerability for people who identify as LGBTQIA+ to include: having a mental health diagnosis, having a substance abuse disorder, being discriminated against, rejection, being bullied or harassed, and being socially isolated. Logically, protective factors follow from risk to include: being accepted by family and loved ones; having a sense of connection to friends and community; and feeling safe. For anyone, seeking and accepting treatment is essential for treating suicidal thinking. Thus, it is recommended that having a skilled therapist with experience in working with those who identify as LGBTQIA+ is essential to facilitate trust and commitment to treatment.

Note: For more information related to research and support specific to LGBTQIA+ youth visit <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

References

<https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

<https://www.sprc.org/populations/lgbt>

<https://sprc.org/sites/default/files/PA%20SSPP%20-%20PA%20Statewide%20Suicide%20Prevention%20Plan.pdf>