

LGBTQ+ WORK GROUP

AT FRIENDSHIP PLACE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



2020 RECONVENING OF LGBTQ+ WORK GROUP

MISSION STATEMENT

In June Friendship Place President/CEO Jean-Michel Giraud issued a call to action to reinvigorate the organizations LGBTQ+ work group. Over the following months co-chairs were identified, a group formed and we quickly set to work on establishing goals and defining a mission. Our mission statement is as follows:

The LGBTQ+ Workgroup of Friendship Place is a collective of Staff, Participants, Board, and Volunteers committed to ensuring that all programs, services, and expressions of Friendship Place are considered welcoming, affirming, inclusive, and safer for LGBTQ+ community members and allies.

We seek to continuously expand our awareness, competency, and sensitivity through action and advocacy throughout the broader Friendship Place community and community at-large.

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MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT/CEO

October 1, 2020

Welcome to the first newsletter of the LGBTQ+ Work Group at Friendship Place!

I would like to start by saluting our work group leaders, Orelia Lesh and Chris Cannedy, and the other group members who have come forth as LGBTQ+ community members and allies, both on the staff and on the Board, to advocate for the LGBTQ+ community and celebrate its cultures and achievements.



At a time when the community has had exciting gains like marriage equality, we are nevertheless having to fend off against attacks from people who are attempting to create new barriers for LGBTQ+ community members. I am especially concerned about recent attempts to limit shelter access for transgender people. Thank you to all of you who have answered the recent call to comment on the proposed changes to the Equal Access Rule that would restrict their access to such a direly needed resource. Other issues have come up in the last few years, pointing to the fact that discrimination remains at some levels of our society.

Friendship Place is a welcoming and affirming community. I am looking forward to robust conversations, in this new work-group forum, on matters of equity in our community and beyond. The hope is that these conversations will lead to a greater understanding of the issues facing the community and to action to move the system forward.

Throughout the year, we will also look for ways to celebrate the progress of the last decades as we keep our eyes on building a better future for the next generation.

One of my goals in my 14+ years at Friendship Place has always been to make it a great place to work, volunteer and participate in services for everybody. Allies are so important in this endeavor and now is a perfect time to get involved. Please consider supporting the work group through your own actions.

Thank you for reading the newsletter and for helping us make Friendship Place and our country better places to be for all.

Jean-Michel Giraud
(he, his, him)
President/CEO



Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

"Hope will never be silent." - Harvey Milk



OUT IN DENTISTRY - HOWARD UNIVERSITY

New Partnership

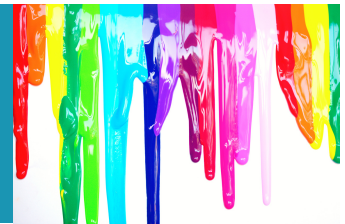
At our September 23rd meeting we welcomed Francis Morgan, President and Christopher Andrews, Fundraising Chair of Out In Dentistry. Out in Dentistry was founded in October 2019 by LGBTQIA+ students and allies at the Howard University College of Dentistry. Their goal is to create a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ Dental students, while also providing support and educational outreach to the broader community. They are a student-led organization with support from Howard University. At our meeting we found common areas and similarities in our two groups in terms of outreach and advocacy. Their efforts being centered around LGBTQIA+ patients and their sensitivity and concern about being identified as such on patient intake forms.

We could relate in many ways to the need for similar sensitivity awareness for new clients at Friendship Place. Christopher Andrews provided details about the group supporting Friendship Place explaining that, "For this coming academic year, our organization has identified Friendship Place as an organization that we would greatly like to partner with and support. We are interested in hosting an oral health kit drive that would include: toothbrushes, floss and other oral health products, as well as a blanket and sock drive during the fall/winter. These community service projects will provide excellent opportunities for our campus community to become educated and support your vital work."

By the conclusion of our time with Out In Dentistry it became quite clear that we make ideal community partners and look forward to working together on future projects that can benefit both our groups.



"Every single American -- gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transgender -- every single American deserves to be treated equally in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of our society. It's a pretty simple proposition." - President Barack Obama



PRESENTATION TO FRIENDSHIP PLACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cochairs Meet The Board

On September 16th Friendship Place LGBTQ+ Work Group Co Chairs Chris Cannedy and Orelia Lesh met with the Board of Directors of Friendship Place and updated the board on the groups progress since reconvening the work group in June.

Orelia began the presentation by updating the board on what the previous work group had accomplished and how the newly recommitted work group would continue their work. The newly crafted mission statement was also read and the goals of the group were outlined.

Chris then previewed the newsletter with the group and explained how the newsletter can be sent to Friendship Place staff and community partners to increase awareness of Friendship Place's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion in both our staff and the community we serve. It also serves as an invite for other compatible groups to support our efforts with in-kind donations and possible financial support. The recent in-kind donation and partnership with Out in Dentistry was given as an example.

Friendship Place board members Bruce Grimes and Anne Morrison as well as President/CEO Jean-Michel Giraud reported that the board of directors was very pleased with our presentation and looking forward to our progress.

THE COST OF COMING OUT: LGBT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSIONALS SHOULD HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS, RISK FACTORS, AND CHALLENGES FACING LGBT HOMELESS YOUTH.

Lesley University lesley.edu

Homelessness is a critical issue for America's youth. According to the True Colors Fund, a nonprofit organization working to end homelessness in the LGBT community, 1.6 million youth are homeless each year and up to 40 percent of them identify as LGBT. Because LGBT youth represent only 7 percent of the total youth population, there is a staggering disproportion of homelessness among these populations.

Despite this sobering statistic, there are currently no federal programs specifically designed to meet the needs of gay and transgender homeless youth. This means that, in many cases, LGBT youth are left without the resources and assistance provided to other homeless populations.

68%

of teens have experienced family rejection after coming out to their family

Human services professionals should have a clear understanding of the unique needs, risk factors, and challenges facing LGBT homeless youth in order to design and deliver the best possible services to their clients.

A Subpopulation at RiskFor all youth, homelessness has a negative effect on normal development. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) defines this demographic as "unaccompanied youth aged 12 to 24 years," and includes four major categories: runaway, transitory or episodic, unaccompanied homeless youth, and street dependent youth. In terms of LGBT demographics, the NAEH reports that homeless youth are disproportionately African-American or American Indian and are often from lower-income communities.Homelessness can lead to mental, physical, and behavioral issues that last a lifetime.

Aside from being at greater risk for homelessness, LGBT youth are also likely to become homeless at younger ages, according to Child Trends, a leading nonprofit research organization focused on improving the lives of children, youths, and their families.

1 in 4

teens are forced to leave their homes after coming out to their parents

There are regional differences in LGBT youth homelessness as well, with higher percentages on the East and West Coasts. In Seeking Shelter: The Experiences and Unmet Needs of LGBT Homeless Youth, the Center for American Progress reports that 25 to 50 percent of the youth homeless population identifies as LGBT in those regions compared to 10 to 25 percent in the Midwest. "It is possible that homeless LGBT youth migrate to the coasts to seek more accepting communities or places where there are greater legal protections or programmatic options to serve LGBT communities," the report continues.

Continued next page....

Pathways to LGBT Youth Homelessness

There are many reasons why LGBT youth may face homelessness, but the most critical factors are focused on family units. The True Colors Fund notes that family conflict is the most common cause of all youth homelessness, but this is even more significant for LGBT populations: “Half of all teens get a negative reaction from their parents when they come out to them,” and more than one in four are forced to leave their homes.

According to a study by the Williams Institute, which surveyed 354 agencies that work with LGBT homeless populations, 68 percent of clients have experienced family rejection. The NAEH reports similar findings, noting that youth consistently report severe family conflict as the primary reason for their homelessness.

Nowhere Safe to Go

Family rejection at young ages can have lasting negative effects, and unfortunately, LGBT youth experiencing homelessness don’t always find a safety net in their communities. The NAEH notes that there is national shortage of youth shelters and housing programs, which can lead to youth being denied assistance upon leaving their family homes.

Social services can be a short-term solution, but studies show that “12 to 36 percent of emancipated foster care youth will report being homeless at least once after discharge from care,” the NAEH reports. Youth may also leave their housing placements to avoid unfair treatment, abuse, or harassment, the Center for American Progress notes.

LGBT youth are also underserved when it comes to health care services. The True Colors Fund notes that there is a shortage of clinics and facilities that meet the population’s unique needs. In addition, some facilities won’t treat minors without the consent of a parent or guardian. While a growing number of facilities and organizations are dedicated to providing care specifically for LGBT homeless youth, there is still much work to be done.

Critical Issues Affecting LGBT Homeless Youth

Because they are often without a family to turn to, LGBT homeless youth are at risk of mental health issues, substance abuse, crime, and victimization. According to the On the Streets report, “The instability of homelessness causes physical and emotional stress for homeless youth. When combined with the stigma of a gay and/or transgender identity, this stress can cause youth to experience mental illness.”

The same report notes that “gay homeless youth were more likely to suffer from major depression than heterosexual homeless youth, and lesbian homeless youth were more likely to have post-traumatic-stress syndrome than heterosexual homeless young women.”

These mental health risk factors can increase the likelihood of risky behaviors like substance abuse and unprotected sex. According to the Seeking Shelter report, “42 percent of gay homeless youth abuse alcohol compared to 27 percent of heterosexual youth,” and intravenous drug use is significantly more common than among heterosexual homeless youth. Child Trends reports that 58 percent of LGBT youth reported having been sexually victimized as well.

Living a homeless or transient lifestyle can also lead to crime. The Seeking Shelter report notes that family rejection and involvement in the juvenile justice system are “undeniably intertwined,” and leaving home because of family rejection puts youth at a higher risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system in the future. “This is in part because running away from home is often a status offense that triggers judicial intervention,” the report explains.

Perhaps most significantly, the report notes that homelessness, system placement, and involvement in the justice system may be cyclical: “Incarceration and involvement in juvenile justice systems for these youth is caused by the criminalization of homelessness itself ... LGBT homeless youth may thus be both driven into homelessness because of their relationship to juvenile justice and child welfare institutions, and are driven back into these systems due to their lack of housing.”

ONLINE ARTICLES

Committee members recommend the following online articles for continued reading.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC A PERFECT STORM FOR LGBTQ HOMELESS YOUTH

WITH SCHOOL CLOSURES, REDUCED SERVICES AT LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTERS AND A LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT, THESE YOUNG AMERICANS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE.

From Elizabeth Kuhr NBC News April 5, 2020

Finding a secure place to live has not been easy for Nez Marquez, 23, who has experienced homelessness for the past five years. Born in Mexico and raised in New York, he left home at 18 because his family did not accept his gender identity and sexual orientation, he said.

Marquez is staying at Sylvia's Place, an emergency shelter for LGBTQ young adults on the bottom floor of a Manhattan church. He said shelters that specifically cater to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people are safer for him because he has been subjected to homophobic attacks at general-population shelters. But now, in addition to anti-gay violence and the inherent dangers of life on the streets, Marquez has another fear: the coronavirus and its ripple effects.

"I've been worried about not having housing," Marquez said in an interview. "If where I'm staying shuts down, I'll be out of options."

Not only does he worry about being "forced to live in a homophobic environment," but he also has a congenital lung issue, putting him at higher risk for adverse outcomes if he were to get COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus.

[Continue reading the full article by clicking here](#)



9 STRATEGIES FOR QUARANTINING IN A NON-LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENT

WITH HELP FROM QUEER THERAPISTS AND EXPERTS FROM THE TREVOR PROJECT, HERE'S HOW TO ENDURE ISOLATION WITH THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT ACCEPT YOUR IDENTITY.

From Wren Sanders them.us March 26, 2020

It took me nearly two years, a global pandemic, and the prospect of spending an unknowable amount of time quarantined in close proximity to my parents to finally confront them about their habit of misgendering me. I sent a long text. I held nothing back. It was brutal — two years' worth of don't call me that rolled into one six-inch blue chunk of f--k you.

They're not transphobic, I told myself. They just forget sometimes. Besides the slip-ups, they're good, considerate, caring folks, I'd think. Dad proofread my papers even when he had no idea what I was saying. Mom went on long walks with me when my heart had broken in ways she could never fully understand.

But last week, when it was announced that New York, where I live, would likely be going into lockdown mode, I realized two things: First, that no matter how good their intentions might be, my parents' glacial approach to using my pronouns was unacceptable; second, that if I was going to wait this out with them, I needed to explain as much. Enough was enough.

[Continue reading the full article by clicking here](#)



Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

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(he, his, him)
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