

LGBTQ+ Youth Substance Misuse



508

BHS Students took our 2021 Core Survey

33%

of these students identified as LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AT BHS FELT THEY WERE GIVEN USEFUL ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY:

39%

Compared to 60% of cisgender & heterosexual peers.

LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AT BHS FELT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR FUTURE:

58%

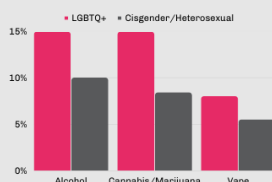
Compared to 72% of cisgender & heterosexual peers.



4 OUT OF 10

LGBTQ+ students at BHS feel good about themselves OR feel like they belong at school.

Compared to 7 out of 10 cisgender/heterosexual peers



SUBSTANCE USE

LGBTQ+ students reported higher rates of use of the three most commonly used substances & products among high school students within the past 30 days.

REFERENCES

2021 BHS Core Survey designed and implemented by Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community and Burlington School District.



Why Are You Receiving This?

LGBTQ+ youth are at higher risk for substance misuse, with fewer resilience protections than their cisgender and heterosexual peers. But you can help! This data brief by Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community (BPHC) and Outright Vermont has information and strategies that youth and family-serving organizations in Burlington can use to support LGBTQ+ youth. We hope you will work with us to improve outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth in Burlington.

What is the Core Survey?

BPHC works with the Burlington School District to administer the anonymous Burlington Core Survey to students in 6th - 12th grade. The survey asks questions related to substance use and other risk and protective factors. It also asks students to identify issues they are concerned about. The survey results help us to respond quickly to emerging trends and needs of youth in Burlington other than waiting for slower results from state and national surveys.

LGBTQ+ Youth Report Higher Rates of Substance Misuse, Fewer Resilience Factors

- LGBTQ+ youth face disparate health outcomes compared with their cisgender and heterosexual peers. They are more likely to use or misuse substances, try smoking or vaping earlier than their peers, and more likely to use cannabis. They also report fewer resilience factors, such as feeling a sense of belonging at school or home.
- These increased risks, and lower resilience factors, are not inherent to a person's identity; rather they stem from the burden of stress LGBTQ+ youth shoulder. Minority Stress Perspective can help us understand that LGBTQ+ youth experience violence and the threat of harm more frequently. Further, they regularly receive messages that target LGBTQ+ youth, devaluing them, or even suggesting they should not exist. This chronic, toxic stress, contributes to poor health outcomes and increased risk factors when compared with their cisgender, heterosexual peers who do not experience those same stressors.

How You Can Support LGBTQ+ Adolescents at Your Org:

- **Talk** with young people about their experiences of stress and what can help.
- **Create opportunities** for fun, connection, and activism that increase young people's agency and sense of community. Young people who see that they can create positive change in their communities get a boost of self esteem, future planning, and feel a sense of belonging that can positively shift risk-taking behavior.
- **Build support systems and easily accessible information** for parents and adult caregivers. LGBTQ+ youth who receive family support for their identities experience far fewer risk factors than their peers with unsupportive families.
- **Identify ways that your team or organization will communicate, internally and externally, to offer welcome and belonging** to LGBTQ+ youth, and youth in other historically marginalized communities. Build on those bright spots!
- **Normalize using pronouns** for introductions.
- **Invite organizations like Outright Vermont and BPHC in to your organization** to address specific issues or service gaps. You don't need to do this work alone! Creating partnerships can make your work more impactful and sustainable.
- **Require youth and family-serving staff to regularly attend training** related to sexuality and gender identity. **Dedicate time to expanding staff cultural competency.** Ensure staff are aware of local and national resources they can connect LGBTQ+ youth and their families to.
- **Review procedures and paperwork** that youth fill out to ensure it is inclusive and respectful of all gender identities. Make sure you model the same care to your internal processes and culture for staff.
- **Increase LGBTQ+ representation** in programs and outreach materials and create spaces in schools and communities that affirm LGBTQ+ youth.
- **Familiarize yourself and your organization with the Vermont Prevention Model.** Both of our organizations utilize a social ecological framework to guide our work with youth and families.
- **For more ideas, explore Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ+ Youth**, a toolkit by Advocates for Youth available for download at advocatesforyouth.org.



Some Additional Resources We Recommend

LOCAL RESOURCES

- [Outright Vermont](#) – Building hope, equity, and power with LGBTQ+ youth since 1989! Youth, their families and caregivers, and youth-serving professionals can receive supportive services, advocacy, skill-building, and resources, both virtually and in-person.

RESOURCES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL WORK

- [National SOGIE Center](#) – a centralized site for accessing resources on providing culturally responsive care to children, youth, young adults with diverse SOGIE, and their families across these systems.
- [Family Acceptance Project](#) – Peer-reviewed research and resources to support family acceptance for LGBTQ+ youth. Downloadable resources available including, videos, posters, practice guides, policy models, and more.
- [GenderSpectrum](#) – Resources for families and youth-serving professionals about gender and sexual identity, and ways to support LGBTQ+ youth.
- [Advocates for Youth](#) – partners with organizations as well as young people and their adult allies to champion youth rights to bodily autonomy and improve policies, programs and systems to secure sexual health and equity for all youth.

NATIONAL RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

- [The Parents Guide to Supporting LGBTQIA+ Kids at Parents.com](#) – this great website has “tools, articles, tips, and real-life stories to help you take action and create a more inclusive community for all children.”
- [Partnership to End Addiction has compiled a set of resources](#) for parents and families to serve as a guide to affirming and protecting their LGBTQ+ loved ones and to finding help if needed.
- [LGBTQ Family Acceptance](#) – resources for both LGBTQ youth and families to help parents and caregivers access accurate information about their children's sexual orientation and gender identity and for youth and caregivers to find supportive resources that validate diverse identities.
- [GenderSpectrum](#) – Resources for families and youth-serving professionals about gender and sexual identity, and ways to support LGBTQ+ youth.
- [The Trevor Project](#) – Suicide prevention and 24/7 hotline, chat line, and text services. Robust national surveys of LGBTQ+ youth mental health for further research and information.