



Sonoma County

MENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

This Fact Sheet serves to provide an overview of LGBTQ mental health in Sonoma County in order to inform policy makers, providers, and community members about health disparities in their community and ways to address them.

- **LGBTQ individuals are almost 3 times more likely than others to experience a mental health condition such as major depression or generalized anxiety disorder. This fear of coming out and being discriminated against for sexual orientation and gender identities, can lead to depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, thoughts of suicide and substance abuse.**
- **LGBTQ people must confront stigma and prejudice based on their sexual orientation or gender identity while also dealing with the societal bias against mental health conditions. Some people report having to hide their sexual orientation from those in the mental health system for fear of being ridiculed or rejected. Some hide their mental health conditions from their LGBTQ friends.**
- **As a community, LGBTQ individuals do not often talk about mental health and may lack awareness about mental health conditions. This sometimes prevents people from seeking the treatment and support that they need to get better.**

- Often termed “minority stress,” disparities in the LGBTQ community stem from a variety of factors including social stigma, discrimination, prejudice, denial of civil and human rights, abuse, harassment, victimization, social exclusion and family rejection.
- Rates of mental health conditions are particularly high in bisexual and questioning individuals and those who fear or choose not to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity. Though not all people will face mental health challenges, discrimination or violence, many people report less mental well-being and satisfaction.

“NAMI.” NAMI, 2019, www.nami.org/find-support/lgbtq.

48%

48% of LGBTQ 9th graders in California have considered suicide, 63% experience chronic sadness or hopelessness.

51%

51% of Transgender 9th graders in California have considered suicide, 58% experience chronic sadness or hopelessness.

CalSCHLS.” The Californial School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey (CalSCHLS) System, 2019, calschls.org/reports-data/data-dashboards/secondary-dashboard/

According to town hall meetings, a sizable proportion of therapists are not adequately trained or even willing to serve trans clients, and several trans people spoke of their difficulties in finding therapists who could provide the much-needed quality support.

O'Brien, R.P., Walker, P.M., Poteet, S.L., McAllister-Wallner, A., & Taylor, M. (2018). Mapping the road to equity: The annual state of LGBTQ communities, 2018. Sacramento, CA: #Out4MentalHealth Project.

According to Gary Gates, a researcher at UCLA's Williams Institute, a think tank on sexual-orientation law, who based his findings on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey, the Santa Rosa metropolitan area—in effect, Sonoma County—is second in the nation (behind San Francisco) when it comes to same-sex households. With 7.63 gay couples per 1,000 households, Sonoma County's LGBT population is 56 percent greater than the national average."

Holtz, Elaine B. "General Articles." The Rainbow Connection, 2012, northbaybiz.com/General_Articles/General_Articles/The_Rainbow_Connection.php.

A needs assessment of Napa County, which neighbors Sonoma County and shares similar population demographics found:

- LGBTQ competent counseling was identified as the most common unmet need of LGBT Napa residents (n=452)
- The top priority suggestion to come out of the needs assessment was to expand offerings of LGBTQ competency trainings for organizations, providers, schools, doctors, nurses, counselors, police, etc.

Napa County LGBTQ Needs Assessment 2012/13 - LGBTQ Connection: Napa County & Sonoma County." LGBTQ Connection | Napa County & Sonoma County, 2015, www.lgbtqconnection.org/napa-county-lgbtq-needs-assessment-201213.

FROM OUR OWN DATA

40%

40% of youth surveyed from LGBTQ Connection reported not seeking therapy because they didn't think they'd feel safe and welcome due to their gender identity and/or their sexual orientation.

- LGBTQ individuals from both Positive Images and LGBTQ Connection have shared numerous stories about not seeking mental health care or stopping mental health care because they did not know if the provider was LGBTQ affirming or because the provider did something harmful in regards to LGBTQ-related issues.
- Task force members also report negative interactions with local mental health providers.
- Local MFT Kris Spangler has created a "Trans Affirming Therapist List" with 27 mental health providers who have demonstrated experience providing affirming services to the trans community. This list was created and is updated as a service to the gender expansive community based on the desperate need for gender expansive folks to have mental health professionals who are affirming of our identities.
- A three month follow-up survey to attendees at LGBTQ Connection's Best Practices Training showed that 100% of respondents made some sort of change in their practices, with over 80% reporting using gender neutral language and over 50% showing visible displays of support for LGBTQ people.