

About the Executive Summary

This executive summary provides the highlights of the most recent issue of the *Children's Mental Health Research Quarterly*, available for free at childhealthpolicy.ca. The *Quarterly* presents the best available research evidence on a variety of children's mental health topics. The BC Ministry of Children and Family Development funds the *Quarterly*.

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About the Children's Health Policy Centre

We are an interdisciplinary research group in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. We focus on improving social and emotional well-being for all children, and on the public policies needed to reach these goals. To learn more about our work, please see childhealthpolicy.ca.



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Supporting LGBTQ+ youth

LGBTQ+ young people — including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning — often face added challenges growing up. For example, sexual-minority youth are overrepresented among the homeless and are victims of violence at rates far exceeding their peers. Given the serious adversities LGBTQ+ youth often experience, it is no surprise they also face an unequal burden of mental health concerns. This includes higher rates of substance use, anxiety and depressive symptoms, including suicidal thoughts and attempts. Yet despite the added challenges LGBTQ+ youth face, most do not experience poor mental health outcomes. Rather, most go on to thrive as adults — strong evidence of their resilience.

All adults have an ongoing responsibility to create positive environments and experiences for LGBTQ+ young people. They can do so by promoting acceptance, increasing their knowledge of issues affecting LGBTQ+ youth and using gender-neutral language. Adults also can advocate for LGBTQ+ youth to have quick access to mental health services when they need them.

Promoting positive school environments

A wide range of benefits can occur when LGBTQ+ youth have affirmative experiences in their schools. To ensure these benefits, practitioners and policy-makers can take a number of steps.

- **Ensure positive school environments for LGBTQ+ youth.** As highlighted in our review, many schools in North America are already implementing practices and policies to help LGBTQ+ youth have better experiences. These often include supporting gay-straight alliances, policies against homophobic bullying and training staff — initiatives that can have both immediate and long-term benefits. Practitioners and policy-makers can help ensure that these initiatives are widespread and are sustained, so that all young people have supportive school environments — as is their right.
- **Address discrimination to create mental health benefits.** When discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth is addressed, there can be benefits beyond a positive school environment. Such efforts can also reduce substance use and lead to less suicidal ideation and fewer suicide attempts by these youth — important mental health benefits. So addressing discrimination is an important preventative measure as well as an ethical one.
- **Support LGBTQ+ youth for everyone's benefit.** Gay-straight alliances and policies against homophobic bullying may have benefits that extend beyond LGBTQ+ youth, including reductions in drinking for many within the student body. Consequently, by encouraging and supporting LGBTQ+ youth, practitioners and policy-makers likely end up assisting all youth, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Please see our [full issue](#) to learn more about supporting LGBTQ+ young people. 🖐️

