

Children's Mental Health: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth

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October 30, 2017

Children's Mental Health: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth

1. Series overview
2. Background
3. New research on supporting LGBTQ+ youth in schools
4. Discussion
5. Wrap-up

1. Series Overview



Series Overview

- This series provides ongoing overviews on *Children's Mental Health Research Quarterly* topics
 1. Overview Talk 2016.04.21
 2. Preventing and Treating Anxiety 2016.12.12
 3. Preventing and Treating ADHD 2017.03.09
 4. **Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth 2017.10.30**

Meeting Basic Needs for All Children

- **Children's needs**

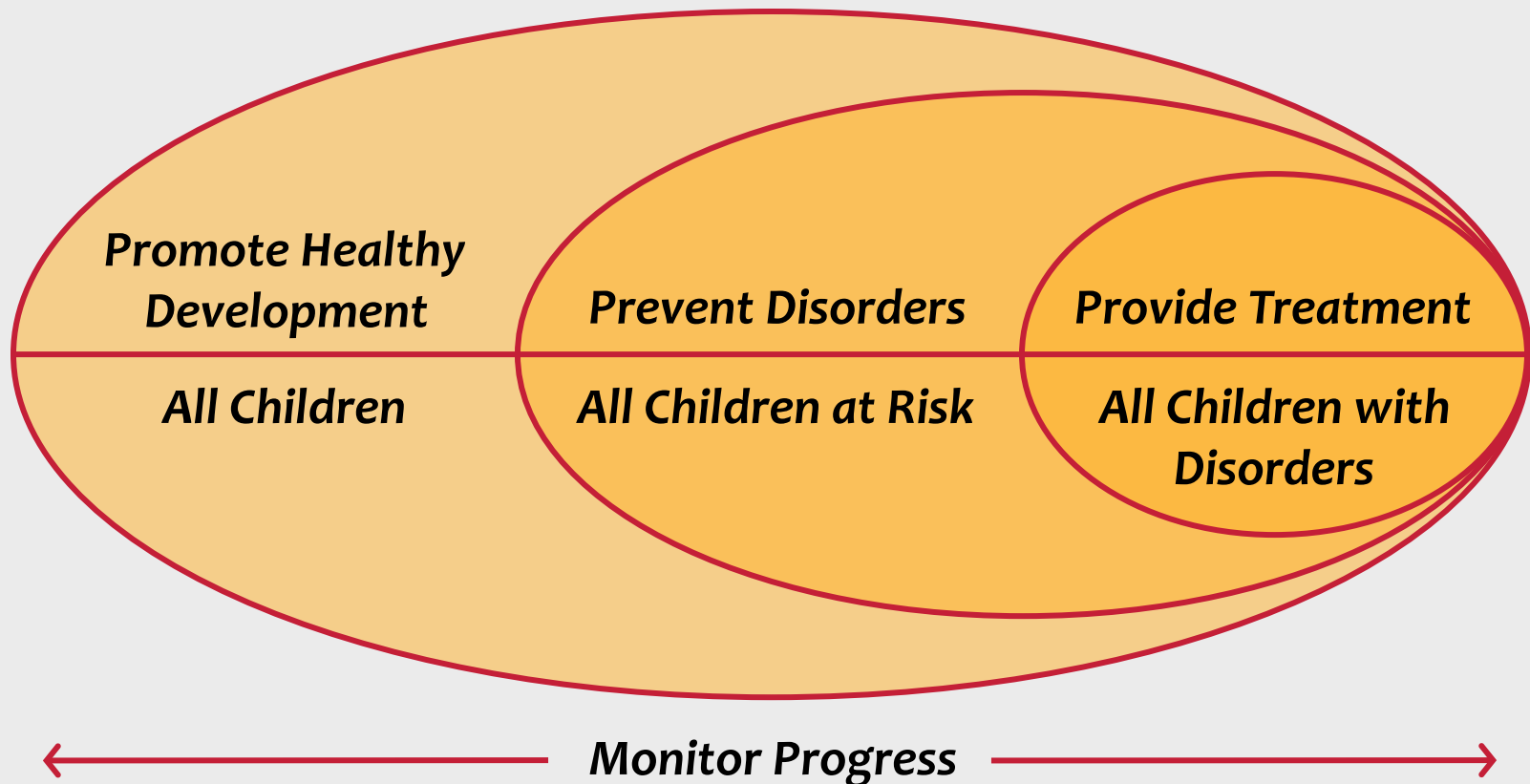
- Safety, security, stability and healthy living conditions
- Warm and authoritative parenting
- Developmentally-appropriate learning experiences
- Access to effective public health, healthcare and social services



- **Children's outcomes**

- Wellbeing and resilience
- Ability to reach potential and contribute
- Freedom from avoidable illness / injury / disability

Population Health Approach



Research-Informed Policy and Practice

“How do we **know** that we’re doing the right things,
and that we’re doing them right?”

(Drucker 1993)

Research-Informed Policy and Practice

- Improving children's mental health
 - Longstanding research-policy-practice collaboration with the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)
 - Policy and practice reports, talks and consultations
 - Ongoing systematic reviews of new research on prevention and treatment interventions for a range of childhood mental health conditions and related topics
 - Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with children are the standard for assessing intervention effectiveness
 - New research findings are published free online in the *Children's Mental Health Research Quarterly*, see childhealthpolicy.ca

Quarterly

SPRING 2017

VOL. 11, NO. 2

Supporting LGBTQ+ youth

OVERVIEW

Expressing identities
with pride

REVIEW

Promoting equity
for everyone's benefit



2. Background



Expressing Pride in Identity

- Definitions of sex and gender
 - *Sexual orientation* → sexual or romantic attractions
 - *Gender identity* → sense of oneself as a girl or boy, irrespective of biological sex at birth
- Developmental pathways
 - Most children learn about sex and gender early in development
 - All are also exposed to social expectations based on gender
 - Many children engage in “gender-non-conforming” behaviours
 - From puberty through adolescence, most young people explore their sexuality and gender identity

When Identity Leads to Adversity

- Most youth face hurdles in their sexual and gender development from time to time
- But many LGBTQ+ youth face added challenges
 - Having more fear about dating
 - Having more difficulty finding partners
 - Having to hide, or having to “come out” and risk rejection
 - Experiencing stigma and exclusion within their families, their schools and their larger communities
 - Experiencing unsupportive environments leading to further adversity, e.g., homelessness, violence/victimization

When Adversity Harms Mental Health

- Given the serious adversities that many LGBTQ+ youth face, it is not surprising that some mental health problems occur at higher rates than for sexual-majority youth
 - Substance misuse
 - Anxiety
 - Depression including suicidality

Reducing Adversity, Promoting Resilience

- Protective factors that apply to all young people
 - Feeling connected to family
 - Feeling connected to school
 - Feeling safe
- Protective factors specific to LGBTQ+ youth
 - Having parents be supportive after “coming out”
 - Being part of LGBTQ+ support groups
 - Having friendships that continue after “coming out”

Reducing Adversity, Promoting Resilience

- Most LGBTQ+ youth have good mental health outcomes
- But everyone can do more to help
 - Learn about LGBTQ+ issues
 - Model acceptance in family, school and community settings
 - Create environments that are free of bullying and harassment
 - Support youth who are transitioning

Reducing Adversity, Promoting Resilience

- Mental health practitioners and policymakers can help
 - Use gender-neutral language, e.g., “partner” rather than “girlfriend” or “boyfriend”
 - Address specific risks, e.g., bullying and harassment
 - Support groups that serve sexual-minority youth
 - Educate families, schools and communities and engage them in affirming the journeys of LGBTQ+ youth
 - Ensure that LGBTQ+ youth have access to timely and effective mental health interventions
 - Enact laws and policies that protect sexual-minority youth

Gay rights around the world: the best and worst countries for equality

Equal marriage laws are being passed in several countries, but in Russia, life grows harsher each month for LGBT people. Which places are best and worst for gay rights?



An act of defiance in front of a demonstration against gay marriage in Marseille, France, in 2012. Gerard Julien/AFP/Getty Images

Emine Saner

Tuesday 30 July 2013
15.08 EDT

We have a US president who supports gay marriage, and now a pope who is exactly signing up to equality for all, is at least starting to talk in language less inflammatory than his predecessor. "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has goodwill, who am I to judge?" he told an assembled group of bishops and cardinals after his return from his tour of Brazil. Then he went on to criticise the gay community, saying he wasn't going to break with the catechism that said "homosexual acts are

Where the world stands on gay rights



A gay pride march in Guadalajara on June 18, 2016. (Ulises Ruiz Basurto / European Pressphoto Agency)

By Ann M. Simmons

JUNE 21, 2016, 3:00 AM

The recent massacre at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla., has focused attention on the status of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning people in the United States.

Over the last decade, the country has made significant progress in terms of acceptance of this

Ten states sue Obama administration over transgender bathroom policy

- Newest lawsuit comes after 11 other states sued over guidelines
- Districts that fail to comply risk forfeiting millions in federal funding
-

Molly Redden in
New York

Friday 8 July 2016
22.49 BST

Ten states lodged a new legal challenge on Friday against the Obama administration's requirement that public schools allow transgender students to use bathroom facilities consistent with their gender identity.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Nebraska, comes after 11 other states sued the Obama administration over the same policy in May. Barack Obama announced the new rules as his administration intensified its battle with North Carolina, which passed a law barring transgender people from using bathrooms and other gendered facilities that don't match the gender on their identification certificates. The federal policy applies to every public school district in the country. Districts that fail to comply risk forfeiting millions in federal funding.

With Friday's lawsuit, the number of states challenging the policy reaches 17. Many observers predict that the battle will ultimately come before the Supreme Court.

Bathroom access is just one flashpoint in a far-reaching clash over transgender rights. In March, alone, state lawmakers introduced dozens of bills that would permit broad exemptions from anti-discrimination laws against transgender individuals in hiring, housing and business, sometimes even in places of public religion.

In June, the Pentagon announced an end to its ban on openly transgender people in the armed forces.

But access to gendered spaces is one area where the Obama administration has had a big impact, moving aggressively to make an example of an Illinois school district that refused to fully accommodate a trans girl, and suing North Carolina over its broad ban on transgender people's use of public facilities.

Those actions inspired cries of government overreach which the plaintiffs' lawyers echoed on Friday.

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What You Should Know About LGBTQ Youth Suicide in Canada

Every year, on average, 500 Canadian youth (ages 10 – 24) die by suicide (Statistics Canada). It is unknown, however, how many of these youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit or queer (LGBTQ), or may

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RECENT POSTS

U.S.

Supreme Court Ruling Makes Same-Sex Marriage a Right Nationwide

By ADAM LIPTAK JUNE 26, 2015

WASHINGTON — In a long-sought victory for the gay rights movement, the Supreme Court ruled by a 5-to-4 vote on Friday that the right to same-sex marriage.

“No longer may this liberty be denied,” Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote for the majority in the historic decision. “No union is more worthy of respect for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion and sacrifice in forming a marital union, two people become something greater than they were.”

Marriage is a “keystone of our social order,” Justice Kennedy wrote. The plaintiffs in the case were seeking “equal dignity” in marriage.

The decision, which was the culmination of decades of legal battles, set off jubilation and tearful embraces across the country. It ended same-sex marriages in several states, and resistance — or at least opposition — came against the backdrop of fast-moving changes in public opinion, indicating that most Americans now approve of the ruling.

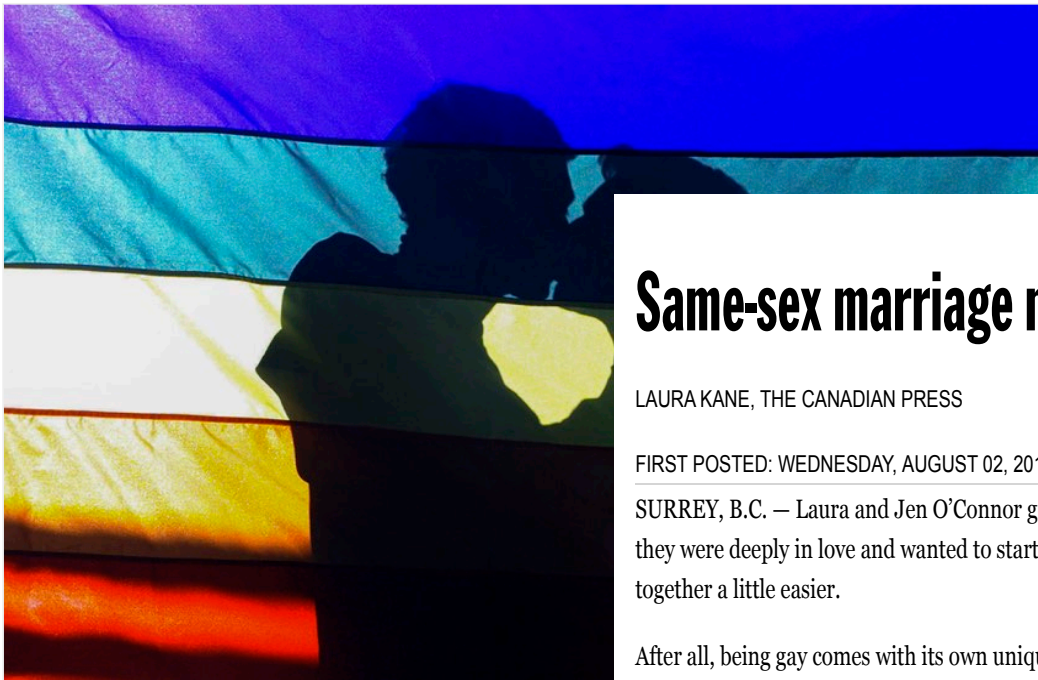
The court’s four more liberal justices joined Justice Kennedy’s opinion. Each member of the court’s conservative wing filed a separate dissent, in tones ranging from resigned dismay to bitter scorn.

In dissent, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. said the Constitution had nothing to say on the subject of same-sex marriage.



The Atlantic How Gay Marriage Became a Constitutional Right

The untold story of the improbable campaign that finally tipped the U.S. Supreme Court.



MOLLY BALL | JUL 1, 2015 | POLITICS

Same-sex marriage more popular than ever in Canada

LAURA KANE, THE CANADIAN PRESS

FIRST POSTED: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 02, 2017 09:49 AM EDT | UPDATED: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 02, 2017 03:13 PM EDT

SURREY, B.C. — Laura and Jen O'Connor got married for all the romantic, fairy-tale reasons: after seven years together, they were deeply in love and wanted to start a family. But on another level, they thought it might just make their life together a little easier.

After all, being gay comes with its own unique set of challenges — challenges they hoped might be easier to navigate if they shared a last name.

“It’s one less thing, one less obstacle that you have to deal with,” says Jen, 27, during an interview in a sun-drenched backyard at Laura’s parents’ house in a Vancouver-area suburb.

“When we’re sitting together, (people ask), ‘Are you sisters? Are you cousins? Are you family? Are you best friends?’ No, we’re actually wife and wife.”

When they check into a hotel, puzzled staff often ask if they’d prefer a room with two beds. Now that they’re married, the

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Vancouver Pride Parade: Trudeau Becomes First Sitting PM To Take Part

CP | By Geordon Omand, The Canadian Press

Posted: 07/31/2016 8:52 am EDT | Updated: 08/01/2016 9:59 am EDT



Ontario, Catholic schools face off over gay-straight alliances

Ontario Education Minister Laurel Broten insists all of the province's publicly funded schools must establish clubs specifically targeting the bullying of gay, bisexual and transgender students.



Tyler Anderson/National Post files



thestar.com

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All schools must allow 'gay-straight alliances' under new anti-bullying bill

Ontario's anti-bullying bill has been toughened with a new provision forcing schools to call clubs "gay-straight alliances" if students wish.



POSTMEDIA NEWS

February 2, 2012
3:51 PM EST

Filed under
News › Canada

By Sheila Dabu Nonato

A key disagreement between the Ontario government and the province's Catholic schools over student-led support groups for gay students could spark a legal battle over religious rights.

Ontario Education Minister Laurel Broten is insisting that all of the province's publicly funded schools must establish clubs specifically targeting the bullying

B.C. schools to add protections for LGBTQ students in anti-bullying policies



Education Minister Mike Bernier, photographed on July 30, 2015. Public school districts and private schools will have until the end of the year to update their policies to include explicit references to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, Mr. Bernier said at an emotional news conference.

CHAD HIPOLITO/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

LAURA KANE

VANCOUVER

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SEPTEMBER 8, 2016

TRENDING

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LGBTQ

Sexual-orientation and gender-identity battle grips schools

Supporters of inclusive programs in Langley and Abbotsford are facing down a small but vocal group of counterprotesters who have labelled LGBTQ-friendly curriculum and policies as a 'sex activists' agenda' that 'abuses' children, **Caroline Alphonso** writes



Cole, 15, with his father, Brad Dirks, prepares to head off to school in Langley, B.C. on Oct. 20. Brad has been supportive of programs that help transgender students find acceptance at school.

JIMMY JEONG/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CAROLINE ALPHONSO >
EDUCATION REPORTER
2 DAYS AGO

When Brad Dirks sent his eldest child to Grade 9 in Langley, B.C., two years ago, he was afraid that Cole would be misunderstood and excluded: "This was always

3. New Research on Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Schools



New Research on Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Schools I

- Searched for systematic reviews on interventions to support LGBTQ+ youth → spring 2017
- Identified one high-quality systematic review examining 15 observational studies that assessed the impact of gay-straight alliances in high schools
 - These alliances typically aim to increase awareness of LGBTQ+ issues, create social opportunities and provide advocacy, counselling and other supports
- But did they reduce school-based victimization?

Benefits of Gay-Straight Alliances

- These alliances were found to be associated with significantly fewer victimization experiences at school
 - Homophobic victimization (30% lower odds)
 - Safety concerns for LGBTQ+ youth (36% lower odds)
 - Homophobic remarks (52% lower odds)

New Research on Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Schools II

- Searched for original studies on school-based interventions to support LGBTQ+ youth that also assessed mental health outcomes → spring 2017
- Identified four observational studies in representative samples examining either substance use or suicidality
 - Examining “affirming” interventions such as gay-straight alliances, policies prohibiting bullying and harassment, staff education, inclusive health curricula, and facilitating access to competent services beyond schools
- But did they improve youth mental health?

Benefits of Affirming School Environments

- Affirming school interventions were associated with reduced alcohol use
- In two of three surveys that examined substance use
 - Lower levels of risky drinking
 - Improvements shown for **both LGBTQ+ and heterosexual youth**

Benefits of Affirming School Environments

- Affirming school interventions were also associated with reduced suicidality
- In three of three surveys that examined suicidality
 - Less suicidal ideation and fewer suicide attempts
- In two of three surveys that examined suicidality
 - Improvements shown for **both LGBTQ+ and heterosexual youth**

4. Discussion



Discussion

Please share your thoughts, questions and feedback.

5. Wrap-Up



References

Please see childhealthpolicy.ca

Upcoming Topics

2018

Preventing and treating childhood depression

Preventing and treating childhood substance use

Preventing avoidable childhood adversities

Acknowledgements

BC Ministry of Children + Family Development

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Bigstock Photos

Thank you!