



POSITION ON STIGMATIZATION OF LGBTQ+ PERSONS IN LEGISLATION

WHO ARE WE?

The New Hampshire Suicide Prevention Council (SPC) was established in 2008. The SPC's mission is to reduce the incidence of suicide in NH through the goals identified in the State Suicide Prevention Plan, including:

- raising public and professional awareness of suicide prevention;
- addressing the mental health and substance misuse needs of all residents;
- addressing the needs of those affected by suicide; and
- promoting policy change.

New Hampshire has a proud and impressive history of pursuing research-based initiatives to address this concerning and preventable public health problem, such as, Crisis Intervention Team Training for Police, The Connect Program, and the NH Firearm Safety Coalition.

CURRENT SITUATION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

The NH SPC uses a data-driven approach to inform council decision-making. Data clearly shows that LGBTQ+ students in New Hampshire are over three times more likely to consider and/or attempt suicide and that this risk is directly tied to ongoing stigmatization.¹ Specifically, removing supportive spaces including in families, schools, and communities for LGBTQ+ youth increases suicide risk, while supporting LGBTQ+ youth and families through access to affirming spaces and necessary healthcare decreases this risk.^{1,2}

POLICY ENVIRONMENT

In NH, many bills have been introduced this year that would decrease access to core protective factors for LGBTQ+ youth- inclusive schools, supportive adults/community spaces, and access to care. Protective factors are a critical piece of suicide prevention, and the removal of these protections would result in increased suicidal ideation. By removing access to representative safe spaces in the community, these youth are much more likely to end up instead being represented in our state's suicide statistics.

The introduction of these bills this session has already caused harm to the LGBTQ+ youth in our state. 80% of LGBTQ+ youth in NH reported that recent politics negatively impacted their wellbeing.³ Poor wellbeing is a predictor of more profound future risk of suicidal ideation.⁴ These youth not only fear losing access to safe spaces if this legislation were to pass but are also negatively impacted by the misinformation embedded within these bills and the discussions surrounding them. No young person should have to hear conversations that paint their identities as inherently problematic. Further, this negative narrative around the LGBTQ+ community can serve to embolden individuals in our state to cause interpersonal harm through harassment, bullying, and even physical assault.



POSITION ON STIGMATIZATION OF LGBTQ+ PERSONS IN LEGISLATION

POSITION AND VISION

Marginalized populations, including LGBTQ+ folks, are not inherently more at risk for suicide because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, but rather the increased risk comes from how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society. When LGBTQ+ youth do not experience discrimination or harm due to their identities, their risk level falls below that of the general teen population, whereas experiencing discrimination interpersonally and though policy is correlated with a much higher risk.^{3,1}

The Suicide Prevention Council envisions a NH where every person in our state feels safe enough to live another day. As such, the NH Suicide Prevention Council stands against legislative efforts that directly increase the risk of suicide LGBTQ+ Granite Staters. Together, we can raise awareness and increase access to mental health, substance misuse, and suicide prevention services thereby reducing suicide in NH.

ENDNOTES

¹2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People (California: The Trevor Project, 2023).

²Joseph G. Kosciw, Caitlin M. Clark, and Leesh Menard, *The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools* (New York: GLSEN, 2022).

³2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health: New Hampshire (California: The Trevor Project, 2022).

⁴Diana M. Tordoff et al., "Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care", *JAMA Network Open* (February 2022).