Bullying and LGBTQ Youth

Background
• “Homophobia among adolescents remains an understudied yet prominent social issue relevant to several interrelated areas of research within schools”¹
• “Homophobia includes negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward non-heterosexual individuals and behavior... This can include verbal, physical, and relational aggression that contains homophobic themes or references”¹
• The psychological and social consequences resulting from being the target of homophobic bullying can be devastating (depression, isolation, fear)
• Students of all sexual orientations, genders, and racial or ethnic backgrounds are directly victimized and impacted by homophobic acts.²
• “Bullying of LGBTQ students stems largely from discomfort with students who do not conform to traditional gender roles in their appearance or behavior, i.e., who are gender-non-conforming. A student’s actual sexual orientation may be far less relevant to his or her social victimization than his or her gender identity or gender expression.”²

The Experiences of LGBTQ Youth at School
• 84.6% (nearly 9 out of 10) of LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1% reported being physically harassed, and 18.8% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year.³
• 72.4% hear homophobic remarks, such as “faggot” or “dyke,” frequently or often at school³
• Nearly two-thirds (61.1%) of students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation; 39.9% felt unsafe because of their gender expression; nearly one-third of LGBTQ students skipped at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.³
• The reported GPA of students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression were almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.7 vs. 3.1)³
• LGBTQ youth are 2-3x more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts⁴
• 28% of LGBTQ students will drop out of school, which is more than 3x the average for heterosexual students⁵
• Four out of five LGBTQ students report that they don’t know one supportive adult at school⁶
• Approximately 22% middle school students and 17.7% of high school students reported teasing another student because he/she was gay⁷

Recommendations
• LGBTQ youth who had groups such as the Gay-Straight Alliance in their schools were less likely to report feeling unsafe⁵
• Students attending school with an anti-bullying policy that included protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender expression experienced lower levels of victimization³
• Being “out” in school was related to higher levels of victimization, but also higher levels of psychological well-being³
• “School personnel need to develop a climate supportive of students who are not constricted by traditional gender norms.”⁸
• “Not all students who identify themselves as LGBTQ will suffer high rates of depression and drug use when families or schools are supportive of their sexual orientation.”⁹
Resources for More Information

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN):
www.glsen.org/cgibin/iowa/all/antibullying/index.html

GLBT National Help Center
www.glnh.org/index2.html

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
www.pflag.org

The Trevor Project
www.thetrevorproject.org

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Helpline: 1-800-273-TALK
GLBT National Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-PRIDE
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline: 1-888-THE-GLNH
Peer Listening Line for LGBT Youth: 1-800-399-PEER
GLBT Hate Crimes Hotline: 1-800-686-HATE
LYRIC Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-7743
National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) Legal Helpline: 1-800-528-6257

References

[3] GLSEN 2009 National School Climate Survey