



# **HAPPY AND HEALTHY:**

**A GUIDE FOR LESBIAN,  
GAY, BISEXUAL, QUEER  
AND QUESTIONING  
YOUTH**

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## EVERYBODY DESERVES THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES AND FEEL SAFE.

LGBQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer or Questioning. LGBQ youth are often faced with unique challenges as they grow up. If you're starting to question your sexual orientation, you might be worried about whether your family and friends will accept you for who you are – but you're not alone. In Allegheny County, there are free resources available to help you and laws designed to protect you.

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## COMING OUT

### *How should I come out?*

Start by coming out to yourself, and then move on to somebody close to you. Meet in a safe place and say you want to talk about something important. If you are too afraid to say the words, you might want to write a letter. People come out in many different ways. For more ideas, you can search for coming out videos online. Remember: there's no one right way or right time to come out. Coming out only needs to happen when you feel ready to share this part of yourself with a person you trust.

### *Who should I come out to first?*

Who do you trust with your other important secrets? Many people start by telling a close friend. Some may start with their therapist or doctor. You might want to tell your sibling, cousin, aunt or uncle. It may help to find somebody that is already out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning – they can probably relate to some of the feelings you're experiencing.

### *Should I come out to my caregivers?*

Only if you want to, and only when you're ready and feel safe doing so. Don't come out just because someone else thinks you should. If you think your caregivers may hurt you or kick you out because of your identity, make sure you have a support network in place before taking that risk. You may want to have a supportive person with you to help, such as a friend or a therapist. **If you want to come out to your caregivers, or already have, and think they may need more information and help to fully support you, we have a program that can help!** Steps2Connect is for parents, caregivers, relatives (really any adult you want to build or maintain a relationship with) who need extra help learning how to fully recognize, affirm and love all of you. To find out more, contact us at [DHS-LGBTQ@AlleghenyCounty.US](mailto:DHS-LGBTQ@AlleghenyCounty.US) or call or text 412-973-5053.

### *Will people accept me after I come out?*

Some people will accept you and some may not. You can estimate how well things will go by looking at the experiences of other LGBTQ people in your school or community. You can also test the waters by asking your friends and family how they feel about LGBTQ celebrities like Tessa Thompson, Lil Nas X, Michael Sam or Ellen DeGeneres.

### *How will my religious friends, family and clergy react?*

Some people have strong religious beliefs against LGBTQ identities. However, these feelings sometimes change after a loved one comes out. There are lots of free online resources for people struggling with these issues, including the PFLAG booklet *Faith in Our Families*. There are also many congregations in our area that openly accept LGBTQ+ members. Check [pflagpgh.org/spiritual-directory.html](http://pflagpgh.org/spiritual-directory.html) for a list.

### *Where will I find LGBTQ friends?*

**Everywhere!** You may already have some and not even know it. Once you come out, your friends may feel safer sharing that information with you. You can join or start a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at your school - the GLSEN Network has free resources to help you start one. There are free LGBTQ+ youth groups and social events you can attend at Project Silk and True T Pgh. You can also join Dreams of Hope, a local group of LGBTQ+ and allied youth who come together to create and share art. There are also online resources that you will find at the back of this guide. But remember, if you try to find friends online, please stay safe and avoid giving out personal information. **In addition, the Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation offers a free program called Youth AFFIRM that connects you to other LGBTQ+ youth**

your age, offers important life skills, and you can even get a gift card after completion! For more information about Youth AFFIRM, call or text 412-973-5053. To find contact information for all of these resources and more, flip to the back of this guide.

*How can I find a therapist that will accept me as an LGBTQ person?*

You deserve access to quality, affirming mental healthcare. In Allegheny County, lack of insurance cannot prevent a child from accessing mental health services. Youth over the age of 14 have the right to obtain mental healthcare without a parent's permission and to withhold mental health records from their parents. If you don't know how to find a therapist, you can start by talking to your school social worker or calling Re:solve Crisis Network.

*I'm not ready to tell anybody yet. How else can I express my feelings?*

Art can be a great form of self-expression and self-care. You can try painting, sculpting, making music, dancing, acting or writing. If you're feeling stressed try yoga, meditation or deep breathing. You can also de-stress by playing sports or exercising on your own.

## HARASSMENT AND ABUSE

LGBQ youth are at high risks of harassment and abuse from adults, peers and even other LGBQ sexual or romantic partners.

**Home:** Regardless of your sexual orientation, you deserve a home that feels safe. Your family should not hurt you, threaten you or try to change you. If you are experiencing abuse at home, talk to an adult you trust and contact PA ChildLine for help.

**School:** Your school is obligated to protect you, whether people are physically hurting you, sexually harassing you, calling you names or bullying you online. If you're being harassed or threatened, go to the principal or another official right away. Keep detailed notes with dates of all incidents, and let the school know that it has to protect you. If nothing changes, contact your local ACLU chapter for help.

**Dating:** If your partner is calling you names, cutting you off from family or friends, threatening to reveal private information like your sexual orientation or pressuring you into sexual acts you aren't comfortable with, you may be experiencing abuse. Abuse can also come in the form of a partner fetishizing you or being hateful towards you because of your gender identity or race – they should

never make fun of you for being “not feminine enough” or “not man enough”. A good resource for what healthy LGBTQ+ relationships can look like is Adagio Health’s “Safe Dates” program. If you are experiencing physical or emotional abuse, get help from LoveisRespect.org via online chat, text, or phone call.

## COMMUNITY AND LEGAL RESOURCES

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### ACLU OF PENNSYLVANIA – GREATER PITTSBURGH CHAPTER

A civil rights organization that can provide legal information and help you file discrimination complaints.

Call 1-877-744-2258

[aclupa.org/chapters/greaterpittsburgh](http://aclupa.org/chapters/greaterpittsburgh)

### ALLEGHENY COUNTY DHS LGBTQ RESOURCES

A collection of websites, articles, and resources on LGBTQ+ health, civil rights and other issues. There is a page specifically for LGBTQ+ youth.

[alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/LGBTQ.aspx](http://alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/LGBTQ.aspx)

### HUGH LANE WELLNESS FOUNDATION

Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation works to improve the wellness of LGBTQ+ communities in the region utilizing evidence-based practices and methods of intervention, training, consultation, and coaching to achieve positive movement toward stability, acceptance and reduction of health disparities impacting LGBTQ+ individuals.

[hughlane.org](http://hughlane.org)

### LGBT NATIONAL YOUTH TALKLINE

A non-crisis line where you can talk about coming out and other issues.

Call 1-800-246-7743

### PFLAG

A support group for family members of LGBTQ+ youth. Website includes free resources for talking with family members.

[pflagpgh.org](http://pflagpgh.org) | [pflag.org](http://pflag.org)

### PITTSBURGH EQUALITY CENTER (FORMERLY GLCC)

A place with resources and events for Pittsburgh’s LGBTQ+ community and free drop-in nights for youth. 5840 Ellsworth Ave, Suite #100, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

[pghequalitycenter.org](http://pghequalitycenter.org) | [facebook.com/glccpgh/](https://facebook.com/glccpgh/)

### PROJECT SILK

A drop-in space centering Black and Latinx young gay men and transgender youth of color.

Wood Street Commons, Mezzanine Level, 304 Wood St, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

[chscorp.org/service-area/program/project-silk](http://chscorp.org/service-area/program/project-silk)

### TRUE T ENTERTAINMENT

True T Entertainment serves as a community platform for LGBTQ resource sharing, queer arts, activism, and entertainment. Through community outreach and safe space making, we provide meaningful resources while giving back to our community.

[truettpgh.com](http://truettpgh.com) | [facebook.com/TrueTpgh](https://facebook.com/TrueTpgh)

## HEALTH RESOURCES

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### ADAGIO HEALTH

An organization providing quality health and wellness services with a focus on women and their families, youth and individuals of LGBTQIA+ experiences.

603 Stanwix St, Two Gateway Center, Suite 500,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

[adagiohealth.org](http://adagiohealth.org)

### CENTRAL OUTREACH WELLNESS CENTER

A holistic, multicultural health organization serving LGBTQIA, HIV+, and Hep C-positive patients.

Timber Court Building, Suite 100, 127 Anderson St,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

[centraloutreach.com](http://centraloutreach.com)

### PERSAD CENTER

An LGBTQ+ center with social events as well as mental health counseling and free HIV testing.

5301 Butler Street, Suite #100, Pittsburgh, PA 15201

[persadcenter.org](http://persadcenter.org)

[persadcenter.org/pages/youth-programs](http://persadcenter.org/pages/youth-programs)

### PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Planned Parenthood provides comprehensive healthcare to all, regardless of insurance or ability to pay. Planned Parenthood is an excellent resource for quality, LGBTQIA+ specific sex education as well as access to contraceptives, STD testing, routine screenings, PrEP and more.

933 Liberty Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15222

[plannedparenthood.org](http://plannedparenthood.org)

### UPMC CHILDREN'S CENTER FOR ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT HEALTH

UPMC CAYAH offers LGBTQIA+ affirming primary care services, hormone therapy, mental health support, case management, gynecological care and STD testing for children and youth up to age 26. CAYAH provides comprehensive transgender care services.

UPMC University Center, Mezzanine Floor, Suite M060,  
120 Lytton Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

[chp.edu/our-services/aya-medicine/gender-development](http://chp.edu/our-services/aya-medicine/gender-development)



## EDUCATION RESOURCES

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### DREAMS OF HOPE

An organization that helps Pittsburgh LGBTQ+ youth express themselves by creating art.

[dreamsofhope.org](http://dreamsofhope.org)

[facebook.com/dreamsofhopeorg](https://facebook.com/dreamsofhopeorg)

### GSLEN (GAY STRAIGHT LESBIAN EDUCATORS NETWORK)

A national nonprofit with resources to help schools become more LGBTQ+ inclusive.

[glsen.org](http://glsen.org)

## CRISIS RESOURCES

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### LOVEISRESPECT.ORG

A hotline to get help for teen dating violence.

Call 1-866-331-9474

Text “loveis” to 22522 or chat online

[loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)

### NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE

A hotline that can help if you are thinking about or have already ran away from home.

Call 1-800-RUNAWAY (786-2929) or chat online

[1800runaway.org](http://1800runaway.org)

### PENNSYLVANIA CHILDLINE

A hotline to call if you think you are being abused by an adult.

Call 1-800-932-0313

### RE:SOLVE CRISIS NETWORK

A network of trained crisis counselors that will travel to you, anywhere in Allegheny County, if you are thinking of suicide or experiencing mental health issues.

Call 1-888-7-YOU CAN (1-888-796-8226)

### THE TREVOR PROJECT

A hotline with trained mental health crisis counselors for LGBTQ+ youth.

Call 1-866-488-7386

Text “Trevor” to 1-202-304-1200 or chat online

[thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)



# NOTES







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