

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Creating Spaces to Support Transgender Youth

McGuire, J. K., & Conover-Williams, M. (2010). Creating spaces to support transgender youth. *Prevention Researcher*, 17 (4), 17-20. doi:10.1037/e509042011-005

**SUMMARY:** Transgender youth encounter unique experiences and thus have particular needs. Researchers conducted focus groups with 36 transgender youth to identify their unique experiences and needs and their recommendations for how programs can best support transgender youth. Multiple youth expressed concerns centered on the experience of harassment and systems for giving feedback to programs.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Transgender youth reported specific needs with regard to medical care, housing, work, school, and bathrooms.
- These youth highlighted the need for protection from harassment and systems to report harassment if and when it does occur.
- It was important to transgender youth that program staff be educated about transgender issues and open to feedback about the community center.
- The availability of gender-neutral bathrooms was important for transgender youth, who reported experiencing increased harassment in bathrooms segregated by gender.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Engage in conversations with transgender youth regarding their needs and experiences
- Advocate for transgender youth to ensure that their unique need are being met

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Create systems for youth to report harassment and give general feedback about the program
- Develop rules and procedures that foster an environment without harassment

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend training for professionals who work with military families regarding the experiences of transgender youth and their needs
- Continue to support the development of inclusive programs for youth from military families

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## METHODS

- Researchers conducted focus groups at LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) youth centers during weekly transgender support groups.
- Groups consisted of 3 to 16 participants and lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours.
- Youth were asked about their perceptions of the needs of transgender youth, their experiences in community centers, and their recommendations for supporting transgender youth.
- Responses were coded to identify common themes throughout youth responses.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 36 transgender youth between the ages of 12 and 23 years.
- With regard to race/ethnicity, 61% of participants were Black, 16% were Latino, 14% were White, and 9% were multiple races/ethnicities.
- Of the youth, 78% identified as being female-to-male transgender and 22% identified as being male-to-female transgender.

## LIMITATIONS

- Researchers did not report what percentage of youth spoke about each of the identified themes, so it is unclear whether some themes emerged more universally than others.
- Youth who participated in the focus groups were all attending transgender support groups at an LGBT community center; the experiences of these youth may be different from the experience of youth who do not have that same type of support.
- There was a wide range in the age of the youth with no mean age reported. It is unclear how these needs and experiences may differ over adolescence and into young adulthood.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Consider the experience of youth who do not have access to transgender support groups or LGBT community centers
- Examine the way needs and experiences of transgender youth change over adolescence and young adulthood
- Identify the needs and experiences that are most salient among the population of transgender youth as a whole

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:  
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>