

# LGBTQ+ Youth Substance Misuse



## Why Are You Receiving This?

LGBTQ+ youth are at higher risk for substance misuse, with fewer resilience protections than their cisgender and heterosexual peers. But you can help! This data brief by Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community (BPHC) and Outright Vermont has information and strategies that youth and family-serving organizations in Burlington can use to support LGBTQ+ youth. We hope you will work with us to improve outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth in Burlington..

**508**

BHS Students took our 2021 Core Survey

**33%**

of these students identified as LGBTQ+

**LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AT BHS FELT THEY WERE GIVEN USEFUL ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY:**

**39%**

Compared to 60% of cisgender & heterosexual peers.

**LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AT BHS FELT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR FUTURE:**

**58%**

Compared to 72% of cisgender & heterosexual peers.

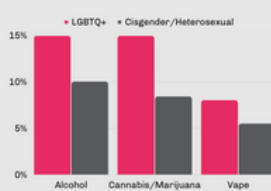
**4 OUT OF 10**



**LGBTQ+ students at BHS feel good about themselves OR feel like they belong at school.**

Compared to 7 out of 10 cisgender/heterosexual peers

### SUBSTANCE USE



LGBTQ+ students reported higher rates of use of the three most commonly used substances & products among high school students within the past 30 days.

### REFERENCES

2021 BHS Core Survey designed and implemented by Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community and Burlington School District.

## What is the Core Survey?

BPHC works with the Burlington School District to administer the anonymous Burlington Core Survey to students in 6th - 12th grade. The survey asks questions related to substance use and other risk and protective factors. It also asks students to identify issues they are concerned about. The survey results help us to respond quickly to emerging trends and needs of youth in Burlington other than waiting for slower results from State and national surveys.

## LGBTQ+ Youth Report Higher Rates of Substance Misuse, Fewer Resilience Factors

- LGBTQ+ youth face disparate health outcomes compared with their cisgender and heterosexual peers. They are more likely to use or misuse substances, try smoking or vaping earlier than their peers, and more likely to use cannabis. They also report fewer resilience factors, such as feeling a sense of belonging at school or home.
- These increased risks, and lower resilience factors, are not inherent to a person's identity; rather they stem from the burden of stress LGBTQ+ youth shoulder. [Minority stress perspective](#) can help us understand that LGBTQ+ youth experience violence and the threat of harm more frequently. Further, they regularly receive messages that target LGBTQ+ youth, devaluing them, or even suggesting they should not exist. This chronic, toxic stress, contributes to poor health outcomes and increased risk factors when compared with their cisgender, heterosexual peers who do not experience those same stressors.

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## How You Can Support LGBTQ+ Adolescents at Your Org:

- **Talk** with young people about their experiences of stress and what helps.
- **Create opportunities** for fun, connection, and activism that increase young people's agency and sense of community. Young people who see that they can create positive change in their communities get a boost of self esteem, future planning, and feel a sense of belonging that can positively shift risk-taking behavior.
- **Help build support systems and easily accessible information** for parents and adult caregivers. LGBTQ+ youth who receive family support for their identities experience far fewer risk factors than their peers with unsupportive families.
- **Identify ways that your team or organization communicates, internally and externally offers welcome and belonging** to LGBTQ+ youth, and youth in other historically marginalized communities. Build on those bright spots!
- **Normalize using pronouns** for introductions.
- **Invite organizations like Outright Vermont and BPHC into your organization** to address specific issues or service gaps. You don't need to do this work alone! Creating partnerships can make your work more impactful and sustainable.
- **Require youth and family-serving staff to regularly attend training** related to sexuality and gender identity. **Dedicate time to expanding cultural competency** and be aware of local and national resources available for different needs expressed by LGBTQ+ youth and their families.
- **Review procedures and paperwork** that youth fill out to ensure it is inclusive and respectful of all gender identities. Model the same care is extended to your internal processes and culture for staff.
- **Increase LGBTQ+ representation** in programs and outreach materials and create spaces in schools and communities that affirm LGBTQ+ youth.
- **Familiarize yourself and your organization with the Vermont Prevention model.** Both of our organizations utilize a social ecological framework to guide our work with youth and families.
- **For more ideas explore [Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ+ Youth](#),** a toolkit by Advocates for Youth.



[Click here](#) for additional resources and supports for LGBTQ+ youth.