

Children's Rights

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<https://www.childrensrights.org/lgbtq-2/>

Policy Issue Resources

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people are over-represented in foster care, where they are more likely to experience discrimination, abuse, neglect and the risk of harm. A [2019 study](#) found 30.4 percent of youth in foster care identify as LGBTQ and 5 percent as transgender, compared to 11.2 percent and 1.17 percent of youth not in foster care.

LGBTQ youth are more likely to suffer from consistent harassment and abuse in foster care, juvenile justice settings and homeless shelters. At times, they're subjected to dangerous efforts that falsely claim to change their orientation or gender identity, including so-called conversion therapy. These incidents are particularly pervasive with transgender youth, whose very identities are rejected in state care, and who, when bullied and abused, are often criminalized for acting in their own self-defense.

Without safe foster care placements, and without the vital support of caseworkers and other child welfare professionals, LGBTQ youth often flee abuse in foster care only to face homelessness and sexual exploitation.

The Williams Institute also found that around 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. In New York, the birthplace of the modern gay rights movement, studies show some 78 percent of LGBTQ youth were removed or ran away from foster homes because of the hostilities they faced, and 56 percent chose to live on the street rather than in a foster care placement because they felt safer there. The U.S. National Alliance to End Homelessness reports that LGBTQ homeless youth are roughly 7.4 times more likely to suffer acts of sexual violence than heterosexual homeless youth.

LGBTQ young adults are also overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. While LGBTQ youth comprise only an estimated 5-7 percent of the overall youth population in the United States, they represent 13-15 percent of those currently in the juvenile justice system. Findings show that, when compared with their heterosexual and cisgender peers, LGBTQ youth in the juvenile justice system are twice as likely to have experienced child abuse, group and foster care placement, and homelessness.

In May 2019, Children's Rights established the [Interfaith Coalition for Children's Rights](#), a group of faith leaders working on behalf of children in foster care nationwide to combat proposed discriminatory legislation.

Children's Rights Paralegal Intern Brayden Bell developed a report: [A Visible Issue Renders Marginalized Communities Invisible](#).

The report examines the importance for child placement agencies to use inclusive language and imagery to recruit and support racial minority and LGBTQ+ families, comparing the Los Angeles County and Tennessee child welfare systems.

[Read the report here](#)



Children's Rights partnered with the Movement Advancement Project, Family Equality, National Center on Adoption and Permanency, the North American Council on Adoptable Children, and Voice for Adoption to release [The High Stakes in the Fulton Case: Undermining the Vital Role of Child Welfare Laws & Regulations in Protecting America's Children](#).

Learn how potential outcomes of the case could have an impact on the child welfare system, as well as on other social service systems that receive government funding.

[Read more about the report on our blog](#)



Children's Rights developed a report, [Fostering Inequity: How COVID-19 Amplifies Dangers for LGBTQ+ Youth in Care](#), exposing how the discrimination, institutionalization, and abuse that LGBTQ+ youth already face is

exacerbated by COVID-19. The report lifts up the voices of youth through compelling testimony from several young people currently or formerly in foster care who identify as LGBTQ+.

Learn what steps child welfare agencies and federal and state governments can take to address issues caused directly by COVID-19 and, at the same time, rectify conditions that have long put LGBTQ+ youth at risk.

[Read more about the report and current state of LGBTQ+ rights on our blog](#)

Childrens Rights partnered with Lambda Legal and the Center for the Study of Social Policy to release [Safe Havens: Closing the Gap Between Recommended Practice and Reality for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth in Out-of-Home Care](#). The report offers the first comprehensive analysis of the troubling lack of explicit laws and policies in most states to protect transgender, gender expansive and gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth in the child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth systems (out-of-home care systems). View interactive maps of which states do and do not offer provisions protecting LGBTQ youth from discrimination in [child welfare](#) and [juvenile justice](#) systems across the country.

While some states and child welfare agencies have explicit protections for LGBTQ+ foster youth and foster parents, there are still 29 states that lack non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Its time to update our nations laws to make sure everyone is protected.

[Add your name and join thousands across the country pushing the Senate to cosponsor and pass the federal Equality Act](#). The law would finally provide consistent and explicit anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people in every state. It would also add and expand legal protections for women, people of color, people of minority faiths, and many other communities.

By making sure every persons sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression are protected under federal law, Congress can ensure that youth and families are served with dignity and respect.

[Sign the Petition](#)

Over 20,000 children age out of the foster care system every year without a permanent family or home, forcing youth into instability and homelessness. Many adults want to open their homes and hearts, but discrimination stands in the way.

By denying LGBTQ+ families the ability to foster and adopt children, child welfare agencies deny children the right to safe, happy, and healthy permanent homes.

Stand up for LGBTQ+ parents, families, and children and demand Congress end discrimination in taxpayer-funded adoption and foster care services.

All children have the right to be kept safe from harm and cared for by loving families. [Call on your federal legislators to support laws and policies that promote justice and the human dignity of all people and to pass the John Lewis Every Child Deserves a Family Act.](#)

[Sign the Petition](#)

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