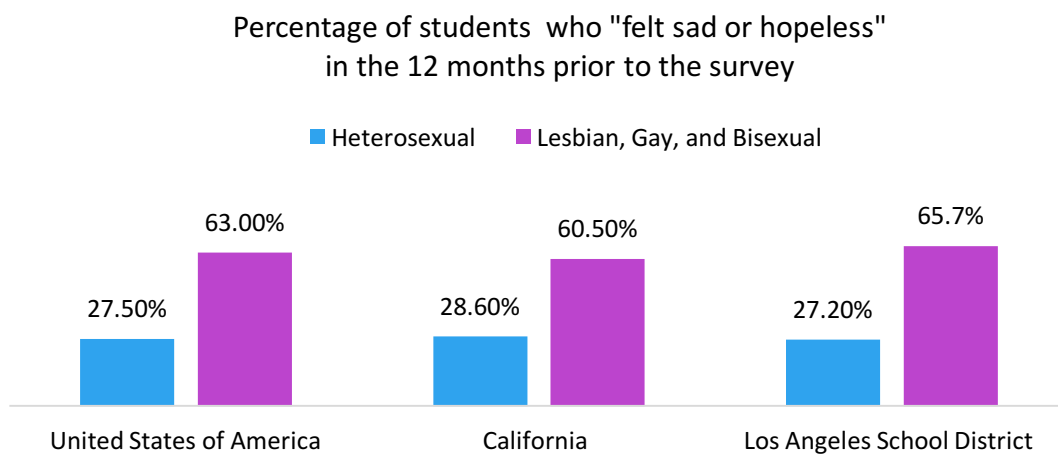


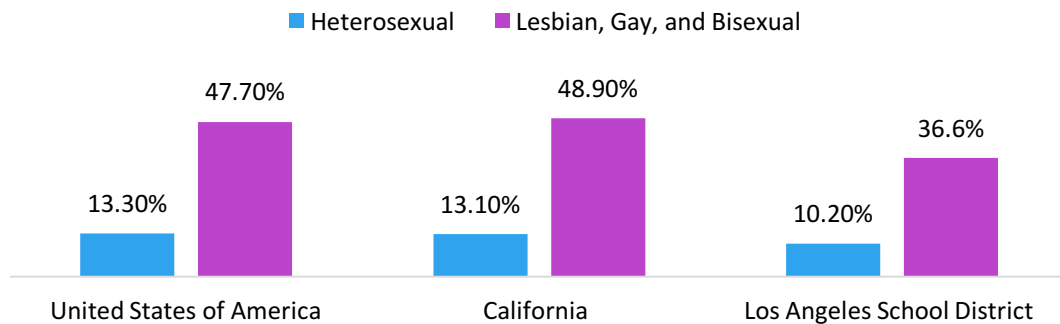
Suicide Prevention in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students in Los Angeles

In the Los Angeles Unified School District in California, lesbian, gay, and bisexuals (LGB) students in grades 9-12 are at an increased risk compared to their heterosexual counterparts of contemplating or attempting suicide. The purpose of this proposal is twofold. Firstly, the goal is to highlight this health disparity and identify cost-efficient methods to prevent suicidal thoughts and actions in LGB students in the Los Angeles School District. Secondly, this plan aims to equip key stakeholders with tools to prevent LGB students who are suicidal from taking suicidal action. Thirdly, this plan will highlight advocacy groups who could partner in this public health effort and identify threats to success.

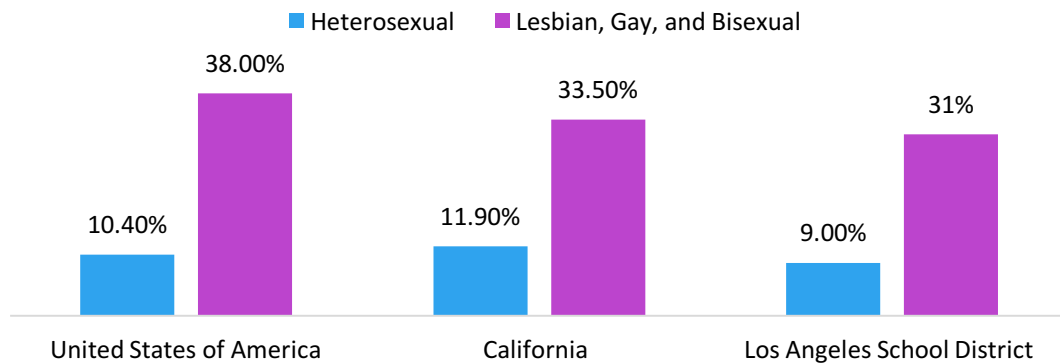
In a study entitled: "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance-United States, 2017," published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2018, a student sampling of 14,765 students in 144 schools highlights the incidence of suicidal thoughts and actions at the national level, state level, and in select urban school districts. The data is detailed in the graphs below, gathered from both private, public, and charter schools.



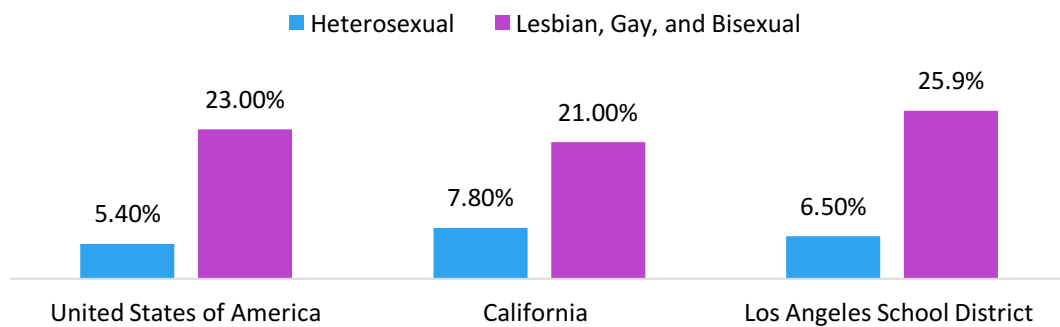
Percentage of students who "seriously considered attempting suicide"



Percentage of students who made a plan to commit suicide



Percentage of students who actually attempted suicide



The graphs above highlight the consistently higher rate of sadness, suicidal ideation, suicidal planning, and suicidal action taken by LGB students compared to heterosexual students across local, state, and national groups. This is just one of numerous studies that outline the

need for more programs to the support LGB students (US National Library of Medicine and Institutes of Health). Samuel Garrett-Pate from Equality California, says on the subject:

“California is lucky to have the strongest statewide LGBT civil rights protections in the country but we know that that doesn’t necessarily translate to full, lived equality...We particularly see this with some of the most vulnerable groups, which includes LGBT youth” (California Health Report).

There are several advocacy groups that would make excellent partners in the goal of lowering the incidence of suicidal thoughts and actions in 9-12 grade students in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The first group is GLSEN, which is dedicated to fighting discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) students in grades K-12 across the United States. They do so by empowering students, conducting research, partnering with policy makers, and developing resources for educators that promote a positive LGBTQ curriculum.

The second advocacy group is the Trevor Project. The Trevor Project is an intervention organization that focuses on preventing suicide in LGBTQ youth. They have a year-round 24-hour crisis line for those who are considering suicide. In addition to this resource, they also dedicate time to fighting for pro-LGBTQ policies and promoting positive LGBTQ education materials.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has recently re-committed itself to supporting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) student populations. In an effort to create a safe environment that fosters inclusivity and combats isolation that can manifest in suicidal behavior, the District has proposed several interventions.

Their interventions include training educators about available LGBTQ resources, researching the possibility of all-gender bathrooms, and organizing a diverse sub-committee of students to review textbook curricula. Research demonstrates that LGBT representation in school curriculum has a positive impact and helps LGB students feel safer and more accepted by classmates (GLSEN). The LAUSD announced their intentions to implement their interventions after a unanimous vote in June 2018, prior to the start of the new school year.

In conjunction with these efforts by the LAUSD, our public health plan proposes that an awareness video be filmed and incorporated into freshman and new student orientation at all LAUSD school sites. The video would be made in partnership with the LAUSD and would bring awareness to the new initiatives in progress at LAUSD to support LGB high school students. The video would be a mandatory part of orientation ensuring that each student who is enrolled at LAUSD would be made aware of LAUSD resources at the beginning of their high school or transfer experience. Our plan recognizes that it is impossible to completely stop bullying LGB students may be subjected to; it is also acknowledging that it is not feasible to train all educators at LAUSD to identify the signs that a student is suicidal. The purpose of our plan is to equip LGB students with an awareness of resources available to them throughout their high school journey.

The second part of our plan is to create a LASUD-wide outdoor hiking club for LGB students and allies called "Hike It Out." This club would be sponsored by GLSEN. Each school in the LASUD would have a local chapter that would meet regularly, as any other club on campus would meet. In addition, there would be off-campus, weekend hiking trips. There would also be larger meet ups of all LAUSD chapters on a quarterly basis. The purpose of these clubs is to

create community and support for LGB students, with the encouragement of their allies. LGB allies are heterosexual and cis-gender individuals who support LGB civil rights (Miller). Hiking is a trendy outdoor activity in the Los Angeles region and is accessible year-round. Los Angeles has many local trails that would bring students outside into the moderate California sunshine. Exercise and social support can help combat feelings of isolation or depression, both of which can lead to an increased risk of suicide(Carter) (Bradley Hospital).

The third part of the plan is to distribute The Trevor Project suicide crisis-line and text information throughout LASUD campuses. The information will be posted around campus and made available to educators to distribute should they see a need in a particular student. The purpose of this public health initiative is to prevent LGB students from suicidal thoughts or actions, and this last communication piece is to offer students direct, easily-reached support if they are feeling suicidal and need one-on-one crisis support.

Despite positive support from LAUSD, the initiative to reduce the incidence of suicidal behavior in high school students may meet roadblocks. There are some who do not agree with the LGB lifestyle and its incorporation into the public school system. The topic of LGB can be politically and religiously controversial. While LGB students, their parents, and their friends may be supportive of these new public health efforts to reduce the incidence of suicide, there will likely be parents or students who are offended by a mandatory LGB friendly video at orientation or promotion of an openly LGB club on campus. They may not want their children, or themselves, exposed to these practices. There may also be teachers or staff at LAUSD who do not agree with these changes. However, data proves that suicidal thought and actions are a serious problem amongst LGB high schoolers in Los Angeles. In California, a Democrat majority

state, law makers have been vocal in their support for equal LGB civil rights (California Democratic Party). While California is a Democratic majority state, LGB students will likely continue to receive support. Unfortunately, this status could change with a shift in political leaders and as the conversation comes in and out of vogue.

There is a clear health disparity impacting lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in grades 9-12 in the Los Angeles Unified School District. When compared to their heterosexual counterparts, LGB students have a higher rate of suicidal thoughts, planning, and action. Building from actions started by the LAUSD and partnering with GLSEN and the Trevor project, this health plan aims to reduce the disparity of suicide rates in LGB students with a three-part plan. This plan includes awareness, action, and resources. Each element uses partnerships and existing resources to be cost efficient, while keeping in the mind key stakeholders of parents, students, and educators. While this topic can be politically and religiously charged, the disparity is too great to be ignored.

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