



INTERSECTIONS IN THE WORK TO ENSURE YOUTH IN STATE CUSTODY HAVE ACCESS TO SEXUAL HEALTH CARE

Ensuring that all youth in state custody can access comprehensive, science-based, and affirming sexual health care is not just a human rights issue; it's good public health and adolescent health policy.

It is a matter of LGBTQ rights, reproductive justice, and racial justice.

TO GET INVOLVED OR FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT CHLP.



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LGBTQ YOUTH ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN STATE CUSTODY SETTINGS.

- ▶ **Ensuring that all young people in out-of-home care have access to sexual health care is an LGBTQ issue.**

LGBTQ youth need supportive relationships and environments, but they don't often get that in state custody. Instead, they are more likely to face harassment, discrimination, and violence from peers and staff. What little sexual health care youth in state custody do receive may not address the health needs of LGBTQ youth or even acknowledge their existence. When essential services such as basic health care ignore or pathologize them, LGBTQ youth are likely to have poor health outcomes related to mental health, HIV and other STIs, and unwanted pregnancy. This lack of care and guidance also limits the ability of LGBTQ youth to grow and develop as they transition into adulthood.

Comprehensive sexual health care that affirms the identity of LGBTQ youth, appropriately addresses their sexual health needs, and affirmatively supports their safety and well-being—rather than marginalizing them for their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (SOGIE)—can help prevent SOGIE-based violence and provide LGBTQ youth the support they need.

TEENS ACCOUNT FOR NEARLY HALF OF NEW STI CASES EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE ONLY A QUARTER OF THE SEXUALLY ACTIVE POPULATION.

- ▶ **Ensuring youth in state custody have access to sexual health care is a public health issue.**

Between 2010 and 2015, over 54,000 young people, aged 13 to 24, were diagnosed with HIV in the U.S., accounting for 22% of new HIV infections during that time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists high rates of STIs, HIV stigma, feelings of isolation for LGBTQ youth, and inadequate sex education as the most significant HIV prevention challenges for young people. And the CDC-appointed Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends comprehensive, risk-reduction sexual health interventions for adolescents.

Juvenile detention, foster care and mental health facilities provide a unique public health opportunity to address the sexual health needs of populations at unusually serious risk of HIV and other STIs. And juvenile detention and congregate care facilities, as state-operated or -regulated facilities, have an established legal obligation to provide services that meet all health care needs of the young people in their charge. Over 50,000 young persons were in juvenile detention at some point in 2013. This is in addition to youth in congregate care, foster care, and experiencing homelessness. Ensuring they have access to sexual health care is a juvenile justice issue. Comprehensive and affirming sexual health care that includes sexual health literacy programming is not only good public health policy; it's a legal right!

SEXUAL HEALTH CARE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF HEALTH CARE.

► **Making sure that youth in state custody have access to sexual health care is an adolescent health issue.**

Adolescents have a right to health care, and sexual health care is no exception. Individual morality and religious beliefs cannot legally determine the content or provision of this care, which is informed by accurate scientific evidence, professional medical guidelines, and the best interests of each young person. In addition to treatment and prevention of STIs, including HIV, adolescents need a safe and affirming environment in which they receive instruction, guidance, and resources to empower and support healthy development, now and into adulthood.

► **Accessible sexual health care is a pillar of reproductive justice.**

Reproductive rights are meaningless without real access to sexual health literacy and health care programs. Young people in state custody need affirmation, resources, and support, not marginalization and shaming based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

YOUNG PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN STATE JUVENILE DETENTION AND CONGREGATE CARE FACILITIES.

► **Ensuring the more than 36,000 young people of color in placement have access to sexual health care is a racial justice issue.**

Young people of color accounted for 68% of those in placement in 2013, and they were detained for longer than white young people. Black young people had a commitment rate more than four times higher than that for white young people, and a detention rate nearly six times higher. Young people of color and young people in detention are both independently at higher risk for STIs, and STI prevalence is particularly high for young people of color in detention.

The disregard for human rights evident in the lack of adequate sexual health care is based on a system built on white supremacy, and we must address it as a racial justice issue.

YOU CAN HELP ENSURE YOUTH IN STATE CUSTODY HAVE ACCESS TO SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES!

Learn more about the issue on our website. Join your state advocacy group's efforts to ensure the sexual health rights of youth in state custody. If your state doesn't have an advocacy group, you can be a founding member and join our national network. Connect with other state advocacy groups to receive regular updates, action alerts, new resources, and to participate in membership strategy calls. To join, email programassociate@hivlawandpolicy.org.

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