



2023, Issue 2: February

Dear state adolescent health colleagues,

My daughter's school dance on Saturday prompted a family conversation. I told my girls that the winter dance at my own high school was called "TWIRP" (the woman is required to pay).

They thought that was so weird: "What if both people are women?"

I felt like an artifact from a different century (which I am) as I explained that, back in the day, same-gender couples didn't attend dances together. I love that this was foreign to them.

Gendered traditions and expectations are changing in some places to embrace the broad range of normal human experience. (See recent popular culture celebrations of queer youth and love like Netflix's "Heartstopper" and "Young Royals" and Amazon Prime's "Anything's Possible.") Instagram users, check out [Woke Doctors](#) account, specifically their post about Black LGBTQ+ Icons.

In other places, not so much: homophobia and transphobia still thrive. Even in schools striving to be more inclusive and expansive, young people who identify as LGBTQ+ (or are perceived as such) experience harassment, bullying and violence. In some parts of the U.S., acceptance and acknowledgement are under direct attack.

I'm just going to say "the thing:" it's a bizarre feeling to lead an organization like SAHRC—which exists to support state-level adolescent health coordinators—when many states are assertively dismantling public health supports for youth.

I know that you know what this disconnect feels like.

Here's how we're managing our cognitive dissonance at SAHRC: we're revising our core resources to make them more queer-friendly and gender expansive. We're trying to ignore the hateful noise in the larger public discourse and dig deeper to challenge common adolescent health conventions that perpetuate homophobia and transphobia. We hope you'll check out our updated "[Stages of Adolescence](#)" [resources](#). (If you're willing to help us update our Spanish translations, we'd love to hear from you.)

If you, too, are looking to do "the next right thing" (thank you, Anna from "Frozen 2"), we encourage you to join us in taking small steps (quietly if you have to) toward making your jurisdiction's sexual health curricula, and dating violence and teen pregnancy prevention programs more inclusive of all our young people.

We know you, too, are deeply concerned about young people's mental health status and the levels of isolation, loneliness, and stress they report. That goes double for those of us supporting youth population being targeted by adults(!) for policy bullying.

We're going to keep working to ensure that [healthy youth development](#), in its many forms, is part of the solution.

Thanks for continuing to do the hard, systemic work to show up for all our young people. And see you, hopefully, at the AMCHP conference!

[Lynn Bretl](#), MPP

Director, State Adolescent Health Resource Center at the University of Minnesota

Anyone may subscribe to SAHRC Connections by [signing up here](#).

web-based apps are safe spaces



Dennis H. Li, assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University and the [Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing](#) at Northwestern, knows how to support young people's health.

Dennis' work primarily focuses on the development and delivery of digital sexual health programs to reach adolescent and young adult sexual minority men with critical HIV education. And, one of his many roles is co-chairing the Adolescent and Young Adult Health Committee in the Maternal and Child Health Section of the American Public Health Association

When SAHRC Director Lynn Bretl served on a conference panel with him last year, she knew he was the person to approach for answers for this LGBTQ-focused issue of Connections. We caught up with Dennis a couple of weeks ago, and went straight to the hard questions like, "What do you consider to be best practices for LGBTQ youth?" and "What would you change if you were Queen for a day?" Here's what he told us:

Best practices for LGBTQ+ young people include:

- Universal school safety policies that explicitly promote the health and well-being of all young people.
- School-based health centers, because they reach young people where they are (most young people are in educational settings) and because they tend to offer specific services for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Access to condoms, HIV testing, and PrEP, in addition to other sexual and reproductive health services.
- Online health information: LGBTQ+ young people access information online at a higher rate than other young people. Forums like [Q Chat Space](#) and [Planned Parenthood's Roo chat bot](#) provide a safe space.

"The design and science behind web based interventions already exist," says Dennis. "Now we need the funding and infrastructure support to get them out into the world."

What does this mean for the state adolescent health workforce? For starters, we can encourage funders like the CDC to include web based interventions and programs in their lists of accessible, evidence-based interventions (similar to MPC or TOP). States, for example, can apply for funding via innovation grants to use web-based programs (like [Northwestern's SMART](#)) as the intervention.

Says Dennis, "State health departments and nonprofits can also partner with the academic institutions that hold the technology to these programs but lack the partnership to implement them or bring them to scale."

for youth-serving professionals



Guidance for youth-serving professionals

- [We Support Transgender Youth: A Statement and Framing Guidance](#): According to UCLA Center for the Developing Child and Frameworks Institute, it's already well understood how to support trans youth.
- [Gender-Affirming Care and Young People](#) is a 2-page fact sheet from the Office of Population Affairs.
- [LGBTQ Health and Rights](#) from Advocates for Youth outlines how to ensure that LGBTQ young people are safe and supported in our homes, schools, and communities.
- SAHRC just updated its (English version) Stages of Adolescence handouts with gender expansive language. Check out [Early Adolescence](#), [Middle Adolescence](#), and [Young Adulthood](#)! These are works in progress: please share your friendly suggestions. (¡Y necesitamos ayuda con traducción! ¿Puede usted ayudar? Contacto [Katie Pierson](#).)
- The [Adolescent and Young Adult Health - National Resource Center](#) (SAHRC's "motherhood") just released a [mental health brief](#) on national Young Adult mental health status and utilization of mental health care, developmental factors important for positive mental health, and evidence-based calls to action for individuals, organizations, and systems.
- Remember! **988** is the national suicide prevention hotline number.

Trainings & tools for youth-serving professionals

- University of Michigan Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI)'s [LGBTQ+ Youth Spark Series](#) is a suite of four 15-min "Sparks" that help health centers provide patient-centered care to their LGBTQ+ adolescent patients. AHI's [Starter Guide: LGBTQ+ Youth-Friendly Services](#) also offers practices that can help deliver the most respectful care and improve the experience of young LGBTQ+ patients. A glossary of terms and concepts as well as lists of resources are also included.
- Similarly, ACT for Youth's Adolescent Health Care Tools include a [suite of resources for working with LGBTQ+ patients](#), including [Gender-affirming Care: What It Is and Why It's Necessary](#), an article providing background on the basic needs of transgender and nonbinary youth and clarifying what gender-affirming care is and is not.
- Healthy Teen Network has great resources for youth-serving professionals, including: [Teaching Inclusive Sex Ed: A Focus on LGBTQIA+ Youth](#), [Being an Ally to Youth Who Identify as LGBTQ+](#), and [Serving Everyone: Providing Health Services to LGBTQ+ Youth](#).
- [Q Cards](#): A communication tool for LGBTQ+ youth and health care providers, the Q Card is a tri-fold form that lets youth fill in their name, pronouns, sexual orientation, gender identity, and health concerns or questions. The bottom panel includes tips for health care providers. (for purchase)
- [National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center](#): Provides educational programs, resources, and consultation to health care organizations. Their online library provides no-cost educational materials on the latest developments, issues, and best practices in providing affirming LGBTQIA+ healthcare, including over 100 publications, toolkits, training videos, and more.

for and by young people



Youth supports

- [24/7 Crisis Services - The Trevor Project](#) - The Trevor Project's mission is to end suicide among LGBTQ young people. Their website offers resources, and a free, confidential, and secure 24/7 crisis line is staffed by crisis counselors trained to answer calls, chats, or texts from young people struggling with issues such as coming out, LGBTQ identity, depression, and suicide.
- [Go Ask Alice!](#) - Geared toward young adults, this Q&A website offers a large database of questions about reproductive and sexual health concerns, including [Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, and Questioning \(LGBTQ+\)](#).
- The Centers for [Young Women's Health](#) and [Young Men's Health](#), projects of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital, has a series of guides on LGBTQ contraception, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental health, and transgender terminology.

Youth voices

- [Learn with Love: Uplifting Transgender Youth Stories](#) - The Trevor Project's first documentary short film uplifts three trans young people from diverse cultural backgrounds to talk about growing up and important relationships.
- [It Gets Better Project](#)'s mission is to uplift, empower, and connect diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth around the globe. [Youth Voices](#) is an annual cohort of exceptional young people ages 13-18 who team up with the It Gets Better Project to offer their unique stories and insights to other LGBTQ+ youth.

announcements



Hey, SAHCs! Your friends at SAHRC could use your help!

If you are connected to a Youth Advisory Board (and, especially, if you have the means to pay them a stipend), can you please forward this request to them?

"The State Adolescent Health Resource Center at the University of Minnesota wants to partner with a Youth Advisory Board to update a foundational resource to be gender inclusive. Interested in learning more? Please contact [Katie Pierson](#), Communications Manager." Thanks!

And, check out this free webinar on Positive Prevention Plus:

We all are learning, growing, and doing the best we can for our students: navigating conversations in a sex ed class can be complex. "Am I using the most inclusive words for this lesson?" "Is there a way I can make students in my classroom feel affirmed in their gender and sexuality during our sex ed discussions?" "I'd love time to practice using they/them pronouns!"



Join **Healthy Teen Network** for a discussion with **True You Maryland** partner Alicia Miller, MPH, CHES, to learn about inclusive practices in sexuality education, practice inclusive language using concrete examples from a comprehensive, evidence-based sexuality education program (Positive Prevention Plus), and discuss with colleagues from across the state how they create affirming spaces for their students and what resources they rely on. **Registration is free.** [Register here.](#)



March 19-25

To join in on this global celebration of adolescent health and wellness, please go to the website's [Resource Page.](#)

"We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough."

--[Combahee River Collective](#) statement, 1977.

about sahrc

The State Adolescent Health Resource Center (SAHRC) works to build a national network of states and territories in which adolescents and young adults (AYA) are bedrock priorities in practice and policy. Created by MCHB in 2000 to elevate AYA health as a state-level priority within the Title V/MCHB structure, we offer workforce development in the form of ongoing responsive leadership, technical assistance, research-based resources, and community-building opportunities. This newsletter is funded through SAHRC's partnership with The Adolescent and Young Adult Health – National Resource Center ("the Center") which also includes the [National Adolescent Health Information Center](#), the [Association for Maternal and Child Health Programs](#), and the [National Improvement Partnership Network](#). The Center is supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Services and Resources Administration, USDHHS cooperative agreement U45MC27709, Adolescent and Young Adult Health Capacity Building Program. The contents don't necessarily represent the views of or an endorsement by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.



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