Q&A: Educator Pedagogical Approach
A Blueprint to Reduce LGBTQ Youth Homelessness
Dr. Alan J. Dettlaff & Dr. Henrika McCoy
March 2020

How can I use this resource in the classroom?

In its entirety this set of materials can be used in discussions related to diversity and justice across the social work education curriculum and lends itself to being used in the development of assignments and integrated into a variety of teaching activities. In addition, its content easily maps to other CSWE competencies. For example, content captured from the experiences shared by youth-consumers, strategies for creating safe and affirming environments for LGBTQ youths, and assessment tools can be integrated into practice courses (Competency 8: Intervene With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities). In research courses, the two systematic reviews that are part of the resource can be used as models of how this research method can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions provided to marginalized groups (Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice). Finally, the recommendations included in every report in this resource can be used to facilitate policy discussions (Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice).

Why a focus on LGBTQ youths experiencing homelessness?

LGBTQ youths experiencing homelessness are frequently absent in the literature to which social work students are exposed, the training they receive, the research they translate into practice or conduct, and the policies they analyze or formulate. This ultimately results in a highly vulnerable population often encountering under- or ill-prepared social workers. 3/40 Blueprint was created to help address this gap. This project identifies the needs of LGBTQ homeless youths, explores strategies to respond to those needs, and proposes ways to facilitate successful transitions from adolescence to adulthood. We focus on LGBTQ youths in particular because compared to the broader population of homeless youths, as a group they tend to be more vulnerable to victimization, substance abuse, mental health issues, and risky behaviors. In-depth attention is given to how transgender and gender expansive youths are affected by public systems.

[3/40 Blueprint](#) demonstrates how practitioners can create safe and affirming environments for homeless youths. Social work students will be exposed to appropriate and respectful intake, screening, and assessment tools. They will learn which intervention and nonintervention factors contribute to successful outcomes related to accessing stable housing, permanent connections, education, and employment. Finally, they will be exposed to a wide range of relevant perspectives, including those of LGBTQ youth-consumers, runaway and homeless youth service providers, advocates, and researchers, all of whom are represented in this project. We recognize that the content in [3/40 Blueprint](#) is not representative of all youth-consumers in this population; however, it can provide a starting point for laying a foundation, engaging in dialogue, and encouraging further exploration.

What do you hope will be accomplished by sharing this resource?

We hope to provide future social workers with accessible information that can improve their chances for success when working with LGBTQ youths who are experiencing homelessness. As social workers we are "guided by a person-in-environment framework" (Council on Social Work Education, 2015, p. 5) and we have a mission to attend to those who are vulnerable and oppressed (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). As socially abandoned children, LGBTQ youths who are experiencing homelessness face significant vulnerability and oppression in very difficult environments. To be effective, it is important that social workers understand their experiences and needs. We identify both in this resource. We hope that the inclusion of youth-consumer voices throughout, coupled with reviews of the literature and recommendations for strength-based tools, will provide students with a firm foundation to rely on as they engage in the practice of social work.

References

Council on Social Work Education. (2015). *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.*
        https://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/Standards-and-Policies/2015-EPAS

National Association of Social Workers. (2017). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*.
        https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ms