Vermont Department of Mental Health MENTAL HEAL WARENESS MON

May 2021 — Week Two

There is need for LGBTQ+ responsiveness in VT mental health providers

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C ince 2016, the majority (53%) of individuals who utilized the VT Crisis Textline identified as LGBTQ+. Of all VT texters, 8% $oldsymbol{\bigcirc}$ identified as trans, genderqueer, or agender. If you are seeking support, text VT to 741741.

Everyone can help! The Trevor Project lists the research-supported protective factors that bolster wellness for youth and young adults who identify as LGBTQ+1 :

PROTECTIVE FACTOR	ACTION STEPS FOR EVERYONE
Having strong social supports	 Respect an individual's name & pronouns Share your pronouns when introducing yourself Invite conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity
Visibility of and access to positive examples of adults who identify as LGBTQ+/ mentors	 Share affirming media Support organizations that increase LGBTQ+ visibility or run groups for those in community Support LGBTQ+ owned businesses
Having supportive environments- including policies, physical spaces, and reduction/ elimination of microaggressions	 Advocate for affirming/protective policies Ensure physical spaces have accommodations such as single stall bathrooms
Development of coping strategies	 Actively seek LGBTQ+ resources Make your allyship visible in space you occupy

Trainings options are available to VT providers. Outright VT recently created and delivered a webinar series for providers focusing on provider best practices when serving individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. Currently, the Center for Health and Learning with support by Outright VT and the Department of Mental Health, is developing a training for healthcare providers focusing on Suicide Prevention for Youth and Young Adults who identify as LGBTQ+. For additional support, Outright VT, the Pride Center of Vermont, and the Center for Health and Learning offer options for training, workshops, and advising.

Resources are available for Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ and their families. Any of the organizations linked here are great resources to start with.

Sending Clear Messages of Support Through Policy Change: DMH commends sponsors Rep. Taylor Small and Rep. Mari Cordes for helping Vermont to become the first state to unanimously pass a bill that bans the use of the 'panic defense' when the target's sexual orientation or gender identity as the reason for a violent crime (H.128). This strengthens Vermont's position as one of the states with the most policy protections for individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, according to the Movement Advancement Project.



¹ (2019, May 30). Research Brief: Fostering the Mental Health of LGBTQ Youth. The Trevor Project. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2019/05/30/ research-brief-fostering-the-mental-health-of-lgbtq-youth/



<u>rans in Trumpland</u> investigates the impact of anti-trans policies on the lives of four transgender Americans. Told through a road trip narrative across remote parts of the United States, the series explores the trans experience in Texas, North Carolina, Mississippi, and Idaho". It includes powerful messages of the impact of policy, individual resilience, and hope for the future.



Understanding the impact: Better data accuracy needed

ver the last year, a core group of DMH staff have been meeting twice monthly to combat racism in our sphere of influence. We have learned that data on race and ethnicity is collected inconsistently between providers and entities in our system of care, complicating our ability to identify areas of need. Fortunately, DMH is working with our partners across the Agency of Human Services to identify where and how data is collected, form a common list of categories, communicate changes to providers, and increase data accuracy moving forward

DMH Anti-Racism Group: Turning Words into Meaningful Action

MH recognizes that both silence and the use of insensitive language are harmful to individuals whose identities are not part of the dominant group. Talking about racial injustice and actively seeking out pejorative or discriminatory language and changing it allows us to confront implicit and explicit racism and to reclaim its power. The DMH Antiracism Group



formed in June 2020 as an internal space for staff to seek ongoing education around racial equity both as individuals and as part of the healthcare system and to identify and work toward specific areas of action. We intentionally discuss racial justice issues such as inclusive language and the concept and experience of microaggressions and identify concrete changes that we can make in our language, policies, and practices. This dual focus on education and action has allowed us individually and collectively to start making changes that might be initially small, but which we believe will have increasingly more powerful and positive ripple effects in the mental health system of care.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Training Will be Offered at DMH This Summer:

t the beginning of the year, DMH put forth a Request for Proposals for culturally and linguistically competent training and consultation to staff and community partners. Two of the core intentions in the Department's Vision 2030 are that our policies and practices are socially just and that we build more equitable healthcare services and access to those services. The goal in seeking this training is to increase staff's understanding of experiences of individuals who identify as part of non-dominant racial and ethnic groups, to improve understanding of mental health models of treatment that may be more culturally appropriate than the traditional medical model, to build cultural competence, and to learn about working effectively with interpreters. A local organization will be offering four different two-hour trainings to varied numbers of DMH and AHS staff throughout the summer. Please stay tuned for more information.

Resources

- How are Vermont Abenaki youth doing and what can we do as members of the mental health system of care to support them? Check out this article to find out more: https://www.alnobaiwi.org/blog/culture-is-connection.
- Do you identify as BIPOC? State program standing committees that advise DMH are recruiting new members! For more information visit the DMH website or contact Eva. Dayon@vermont.gov.
- Have feedback for DMH regarding Anti-Racism? We'd love to hear from you. Contact Eva.Dayon@vermont.gov.

Workforce Appreciation Spotlight 🀬

he Vermont Department of Mental Health (DMH) wants to extend our gratitude to all those working to advance anti-racism and equity work across the state including staff at Designated and Specialized Services Agencies, hospitals, community partners, and other state agencies. We acknowledge there are many competing priorities for your time, and we thank you for centering the challenging task of creating a more just community.