



LGBTQ+ YOUTH TOBACCO PREVENTION PROJECT SUCCESS STORY

GSTA & LGBTQ+ YOUTH TOBACCO PREVENTION FOCUS GROUPS & SURVEYS

SUMMARY

The 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) data provided a lot of important information about LGBT use of tobacco as well as risk and protective factors. The 2021 LGBTQ+ Youth Tobacco Prevention Project Needs Assessment also identified other factors that may contribute to tobacco use. In May of this year, we gathered more information directly from LGBTQ+ youth.

CHALLENGE

There is a great lack of research in general about LGBTQ+ youth informed by their own voices. This project is not only informing tobacco prevention in Maine, it has the potential to add to the very small body of LGBTQ+ youth and tobacco use and prevention literature. Therefore, both designing and conducting the focus group and surveys followed the federal Health and Human Services regulations for the protection of human subjects in research, a time intensive and challenging process.

INTERVENTION

The HCCA staff worked with the Office of Research and Integrity (ORIO) at University of Southern Maine and their Institutional Review Board to assure that the youth were protected from a variety of risks associated with research. The design and implementation of all materials, recruitment and strategies were approved through this system.

RESULTS

The 4 focus groups and 16 survey participants were recruited through Gay Straight Trans Alliances (GSTAs) in three counties, so most responses were from members of GSTAs. Results are reported in five themes: 1) What acceptance looks like, 2) People who can be trusted, 3) Anxiety, depression, stress and ways used to manage, 4) Why LGBTQ+ Youth do things they don't really want to, and 5) Nicotine access, use, and belief, compared to cannabis access, use, and beliefs, because of the high rates of co-use.

HIGHLIGHTS

- LGBTQ+ youth who are in GSTAs report using fewer substances, including tobacco, than the rates reported on the 2019 MIYHS.
- The use of preferred names and pronouns is very important to the youth, showing acceptance.
- The youth shared 58 different coping skills on the survey and many were positive, such as reading, writing, music, and "talking it out". Three reported using substances and three reported swearing, punching something or screaming.
- It is clear that we need to reach Maine's LGBTQ+ youth outside of GSTAs for prevention messages in order to reach the intended audiences.

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