



# LGBTQ+

## CASA Support Guide

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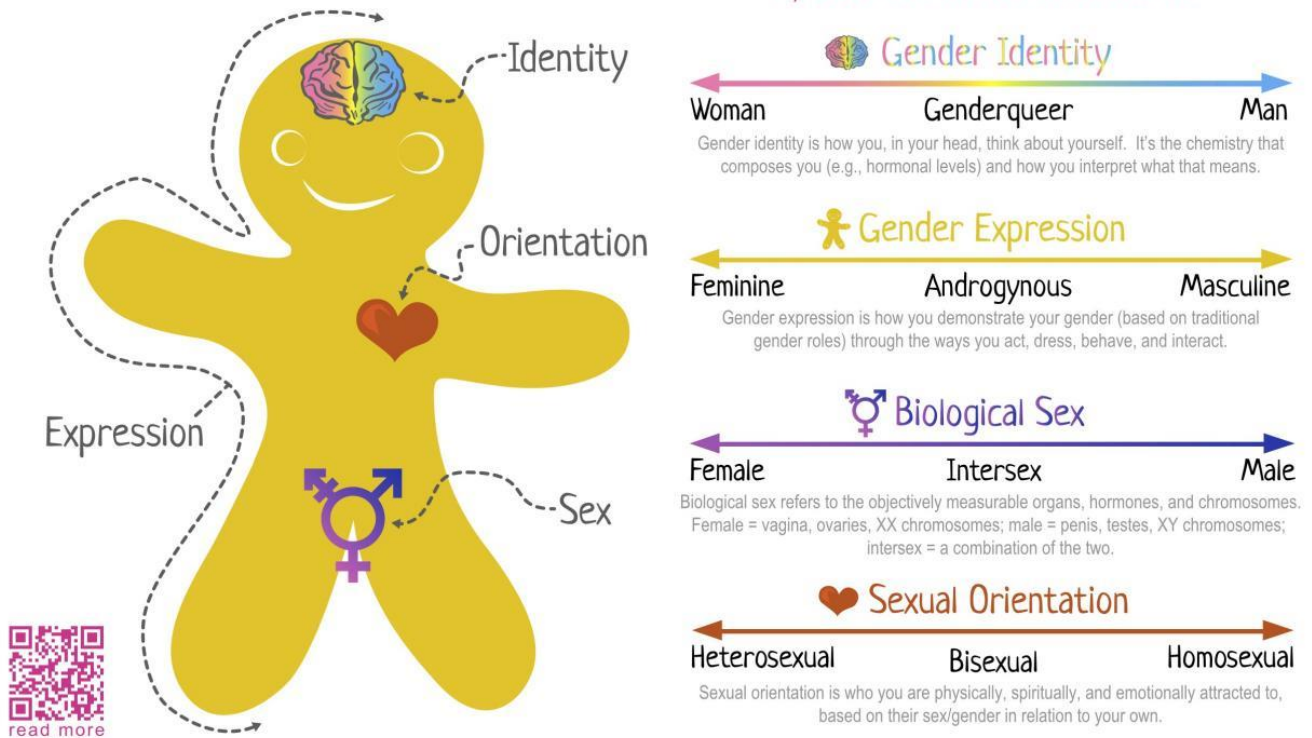
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# The Genderbread Person

by [www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](http://www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com)



Learn more about the LGBTQ community through participating in the independent study options on page 13; reach out to your Advocacy Supervisor to see if you can receive continuing education credit.

Note: The documentaries, TV shows and books suggested in the below lists may contain material that covers sensitive topics, such as: sexual assault, violence, homophobia, self-harm, suicide, among others. We ask that you exercise caution if any of these topics may be triggering. Reach out to your Advocacy Supervisor if you feel you need further support or resources. We acknowledge that the lists below are not exhaustive and may not include certain groups/identities within the LGBTQ+ community.

## LGBTQ+ Terms

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**Agender** | an individual who does not identify with any gender

**Androgynous** | identifying/presenting as neither clearly masculine nor feminine

**Ally** | a person who is heterosexual/cisgender, but supports and affirms the LGBTQ+ community

**Asexual** | a person who does not experience physical attraction to people of any gender

**Bigender** | people who identify as two genders simultaneously.

**Bisexual** | a person who is attracted to others of two different genders (i.e. attraction to men and women, women and nonbinary people, men and nonbinary people)

**Cisgender** | individuals whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

**Deadname** | a term used by some to describe when a transgender/nonbinary person is referred to by the name they were given at birth

**Gay** | a man/masculine identifying individual who is attracted to other men; may also be used as an umbrella term within the community

**Gender Binary** | the idea that there are exclusively two genders which are fixed, biologically based and attached to societal expectations.

**Gender Dysphoria** | a clinical term used in psychiatry to refer to an incongruence between an individual's sex assigned at birth and their gender identity, with marked dissociation from one's physical body.

**Gender Expression** | the ways in which people externally express their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, grooming, and movement

**Gender Fluid** | a gender identity that can change with time and/or situation, as opposed to a fixed gender

**Gender Identity** | a person's understanding, definition, or experience of their own gender regardless of their biological sex

**Difference between gender identity and gender expression:** a person's gender identity and gender expression are related, but different concepts. The two may not align, and one is not indicative of the other

**Genderqueer** | a term used by some people who may or may not consider themselves trans, but who identify their gender to be outside the gender binary system or culturally prescribed gender roles

**Gender Spectrum** | instead of binary, a recognition of gender as a complex aspect of self, including sex, gender expression and identity

**Intersex** | a person who was born with a variation in their sexual or reproductive anatomy such that their body does not fit typical definitions of male or female.

**Lesbian** | a woman/feminine identifying individual attracted to other women

**Misgender** | a term used to describe when transgender/nonbinary people are referred to by a pronoun/other gendering language that does not match their gender identity

**Nonbinary** | an umbrella term used to identify people whose experience of gender falls outside of explicitly male or female

**Pansexual** | a person who is attracted to people of all other genders

**Queer** | an umbrella term used to identify a person who is not cisgender and heterosexual; has also been used in the past as a slur towards the community, but is now being reclaimed

**Questioning** | a person who is not yet sure of their gender identity/sexual orientation

**Sex Assigned at Birth** | the sex assigned to a person based on physical characteristics

**AFAB/DFAB** | Assigned Female at Birth/Designated Female at Birth

**AMAB/DMAB** | Assigned Male at Birth/Designated Male at Birth

**Sexual Orientation** | an individual's enduring physical, emotional and romantic attraction to another person.

**Transition** | refers to the process by which transgender/nonbinary people may make certain changes in order to affirm their gender identity; there are multiple aspects of transition, including:

- **Social Transition** | usually the first step in a person's transition; may include changes such as name used by friends/family, gender presentation (clothing, haircut, etc.), and other, less formal changes
- **Legal Transition** | refers to the process by which transgender/nonbinary people change their legal name and gender marker through state and/or federal institutions
- **Medical Transition** | refers to the process by which transgender/nonbinary people seek out medical services which alleviate aspects of their dysphoria; may include surgeries: "top" (mastectomy/breast augmentation), "bottom" (phalloplasty, metoidioplasty, vaginoplasty), or facial feminization surgeries ("FFS"); hormone therapy (hormone blockers, testosterone, or estrogen and testosterone blockers); and speech therapy

\*\* Transgender and nonbinary people may or may not seek out these services as they wish -- there is no "right way" to transition \*\*

**Transgender** | people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from the sex they were assigned a birth.

**Transsexual** | an outdated term which had, in the past, been used to distinguish between trans people who had undergone a form of medical transition and those who had not; no longer used widely in the community

Many people refrain from talking about sexual orientation and gender identity or expression because it feels taboo, or because they're afraid of saying the wrong thing. This glossary was written to help give people the words and meanings to help make conversations easier and more comfortable. LGBTQ+ people use a variety of terms to identify themselves, not all of which are included in this glossary. Always listen for and respect a person's self-identified terminology.

## Why is Advocacy for LGBTQ Foster Youth so Important?

Our society is unquestionably becoming more accepting of LGBTQ people, especially when it comes to traditional rites of citizenship like serving in the armed forces, getting married, and parenting. But these gains do not in themselves protect our youth from abuse and discrimination due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression (SOGIE).

LGBTQ youth are two times as likely both to be threatened or injured with a weapon at school and to skip school because they feel unsafe.

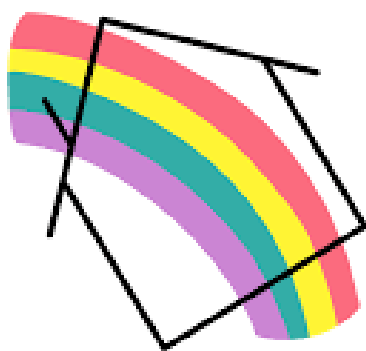
69% of LGBTQ youth reported experiencing some form of harassment or violence

In one study, 100% of LGBTQ youth surveyed in New York City group homes reported experiencing verbal harassment, and 78% experienced physical violence because of their sexuality or gender identity. In this same study, 56% of LGBTQ youth interviewed reported living on the streets because they felt safer there than in their foster or group home (Urban Justice Center, 2001).

A [2019 study](#) found 30.4% of youth in foster care identify as LGBTQ and 5% as transgender, compared to 11.2% and 1.17% of youth not in foster care.

LGBTQ young adults are also overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. While LGBTQ youth comprise only an estimated 5-7 percent of the overall youth population in the United States, they represent 13-15 percent of those currently in the juvenile justice system. Findings show that, when compared with their heterosexual and cisgender peers, LGBTQ youth in the juvenile justice system are twice as likely to have experienced child abuse, group and foster care placement, and homelessness.

LGBTQ youth in foster care are less likely than other youth to find a permanent home, whether through reunification with their birth or kin families or through adoption.<sup>[15](#)</sup>



**LGBTQ+**  
YOUTH IN CARE

## How You Can Better Support Your LGBTQ Youth

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It is crucial to remember that, before any support or advocacy is offered in this area, the youth must give you their expressed permission and agree to receive the support. If LGBTQ+ youth are open with you regarding their identity, this does not exactly translate to blanket permission for you to advocate for LGBTQ+ specific goals/needs on their behalf, nor does it allow you to share or disclose any information with anyone regarding this part of their identity. Always be mindful of preserving the confidentiality of a youth's identity. Ask the youth who they've shared this part of their identity with and whether or not they feel comfortable with you speaking with those individuals about it. It's always important to consider that not everyone in the youth's life might be fully aware of how the youth identifies.

### Starting a relationship with your LGBTQ+ Youth

When it comes to communication, what makes for a great advocate? Great advocates listen to youth with open minds and support them, no matter what the youth are going through. Being a great advocate for a youth around Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGIE) is no different – if you are a good listener and can approach conversations from a place of acceptance, this will help you support your youth in whatever she is experiencing surrounding SOGIE. Even if you don't know that many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, or Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) people, you can still be an ally, and it starts with listening and acceptance.

Some advocates may wonder whether it is necessary or even appropriate to discuss SOGIE with their CASA youth; while you certainly shouldn't bring it up ("so, do you think you might be gay?"), you also should not feel you need to shut down conversations about it. Being able to engage with your youth about SOGIE is necessary to effectively advocate for supportive placements, permanency, and safety at home and school – all central to our goals as CASAs.



## Starting a CASA Conversation

**Start by listening.** Again, this is THE MOST IMPORTANT PART of being a supportive adult to youth, no matter what they are going through – but especially when it comes to identity development. You may have no experience at all with LGBTQ people, but if you can come to conversations with your ears and heart open, it's much more likely that your youth will feel heard and understood.

**Use gender neutral language.** Instead of asking, "do you have a girlfriend?" to your male youth, ask instead about "important relationships." Even something as simple as, "do you like anyone at school?" keeps things gender-neutral and lets the youth know you aren't assuming he's straight.

**Be open about their interests.** There are no activities that are "just for boys" or "just for girls." Anyone can be a cheerleader, a football player, a fashion designer, a firefighter. Stay open and listen to what interests your CASA youth, then use your advocacy skills to make sure they get involved in activities they are passionate about!

*"I was in a residential treatment center and the youth and staff were difficult to deal with. If a youth does come out as part of the LGBT community, I think the CASA should ask if the staff is supportive as well, because they're there every single day and they're being harassed by the kids and they can't necessarily go to the staff members." - Michael*

**Just ask.** If you are working with a transgender, gender queer, or gender variant youth and aren't sure how they identify, just ask: "what pronouns do you prefer to use?" Your CASA youth may also have a chosen name they wish to go by. Address them how they wish, and encourage them to dress, speak, and act in whatever ways make them feel like themselves. If you're ever unsure and haven't yet asked, use plural pronouns (e.g. "they want to enroll in a karate class") until you learn otherwise.

**Let them know they don't have to know.** During youth and young adulthood, exploration of sexuality and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) is normal. All young people, even straight, gender-traditional ones, are figuring out who they desire (sexual orientation) and how they want to "do" masculinity and/or femininity (gender identity).

# WAYS TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Visit [Human Rights Campaign](#) for more information on being an ally

There are many different ways that you can show your support for the LGBTQ people in your life. There is no one "right" way to do so.

**Here are some easy ways to demonstrate support that fit naturally into most people's lives:**

- Create social settings that bring your straight, cisgender and LGBTQ friends and family together.
  - Talk openly and honestly with your LGBTQ loved ones about their lives.
  - Find opportunities to talk openly with your straight and/or cisgender friends about your LGBTQ friends and family and the issues they face.
  - Make sure that you include the partners of your LGBTQ loved ones in events and activities, just as you would any other friend's spouse or significant other.
  - If you hear an anti-LGBTQ comment or joke, speak up and explain why such comments or jokes are harmful and offensive.
  - Integrate inclusive language into your regular conversations, professional interactions and/or spiritual life.
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- Get involved with pro-LGBTQ groups and campaigns and contact your elected officials about LGBTQ rights.
  - Join pro-LGBTQ causes or groups on Facebook and through other social networking opportunities.
  - Attend pride celebrations and other LGBTQ community events.
  - Visit the website for PFLAG (formerly known as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), a national organization that unites parents, families and allies with people who are LGBTQ. You can go to [pflag.org](#) for information on local meetings and PFLAG public education programs across the country.
  - Casually mention a news item about an LGBTQ issue in a positive way.
  - Mention other LGBTQ friends or family you might have in open conversations.
  - Put a supportive symbol or sign in your office or home, or on your vehicle. (For example, you could wear an LGBTQ ally button, add a rainbow sticker on your name badge at work, or put the Human Rights Campaign equal sign sticker on your car.)
  - Read an LGBTQ publication.
  - Post a message in support of LGBTQ issues on social media.
  - Suggest a get-together to watch a movie or show with LGBTQ topics or characters.
  - Add your pronouns to your email signature or share your pronouns when introducing yourself to new friends or colleagues.
  - Stand up for LGBTQ issues in every aspect of your life — even if there are no LGBTQ people there to watch.

## Here are a few other ways that you can support your LGBTQ Youth

### **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE)**

- Advocate for changes in youth's legal name and/or gender marker by working with their attorney.
- Ensure and advocate that youth have access to clothing, cosmetics/hygiene items, and anything else that matches their gender identity/expression.
- Check to see if youth feel comfortable with their service providers and offer to help find alternatives if needed.
- Advocate for a youth's right to competent and supportive physical/mental health care providers that address their needs (including transition related treatment).
- If a youth is in a service area that does not have the appropriate LGBTQ+ supports, you can advocate for exploration of funding/transportation resources for them to have access to those services.

### **Safety**

- Listen and provide a safe space for them to be their authentic self.
- Check in with them to ensure they have access to other supportive individuals to help them maintain their own safety.
- If the youth is on board, you can be a strength based and affirming voice in Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings. Additionally, you can help educate the youth's support network regarding LGBTQ+ issues in general, or specific ones that are affecting your youth.
- Advocate for respect and be sensitive to the youth's right to privacy and confidentiality.

### **Permanency**

- Follow up with your youth to ensure that their placement is a LGBTQ+ safe and accepting place for them. If it isn't, help advocate for changes, as needed.
- Ensure that the youth has access to accepting peers/adults in their placement who can be of support if issues arise. If none are identified, you can help be a voice and support for them by advocating for any needed changes.

### **Well-Being**

- Help increase their access to positive social interactions. These can come through their own experience/relationships, or events that you take them to during your CASA visits.
- Check-in with them to see if there are any LGBTQ+ serving organizations, groups or online communities they are interested in exploring. You can be the connector to those and help create a space for them to feel more supported.

## **Education**

- Become the adult who cares about their school experience and support their involvement in LGBTQ+ centered/affirming extracurricular activities. Show up for important events and milestones in their life.
- If you are the youth's educational rights holder, help enroll the youth into a school that has support groups, LGBTQ+ friendly curriculums, and/or antibullying/harassment practices. It is important to ensure that the child/youth feels safe and respected by staff and peers.
- If issues arise at school, speak with the youth to see how you can better support and advocate for them.
- If you observe harmful practices that target LGBTQ+ youth, such as multiple school transitions, become a catalyst for change and advocate for prevention measures.

## **Juvenile Justice Involved LGBTQ+ Youth**

- Speak with your youth about ways you can advocate for them in your court report. If they agree, you can utilize these opportunities to speak about the youth in a way that respects their identities and shares their information in an accurate manner. Furthermore, you can also utilize your report to request supportive services for them, if needed.
- If your youth is in a custodial program, ensure they have access to appropriate services and necessities (e.g. binding tape).

## Court Report Guidance

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### Quick Tips Before Writing Your CASA Report

- Always make sure that, before sharing any LGBTQ+ identifying information in your report, you received the youth's permission to do so.
- Make sure that the information you are sharing is actually relevant for the report.
  - Do not disclose health information about gender related/affirming treatments or medications unless it is absolutely necessary for your child/youth's advocacy and the youth has consented to the disclosure. This information should be explored on a case by case basis and discussed with your Advocacy Supervisor as well as the child/youth. *(An example of an instance where a CASA can include such information is when they have the consent of the youth and if that young person is encountering a barrier with transportation/funding for treatment/medicine)*
- Advocate for affirming care and services when your youth needs/asks for them. Ex therapy, medical care, support services and appropriate apparatus such as binders.
- Respect your youth's wishes. They may not be out to their parents or other important people in their life. If they request support but ask for it not to be detailed in the court report, respect that boundary and reach out to your Advocacy Supervisor on how to best advocate for their needs outside of the report.
- Respectfully ask your youth how they want to be referred to in the report and during the hearing (i.e. name, gender, and pronouns).
- If the name, gender, and/or pronouns they use differ from their legal documents, acknowledge, honor, and use the name, gender identity, and pronouns that the youth uses.



### Documentaries

[A Secret Love](#) (2020) | Netflix  
[All in My Family](#) (2019) | Netflix  
[Disclosure](#) (2020) | Netflix  
[Laerte-Se](#) (2017) | Netflix  
[How to Survive a Plague](#) (2012) | Sling  
[Paris is Burning](#) (1990) | Apply TV  
[Queer Japan](#) (2019) | Amazon Prime Video  
[Two Spirits](#) (2011) | Vudu  
[The Death & Life of Marsha P. Johnson](#) (2017) | Netflix  
[The State of Marriage \(2015\)](#) | Tubi  
[Transhood](#) (2020) | HBO Max  
[Vito](#) (2011) | Amazon Prime Video

### Books

- A Guide to Gender | Sam Killerman
- Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches | Audre Lorde
- Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out | Susan Kuklin
- The Meaning of Matthew | Judy Shepard
- A Queer History of the United States | Michael Bronski
- Pedro and Me | Judd Winick

### LGBTQ+ News

[Them.](#) | [Subscribe](#)

A next-generation community platform with a YouTube channel, “them” chronicles and celebrates the stories, people and voices that are emerging and inspiring all of us, ranging in topics from pop culture and style to politics and news, all through the lens of today’s LGBTQIA+ community.

[American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#) | [Subscribe](#)

The ACLU works to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, & queer people belong everywhere and can live openly and authentically without discrimination, harassment, or violence. The ACLU has a long history of defending the LGBTQ community, dating back to 1936.

[Human Rights Campaign \(HRC\)](#) | [Subscribe](#)

By inspiring and engaging individuals and communities, the Human Rights Campaign strives to end discrimination against LGBTQ people and realize a world that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

[The Trevor Project](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Founded in 1998 by the creators of the Academy Award®-winning short film TREVOR, The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25.

[Children’s Rights](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Children’s Rights began as a project of the New York Civil Liberties Union and, later, the American Civil Liberties Union, and in 1995 became an independent nonprofit organization. They’ve won landmark legal victories in Connecticut, Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Washington, DC and Wisconsin and engaged in advocacy efforts that are changing the way child welfare is practiced in the United States. Children’s Rights is proving that failing child welfare systems not only can be fixed, but can be made to run well.

## Local Resources for Youth

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### **The San Diego LGBT Community Center** <https://thecentersd.org>

The San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center, Inc., (d.b.a., The Center) is one of the largest and most vibrant LGBTQ community centers in the nation. The Center provides targeted programs and services to the full diversity of the San Diego LGBTQ community, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, nonbinary, immigrant, and HIV communities to the betterment of our entire San Diego region. Last year, The Center provided more than 80,000 direct service visits to San Diego community members, and through its events, activities, and advocacy, touched the lives of thousands more.

### **San Diego Pride** <https://sdpride.org/youth/>

San Diego Pride works year-round to advocate and empower our LGBTQIA+ youth. From coalition meetings, GSA meet-ups, and youth-led events, there are a number of ways you can get involved as an LGBTQ youth, faculty, or guardian.

In addition to our annual festivities, San Diego Pride has donated more than \$3 million dollars to LGBTQ-serving nonprofits and runs multiple year-round education, advocacy, and community service programs. Pride festivities have grown from a small grassroots march for equal rights into the largest civic event in the region, with activities that span a full week of celebrating the LGBTQ community.

### **Trans Family Support Services** <https://transfamilysos.org/>

Trans Family Support Services offers: family support, training, speakers, and support groups. Family Engagement Sessions (FES) are held in the comfort, privacy and convenience of your home or via Zoom for clients not located in Southern California. Our focus is to provide the necessary education and resources so everyone is prepared to navigate this journey and most of all to understand and accept your child. We have open communication with the youth and family members as they progress through their transition.

## San Diego LGBTQ Community Center Support Groups

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- **Mi Familia** (Spanish – 6:00-7:30 pm second Monday of the month) Meetings are in person, but must RSVP by email to Carolina Ramos, [cramos@thecentersd.org](mailto:cramos@thecentersd.org).
- **Brave Space**, peer-led discussion group for LGBTQ+ people of the Black & African diaspora via Zoom, (11 am-12:30 pm, third Saturday of the month). RSVP: [hweldeghegiorgis@thecentersd.org](mailto:hweldeghegiorgis@thecentersd.org)
- **Aromantic & Asexual Discussion Group** [nvelazco@thecentersd.org](mailto:nvelazco@thecentersd.org) (first and third Tuesday of the month)
- **Transgender Coming out Group**, [trans@thecentersd.org](mailto:trans@thecentersd.org) (every Monday)
- **Trans Significant Other, Family, Friend, or Ally Support Group**, [trans@thecentersd.org](mailto:trans@thecentersd.org) (second and fourth Wednesday)
- **Non-Binary Gender Identity Exploration Group**, [trans@thecentersd.org](mailto:trans@thecentersd.org) (every Friday)
- **South Bay Youth Center**: Open on Tuesdays for ages 14-18 and Thursday ages 18-24, both as a community space from 3-7:00 pm  
SBYC, 1180 Third Avenue, Suite C-1, Chula Vista 91911  
For info: [southbayyouth@thecentersd.org](mailto:southbayyouth@thecentersd.org)
- **Hillcrest Youth Center**: Open on Mondays, Wednesdays for ages 14-18 and Fridays for ages 18-24, both as a community space from 3-7:00 pm. For info: [hyc@thecentersd.org](mailto:hyc@thecentersd.org)

### North County LGBTQ Resource Center Zoom Meetings

Email [info@ncresourcecenter.org](mailto:info@ncresourcecenter.org) for links

- **Come As You Are: Trans nonbinary group, all ages**. Every Monday at 6 pm.
- **Round Table: All gender and sexual orientations**, ages 18-29. Every Thursday at 6 pm.
- **Queer Chat**: Ages 13-18. Every Wednesday at 3 pm.
- **Trans Game Day: Trans nonbinary games, all ages**. Every Sunday from 3 to 6 pm.

## National Resources for Youth

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**TREVOR PROJECT** <https://www.thetrevorproject.org> | Crisis/Suicide Hotline: 1-866-488-7386

Crisis counselors are trained to answer calls, chats, or texts from LGBTQ young people who reach out on our free, confidential and secure 24/7 service when they are struggling with issues such as coming out, LGBTQ identity, depression, and suicide.

**Human Rights Campaign: All Children All Families Seal of Approval**

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/all-children-all-families-participating-on-behalf-of-a-casa-affiliate>

HRC's All Children – All Families, a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, promotes LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and affirming practices among child welfare agencies and formally recognizes those agencies that are leading the field with innovative approaches to inclusion.

**Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Network** [www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

GSA Network is working to strengthen the national movement-building capacity at the intersection of LGBTQ+ youth organizing and racial and gender justice in schools, and develop the next generation of LGBTQ+ leaders, particularly low-income youth and youth of color in California and nationally. GSA network trains youth leaders, supports youth organizing, runs campaigns, and builds a GSA movement. We strengthen the ability of trans and queer youth of color to envision and create sustainable communities where they can live authentically, and we support community-based organizations across the country that are making a local impact.

**Lambda Legal** [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org)

Lambda Legal, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and everyone living with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work

**National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)** [www.nclrights.org](http://www.nclrights.org)

With a commitment to racial and economic justice and our community's most vulnerable, NCLR is a leader at the forefront of advancing civil and human rights for LGBTQ individuals and their families through impact litigation, public policy, and public education. In 1993, NCLR became the first LGBTQ legal organization in the country to launch a project dedicated to advocating for LGBTQ youth. Through public education, training, policy advocacy and litigation, NCLR works to ensure that all LGBTQ youth are safe and able to live openly with the supports they need to thrive and reach their full potential.

**Transgender Law Center** [www.transgenderlawcenter.org](http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org)

Transgender Law Center is the largest national trans-led organization advocating self-determination for all people. Grounded in legal expertise and committed to racial justice, we employ a variety of community-driven strategies to keep transgender and gender nonconforming people alive, thriving, and fighting for liberation.