



# Embrace the Journey: An LGBTQ+ Adolescent Health Campaign

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## Introduction

LGBTQ+ youth experience mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety and suicidality, at much higher rates than non-LGBTQ+ youth of similar ages<sup>4</sup>. LGBTQ+ youth are also more likely than non-LGBTQ+ youth to have experienced stressful life events (SLEs), sexual assault, exposure to violence, homelessness, substance use, bullying and peer victimization. LGBTQ+ youth were found to have higher cumulative adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) than heterosexual/cisgender youth<sup>1,3,5</sup>. High levels of ACEs have been shown to be linked to lifetime mental and physical health disparities among LGBTQ+ populations<sup>4</sup>. These disparities are exacerbated by lack of LGBTQ+ affirming support from healthcare providers and mental health providers<sup>2</sup>. Literature demonstrates that these disparities are mitigated significantly by supportive families<sup>6</sup>.

## Methods

In part one of the study, a sample of LGBTQ+ adolescents, ages 13-18, were administered a survey covering demographics, health experiences, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Participants then took part in focus groups on topics related to health and its social determinants. In part two, interviews with adult stakeholders (parents, educators, health care/mental health providers, and social workers) explored health beliefs, experiences, knowledge, and local priorities. Next, local LGBTQ+ youth and adult stakeholders were invited to participate in a Boot-Camp Translation to develop a health communication campaign targeting parents of LGBTQ+ youth to address health disparities.

## Results

The health communication campaign developed was titled “Embrace the Journey” and targeted parents of LGBTQ+ youth. The campaign directed viewers to an associated website, *embracethejourneylou.org*, which features resources for parents of LGBTQ+ youth, including a list of local and state-wide resources, a glossary of LGBTQ+ related terminology, and advice taken from LGBTQ+ youth and parents during focus groups.

The website also features creative writing and artwork solicited from local LGBTQ+ youth about experiences with family, mental health, and growing up LGBTQ+.



Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are at higher risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide. **Supportive parents greatly reduce this risk.**

Learn how to support your child at:  
**EMBRACETHEJOURNEYLOU.ORG**



“Embrace the Journey” Campaign Poster (above)

Digital Billboard (right)

## Conclusions

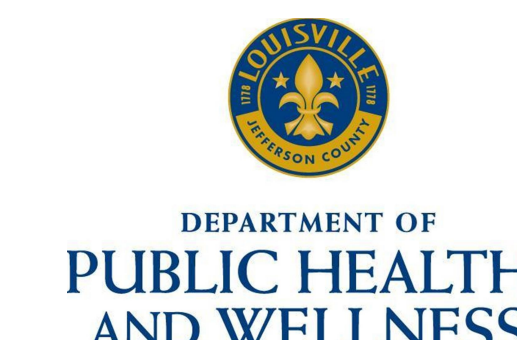
The campaign ran on digital billboards in downtown Louisville, KY, and was shared widely on social media between August and November of 2019. The website received over 3.5K views between the months of August of 2019 and April of 2020.

The campaign received positive feedback from the community and highlighted the need for resources for LGBTQ+ youth and their families.

“If I could ask my parents, or if I could, if there was one thing I wanted my parents to know, and had I opened up to them at any time, I would have wanted them to know that **everything they wanted me to become as an adult as a functional adult human is completely unaffected by my sexual preference.** And I feel like they think that because I'm bisexual or because I'm sometimes transgender **that it takes away my usefulness to society.**”

Example of Youth Advice from *embracethejourneylou.org*

## Acknowledgements



## Example



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