

Recommendations for Santa Clara County Youth Well-Being Initiative

2022 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARIES
& GAP ANALYSIS REPORT

By Rhodes Perry Consulting, LLC



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Executive Summary

In 2017, the Center for American Progress published [Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality Through Local Executive Action](#). The authors of the report offer “a broad menu of options for non-legislative actions that can be taken by executives managing local governments in order to better protect, serve, and include LGBTQ+ residents.” The authors assert that local governments affect the daily lives of every person in the United States in ways both big and small, acknowledging that there are more than 3,000 county governments and nearly 36,000 active city and town governments in the United States with total annual expenditures of \$1.72 trillion. Key recommendations included in the report include:

- Propose and sustain budgets that fund LGBTQ+ targeted programs and appoint an LGBTQ+ liaison in the executive office and in relevant agencies.
- Prohibit city and county employees from discriminating in the delivery of services, activities or programs.
- Ensure restrooms in city and county buildings are accessible regardless of gender identity or expression.
- Include LGBTQ+ inclusive nondiscrimination requirements in contracts and grants, including a requirement to not engage in conversion therapy.
- Provide cultural responsiveness educational programs to stakeholders working with LGBTQ+ people.
- Expand SOGIE data collection to gain a better understanding of the needs of LGBTQ+ people.
- Include LGBTQ+ owned businesses alongside other minority-owned businesses in contracting opportunities and revoke licenses of businesses that violate nondiscrimination laws.

Over the past decade, a growing number of county, city and town governments have made significant strides to advance their LGBTQ+ diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments by supporting capacity building in the areas of institutional strategy, operations, programming, services and workforce development. Even with these advances, however, a chilling cultural and political climate exists for many LGBTQ+ people living in the United States. Tragically, government agencies are not immune given the [erosion of Federal protections](#), which has effectively rolled back life-saving protections for LGBTQ+ people across the country.

Much of what is included in the *2017 Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality Through Local Executive Action* outlines a comprehensive list of opportunities Santa Clara County executives may wish to consider in order to create a sanctuary for LGBTQ+ residents – and in particular LGBTQ+ young people - living across the county. According to the report, “studies on the diffusion of policy ideas indicate that actions that begin at the

local level have the potential to influence peer jurisdictions and can translate to changes at the state and federal levels in a phenomenon called the [‘snowball effect,’ or ‘bottom-up federalism.’](#)”

This summary report and subsequent recommendations will assist County leaders with informing their broader approach to design SupportOUT - an interagency County initiative designed to promote the health & well-being of BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people - and will assure that fellow administrators and community partners’ ideas and concerns are stitched within the County’s efforts to build a dynamic initiative ensuring the delivery of culturally specific services for BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people, centered around young people vulnerable to family rejection, school bullying, houselessness, the criminal justice system and violence.

Recommendations at a Glance

Based on the author's research and analysis, the following solutions are recommended to help inform the County's SupportOUT initiative vision, goals and implementation plan. A list of the ten core recommendations is featured below, and the full report goes into greater depth amplifying some of the stakeholder feedback for additional context to better understand current challenge areas and potential solutions. County executives are encouraged to work with key stakeholders to prioritize those recommendations below they wish to implement. The ten core recommendations include:

- 1) Connect LGBTQ+ Young People to Affirming Resources & Referrals.**
- 2) Innovate LGBTQ+ Specialty County Court.**
- 3) Aggressively Move Families to LGBTQ+ Accepting Behaviors.**
- 4) Equip Health Professionals with Skills to Provide LGBTQ+ Affirming Care.**
- 5) Expand Geographic Access to LGBTQ+ Affirming Housing & Drop-In Spaces.**
- 6) Deliver Culturally Responsive Services to LGBTQ+ Youth of Color.**
- 7) Invest in LGBTQ+ Affirming Family Finding for Out-of-Home LGBTQ+ Youth.**
- 8) Develop a Robust Monitoring System for Vendors Delivering LGBTQ+ Services.**
- 9) Collaborate with Public School Principals to Build LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools.**
- 10) Establish a Thought Partnership Network with Leading Jurisdictions**

These recommendations offer a starting point to begin addressing some of the identified challenges the author noted during the 17 qualitative interviews conducted with internal and external County stakeholders. The following summary report offers additional context and a few poignant examples of how these challenges have manifested. While this document offers a snapshot in time with a limited stakeholder perspectives, readers are encouraged to continue fostering dialogue with additional County stakeholders to better understand what's working well and what can be improved to successfully launch the SupportOUT initiative and positively improve the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people living throughout the county.

Overview

From March through October 2019, RPC interviewed 7 County stakeholders and 10 external LGBTQ+ youth experts who either serve as liaisons in local government agencies or at national LGBTQ+ organizations. The goal of conducting qualitative interviews was to gain a better understanding of the specific service delivery challenges and opportunities that exist for LGBTQ+ young people living in Santa Clara County, and to gain a better understanding of how other jurisdictions attempt to improve government services for LGBTQ+ young people across agencies. The information gleaned from stakeholders participating in these conversations reflect only a snapshot in time, and do not reflect all County stakeholders and their opinions.

Key Stakeholder Interviews – 03/01/19 – 10/31/19	
County Stakeholders	External Stakeholders
1. Judge Katherine Lucero, Juvenile Justice Court	1. Ashe McGovern, NYC Mayors Liaison, Unity Project
2. Amber Andrade, Sylvandale Middle School Principal	a. Elana Redfield, NYC HRA, Unity Project
3. Mike Simms, Probation	b. Pharon Ford, NYC ACS, Unity Project
4. Dr. Mitch Gevelber, Gender Health Center/Peds	c. Reed Christian, NYC, The Door, Unity Project
5. Frederick Ferrer, CASA, CEO	2. Amber Hikes, Philadelphia LGBTQ+ Mayors Liaison
6. Adrienne Keel, LGBTQ+ Youth Space, Program Director	3. Jabari Lyles, Baltimore LGBTQ+ Mayors Liaison
7. Debbie Pell, Bill Wilson Center, Chief Program Officer	4. Malik Brown, Atlanta LGBTQ+ Mayors Liaison
	5. Collen Kutney, HRC, Municipal Equality Index
	6. MaryBeth Szydlowski, Advocates for Youth
	7. Derrick Reyes, Queerly Health

The interviews conducted with County stakeholders and community partners helped the RPC identify LGBTQ+ specific programming currently in place as well as the barriers and gaps that negatively impact LGBTQ+ young people and their families. These interviews were structured to inform the SupportOUT Initiative, which is a project of the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs and the National Center for Lesbian Rights. The external

interviews helped to better understand how other counties and municipalities worked with community partners to deliver culturally specific services to LGBTQ+ community members, and if/how they manage interagency efforts to avoid siloed projects, programs, or services.

The rest of the report includes a thematic summary of what was discovered during the internal and external stakeholder interviews, followed with recommendations addressing the core challenges identified during these conversations. County leaders are encouraged to use this document to consider the recommendations researched and presented in this report to inform the design of the SupportOUT initiative underway. Additionally, when considering these recommendations, County leaders are encouraged to consider how they impact the County's broader diversity, equity and inclusion commitments with respect to strategy, operations and system transformations.

How to Use This Report

The following summary and recommendations outlined in this report offer valuable information intended to support county leaders develop the SupportOUT initiative. RPC synthesized 17 qualitative interviews with Santa Clara County Administrators, community partners along with external LGBTQ+ Liaisons to Mayors from four localities. During these interviews, stakeholders identified opportunities and challenges with improving services and outcomes for LGBTQ+ stakeholders.

Given the challenges and opportunities identified in the summary section of this report, RPC conducted research, analysis, and summarized available solutions that could influence the county's SupportOUT Initiative and broader DEI strategy, operations and system goals. The information gleaned from stakeholder interview reflect only a snapshot in time, and do not reflect all county administrators, community partners and their opinions.

Note that the recommendations outlined in this report provide multiple options for each challenge area identified by stakeholders interviewed. The county's executive team is encouraged to consider the best options aligned with county culture, available resources and opportunities for change. RPC is happy to present the recommendations outlined below with the county's executive team in order to answer any concerns, offer suggestions on how to implement the most promising solutions, and lead a strategic planning session to establish a long-term vision to improve the health and well-being of BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people.

Summary

This summary includes themes of what were discovered during the external and internal stakeholder interviews. The first part of the summary focuses on ten (10) external stakeholders, most of whom serve as LGBTQ+ Liaisons for Mayors of major metropolitan areas. The second part of the summary focuses on seven (7) internal Santa Clara stakeholders working across the county either in government agencies for the county or as community partners with formal and informal relationships with the county.

External Interviews

This summary includes the themes discovered when interviewing ten (10) external stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders work as LGBTQ+ Liaisons for Mayors of major metropolitan areas located on the east coast. A handful work for national organizations focused on improving supports for LGBTQ+ people, and particularly LGBTQ+ young people.

National LGBTQ+ Projects Impacting Local Government

RPC identified three promising national projects discovered during the external stakeholder interview process with national LGBTQ+ youth experts. These national projects are briefly outlined below, and may help county leaders further inform the design of the SupportOUT initiative:

- 1) **HRC Municipal Equality Index (MEI).** While the Human Rights Campaign's MEI does not examine LGBTQ+ interagency efforts, it does examine laws and policies on the books of other municipalities and counties committed to improving services and programs for LGBTQ+ people. The index also identifies if a city or county has a LGBTQ+ Liaison. RPC learned that it is rare to see a coordinated interagency campaign or initiative tackling LGBTQ+ health and well-being challenges like housing, healthcare access or family support. The index may help gain a better sense of other counties with capacity similar to Santa Clara County.
- 2) **The CDC/Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Project.** Led by Advocates for Youth and the All Students Count Coalition, which includes partner organizations like the Trevor Project, Gender Spectrum, PFLAG National, CenterLink, GLSEN, NCLR and others, this project is an effort to ensure the CDC continues to encourage states

to collect sexual orientation gender identity and expression (SOGIE) data and health risks to better understand the needs of LGBTQ+ young people. This Coalition of organizations is currently researching how race/ethnicity and transgender status intersect in predicting health risks measured in the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

The findings from this study will be turned into advocacy and education products helping public school officials inform how to build more inclusive classrooms and programs for BIPOC transgender students. These findings have the potential of further informing the design of the SupportOUT initiative, particularly considering how to engage school systems and some of the unique challenges LGBTQ+ young people encounter in school settings. Santa Clara County may also wish to consider including the CDC approved transgender status and gender expression questions on its YRBS surveys administered in their school districts.

- 3) [Queerly Health](#) is another national LGBTQ+ resource identified through external interviews. The organization leverages digital health to bridge the gap between LGBTQ+ people and safe, comprehensive, and culturally affirming health and wellness providers. Queerly Health is working to meet its lofty goal by developing an online marketplace of vetted and trained professionals, telehealth tools, and concierge health. This tech service has the promise of connecting LGBTQ+ young people in Santa Clara County with affirming health professionals and may help meet some of the resource gaps identified by internal stakeholders.

Local Government Interagency Efforts

Of all of the stakeholders interviewed, New York City was the only municipality working on a coordinated interagency effort to improve the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people engaged with the city's education, child welfare, juvenile justice, probation, health and youth services agencies. This coordinated effort is known as the Unity Project. More details about the initiative follow:

- **NYC Unity Project Goals.** Officially launched in September 2017 by First Lady, Chirlane McCray, the NYC Unity Project's goal aims to create an interagency hub with 16 city agencies to learn how to support & empower LGBTQ+ young people. The project seeks to address root causes caused from family rejecting behaviors. The project is housed within the Mayor's Office and works to coordinate efforts across city agencies. The project centers marginalized and vulnerable LGBTQ+ young people focusing on areas where there is significant inequity & experiences of marginalization & isolation. These include access to:
 - Stable housing

- Health equity
 - Work justice
- **Initial Budget Investment.** The city's initial investment in the project was \$4.8 million, which does not include existing funds within the participating agencies who already have LGBTQ+ liaisons and established program budgets. The resources primarily fund trainings and certification of 500 Health + Hospitals physicians, a public awareness campaign centered on LGBTQ+ youth and their families, and funding for seven new community coalitions aimed at reducing alcohol and substance misuse. Future funds will be available to bring together stakeholders to address the root causes of persistent inequities.
 - **Investing in Family Acceptance Development.** Part of the project's funds are being invested in developing a family acceptance framework to reduce family rejecting behaviors connected to high rates of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness, and partnering with the Administration for Children's Services & the LGBTQ+ Community Center with a focus on clinicians. Funds are supporting the LGBTQ+ Institute for Family Therapy (LIFT) & working with CAMBA's Project Ally. These family-based interventions are available in English and Spanish.
 - **Develop Strategic Partnerships.** The Unity Project is partnering with the Ackerman Institute to roll out a yearlong training program for BIPOC clinicians to gain knowledge, skills and confidence needed to effectively work with LGBTQ+ young people vulnerable to rejecting behaviors and their families. The city recently hired someone at the Administration for Children's Services to have a broader view on family acceptance research. The Unity Project also engaged in participatory action research where LGBTQ+ young people are central to the design & creation of specific family-based interventions. Research is being conducted through the City's Department of Health & Mental Hygiene and Hunter College.

Mayors Liaisons of LGBTQ+ Affairs

After speaking with leaders from four (4) different municipalities it became clear that only one LGBTQ+ Affairs Office had the authority and resources to leverage an interagency campaign to positively impact LGBTQ+ residents. The remaining three (3) jurisdictions largely focused on community liaison and outreach efforts with internal government administrators. The primary functions of the liaisons largely focused on building external partnerships with community-based organizations, facilitating multiple LGBTQ+ competency trainings for key agency stakeholders and interfacing with LGBTQ+ community events. Liaisons also required contractors delivering health and

human services to demonstrate some level of specialization in working with LGBTQ+ populations.

Internal Interviews

This summary includes the themes discovered when interviewing seven (7) county stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders work for community-based organizations with formal contracting relationships with the County.

Affirming LGBTQ+ Resources

Internal interviewees expressed the need for specific resource and referral lists with respect to their focus areas:

- **Geographical Access to Services.** The South part of the county (Gilroy & Morgan Hill) lack affirming resources for LGBTQ+ youth. The LGBTQ+ Youth Space has existing programs, but there is far greater demand. Currently, the foster care system is overly dependent on the LGBTQ+ Social Worker at the County of Santa Clara Social Service Agency, who has extensive knowledge but is over extended. The LGBTQ+ Youth Space also has a full-time outreach coordinator working 100% of the time in the most remote parts of the county.
- **Transportation Challenges.** The greatest barrier for system involved youth to receive the culturally responsive support and services they need is the physical challenge of accessing transportation to drive to where services are being offered. Not everyone is capable of getting to a centralized location, and not everyone can access public transportation.
- **LGBTQ+ Specific Hotline for County.** Interviewees requested a LGBTQ+ specific hotline, and/or a county navigator who can connect LGBTQ+ young people to county services, offering wrap-around support to help a young person to get on track.
- **Need for Accessible LGBTQ+ Bench Guide.** Currently, county courts lack updated LGBTQ+ bench guides. Current bench guides are outdated and fail to provide the support LGBTQ+ young people need to receive affirming court mandated services. Interviewees would like to see a renewed commitment to updating existing guides, and all judges must have access to these updated guides, and uniformly apply them when interfacing with a LGBTQ+ or questioning young person.

- **Probation Request for Referral Resources.** The Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs is the primary source for guidance and resources for probation officers. Interviewees requested probation specific resources in order to share relevant information with staff and young people as there is a growing interest and need in this space.
- **Request LGBTQ+ School Resource List.** Interviewees requested a central county LGBTQ+ school resource list with trusted services, professionals, support groups, etc. They would like to access this type of resource list so that they can refer students and parents to it. In order to support students and families, interviewees often conduct online searches for possible resources, but struggle with locating reputable and affirming resources that have previously been vetted.

County Courts

Key successes for family and juvenile county courts to effectively meet the needs of LGBTQ+ young people include:

- **Gender Responsive Task Force.** The Task Forces exists to ensure the needs of transgender and cisgender girls, transgender boys, and nonbinary young people are addressed and not glossed over with lip service. Including young people on the Task Force has helped Court professionals understand what they are doing wrong and what they are doing right.
- **Change Uniform Color.** Court professionals felt changing the uniform color of young people in detention was a proactive and immediate change they could take to positively create a gender inclusive culture. Before making the change, they conducted a focus group with young people in the girl's unit, and with their feedback they selected the color purple. This was the first-time court professionals involved young people in this type of decision-making, and through this participatory collaboration, they also redesigned the experience of young people when they are initially brought into custody.
- **Mental Health Access.** Given that young people have a high incidence of self-harm while in custody, the county has extended access to mental health providers. Currently, young people are assigned a mental health provider when interfacing with the courts. Some interviewees felt there has been a decline in self-harm, though there is an absence of data to confirm what they are witnessing.

- **Drop-In Case Management Model.** Young people are also assigned multidisciplinary teams (MDT) as soon as they are placed at juvenile hall. The [county's MDT model](#) often consists of a probation officer, health and mental health professionals, a lawyer and a licensed social worker. The MDT begins developing a plan for young people to reenter into their communities to avoid prolonged detention. The drop-in model is highly utilized, and young people want meaningful communications where they can talk and discuss what's going on in their lives with a mental health professional.
- **Young Women's Freedom Center.** At the time of this report, the county was rolling out the Young Women's Freedom Center with a \$1 million investment. Part of this investment involved training several cohorts primarily working with Chicana & Latina girls doing deeper work around healing and gender. In July 2019, the Center facilitated its curriculum to 16 girls in the juvenile halls and later in the year to 8 girls at the ranch. Curriculum focuses on economics, spirituality and empowerment to move young people from detention back into community.
- **Great Interest in Serving LGBTQ+ Young People.** Court personnel expressed a growing interest in serving LGBTQ+ young people. Particularly, some of the county Judges have expressed an interest in really wanting to do the right thing by supporting young people in court settings ensuring that they are safe, affirmed, and getting what they need to support their overall well-being.

Key challenges for family and juvenile county courts to effectively meet the needs of LGBTQ+ young people include:

- **Judges Need Support to Handle Family Rejection.** Judges are at a loss when working with a family that is rejecting of their LGBTQ+ child. Ideally, some strive to work with the parent by creating the necessary space to begin healing, but interviewees expressed that they simply lack the training to feel confident in doing this work. The worst-case scenario is that parents don't show up at court, they won't visit, and won't take phone calls.
- **Need for *Inclusive* Gender Responsive Services.** There's very little guidance on how to provide gender inclusive services for populations other than straight, cisgender girls. In fact, massive inequities exist when attempting to deliver gender responsive services to straight, cisgender boys and LGBTQ+ young people as a whole.
- **Request for Pronoun/Name Guidance.** Interviewees mentioned there is a lot of trial and error from the bench when attempting to affirm a young person's name and pronouns. Some judges attempt to have private conversations with a young person prior to a hearing to get names and pronouns correct, however this is not a universal practice. The bench was described like a living room, in which some

some young people don't want their parents to know they use a different pronoun or name due to fear of negative consequences that may exacerbate family conflicts.

- **Needs a Safety Trauma Informed Model.** Some professionals are resistant to anything that looks like treatment, complaining that if you put a young person in a treatment modality, they must remain in juvenile hall longer than they need to be. The drop-in model is highly successful, and interviewees report that “every young person” referred to the drop-in program has opted into and appreciated meaningful conversations.

Interviewees recommended the following critical supports to keep young people in general – and LGBTQ+ young people specifically – out of the system:

- **Offer a Pre-Intervention Hotline for Parents.** Instead of offering services *after* a young person is on probation or in child welfare systems, consider offering pre-interventional services to prevent young people from getting involved in court systems. Offering a hotline for parents of LGBTQ+ young people and making affirming services accessible outside of the court system is key.
- **Decriminalize Survival Sex & Other Crimes of Poverty.** Offer a behavioral health response for respite for time away from home for LGBTQ+ young people and in particular transgender and nonbinary young people engaged in the commercial sex industry and other survival crimes. Interviewees shared that the system is not nimble and nuanced enough to understand *why* LGBTQ+ young people and in particular transgender girls are overrepresented in juvenile courts for survival related crimes.
- **MDT CSEC Model.** Instead of criminalization, interviewees recommended multi-disciplinary teams of mental health, substance abuse, school and family experts to offer a remedy for that rather than a court response. This model's sole purpose is to stabilize youth at home or in community. The teams need to take a culturally responsive approach to address stigma towards LGBTQ+ people and communities. MDTs must receive training to successfully reduce family rejecting activities and have bilingual language capacity to work with families where English is not their primary language spoken.

Interviewees offered the following innovative ideas to create LGBTQ+ affirming courts services:

- **Court Educational Advocate.** Interviewees requested a court educational advocate who would be engaged in a young person's life. Those that suggested this position are open to explore what it could look like and to map out costs and present it to the board of supervisors. They imagine this advocate would serve as

a mediator and work with a variety of county departments including probation, social services, CBOs specializing in LGBTQ+ youth housing opportunities with the goal of better coordinating response plans.

- **Court Request for LGBTQ+ Education.** Interviewees mentioned that the court personnel have to write a grant when they want to do something innovative. They believe if they reprioritized this work, they could secure the necessary funding to offer enhanced training and develop updated bench cards. Additional support from the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs on how to approach this is appreciated. Ideally, interviewees want to have quarterly trainings every year at no cost to give the judges the knowledge, skills and confidence to affirm LGBTQ+ young people in their courts.
- **Develop LGBTQ+ MDT for Courts.** MDT models work, and courts do it for a variety of special populations. Interviewees would like to explore the possibility of developing a LGBTQ+ MDT to prevent LGBTQ+ young people from unnecessarily coming into custody. They believe the county is ready to intentionally discuss and explore this possibility. They underscored that far too many LGBTQ+ young people don't belong in custody, and many would be better served in child welfare or LGBTQ+ specific housing programs, if available.

Family Acceptance/Rejection

Strategies to enhance the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people include reducing family rejecting behaviors. Interviews with internal county stakeholders offered the following ideas:

- **System Needs to Aggressively Work with Families.** Interviewees shared how important family involvement is needed when working to support LGBTQ+ young people in foster care. They would love to see the ability of systems to aggressively work with families through unpacking family rejecting behaviors. Doing this challenging work on the front end will lead to better health and well-being outcomes.
- **LGBTQ+ Affirming Family Finding.** Interviewees expressed a desire to have a training to examine LGBTQ+ affirming family finding techniques similar to the work the RISE Program did with foster care agencies in Los Angeles County. This type of training could be helpful for any county employee or community partner working with out-of-home LGBTQ+ young people. Santa Clara County can serve as national leader by bringing together the wisdom on LGBTQ+ family finding techniques to other counties & municipalities looking to limit the traumatic

and pervasive replacements LGBTQ+ young people endure in child welfare settings.

- **Address Family Rejection from the Bench.** Interviewees mentioned that family rejection happen *too often* for LGBTQ+ young people along with other young people engaged in the court system. They mentioned that additional support and training is needed to equip judges with the knowledge, skills and confidence to address and reduce family rejecting behaviors as they are happening in the court room, when MDT support is not readily available.
- **School Support in Addressing Family Rejection.** Interviewees mentioned that addressing family rejection with parents is the part of the job of school administrators that makes them the most nervous. Rejection at any level for any student for any reason is detrimental. Trusted school administrators have a lot of students that ask them to be in the room when they first come out to their families. Prior to facilitating a meeting, these trusted administrators ask their students the following questions:
 - What has the student heard from their family when LGBTQ+ issues come up in the news?
 - Does the student have any family members who are LGBTQ+? Is the student going to be the first?
 - What has the student heard from their family about their views about LGBTQ+ people prior to coming out?
 - How does the student think the family will react?
- **LGBTQ+ Youth Space Family Night.** Interviewees mentioned that the LGBTQ+ Youth Space offers a family night empowering LGBTQ+ young people and members of their families to meet together in an environment for facilitated discussion with staff to hash out differences. This event transforms the hearts and minds of families once influenced by personal or religious beliefs that aren't accepting of LGBTQ+ people to embrace more accepting behaviors.

Healthcare and Mental Health Services

Interviewees identified some of the most common health challenges that current County systems fail to address for transgender and nonbinary young people:

- **Lack of Bottom Surgery Providers.** The county has done a great job developing a pipeline of surgeons for top surgeries, and public insurance along with private insurance now covering these procedures for young people under 18. The county is struggling with developing a similar pipeline for bottom

surgeries, and subsequently getting insurance companies to cover these gender affirming procedures.

- **Need for Trans Patient Navigator.** Valley Health Plan & Valley Medical Centers need more education. Interviewees recommend a patient navigator/advocate as opposed to a doctor to help with this work. A systems thinking person is needed to create a program similar to Kaiser’s Gender Pathways. Some interviewees are more optimistic about what’s available for coverage and have created a clear path to medical care at Kaiser.
- **Valley Medical Website.** Improvements for LGBTQ+ resources and services need to be consistently updated on the website. Interviewees are not pleased with the website’s current form, and some have shared that it is “terrible.” They lament that there are no definitive resources for county services and share that while Santa Cruz has incredible resources and a website at UCSF – “Mind the Gap” - the county should also have a comprehensive web portal that includes services for LGBTQ+ young people in all areas of life.
- **Getting to Zero.** The LGBTQ+ Youth Space currently participates in this County initiative and offers HIV/AIDS anti-stigma programs with the support of young people. Incentivized through program dollars, young people learn more about HIV/AIDS & STIs prevention work. The program empowers young people to engage in t-shirt and tote bag painting to start conversations about why they created that piece linking it to reducing HIV/AIDS stigma. This year the LGBTQ+ Youth Space worked on a PSA and the importance of getting tested. Staff also use program resources to distribute and make accessible safer sex supplies to anyone.

Interviewees offered a few important insights on what LGBTQ+ young people are sharing with them that should be known to County executives shaping the SupportOUT Initiative. These insights include:

- **Evolving Expectations.** Some young people expect their providers to be experts; some are accepting they just want their provider to be thoughtful, affirming, and understanding. Interviewees have found in the world of WPATH that experience speaks more loudly than taking a class or earning a certificate.
- **Fragmented Mental Health Care.** Interviewees hear challenges from transgender & nonbinary folks that their mental health care is fragmented. Often times clinicians will either heavily focus on gender identity matters, but not focused on underlying concerns, or vice versa. Young people have shared with them that it’s hard to find a clinician knowledgeable about gender identity that can deliver a full range of mental healthcare services.

- **Gender Identity Awareness Network (GIAN) for MDs.** A network of therapists that collaborate on a regular basis is helping share experience and knowledge with emerging mental health professionals around gender identity awareness. This cadre of mental health clinicians allows the network to develop a comfort with difficult psychosocial challenges they are trying to address for young people who are transgender. A similar network for medical doctors and nurses doesn't exist, and these professionals are not as far along. Interviewees would like to see a similar collaboration among leading County MDs.
- **Geographic Access to Mental Health.** While MHSA resources created the LGBTQ+ Youth Space, overall mental health resources and services are LACKING. There's a huge gap occurring based on where mental health services are physically located. Interviewees mentioned that the county gave money for new programs that are walking distance apart in San Jose. They recognized that the geographic distance of where facilities are located makes it difficult for folks living on the other side of the county, far away from San Jose.
- **HIV/AIDS Prevention.** Interviewees believe the county is in real danger because community comprehensive sex and reproductive health education is lacking and there is a decline in funding. Public schools in the county are not doing a sufficient job with this type of education and nonprofits lack the resources to fill the gaps. Crystal meth in gay men's communities is on the rise and younger generations have no sense of the history of HIV/AIDS, or where it is heading.
- **Parental Consent Challenges.** Interviewees experience significant challenges when they are working with a parent or guardian that isn't affirming or accepting. When a young person is in foster care and working with an affirming social worker, it's much easier to connect them to affirming medical and mental healthcare options related to gender affirming healthcare care.
- **Value of Family Acceptance.** The more affirmation a young person receives, the better their social, legal and/or medical transition goes. Asking a teenager to be patient is a very difficult ask. Interviewees are amazed at how patient the young people they work with on transition related issues are with the systems they are in, considering the traumatic experiences they have had with family, friends and community around misgendering, misunderstanding, discrimination and violence.

Interviewees also shared an update on the WPATH training for hormone blockers & efforts to build a more gender affirming practice for the county health system:

- **Education on Hormone Blockers.** Interviewees recommended more education for regional endocrinologists about how hormone blockers can delay the onset of puberty and give an adolescent the time and space they need to map out their transition journey. They believe that every medical provider working with young people in the county should receive this education.
- **County Provide Education.** Interviewees believe the County can help expand these training efforts by providing the funding for regular pediatricians from across the County to have access to it. These doctors are in need of basic education about gender and sexuality and what their role is with respect to providing affirming and responsive treatment.
- **Gender Specialists.** Interviewees mentioned that they would love for a gender specialist to work at the county and be a source to consult with for medical and mental health providers. They believe this person could support family doctors and other healthcare providers so that those in the county in need of these services don't have to drive far to receive them. They think Stanford and UCSF are great resources to forge partnerships on this work.

Housing and Drop-In Centers

Strategies to enhance the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people include increased access to affordable housing. Interviews with internal county stakeholders offered the following ideas:

- **Cost of Living & Housing Insecurity.** The cost of living and housing insecurity are a BIG deal for LGBTQ+ Youth Space clients. Interviewees shared that while the organization doesn't collect data on housing insecurity or homelessness, they have heard anecdotally that a number of young people receiving services live in encampments who experience frequent police sweeps where homeless people are cleared out and told to move "somewhere else." They mentioned that these sweeps happen all of the time. While the Bay Area was once a mecca for LGBTQ+ young people to get support, too many queer and trans folks can't even meet basic necessities there including food, clothing and shelter. Lacking these basics creates a huge barrier to survive let alone thrive.
- **No Central Meeting Place for LGBTQ+ Youth.** Interviewees underscored that because LGBTQ+ young people are not a homogenous group, it's difficult for organizations to coordinate with the county on an approach to address housing and drop-in center needs. There is "no one place" where LGBTQ+ youth are located in the county. Interviewees don't see a lot of young people at the Billy DeFrank LGBTQ+ Community Center, and there is a real disbursement of young

people all over the place. GSA networks are connected to the LGBTQ+ Youth Space, the Hub, and the Billy DeFrank Center.

- **LGBTQ+ Drop-In Centers & Housing Options.** Interviewees shared that the LGBTQ+ Youth Space in San Jose is open into the evenings, and many young people *could* benefit from the services offered, but it's FAR from where their schools are located. They want the County to come up with resources to expand these types of services for students who are on the other side of the county. They urge the county to come up with something, because it's not safe for these particular students.
- **South County LGBTQ+ Youth Space Presence.** The LGBTQ+ Youth Space has a South County specific outreach coordinator who runs 3 different groups (weekly & biweekly) and works with schools and stakeholder groups. The dream is for South County to have a static site. The LGBTQ+ Youth Space currently utilizes space at Morgan Hill Public Library in the Morgan Hill Recreation Center. Interviewees mentioned that there's a need for a physical drop-in space in this region, but there's also a danger of losing the anonymity of going to a non-LGBTQ+ community space. Geographically there is much less area/population in South County than Central and North County.

Intersectionality: Race/Ethnicity and SOGIE

- **Launch LGBTQ+ Mentorship Programs.** Interviewees suggested developing mentorship programs to help BIPOC LGBTQ+ students overcome isolation. They shared that in particular parts of the county, it can be very dangerous. Mentoring programs are missing altogether. There is no one. It turns on the teachers to be their support system. Mentors would be amazing, and at the very least definitely people who are allies.
- **Latinx Culture and Family Acceptance.** One Interviewee commented on something they learned "from staff at the LGBTQ+ Youth Space who shared that in Latinx culture, the idea of running away doesn't exist – that is a white thing to do. Latinx kids don't run away." Focusing on culturally responsive strategies to move Latinx families from rejecting to accepting behaviors is something the county is encouraged to aggressively invest in and work to include in approaches of successfully working with LGBTQ+ young people in the county.
- **Translation Services Needed.** Interviewees shared that it is important to have translation services available for providers to work with the diversity of families in the country. They mentioned challenges of accessing services when working with Vietnamese & Spanish speaking families.

- **Somos Familia East Bay LGBTQ+ Youth Space Program.** This program is designed for Spanish speaking families to help dispel myths based on stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people. The program developed a family resource packet, and staff refer families to the program. The LGBTQ+ Youth Space intentionally hires Spanish speakers on staff and continue to offer parent education in Spanish. Interviewees mentioned hiring a full-time outreach staff to staff this program, and they utilize County Behavioral Health Services Department contracts to fund part of this work.

Out-of-Home LGBTQ+ Young People

Interviewees identified system gaps in the County that negatively impact the health & well-being of LGBTQ+ young people in foster care and who are homeless including:

- **Challenge with Multiple Placements.** LGBTQ+ young people often go through 5-6 foster care placements. The majority of these young people live on the east side of San Jose and in the South County including Supervisorial District 1 and Supervisorial District 2. There are 1,300 young people in dependency court, and they wonder how many of these young people are LGBTQ+? Due to lack of SOGIE data collection, it is hard to know, which makes it more challenging to place a LGBTQ+ young person into an affirming home to reduce the high number of placements & the trauma caused from this significant disruption.
- **Resources for Educating Professionals on Transgender & Nonbinary Matters.** Interviewees would like to see foster care professionals gain enhanced knowledge, skills and confidence to affirm, respect and meet the needs of transgender and nonbinary young people. Given that many young people are ready to start medical transition, they would love to have more help in reaching out to mental health systems and social workers. Outreach to these professionals consumes a lot of time, and its life or death for many transgender and nonbinary young people who feel trapped within these systems.
- **Leadership Must Set Tone & Not “Check Boxes.”** Interviewees mentioned that staff affiliated with a transgender training of trainers left for some conflict reasons. They mentioned the dynamic of professionals working on transgender health matters are fear motivated, and that they haven’t yet hired someone who is very skillful on these matters. Folks are still “checking the boxes” when it comes to caring for transgender young people in care. The SPARK Clinic, a foster youth clinic in the county, is doing great work with young people and may help fill this gap.

- **Need a Transgender Health Specialist.** Interviewees would love to see the county hire someone with lots of experience with working with transgender and nonbinary young people on health policy and practice matters. While the Gender Health Clinic is nice, they mentioned that it is not a LGBTQ+ specific clinic, and more of these culturally responsive services are needed.

Probation

Interviewees offered some of the existing challenges that negatively impact LGBTQ+ young people in specialty courts outlined below:

- **Lack of Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Data.** Interviewees wanted the ability to identify LGBTQ+ young people to target appropriate interventions more effectively. They believe if SOGIE data isn't collected in the eyes of Probation, then it doesn't matter. These data will help with advocating for direct resources to the population and make the case for specific services.
- **Limited Culturally Responsive LGBTQ+ Services.** Interviewees shared that services for LGBTQ+ young people are difficult to find. They acknowledged that the lack of culturally specific services for LGBTQ+ young people limit the engagement of this population, and when Probation does engage in contracts with community-based organizations, it's difficult to verify that vendors have the level of competency required to adequately serve LGBTQ+ young people. They suggest tightening the standards for contractors to overcome this challenge.
- **Partners Don't See Urgency in this Work.** Interviewees shared that community partners do not see the urgency of meeting the specific needs of LGBTQ+ people, and they suggested that the partners rationalize that equal services are synonymous to equitable services. They shared that community partners can benefit from basic education about the needs of LGBTQ+ young people interfacing with the juvenile justice system.
- **Struggle with Contract Monitoring.** After a vendor is selected to carry out services, Probation struggles with monitoring contracts. While vendors may have demonstrated in writing during the Request For Proposals process that they have skills in working with LGBTQ+ young people, Probation staff do not know how to call it out if the actions of a vendor fail to meet the expected standards of delivering affirming services. They currently rely on exit interviews with clients to determine if vendor is meeting expected standards.

Probation is challenged with consistently collecting data related to a young person's SOGIE. Interviewees shared the following thoughts on why this is happening:

- **Multiple Entry Points to Probation.** There are multiple pathways into the system. At its most basic level, a young person can enter probation through an officer's arrest or juvenile hall. The current process of collecting SOGIE is not uniform for all of these pathways. Juvenile Hall has the process in place, but others do not.
- **Lack of Trust.** If a young person is going into Juvenile Hall, they don't trust the system. Interviewees question if it's the right time and place to ask these types of questions when there is a lack of trust and rapport between staff and young people. They also wonder if the right staff are asking the questions in a respectful manner – staff asking these questions need to have a level of emotional intelligence and empathy, and not all do.
- **Right Frame of Mind.** If a young person is entering juvenile hall, are they in the right frame of mind to answer the questions? More likely, they are navigating some level of trauma and fear. Interviewees believe young people are in a better frame of mind to answer these questions when they are out in the field. They find young people are calmer, after the initial arrest, and the probation officer is better positioned to build trust.
- **Assumptions about SOGIE.** Interviewees also believe staff are inconsistent with asking the question and make assumptions about a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity based on how they appear.
- **Lack of Safeguards.** Interviewees shared that some young people are skeptical about how SOGIE data will be used in the future. Without clear safeguards around SOGIE data, young people fear that this information will be used against them in the future.

As young people age out of the juvenile justice system, interviewees identified several challenges that arise for young adults between the ages of 23-30, including:

- **Housing Needs.** By far the biggest challenge young people aging out of the juvenile justice system face is housing. There are limited services available for this population and there are multifaceted needs. To leverage available resources, it's critical we ask young people in this age range what they need.
- **Mental Health Services.** While suicide prevention services and resources for them are pervasive for young people in the juvenile justice system, those resources and services fall off and are scarce for the adult system.

- **Housing, Medical, Mental Health & Job Placement Services for Transgender & Nonbinary People.** Interviewees shared that there are currently two transgender men that are in the system at the same time. They shared that it's important to speak to their needs to provide affirming housing, job placement, medical and mental health services for transgender and nonbinary people, which are needs he is seeing that are not being captured or met elsewhere.
- **Lack of LGBTQ+ Informed Diversion Services.** One particular case of working with a LGBTQ+ young person who was having a hard time with family was shared. All that this young person needed was to find an accepting home to survive. Family finding is the sole focus, and interviewees wonder why Probation can't do this type of LGBTQ+ informed family finding work more consistently? They recognize that staff need a high level of training, and wonder if there is a way to fund this need?

Interviewees offered some personal strategies they have employed to bring along other straight, cisgender probation officers to serve as LGBTQ+ allies, including:

- **County LGBTQ+ Trainings.** Current trainings offered at the County level was a big motivator for some to step up as an ally. While they recognized past mistakes made, they were appreciative of the concrete approaches that allow them to better serve LGBTQ+ young people.
- **Empathy Building.** They recognized that the past treatment of LGBTQ+ young people by the government officials "was not right," and they realized as they became more aware how the feeling "was really not right." These feelings are what really brought them on board to be a part of the solution.
- **Connecting Commonalities.** They recognized that some people you will reach and some you will not, and their best strategy is to find a common thread that many of us share. This common thread is that nearly everyone loves their kids and that most staff really want to help young people.
- **Focus on Mission.** They built upon those common threads of love and helping young people, and amplified stats including suicide attempts of LGBTQ+ young people who are 4 times as likely to complete suicide, and asked their colleagues, does anyone's kid deserve to feel like this? From there, they build the case on empathy, and had success in bringing other folks along.

Interviewees offered ideas on how to more fully support transgender and nonbinary young people including:

- **Meeting in the Field.** They suggested meeting with transgender and nonbinary young people in the field, as officers are more successful building trust and rapport working 1:1 with young people who are more likely to be themselves. In group settings, young people tend to be harder and on guard.
- **Properly Training Staff.** Training is ultra-important. Finding the right ratio of people in staff training is critical to unpack biases and practice learning new skills through role play scenarios. Having space for adults to unpack their fears through facilitated discussion in smaller groups is also key as adults have the hardest time with understanding the needs and how to affirm this population.
- **Staff Set the Tone.** Staff are responsible to set the tone for all young people, and model how to affirm and respect transgender and nonbinary people in group settings. This can go a long way.
- **Manage Biases.** Staff must keep their own biases in check. When they are able to manage them, they can be more present to meet the needs of transgender and nonbinary young people.

Public Schools

Interviewees shared great information about their philosophy of how to build inclusive classrooms where LGBTQ+ middle school students can show up authentically and be themselves:

- **Host Parent-Teacher Meetings.** During parent meetings interviewees shared findings from the Trevor Project's mental health outcomes and risks research. Many parents initially resistant to building LGBTQ+ inclusive classrooms realized that their kids could be those at risk. The meetings helped on two fronts – to understand the needs of LGBTQ+ students and to gain a greater awareness of mental health needs. These meeting enabled inclusion efforts to move faster than they did previously. It was an important space for people to name, understand and process what they were feeling.
- **Roll-Out of Pronoun Ally Initiative.** Interviewees shared that none of the county's middle schools were asking pronouns, and they wanted to change that. They began offering trainings for staff where they learned to pause and refrain from assuming another person's pronouns. Schools also offered a form for choosing electives for feeder schools prior to the start of the school year. In the form, students are asked to share their authentic name, pronouns and student ID number. The student ID number aligns with the student's authentic name and pronouns to avoid misgendering from day one.

- **Training Faculty and Staff.** The LGBTQ+ Youth Space came in to do the pronoun trainings and worked with teachers to get down to the raw part of it with the staff. When it comes from an outside person it was easier to feel like the principal is not evaluating them. External trainings allowed faculty and staff to say what they were really feeling without the power dynamic of a principal being in the room.
- **LGBTQ+ Inclusive Programming & Literature.** Interviewees shared that some schools offered a number of programs, including a leadership class that taught students how to be allies. One interviewee launched a suicide prevention week and sex education program inclusive of different genders and sexual orientations, a rainbow flag raising ceremony during Pride days every month, and they have purchased LGBTQ+ focused books for students.

When it comes to other schools in the county, Interviewees offered the following advice:

- **Examine Unconscious Bias.** Interviewees encouraged school administrators to examine and really own their personal unconscious biases before starting the challenging work of building inclusive learning environments for marginalized students, including LGBTQ+ students. Most are not willing to do this deeply challenging personal work unless leadership makes it a requirement. They underscored “a principal must be the spine of integrity for their students and lead by example.”
- **Challenges with All-User Restrooms.** One interviewee mentioned the challenges they encountered when transitioning restrooms to all-user restrooms. Some principals in the county are saying that they have no LGBTQ+ students, and therefore do not need to address the challenges that arise with sex segregated facilities. Until you can show that your school is an inclusive place, Amber asserted that everyone is hiding.
- **Facilitate Conversations with Students.** Interviewees believe that most students are willing to engage in conversations if there is an opportunity to share. They also try to have 1:1 conversations with students through playing basketball and building relationships so that they can informally chat with them to gain a better idea of what’s going on in their lives.
- **Consider Available Research.** Interviewees also encourages county principals to consider available research like the California Healthy Kids Survey. They mentioned the survey found that if boys are perceived to be less masculine than their peers, they are more likely to be harassed. Taking proactive measures to educate students that variations in gender expression is a good thing can be a

proactive step. They also offer anonymous surveys for students to offer feedback directly.

Interviewees underscored that they wanted to see more school principals involved with the design of the SupportOUT initiative:

- **Include Schools in SupportOUT Design.** Interviewees want county and state policymakers to *always* consider inviting educators to the table when designing programs like SupportOUT. They urge County leaders to include the schools, given that educators can help government leaders identify some of the nuanced challenges of family rejection and suicide ideation that show up in school environments. Even if it's sitting on a board, she wants schools to be involved.

Recommendations

Based on the qualitative research gathered and analysis conducted, the following recommendations have the potential of supporting County executives inform the design of the SupportOUT initiative. When examining these recommendations, County executives are encouraged to consider how they impact the County's broader diversity, equity and inclusion commitments with respect to strategy, operations and system capacity building efforts. Context describing some of the observed challenges and subsequent recommendations are included below.

Affirming Resources & Referrals

Two consistent challenges for stakeholders across the county were: 1) not having access to a comprehensive list of LGBTQ+ affirming resources and referrals for young people related to their discipline (i.e., education, community groups, healthcare providers, support hotlines, faith communities, etc.), and 2) they had access to a static resource that was either outdated or did not cover their specific discipline.

Recommendation 1: Connect LGBTQ+ Young People to Affirming Resources & Referrals

To build upon the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs efforts to develop resource lists for various stakeholders and to raise awareness of community partners about available resources located within the county, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Define Quality Control Standards.** Define what it means to be a LGBTQ+ affirming resource or referral and use this definition as a guide to ensure quality control standards that providers, services and programs must meet in order to be listed as an affirming resource. Share this definition and reasoning as to why the resources featured for community partners are included so professionals in the region have a better understanding of what it takes to be listed.
- **Utilize Open-Source Software.** Create a clearinghouse of LGBTQ+ affirming resources & referrals utilizing [open-source software](#) (i.e., like Wikipedia) where anyone within the county can view, use, modify, and distribute these resources. This takes the onus off of one organization or person to manage and be responsible for updating this list. Consider adding a control mechanism where all suggestions must first be reviewed by an appropriate staff person at the County

to maintain quality control. Connecting with [Queerly Health](#) may help with developing a similar app and website.

- **Valley Medical Website.** The comprehensive resource app and website may help supplement the existing resource list developed by the Valley Medical team, which was described by some internal stakeholders as “terrible.” Currently, there are no definitive resources for County services, and many internal stakeholders share that while Santa Cruz has incredible resources and a website as UCSF – “Mind the Gap” - the County could also have a comprehensive web portal that includes services for LGBTQ+ young people in all areas of life.
- **Forge Partnerships.** Forge partnerships with existing LGBTQ+ national organizations that have members and services in the county. Some of these groups may know of additional county resources that presently are unknown to existing community stakeholders. Program staff from organizations like the Trevor Project, PFLAG National, CenterLink, GLSEN and other national groups may already have internal resources and referrals that they may be interested in partnership with the County to further amplify affirming providers, programs & services.
- **Offer a Pre-Intervention Hotline.** Instead of offering services *after* a LGBTQ+ young person is on probation or in child welfare systems, consider offering pre-intervention services to prevent young people from getting involved in court systems. Offering a hotline for parents of LGBTQ+ young people and LGBTQ+ young people, connecting them with affirming services accessible outside of the court system is highly recommended among court and education professionals.

County Courts

Interfacing with LGBTQ+ young people and their families in County Court settings also poses a series of unique challenges. Among these challenges include how to accurately address a young person’s name and pronouns, how to equip judges to address family rejecting behaviors from the bench, and how to navigate the nuances of not outing a young person to family or kinship adults who may not know, and if they did, safety could be jeopardized.

Recommendation 2: Innovate *Inclusive* Gender Responsive Specialty County Courts

To address the specific challenges of respecting a young person's name and pronouns, and to avoid unintentionally outing a young person in a court room setting, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed.

These recommendations include:

- **Need for *Inclusive Gender Responsive Services*.** There's very little guidance on how to provide gender inclusive services for populations other than straight, cisgender girls. Significant inequities exist for cisgender boys, transgender girls and boys, and nonbinary young people. There is an opportunity to include intensive LGBTQ+ education for Judges and staff involved in the Gender Responsive Services & Specialty Court System. These staff would like to work with the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs to explore possibilities. The Center for Court Innovation in New York City is working on addressing similar challenges and may be good thought partners to work through these specific challenges.
 - Note this is *not* a recommendation to develop a separate court for LGBTQ+ youth as this may be unsafe for a number of LGBTQ+ young people not out to various members of their families due to safety and risk concerns. Rather this request is to ensure the Gender Responsive Services & Specialty Court System embraces LGBTQ+ inclusive practices.
- **Develop LGBTQ+ MDT for Courts.** Multidimensional treatment (MDT) models work, and courts do it for a variety of special populations. The county is encouraged to explore the possibility of developing a LGBTQ+ MDT model to prevent LGBTQ+ young people from unnecessarily coming into custody. The county has the capacity to intentionally discuss and explore this possibility. Far too many LGBTQ+ young people don't belong in custody, and many would be better served in child welfare or LGBTQ+ specific housing programs, if available.
- **Court Educational Advocate.** Court officials recommended hiring an internal court educational advocate. Judges would like to explore what this position could look like and to map out costs and present it to the Board of Supervisors. This advocate would serve as a mediator and would work with a variety of county departments including probation, social services, community-based organizations specializing in LGBTQ+ youth housing opportunities with the goal of better coordinating response plans that are affirming and meet the specific challenges experienced by LGBTQ+ young people.
- **Court Request for LGBTQ+ Education.** Court staff often must write a grant when they want to do something innovative. With added staff support, the courts could secure necessary funding to do enhanced training, coaching and develop updated bench resource cards. Additional support from the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs on how to approach this is appreciated. Hosting quarterly trainings every

year at no cost to give the judges the skills to affirm LGBTQ+ young people in their courts was requested.

- **Decriminalize Survival Sex & Other Crimes of Poverty.** Offer a behavioral health response for LGBTQ+ young people and in particular transgender young people engaged in the commercial sex industry and other survival crimes to have time away from home. Currently, the system is not nimble and nuanced enough to understand *why* LGBTQ+ young people, and in particular transgender girls, are overrepresented in juvenile courts for survival related crimes.

Family Rejection

Family rejecting behaviors negatively impact the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people, and professionals working with the county struggle with how to effectively address and limit these behaviors, moving families toward accepting behaviors of their LGBTQ+ children.

Recommendation 3: Aggressively Move Families to LGBTQ+ Accepting Behaviors

To address the specific challenges of limiting family rejection behaviors to improve the overall health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Identify Family Rejection Behaviors.** Several stakeholders interviewed shared how important family involvement is when working to support LGBTQ+ young people involved with county systems like probation, courts, child welfare agencies, accessing healthcare and schools. Systems must work aggressively with families through unpacking family rejecting behaviors. Professionals capable of respectfully asking young people questions like those below will help gain a better understanding if a young person is experiencing some level of family rejection:
 - What have you heard from family members when LGBTQ+ issues come up in the news?
 - Do you have any family members who are LGBTQ+? Are you going to be the first in your family if you come out?
 - How do you think the family will react?

- **Culturally Responsive Family Nights.** Consider expanding on the LGBTQ+ Youth Space family night model, which empowers LGBTQ+ young people and members of their families to meet together in an environment for facilitated discussion with professionals to respectfully address differences. This kind of event helps families demonstrated rejecting behaviors of LGBTQ+ people to embrace more accepting behaviors. Making similar nights geographically accessible for the South & East parts of the County is needed.
- **Parental Consent Challenges.** Support health professionals working with families around helping them overcome personal, religious or organizational resistance to connecting their transgender and nonbinary children to medically necessary transgender healthcare services. Currently medical providers are experiencing significant challenges when working with parents or guardians that aren't affirming or accepting. When a young person is in foster care and working with an affirming social worker, it is much easier to connect them to affirming medical and mental healthcare options related to transition care.

Affirming LGBTQ+ Healthcare

Accessing LGBTQ+ affirming healthcare support and services was also a consistent need and remained a challenge for young people in regions of the County that lacked services and providers more closely located to where they live. Transgender and nonbinary young people in particular face specific challenges when trying to access transgender health related services and procedures.

Recommendation 4: Equip Health Professionals with Skills to Provide LGBTQ+ Affirming Care

To address the specific challenges of accessing LGBTQ+ affirming healthcare services and support, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Hire a Trans Patient Navigator.** Hire a patient navigator/advocate as an opposed to a doctor to help with educating the Valley Health Plan & Valley Medical Centers. The ideal candidate is a systems thinking person to create a program similar to Kaiser's Gender Pathways. Jackie Newton is more optimistic about what's available for coverage and has created a clear path to medical care at Kaiser and could be a great thought partner for this work. This person may also help map out the significant lack of surgeons capable of providing bottom related surgical procedures.

- **Hire Gender Specialists.** Internal stakeholders mentioned that they would love for gender specialists highly knowledgeable in transgender and nonbinary health policy and practice strategies to work at the county and be a source to consult with for medical and mental health providers. These specialists could support family doctors and other healthcare providers so that those in the county in need of these services don't have to drive too far to receive them. Stanford and UCSF are great resources to forge partnerships on this work, and these specialists could provide education on pubertal suppression treatments to pediatricians in the region.
- **Holistic Mental Health Services.** Transgender & nonbinary young people have shared with internal stakeholders interviewed that their mental health care is fragmented. Often times clinicians will heavily be focused on gender identity matters, but not focus on underlying concerns, or vice versa. Young people have shared the challenges of finding a clinician knowledgeable about gender identity that can deliver a full range of mental healthcare services.
- **Develop a Medical Providers Network.** Develop a network of medical health providers that get together on a regular basis and share experience and knowledge of working with LGBTQ+ patients. This cadre of medical providers allows the network to develop a comfort with difficult challenges they are trying to address. A similar network for mental health professionals exists in the County, and these professionals have offered mentorship and support to improve their services for LGBTQ+ young people.
- **Enhance HIV/AIDS Prevention Education.** Some interviewees believe the county is in real danger. As a community, comprehensive sex and reproductive health education is lacking and there is a decline in funding. Schools are not doing a sufficient job with this type of education and nonprofits lack the resources to fill the gaps. Crystal meth in gay men's communities is on the rise and younger generations have no sense of the history of HIV/AIDS, or where it is heading. More attention and resources are needed to improve the health of LGBTQ+ young people.

Geographic Access to Programs and Services

LGBTQ+ young people live throughout the county, and existing community-based organizations are overrepresented in San Jose. Internal stakeholders experience key challenges with connecting LGBTQ+ young people and their families to accessible resources, particularly in the South and East parts of the county.

Recommendation 5: Expand Geographic Access to LGBTQ+ Affirming Housing and Drop-In Spaces

To address the specific challenges of accessing LGBTQ+ affirming programs and services across the county, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Geographic Access to Mental Health.** Overall mental health resources and services are lacking for LGBTQ+ young people in the South and East parts of the County. The County recently invested in new mental health programs located in San Jose, and internal stakeholders would like to see additional investments made for programs for communities living further away from San Jose to better support LGBTQ+ young people in regions where they may feel isolated and without important peer and community supports.
- **South County LGBTQ+ Youth Space Presence.** The LGBTQ+ Youth Space has a South County specific outreach coordinator who runs 3 different groups (weekly & biweekly) and works with schools and stakeholder groups. The dream is for South County to have a static site. The LGBTQ+ Youth Space currently utilizes space at Morgan Hill Public Library in Morgan Hill Recreation Center. There remains a need for a physical drop-in space in this region, but there's also a danger of losing the anonymity of going to a non-LGBTQ+ community space. Geographically there is much less area and people in South County than Central and North County.
- **Diversify the Location of LGBTQ+ Housing & Drop-In Centers.** Since because LGBTQ+ young people are not a homogenous group, the County must develop an approach to offering meeting places – including housing & drop-in centers – out to the South and East parts of the county. Given that there is a real disbursement of LGBTQ+ young people all over the county, community leaders are encouraged to consider ways to expand the reach of the LGBTQ+ Youth

Space, the Hub, and the Billy DeFrank LGBTQ+ Community Center and their presence throughout the county.

- **Offer Services to Address Housing Insecurity.** Housing insecurity and the cost of living are by far the biggest challenges for LGBTQ+ young people – in particular those exiting child welfare and juvenile justice systems. While organizations like the LGBTQ+ Youth Space don't collect data on housing insecurity or houselessness, staff anecdotally have learned that a number of young people receiving services live in tent communities that experience frequent police sweeps where houseless people are cleared out and told to move "somewhere else," which happens all of the time. While the Bay Area was once a mecca for LGBTQ+ young people to get support, too many queer and trans folks can't even meet basic need like food, clothing and shelter – which is a huge barrier to survive.

Culturally Responsive Services

While there are a number of LGBTQ+ specific community-based organizations in the county, stakeholders expressed concern that the services offered by these organizations need to become more culturally responsive to Latinx and Vietnamese stakeholders, among other BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people.

Recommendation 6: Deliver Culturally Responsive Services to BIPOC LGBTQ+ Youth

To address the specific challenges of delivering culturally responsive services to BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Launch LGBTQ+ Mentorship Programs.** Develop mentorship programs to coach BIPOC LGBTQ+ students overcome isolation. In certain parts of the county, it can be very dangerous for BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people. Mentoring programs are missing altogether. To fill this gap, educators often are required to be the support system for BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people. A more intentional LGBTQ+ mentorship program capable of meeting the specific needs of BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people hold much promise.
- **Latinx Culture and Family Acceptance.** Develop culturally responsive strategies to help move Latinx families from rejecting to accepting behaviors. Prioritizing this work is something internal stakeholders would like to see the

county aggressively invest in and bake into existing LGBTQ+ youth focused programs.

- **Expand Somos Familia Program.** A Spanish language resource designed to dispel myths based on stereotypes is well received among internal stakeholders interviewed. The program developed a family resource packet, and staff refer folks to the program and its resources. The LGBTQ+ Youth Space is intentional of having Spanish speakers on staff and have had parent education. The program utilizes County Behavioral Health Services Department contracts to fund part of this work, and stakeholders would like to see this program available for more families who can benefit from it.
- **Limited Culturally Responsive LGBTQ+ Services.** Culturally responsive services for BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people are difficult to find. The lack of culturally specific services for BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people limit the engagement of this population, and when Probation does engage in contracts with community-based organizations, it's difficult to verify that these vendors have the level of competency required to adequately serve BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people. Tightening the standards for contractors may help overcome this challenge.
- **Provide Community Partner Education.** Internal stakeholders interviewed expressed strong concerns that community partners offering culturally responsive services do not see the urgency of meeting the specific needs of BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people who may be receiving services from their organizations. Stakeholders shared that these community partners rationalize that *equal* services are synonymous to *equitable* services. These stakeholders would like to see more intersectional education offered to these organizations to understand how LGBTQ+ young people involved with their organizations could thrive if these stakeholders took a more equitable approach, giving each young person what they need, recognizing that those needs often are quite different.
- **Translation Services Needed.** Internal stakeholders underscored the importance of having translation services available for providers to work with the diversity of families in the county. Translations service for Vietnamese and Spanish speaking families were specifically identified. In the quantitative evaluation, it is recommended to identify languages prevalent in the county to strategize other families where English is not their first language, who may benefit from accessing LGBTQ+ friendly resources translated into their primary language.

Family Finding Practices

Professionals working in child welfare and juvenile justice systems struggle with the challenge of placing LGBTQ+ young people with affirming families. As a result, LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to experience extreme levels of trauma from being placed and replaced with multiple families, compelling some young people to leave the child welfare system altogether, and become vulnerable to experiencing houselessness and interfacing with the criminal justice system.

Recommendation 7: Invest in LGBTQ+ Affirming Family Finding for Out-of-Home LGBTQ+ Youth

To address the specific challenges of enduring multiple family placements and the risk of experiencing houselessness and interfacing with the criminal justice system, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **LGBTQ+ Affirming Family Finding.** Internal stakeholders expressed a strong desire to adapt LGBTQ+ affirming family finding techniques stitched into practices child welfare professionals use to access permanency placements for LGBTQ+ young people. This enhanced family finding technique was first developed by the LA LGBTQ+ Center's RISE Program. These techniques could be helpful for any county employee or community partner working with out-of-home LGBTQ+ young people. Working with the LA LGBTQ+ Center as a thought partner may help the county adapt a similar model for the child welfare & juvenile justice systems.
- **Lack of LGBTQ+ Informed Diversion Services.** Probation would like to engage in aggressive family finding efforts as a LGBTQ+ diversion service. Several stakeholders interviewed mentioned that LGBTQ+ young people are often in the juvenile system simply because they are having a hard time with family and/or are in need of an accepting home to survive. Staff in these systems need a high level of LGBTQ+ family finding training, and the county is encouraged to invest resources to meet this need.
- **Collect SOGIE Data to Reduce Placements.** LGBTQ+ young people in the County often go through 5-6 permanency placements on average. The majority of these young people live in East San Jose and in the South County including Supervisorial District 1 and Supervisorial District 2. While there are 1,300 young people in dependency court, it is unclear how many of these young people are LGBTQ+. If the County consistently collected SOGIE data, it would help with

placing a LGBTQ+ young person with an affirming family to reduce the high number of placements and the trauma caused from this significant disruption.

- **Invest in Professional Transgender Education.** Internal stakeholders would like to see foster care and juvenile justice professionals gain enhanced knowledge, skills and confidence to affirm, respect and meet the specific needs of transgender and nonbinary young people. Given that many young people are transitioning at earlier ages, prioritizing education for mental health systems and social workers is encouraged.

Monitoring Contractors

Stakeholders interviewed appreciated the requirement that contractors must demonstrate their ability to provide affirming services and have in place nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people. Unfortunately, those interviewed also expressed the challenge of actually monitoring vendors employed by the County working directly with young people to ensure that they are actually delivering these LGBTQ+ affirming services and supports.

Recommendation 8: Develop a Robust Monitoring System for Vendor LGBTQ+ Services

To address the specific challenges of assuring vendors are delivering LGBTQ+ affirming services and supports, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Establish Contract Monitoring Standards.** After a vendor is selected to carry out services, the county is encouraged to establish ongoing contract monitoring standards and identify staff to conduct vendor LGBTQ+ inclusion audits. Probation in particular has experienced challenges where vendors may have demonstrated in writing during the Request for Proposal process that they have skills in working with LGBTQ+ young people, Probation staff doesn't really know how to call it out if the actions of a vendor fail to meet the expected standards of delivering affirming services. Support from the county on how to address this challenge is requested.
- **Vendors Must Uniformly Collect SOGIE.** Providers are inconsistent with respectfully asking optional SOGIE demographic questions. Rather, they make assumptions about a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity based on how they appear, and refrain from asking all young people these questions. In

order for vendors to demonstrate how they are working with LGBTQ+ young people, it's helpful for the county to have a better sense of the universe of how many LGBTQ+ young people are served and what their specific needs may be.

- **Improve Privacy Safeguards for SOGIE Data.** Even when vendors are asking SOGIE demographic questions, young people are skeptical about how SOGIE data will be used in the future. Without clear safeguards around managing SOGIE data similar to other confidential medical information, young people fear that their SOGIE status may be used against them in the future. This lack of trust and understanding of why this information is being gathered and to what purposes it will be used to improve services compels many young people who are LGBTQ+ more likely not to share this information with a provider. This results in LGBTQ+ young people not having the opportunity to be connected with the supports and services they may need.

Public School Administrators

Public school professionals are often the first line of defense to identify family rejection behaviors and signs of depression, isolation and suicide ideation behavior among LGBTQ+ students. Unfortunately, the county does not have consistent programming or services available for all schools to adequately connect these young people to supports that can help move families to more accepting behaviors and empower LGBTQ+ young people to connect with affirming peer and community supports.

Recommendation 9: Collaborate with Public School Principals to Build LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools

To address the specific challenges public school professionals navigate when working with LGBTQ+ young people and their families, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Host Parent-Teacher Meetings.** Offer consistent education for parents and teachers across the county to communicate the importance of building LGBTQ+ inclusive school environments. The meetings can help to understand the needs of LGBTQ+ students and to gain a greater awareness of mental health needs for all students who may be at risk to depression, isolation and suicide ideation. These meetings have the potential for people to name, understand, and process their feelings on the topic and to better understand the urgency of holistically doing this work.

- **Roll-Out of Pronoun Ally Initiative.** Consider replicating existing pronoun ally initiatives for all middle and high schools in the county. Prior to rolling out this effort, offer training for staff encouraging them to ask about pronouns and names and update school system data collection efforts where possible. Include chosen name and personal pronouns on class rosters to set staff up for success. Consider hiring the LGBTQ+ Youth Space or similar vendor in the county to perform trainings for staff throughout the county schools.
- **Offer LGBTQ+ Inclusive Programming and Literature.** Offer a number of specific LGBTQ+ programs, like teaching strategies to students on how to be allies of LGBTQ+ people, inclusive suicide prevention programs, age-appropriate sex education inclusive of different genders and sexual orientations, rainbow flag raising ceremonies during Pride days, and invest in LGBTQ+ focused books for students in the libraries.
- **Offer Unconscious Bias Education.** Train school administrators on ways they can examine their own unconscious biases. This training is particularly important for principals and school boards to help them understand how to manage biases that may impact their willingness to support LGBTQ+ students struggling at school. Given that principals must lead by example, these trainings will help principals and other school leaders positively role model and challenge biases that adversely impact LGBTQ+ people.
- **Institute All-User Restroom Policy.** Consider offering support for school administrators encountering challenges with transitioning restroom facilities from gender specific to having at least one all-user restroom on campus. Some principals in the county are saying that they have no LGBTQ+ students, and therefore do not need to address the challenges that arise with sex segregated facilities. Until you can show that your school is an inclusive place, everyone will hide the things that are most precious to them.
- **Include School Officials in SupportOUT Design.** School administrators want to engage with the county and state policymakers to help inform the design of SupportOUT. County leaders are encouraged to engage educators to help government leaders identify some of the nuanced challenges of family rejection and suicide ideation that manifest in school settings. Even if it's sitting on a board, educators want to be involved.

Thought Partners

LGBTQ+ Government Affairs leaders in different municipalities and counties across the country lack a network where they can consistently come together and share best

practices and problem-solve with peers. This lack of connection and support around common challenges that arise creates silos, duplication of services, ultimately leaving many disconnected from benefiting from understanding what's happening in other parts of the country that can advance their own work.

Recommendation 10: Establish a Thought Partnership Network with Leading Jurisdictions

To address the specific challenges of isolation far too many LGBTQ+ government affairs leaders endure, the following recommendations were offered by internal and external stakeholders interviewed. These recommendations include:

- **Allocate Funding to Establish National Network.** The County is serving as a leader when it comes to launching an interagency coordinating effort to improve the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people. There are a handful of other municipalities and jurisdictions currently engaged in similar efforts. Carving out resources and time for select county leaders to meet in-person to engage in identifying common goals and strategies will not only further inform the design of the SupportOUT initiative, but it will also establish the county as a national leader in improving the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people.
- **Hosting Quarterly National Network Calls.** After an initial in-person meeting takes place with this new network (potentially in conjunction with a LGBTQ+ youth related conference like Creating Change, Time to Thrive, Stonewall Educators Conference, etc.), commit to having participants remain engaged in quarterly conference calls where leaders can support one another overcome current challenges, celebrate successes, and identify new areas of potential collaboration and support.
- **Forge National Partnerships.** Consider aligning with National organizations like National Center for Lesbian Rights, Advocates for Youth, CenterLink, PFLAG National, GLSEN, Trevor Project, HRC and others who have a commitment to improving the health & well-being of LGBTQ+ young people. These alliances may help with identifying new areas of resources and visibility to amplify the impact of municipal and county interagency coordinating efforts.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: SupportOUT Stakeholder Recommendations Report

Overview

Since publication of the Recommendations for Santa Clara County Youth Well-Being Initiative: 2019 Stakeholder Interview Summaries & Gap Analysis Report, the “Twin Pandemics” of COVID-19 coupled with the large-scale racial and social justice uprisings have compounded the experiences of BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people living in Santa Clara County. To better assess these experiences, staff from the County of Santa Clara Office of LGBTQ Affairs convened a focus group on April 15, 2022, with several of the original stakeholders who informed the 2019 report.

This Appendix confirms what the authors of the report initially suspected. Since March 2020, the Twin Pandemics have compounded adverse health and well-being disparities endured by BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people living in Santa Clara County. A stakeholder discussion is included below, which offers an updated assessment of what has changed since the publication of the 2019 report, what has remained stubbornly the same, along with underscoring several of the original recommendations from the 2019 report.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders were convened on April 15, 2022, for a 90-minute focus group to unpack some of the challenges of the Twin Pandemics. These stakeholders included the following people:

- Judge Mike Clark, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, Santa Clara County Superior Court
- Sera Fernando, Manager, Office of LGBTQ Affairs
- Crystal Haney, Community Worker, Office of LGBTQ Affairs
- Dr. Mitch Gevelber, MD, Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Gender Health Center
- Adrienne Keel – Director of LGBTQ Programs, Caminar
- Maribel Martinez, Program Manager III, Division of Equity and Social Justice
- Mike Simms, Deputy Chief Probation Officer, Santa Clara County Probation
- Desiree Victor, Site Director, Young Women’s Freedom Center

Discussion

This section features a summary discussion and several recommendations stakeholders offered when the April 2022 focus group was convened.

The primary areas discussed included:

- Accessing affirming LGBTQ+ resources
- Connecting to culturally affirming LGBTQ+ services, geographically convenient
- Interacting with the County Court System
- Moving families from rejecting to accepting behaviors
- Receiving affirming health and mental health services

Accessing Affirming LGBTQ+ Resources

One of the primary recommendations from the 2019 report was the need for a comprehensive LGBTQ+ affirming resources available throughout the County. Additionally, there was a need to appropriately staff and resource the development of this resource list to: 1) ensure that resources, programs, and services listed are indeed affirming of LGBTQ+ young people, particularly BIPOC young people, through demonstrating specific examples, and 2) that staff responsible for curating this list maintain it to avoid referring young people to resources, programs, and services that are no longer relevant.

Since March 2020, the Young Women's Freedom Center launched the PRIDE Project, a mentorship program led by a transitional age youth leader of LGBTQ+ lived experience. The program is designed to connect mentors with system-impacted LGBTQ+ young people to offer support, guidance, and to expand their network of community. The PRIDE Project is an 8-month long support and educational program, and mentors are an important aspect of guiding young people to critical resources, information, and support that has historically been denied to these young people due to the compounding impacts of racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Additionally, Youth Space continues to host introductory meetings with young people as well as community providers to familiarize community members of the services available. Staff at the organization offer tours, and they also host regular meetings with young people to bear witness to youth testimony regarding their experiences of living through the Twin Pandemics. As a way to further gather information, Youth Space conducted a survey shortly after the 2019 recommendations report was published to gain a better sense of LGBTQ+ youth experiences for young people living in Santa Clara County.

Lastly, there was discussion about the creation of a LGBTQ+ youth service hotline that could support Santa Clara County staff who need immediate services for young people specifically County Systems such as schools, foster care, juvenile detention, and

probation. Our 2019 recommendations report highlighted this need, and the group was animated by the idea that the County could create and maintain this essential resource. This type of resource continues to be a basic need that many professionals eager to support LGBTQ+ young people lack.

Interacting with the County Court System

One of the primary recommendations from the 2019 report was to decriminalize survival sex and other crimes of poverty young people in the County complete. Stakeholders encouraged County officials to instead offer a behavioral health response for LGBTQ+ young people and in particular transgender, two-spirit, nonbinary, and gender expansive (TGX) young people engaged in the commercial sex industry to have time away from home to receive the support and services necessary to survive and thrive into adulthood.

Currently, the County Court System is not nimble enough to understand why LGBTQ+ young people and in particular transgender girls, are overrepresented in juvenile courts for survival related crimes. The Young Women's Freedom Center is expanding in this area to begin addressing this need by working with TGX people to equip them with the skills to deliver ongoing and mandatory trainings for officers and other Court professionals to raise awareness and practice basic skills to welcome, respect, and support TGX young people impacted by the County Court System.

The Young Women's Freedom Center is also addressing the patriarchal structure of how hyper criminalization impacts BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people. To address this challenge, the organization connects young people to the emergency supportive services that will address their immediate needs. The organization also offers paid internships to help offset the challenges of meeting basic needs like housing and healthcare, yet they acknowledged that offering compensation that can rival the underground street economy is a significant challenge.

The Office of LGBTQ Affairs plans to offer training around decriminalizing survival sex work and other crimes of poverty can play a big role to help invest in alternatives to youth incarceration. The training can share models of LGBTQ+ affirming youth diversion programs and other community-based solutions that center the BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people's self-determined goals and safety by focusing on ways to prevent the separation and support the reunification of families. The training can also offer strategies to reduce the presence of probation and other law enforcement agencies in the lives of young people and their families by amplifying the Young Women's Freedom Center's Freedom Charter found [here](#).

Moving families from rejecting to accepting behaviors

Significant challenges remain for TGX young people in foster care systems as they have to navigate accessing the care that they need with the courts and their birth/kinship families or foster families. An original recommendation for the Courts was to appoint a LGBTQ+ navigator that has the power to appoint friends of the family, or advocates for youth and families to help translate what a family may need to aggressively move away from rejecting behaviors toward more accepting behaviors.

The Family Acceptance Project's trainings have offered a basic level of support, and yet, having a dedicated staff member(s) on the Court to provide a higher level of care is an investment stakeholders want to see take place. This recommendation aligns with an original recommendation from the 2019 report to hire a court educational advocate who can serve as a mediator and work with a variety of county departments including probation, social services, CBOs specializing in LGBTQ+ youth housing opportunities with the goal of better coordinating response plans.

Stakeholders would like to see the County develop formal relationships with the following LGBTQ+ affirming family centered groups and organizations:

- Trans Families of Silicon Valley
- PFLAG National & Existing Local Chapters in the County
- Q Corner
- Families, Guardians, and Youth Care
- Family Acceptance Project

Geographic Access to Culturally Affirming Care

The 2019 report identified the challenges of accessing services for LGBTQ+ young people living in the Southern and Eastern parts of the County. While the Twin Pandemics allowed young people to access virtual programs, the barrier was significant for young people living in homes that lacked reliable connections to the internet, resulting in further isolation from culturally affirming support and care.

For those young people that did have access to the internet, most now remain hungry to be back together in person. Attendance for virtual programs was pretty solid for the first year into the Pandemic, however, since that time virtual attendance is declining due to Zoom fatigue. Even with the declining numbers, organizations like Youth Space continue to offer virtual programming for two reasons – they have noted that those young people in areas where it's difficult to travel to in-person events have benefited as well as for TGX young people who find the virtual connection to be a more affirming experience.

For those young people participating in virtual programs where their families are not supportive, they have had the opportunity to participate in chat, which has been a lifeline. If they are afraid to speak because their parents or siblings will overhear them

disclose information about their sexual orientation or gender identity, they have the freedom to share more openly in the chat waterfall of a Zoom meeting.

Stakeholders mentioned that the library closures and re-openings impacted groups in the South County, and as an alternative groups met in outdoor park spaces to continue supporting LGBTQ+ young people and families in the region. Others stressed the importance of co-locating Youth Space with Allcove Palo Alto and San Jose as a future incarnation, as the Bill Wilson Center has already taken similar action with their existing programming.

Regarding programs that have multilingual support, the following organizations were mentioned:

- Gardner Health Services, offering peer support groups in the South County for LGBTQ+ adults.
- LGBTQ+ Youth Space
- Youth Center Pride Project, including peer advocacy and mentorship for BIPOC LGBTQ+ people

Stakeholders underscored that there is still a need for expanding culturally affirming LGBTQ+ services. The County is currently hiring for a position dedicated to GARE issues, given how important the concept of intersectionality is when improving service delivery for BIPOC LGBTQ+ young people receiving County and community supports.

Targeting culturally affirming services for BIPOC youth who are also LGBTQ+ youth is a full-time job, and probation staff know this reality all too well. The Division of Equity, and Social Justice is also focused on making sure programs and services have language accessibility built into them. Currently there is a team of 14 people housed within the division.

Receiving affirming health and mental health services

The health and mental healthcare needs of TGX young people across the County remains significant. A positive development is that the Stanford Gender Health Center has increased the number of trainings around gender identity awareness and has offered more peer support for parents and caretakers of TGX young people navigating aspects of social, legal, and/or medical transition.

After the publication of the 2019 report, the County has given birth to the Gender Health Center. The Center is open 5 days a week and it includes nursing, medical, and social work professionals dedicated to support the health and well-being of TGX young people. It's the County's flagship program to meet the healthcare of TGX young people, and it offers insurance program navigators to help overcome some of the nagging challenges of receiving comprehensive gender affirming healthcare including

electrolysis, voice therapy, and some surgical procedures that are often not covered through existing health insurance programs.

The San Jose Behavioral Health Center offers affirming care for LGBTQ+ young people. It comprises a committee of professionals focused on the mental health needs of young people in the region. This network of providers is known to offer gender affirming services to TGX young people and helps make respectful housing placements when needed.

There still remains significant barriers for TGX young people to access residential spaces that are gender affirming. The lack of gender affirming mental health is one of the primary reasons why TGX young people are self-medicating and struggling with substance abuse issues. Many of these young people don't feel safe, which increases the likelihood of substance abuse. External costs include missing out on school, and when engaged in virtual class during the height of the pandemic, many of these students were "participating" with "their masks and video off," suggesting a high level of disengagement.

APPENDIX B: Glossary of Relevant Terms and Definitions

Related to Biological Sex:

Biological Sex (n.) *pertains to an individual's sex, male or female, based on the appearance of their external genitalia, assumed sex chromosomes and hormones.*

Intersex (adj.) — A person born with any of several variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals that, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies;" this term is preferred over hermaphrodite, which can be stigmatizing, outdated and offensive.

Sex (n.) — often used interchangeably with "gender"; a label – male or female – assigned by a doctor to infants at birth based on a combination of biological characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. Also referred to as assigned sex, birth sex, or designated sex.

Related to Gender Identity:

Gender Identity (n.) *relates to a person’s internal view of their gender; one’s innermost sense of being male, female, or another gender, which may or may not align with the person’s body or assigned sex at birth.*

Cisgender (adj.) — A person whose gender identity is congruent with their biological sex; the opposite of being a transgender person.

Cisnormativity (n.) — Social structures and practices which serve to elevate and enforce cisgender (non-transgender) people (also referred to as cissexism).

Gender (n.) — Often used interchangeably with “sex”; can refer specifically to the behavioral, cultural, psychological, or social expectations typically associated with one sex, not just biological characteristics. Each culture has standards about the way that people should behave based on their gender.

Gender Binary (n.) — The cultural belief that human gender exists in only two distinct, opposite, and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine. Also describes a society that divides people into male and female gender roles, gender identities, attributes and expectations.

Gender Spectrum (n.) — An alternative to the gender binary that sees gender as a spectrum, rather than as an either/or, masculine/feminine dichotomy. It denotes gender as a continuum that includes male and female, but without establishing them as absolutes or polar opposites. Also referred to as ***gender fluidity***.

Gender Expansive (adj.) — Primarily used to describe children who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. May also impact those who do, who are questioned or berated based on their dress, appearance, or interests. Other terms with similar meanings include gender non-binary, gender diverse, gender creative, gender independent, gender non-conforming and gender wonderful.

Gender Neutral (adj.) — A term that describes something (usually an occupation such as a Congressperson, firefighter, office manager, etc., a physical space, such as a bathroom, or an item such as clothing such as a unisex t-shirt or hat) that is not segregated by sex/gender.

Genderqueer (adj.) — A term used to describe people who do not identify with the gender binary terms that have traditionally described gender identity (e.g., male/female, man/woman). *Also see gender nonconforming and nonbinary.*

Nonbinary (adj.) — Aspects of a person’s gender expression, gender identity, and interests that go beyond cultural binary prescriptions of behaviors and interests associated primarily with boys/men or girls/women. Other terms include genderqueer, agender, bigender and more. None of these terms means the same thing, but all speak to an experience that is not simply male or female.

Pronouns (n.) — The ways that people refer to themselves and how they want to be referred to in terms of gender. Also referred to as Positive Gender Pronouns or PGPs. New usage of alternative pronouns includes *They/Them/Their* and *Zie* or *Ze/Hir/Hirs*. (*Preferred Gender Pronoun* is now outdated)

Transgender (adj.) — A term used to describe a person whose gender identity (internal sense of self) is incongruent with that person’s biological sex (physical body) or assigned sex.

Transgender Communities (n.) — Umbrella term to refer to the communities of people that includes all whose gender identity or gender expression do not match society’s expectations (e.g., transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, gender non-binary, gender diverse, non-binary, gender creative, gender independent)

Transition (n.) — The nuanced process of transitioning from one gender identity to another. Not ALL transgender and non-binary (TNB) people follow the same path when it comes to “transitioning.” While nearly all TNB people undergo some form of social transition, not everyone will pursue legal transition and even fewer will pursue medical transition, for a variety of reasons.

- **Social Transition** — The social process of disclosing to one’s self and others that one is transgender and/or nonbinary. This often includes changing a name, pronoun, or gender that is more congruent with one’s gender identity and/or gender expression, and different from one’s birth sex, name, and assumed pronouns. This process also may include changing one’s gender expression, which may or may not correspond to traditional gender roles.
- **Legal Transition** — The administrative process of legally changing one’s name and gender on identity documents such as a passport, driver’s license, birth certificate, and social security card to help secure gainful employment, housing, and obtain credit. Accurate documentation reduces likelihood of questions regarding pre-transition history.
- **Medical Transition** — The process of undergoing treatments including pubertal suppression, hormone therapy, and surgical procedures, or receiving services like voice therapy and hair removal to align the body and secondary sex

characteristics with one's gender identity.

Transsexual (adj.) — A term that is sometimes used to refer to a transgender person who has engaged in a medical transition from one sex/gender to another, so that the person's body and gender identity are more physically aligned.

Two-Spirit (adj.) — An identity label used by indigenous North Americans to indicate that they embody both a masculine and feminine spirit. May also be used to include native peoples of diverse sexual orientations and has different nuanced meanings in different native sub-cultures.

Related to Gender Expression:

Gender Expression (adj.) *includes the ways in which a person presents one's gender to society---this can include clothing, body language, hairstyles, interests, behavior, and/or mannerisms.*

Cross-Dressing (v.) — The act of wearing clothing commonly associated with another gender within a particular society; cross-dressers do not typically seek to change their physical characteristics or manner of expression permanently or desire to live full-time as a gender different than their birth sex.

Gender Norms (n.) — Culturally-based expectations of how people should act based on their sex or gender (e.g., men are masculine, women are feminine).

Gender Roles (n.) — Social and cultural beliefs about what is considered gender appropriate behavior and the ways that men and women are expected to act.

Nonbinary (v.) — A term referring to aspects of a person's gender expression, gender identity, and interests that go beyond cultural binary prescriptions of behaviors and interests associated primarily with boys/men or girls/women. Other terms include genderqueer, agender, bigender and more. None of these terms means the same thing, but all speak to an experience that is not simply male or female.

Related to Sexual Orientation:

Sexual Orientation (n.) *refers to a person's emotional, psychological, physical, and sexual attraction toward other people of the same or different gender.*

Ally (n.) — A person who takes a form of action against oppression of members of targeted groups (e.g., LGBT). Allies acknowledge and oppose disadvantages of groups outside their own, seek to reduce their own complicity in oppression of these groups, and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Asexual (adj.) – Lacking sexual desire, attraction or interest; applied to individuals with seemingly no sexual drive. Individuals may or may not engage in purely emotional-based relationships, distinct from celibacy.

Bisexual (adj.) — A person’s physical, emotional, sexual, or romantic attraction to persons of both genders.

Coming Out (v.) – An ongoing, lifelong process toward self-acceptance that includes the potential for informing others of the individual’s sexual orientation.

Demisexual (adj.) – A person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone. The term demisexual comes from the orientation being “halfway between” sexual and asexual; similar to the term graysexual.

Gay (adj.) – The affirming way to refer to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and physically attracted to people of the same gender. It is most commonly used to describe men who are attracted to other men, and it is a term preferred by many to “homosexual”.

Heterosexism (n.) — Institutional policies and interpersonal actions that assume heterosexuality is normative and ignores other orientations; the belief that heterosexuality is superior to other orientations.

Heterosexual (adj.) — A person’s physical, emotional, sexual, or romantic attraction to persons of the other gender (often referred to as straight).

Homosexual (adj.) — Clinically accurate term describing a person whose physical, emotional, sexual, and romantic attraction is to persons of the same gender; the term is viewed by many as outdated and less positive.

LGBT (adj.) — A term used to categorize individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender; may also be stated with the first two terms switched in order (GLBT); other iterations also may include Questioning or Queer (LGBTQ+IA+) or Intersex (LGBTI) abbreviations.

LGBTQIA+ (adj.) — An attempt at being more inclusive to identify the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Allies, and Asexual people. The acronym continues to grow and will likely further evolve over time.

Lesbian (adj.) — Applies only to a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other women; term is preferred by many for homosexual “female.”

Microaggressions (n.) — Seemingly small offenses that marginalized people encounter in their everyday lives.

Omnisexual/Pansexual (adj.) — A person’s physical, emotional, sexual, or romantic attraction to persons of many genders (beyond the traditional binary gender system of male and female).

Polysexual (adj.) — Polysexuality encompasses many, but not necessarily all, sexualities.

Sapiosexual (adj.) — A person who finds intelligence sexually attractive or arousing.


Skoliosexual (adj.) — A person who is sexually attracted to non-binary identified individuals or those who do not identify as cisgender.

Outing (v.) — Exposing or making public another person's concealed sexual identity or orientation, without that person's consent.

Queer (adj.) — Used as an umbrella identity term encompassing lesbian, questioning people, gay men, bisexuals, non-labeling people, transgender folks and anyone else who does not strictly identify as heterosexual. “Queer” originated as a derogatory word. Currently it is being reclaimed by some as a statement of empowerment. Some people identify as “queer” to distance themselves from the rigid categorizations of “straight” and “gay.” Some community members reject the use of this term, due to its connotations of deviance and its tendency to gloss over and sometimes deny the differences between sub-groups.

Questioning (adj.) — A term used to describe a person, often an adolescent, who has questions about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBT Symbols

							
2018 Rainbow Flag	Pink Triangle	LAMBDA*	Lesbian (L)	Gay (G)	Bisexual (B)	Trans (T)	Red Ribbon

Major LGBTQ+IA+ Celebrations

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, & Biphobia (May 17) — Coordinates international events that raise awareness of LGBTQ+IA+ human rights violations and stimulates interest in LGBTQ+IA+ rights work worldwide. By 2016, commemorations took place in 132 countries across the globe.

Pride Month — June is LGBT Pride month, but local Pride events are held all year – based on commemorating the Stonewall Riots in 1969.

National Coming Out Day (October 11) – The month of October is also recognized as LGBT History Month and commemorates the anniversary of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

International Pronouns Day (October 16) – This day is an annual event that seeks to make sharing and respecting personal pronouns commonplace. It takes place each year on the third Wednesday of October.

LGBTQ+IA+ History Month – October is LGBTQ+IA+ History Month observing the history of the LGBTQ+IA+ human and civil rights movement. The month provides role models, builds community, and represents a civil rights statement about the contributions of the LGBTQ+IA+ community.

Transgender Day of Remembrance/Resilience (November 20) — memorializes those who were killed due to transphobia, hatred and/or prejudice. The day also celebrates the resiliencies and lives of those transgender people still with us. The event was created in honor of Rita Hester, who was murdered on November 28, 1998.

Trans Day of Visibility (March 31) – Celebrates transgender people and raising awareness of discrimination faced by transgender people worldwide, as well as a celebration of their contributions to society.

World AIDS Day (December 1) – opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died.