

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

RESOLUTION NO. 00-203

Support for Sexual Minority Youth in Multnomah County

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

- A. In the Spring and Summer of 2000, District 4 Commissioner Sharron Kelley convened a diverse group of community advocates of all ages to assess community supports available to sexual minority youth, and to recommend action for increasing supports.
- B. Commissioner Kelley's advocacy team has identified unique strengths and needs, and recommended six areas of strategic opportunity.
- C. The Commission on Children, Families and Community of Multnomah County has reviewed the plan developed by Commissioner Kelley's advocacy team, and has unanimously voted to recommend that plan to the Board.
- D. A group of County young people, relying on their own experiences as sexual minority young people, convened in a special community forum to review the plan. They recommend the plan to the Board.
- E. We now have an opportunity to strengthen the County's system of social supports for sexual minority youth. If we fail to take this opportunity, we might lose core community supports that are stretched beyond their reasonable capacity.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Resolves:

- 1. "The Strategic Plan for Increasing Supports to Sexual Minority Youth in All Parts of Multnomah County," developed by Commissioner Kelley's advocacy team (Plan), is adopted to support sexual minority youth, their families and communities.
- 2. The Plan will be integrated into the comprehensive plan being developed by the Commission on Children, Families and Community of Multnomah County.
- 3. County departments providing supports to children and families will use this Plan, including its findings and recommendations, to consider and include

sexual minority youth and their families in service delivery plans for all general population services.

4. The Chair will appoint a community advocacy team, staffed by the Commission on Children, Families and Community, to continue providing culturally specific advice to the County to increase supports for sexual minority youth, their families and communities.
5. The assessment recommended in the Plan is assigned to the County Office of Budget and Quality Research and Evaluation Unit.

ADOPTED this 21st day of December, 2000.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON



Beverly Stein, Chair

THOMAS SPONSLER, COUNTY ATTORNEY
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By Sandria Duffey for
Thomas Sponsler, County Attorney

STRATEGIC PLAN

for increasing supports for sexual minority youth in all parts of Multnomah County

December 21, 2000



SUMMARY

This strategic plan has the primary objective of increasing supports for sexual minority youth, defined as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth, in all parts of Multnomah County. This plan is different from many other plans which simply identify the problems of sexual minority youth, and look solely to the modest system of professional service providers who support them, for solutions to the problems. Instead this plan looks at our community's vision for sexual minority youth, and identifies resources and activities that provide opportunities for realizing that vision over time. It calls for investment from all sectors of the community: elected officials, appointed citizen advocates, young people, parents, members of the faith community, professional educators, human services professionals, and others.

Planners have identified a wide range of untapped community resources, and recommend applying these, in combination with public funding support, toward activities in six areas of strategic opportunity: Youth Development, Education, Social Activities, System Development, Health and Social Services, and Advocacy.

BACKGROUND

This plan was produced in the spring and summer of 2000 by a diverse group of community volunteers of all ages, under the leadership of Multnomah County District Four Commissioner Sharron Kelley. The group consisted of people representing several sectors of the community and met on three occasions to review and deliberate on the plan's content and direction. Staff support was provided by Commissioner Kelly's office and the Commission on Children, Families and Community.

STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES

Planning team participants identified an encouragingly wide variety of available resources that could be tapped to provide increased support for sexual minority youth. It was clear however, that the critical need for more money to support certain activities, and especially those activities that the community believes to be "core support," places part of this system at a near crisis point. In the absence of stable, longer term funding,

some core services and supports that we now take for granted might be lost. The amount of funds needed does not appear to be relatively large. A total of perhaps \$200K annually would strengthen and expand existing supports. Of this, not quite half already is in place today, albeit tenuously. Planners called for necessary expanded investment to be shared by public and private partners. (*See attachment 1 for community strengths and resources that have been identified.*)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Activities in six areas form the basis for future work:

- **Goal Area #1: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.**

The many talents of sexual minority young people are often overlooked, but we can tap into many new and needed resources by investing in young people, giving them the chance to build skills, exercise leadership, form relationships with trustworthy adults, and help their communities.

1. Identify exemplary local examples of youth development for sexual minority youth, and promote this through the news media and other public communications.
2. Integrate the natural leaders within our local sexual minority youth population into the activities of the Multnomah County Youth Advisory board, and the Commission on Children, Families and Community.
3. Provide leadership and skills training for young people.

- **Goal Area #2: EDUCATION.**

Schools are often described by sexual minority youth as frightening places of terror and abuse, and at times the problem comes from the adult staff as well as the students; still we want sexual minority youth to succeed in their education.

1. Establish in each school district anti-discrimination policies that are known and enforced.
2. Establish protocols within each school district for culturally appropriate direct intervention with victims and perpetrators of harassment and discrimination.
3. Provide training and other support for educators who want to be allies in this effort.
4. Gain widespread acceptance of the "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students' Bill of Educational Rights" (*see attachment 2*)
5. Integrate the strengths and needs of sexual minority youth into Multnomah County initiatives seeking to improve educational success.

- **Goal Area #3: SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.**

Sexual minority young people have few opportunities for safe, developmentally appropriate social activities, yet we have numerous untapped resources.

1. Work with public and private community organizations to improve currently available social activities, so they are stable, safer and more welcoming for sexual minority youth, both scheduled and drop in.
2. Develop a group of “community sponsors,” including people of all ages, who commit to host safe monthly social activities for sexual minority youth, and provide sponsors with the practical and financial support they need. Formulate quality standards for activities.

- **Goal Area #4: SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT.**

Social supports for sexual minority youth are developed in haphazard ways, often relying on the good will and overextension of advocates at risk of burn out and financial failure.

1. Conduct an independent assessment of quality and capacity of current supports, and identify opportunities for change.
2. Conduct a community visioning process that identifies our chosen future for sexual minority youth in all parts of Multnomah County.
3. Relying on the findings of the system assessment, and reflecting on the community’s chosen future for sexual minority youth, categorize supports as being either: worthy of stabilization, worthy of expansion, worthy of change, or non-existent.
4. Map the planning and funding cycles of current and potential investors, and align development activities with these cycles.
5. Map the diversity of the sexual minority youth population and identify disparities, and opportunities for improvements.
6. Create an ongoing opportunity for advocates, service providers and others to network, coordinate and share resources, in ways that don’t burden overextended people and organizations.

- **Goal Area #5: HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES.**

Providers of direct service for sexual minority youth are often called on to perform heroic and unsustainable efforts.

1. Relying on the findings of the system assessment, and reflecting on the community’s chosen future for sexual minority youth, provide immediate short term relief for current service providers as appropriate.
2. Identify key opportunities for improving existing, general youth and family services and supports, helping them to become safer, more welcoming, and culturally appropriate for sexual minority youth.

- **Goal Area #6: ADVOCACY.**

Many people want to be proactive in their support for sexual minority youth, but without some established structure there is a lack of organization and coordination.

1. Continue the existence of the Kelley Advocacy Team, as a responsibility of the Commission on Children, Families and Community.
2. Call on the County Chair to appoint this advocacy team, staffed by the Commission on Children, Families and Community, to plan and execute key advocacy opportunities for sexual minority youth, and to serve as a small "quick response group." Include representation from at least elected, advocate, youth, communities of color, faith community, service provider, and parent.
3. Identify short and longer term advocacy opportunities, aligned with investment opportunities.
4. Assess the degree to which sexual minority youth are involved in all this work, and the degree to which they are fully integrated, and take action to align vision with reality.

For more information contact:

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Community Strengths for Sexual Minority Youth

Planning Team members were asked to identify, from their perspective, the resources that exist in our community that might be put into action in support of sexual minority youth. They noted the following as a starting point:

- Asset research: the Commission on Children, Families and Community has identified the presence of certain of the “40 community assets” in nearly all of the county’s high school areas; as well as for specific ethnic communities, and for boys and girls. Some generalizations can be made regarding the applicability of this data to sexual minority youth.
- The Commission on Children, Families and Community, Department of Community and Family Services, Health Department and other County Departments each make major investments in youth services each year.
- Many youth are available and eager to help design and run activities that would meet this plan’s objectives.
- The "East Coast Outreach Project, January 2000," an assessment of east Multnomah County, is available from the Sexual Minority Youth Recreation Center (SMRYC).
- Kathy Belge was named as a key resource to sexual minority youth in need of housing and other specialty referrals.
- Gresham Library, and other Multnomah County libraries, are available as no-cost, safe and comfortable meeting places.
- Youth Net has identified specific services that are desired by sexual minority youth.
- The United Way has a commitment to sexual minority youth, and may be willing to adopt the recommendations in this plan.
- Gretchen Schuette, Superintendent of the Gresham-Barlow School District, is a known advocate for all youth, and might help us design a strategy for making schools safer in Multnomah County.
- SMYRC has an active youth speaker's bureau, available for public education.
- Sexual minority parents advisory group (???)
- Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services funds the Youth Investment system, and a continuum of supports for homeless youth; and the Health Department provides HIV prevention services, but there is a need for more professional development among youth serving professionals regarding the interests of sexual minority youth. The homeless youth system could help with providing training.
- Out-In health clinic has expertise in specific medical concerns of sexual minority youth (trans clinic, hep/hiv testing, etc.).
- There is a possibility of coordinating a planned giving approach with the Equity

Foundation and the United Way.

- The dropout rate for sexual minority youth is high. The County's student retention initiative could address this, although it does not now.
- Much has been learned at the national level about establishing gay-straight alliances in schools, and this could be applied here.
- East Metro Human Rights Coalition wants to be of support.
- The State of Oregon Department of Human Services, Adult and Family Services can help with local needs for professional development and training.
- The internet is a vast new resource and many rely on it for communication. SMYRC, the Library and other sites allow free access.
- Many sexual minority youth have expertise in computer applications and internet access and can serve as tutors to others who want to learn.
- Commission on Children, Families and Community provides mini-grants up to \$500 to people of any age who have ideas on how to help young people succeed in life.
- There is interest in a regional conference on sexual minority youth. It could be held in east Multnomah County.
- SMYRC has an affiliation with Washington County, and the Washington County Commission on Children and Families may be interested in collaborating on a regional level.
- Love makes a family has connections to many other related advocacy efforts.
- The Portland Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) supports Rainbow, a social support group especially for sexual minority youth of color.
- MCC has a successful model of collaboration. Along with SMYRC it has conducted programs, and provided safe meeting space, staff, referrals, PC access, and more.
- Eastside (???) cultural competency training's staff and meeting space
- Family Works, a respected local agency, has a highly supportive staff, and strong connections to schools.
- Youthnet has a core group of youth, available to help.
- East Metro Human Rights (???)
- SMYRC staff member Derrick Travers, has expert knowledge about the strengths and needs of trans youth, and about effective HIV prevention strategies.
- Metropolitan Human Rights Center has volunteer facilitators available - 823-5136
- Network Behavioral Mental Health has a history of providing many resources: meeting space at SMYRC; senior volunteers; connections to the Washington County Health Department; management experience; many other things.
- Ecumenical Ministries is a supportive organization within the faith community.
- Communities of Welcome Congregations is another resource with the faith community.
- Roots and Branches is a well respected referral service for sexual minority youth. It has an east Multnomah County outreach project, 2 shelter homes; affiliated with the

Boys and Girls Aid Society and the Equity Foundation.

- Mount Hood Mental Health has meeting space, parent education, connections with several schools, referrals to sympathetic schools, counselors, other professionals.
- Sharron Kelley, Commissioner for Multnomah County District Four, has the ability to bring community concerns to a supportive Board of County Commissioners; can provide office support for copying, mailing, etc.
- Outside In is a model of culturally specific and appropriate outreach and health services; trained staff; gorilla theatre; web page; billboard.
- Christen Aspen's theatre project through Pride N/W is a resource.
- Roots and Branches has an alcohol and drug recovery group for sexual minority youth.
- Bradley Angle House has a support group for sexual minority youth.
- GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) is a local and national advocacy group working for safer schools.
- PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbian and Gays) is a local and national advocacy group working to help sexual minority youth thrive.
- Helios Counseling is a resource (Judy Watson)
- For Us N/W and Shawn Cox, is a local advocacy effort for young people impacted by HIV disease, and is also a volunteer opportunity.
- Private Foundations want to be supportive but need guidance in some cases. MRG, EQUITY, etc.
- Amalia at the Metropolitan Human Right Coalition can help w/Spanish edition of final products.

***Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students'
Bill of Educational Rights***

- *The right to fair and accurate information about sexual orientation in textbooks and other classroom materials.*
- *The right to unbiased information about the historical and continuing contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in all subject areas, including art, literature, science, sports, and history/social studies.*
- *The right to positive role models, both in person and in the curriculum; the right to accurate information about themselves, free of negative judgment, and delivered by trained adults who not only inform lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students but affirm them.*
- *The right to attend schools free of verbal and physical harassment, where education, not survival, is the priority.*
- *The right to attend schools where respect and dignity for all students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, is a standard set by the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, supported by state and local boards of education, and enforced by every district superintendent, principal, and classroom teacher.*
- *The right to be included in all support programs that exist to help teenagers deal with the difficulties of adolescence.*
- *The right to call upon legislators to guarantee and fight for their constitutional freedoms, rather than to reinforce hatred and prejudice.*
- *The right to a heritage free of crippling self-hate and unchallenged discrimination.*