

# LGBTQ+ Youth in the Child Welfare System

The logo for the Gender Health Justice Project (GHJP) is located in the top right corner. It consists of the letters 'GHJP' in a bold, sans-serif font, with a small circle above the 'i' in 'J'. The logo is set against a light blue circular background.

The child welfare system is supposed to help youth and families. They step in if they think a youth was abused, neglected, or needs looking after.

- ❖ They should help to keep a young person safe, fix problems that the young person and family identify, and get them back home if possible.

The system works better for some youth than for others. If it's working for you, great. If it isn't, you should know your rights and how you can get help.



LGBTQ youth wind up in child welfare more than other young people for various reasons.

- ❖ They are sometimes abused or neglected more than others.
- ❖ Sometimes, families don't accept them for who they are.
- ❖ LGBTQ youth might run away or even be put in child welfare by their families.

Because problems like being "in the closet", coming out, being bullied, or getting abused can make life hard for LGBTQ youth, they sometimes need adults to help.

- ❖ Although child welfare workers should understand how to help LGBTQ youth, they don't always do a perfect job. They might not know how to relate to LGBTQ youth.
  - ❖ Even if they do, some young people might feel scared to talk about being LGBTQ.



It can be harder for LGBTQ youth to get back with their families. They can spend longer in the child welfare system and have a harder time finding a foster family or being adopted.

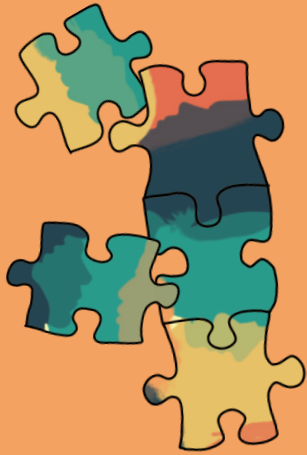
If a parent is using drugs or alcohol, has a hard time because of poverty or lacking a job, or has other problems, child welfare should help. They do this better for some family than for others.

- ❖ For LGBTQ youth of color, it can be even harder. Discrimination in society can add extra stress on them or their families.



But some people are working hard to help LGBTQ youth. You are not alone. If you feel comfortable, talk to an adult like your caseworker, court advocate, or your pediatrician, a nurse, social worker, teacher, or school guidance counselor.

- ❖ If you want to, you can help make the system better by becoming a youth advocate. Others who are already involved can give you ideas.



Above all, know that there is hope for you and others like you. Things can be hard. But by helping each other, we can work to make things better.

If you are not feeling safe or in need of support, here are some numbers to call that have trained counselors available 24/7:

- ❖ 988 (National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline)
- ❖ 1-866-488-7386 (The Trevor Project)

