



# nyac

National Youth Advocacy Coalition

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC), founded in 1993, is a social justice organization that advocates for and with young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) in an effort to end discrimination against these youth and to ensure their physical and emotional well-being. NYAC envisions a society in which all LGBTQ youth can reach their full potential and works to advance policies that reflect the lives of these diverse young people. NYAC accomplishes its mission primarily through capacity building assistance, but also through youth engagement and advocacy.

Working with local, state and national organizations, NYAC offers capacity building assistance to increase their effectiveness in working with LGBTQ youth. This work ranges from developing model programs to providing a national infrastructure to improve communication between organizations working with LGBTQ youth. In its role as the national social justice organization working for and with LGBTQ youth, NYAC engages young people to become advocates for progress within the broader LGBTQ civil rights movement.

Over the upcoming year, NYAC and LGBTQ youth-serving organizations would like to work with the Obama/Biden administration on the following issues of importance to LGBTQ youth.

## **An Inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)**

As young people enter the workforce they are concerned about legally losing their jobs because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression. This is especially true in this economic crisis where many people already have increased anxiety about job security. Not including gender identity or expression in ENDA would be a mistake and would exclude far too many LGBTQ youth.

## **Matthew Shepard Act**

According to reports published by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, hate crimes focused on LGBTQ individuals remain a serious problem in this country. The recent ten-year anniversary of the attack on Matthew Shepard was a painful reminder that this problem has remained unaddressed by the Federal government for too long.

## **Safety**

In addition to hate crimes, physical, emotional and sexual abuse against LGBTQ youth occur at frighteningly high rates in our nation's schools and other youth-serving venues. Many of these have government oversight, regulation and/or funding. Bullying and neglect by youth-serving professionals towards LGBTQ youth continues to put them at greater risk for suicide, substance abuse, poor academic performance and other high-risk behaviors.

## **Census 2010 & Data Collection**

Too often organizations seeking government funding for important LGBTQ work are denied because there is insufficient government data pertaining to the LGBTQ community. The lack of sexual orientation and gender identity data collection in the census, health surveys and other data collection projects is a barrier to providing LGBTQ youth with the assistance and services they need. The government should include sexual orientation and gender identity questions on all surveys and in the meantime should refrain from denying funding to organizations that seek support for important LGBTQ work simply because this data is not yet available.



### **Homeless LGBTQ Youth**

The Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Act must be expanded to better address the homeless youth crisis facing our country. As a result of bullying, religious persecution, family hostility, and other reasons, LGBTQ youth are more prone to find themselves homeless. In addition to increased efforts to address youth homelessness, more must be done to educate current providers on issues specific to LGBTQ youth. Organizations with a track record of poor treatment of LGBTQ youth should be coached to improve their treatment and/or denied future funding until improvement is seen.

### **Higher Education Costs**

Education costs have been increasing each year over the past decade at a higher rate than previously seen. While this presents a problem for all young people, LGBTQ youth often find that the solutions being offered for this problem are inaccessible to them. The process for applying for government backed student loans and financial aid often requires parental involvement; this a problem for young people who have lost contact with their parents, which tends to happen more to LGBTQ youth. There are also far fewer private and institution scholarships available for LGBTQ youth than other minority populations. Bans on affirmative action in a growing number of states are forcing some minority scholarship criteria to be rewritten. We are already seeing that these rewrites sometimes make them less accessible to LGBTQ youth. These factors combined with workplace discrimination faced by LGBTQ youth and the weakened economy provide LGBTQ youth with less solutions to this increasingly problem than many of their non-LGBTQ classmates.

### **High Rates of HIV Among Youth**

The AIDS epidemic is not over and our young people are proof of that. New HIV infections among young people continue to emerge at alarming rates; nearly one-fifth of all HIV transmission occurs among people 24 or younger, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many of our government-financed efforts to reach out to young people are outdated, underfunded, and ineffective. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must do more to slow the spread of HIV and they'll need support from the administration and Congress to do it.

### **Government Funding to LGBT Organizations**

In an increasingly competitive environment for government funding, LGBT organizations that depend on this funding to do their work are seeing it taken away. Sometimes that is because they are simply outdone in the grant process. However, too often funding is cut off for political reasons, sometimes including anti-LGBT motives. Many organizations providing services to LGBTQ youth are facing bankruptcy or worse as a result of decreased government funding, or funding being taken away and provided to non-LGBT, and sometimes anti-LGBT, organizations. Rather than having the opportunity to seek services from these new providers, LGBTQ youth are often completely left behind.

### **Comprehensive Sex Education**

Abstinence-only education has done more harm than good to young people. The number of young people graduating from public schools with little knowledge of safer sex practices is alarming. Young people's sexual activity has not been altered by abstinence-only education in a positive way. Rather than decreased activity, we are seeing an increase in unsafe sexual activity. NYAC believes abstinence-only education is one explanation for the continued increase in HIV rates among young people and that comprehensive sex education is vital for preventing HIV transmission.

### **Health Care**

LGBTQ youth are concerned about accessibility to health care, particularly given increased tuition costs, prospects of job discrimination, and a faltering economy. Non-HIV related health programs for the LGBT community, lesbian health research, LGBTQ youth substance abuse, mental health and transgender health are currently neglected areas of concern to LGBTQ youth.