Suicidal Behavior in Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth

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Most gay, lesbian and bisexual youth never attempt suicide and never have other serious substance abuse or mental health problems (depression and anxiety), however …

- Gay, lesbian and bisexual youth are up to six times more likely to attempt suicide during adolescent than their heterosexual peers.

- Gay, lesbian and bisexual youth are also up to six times more likely to have serious substance abuse or mental health problems (depression and anxiety) that are known risk factors for both attempted and contemplated suicide.

- Even after controlling for other known risk factors, status as gay, lesbian or bisexual may confer an independent risk for attempted suicide related to difficulties expression a minority sexual identity in a hostile environment permeated by anti-homosexual bias.

- Other possible social risk factors for attempted suicide include gender non-conformity, early awareness of homosexuality, lack of social support, school dropout, family problems, suicide attempts by friends or relatives and homelessness.

- Attempted suicide may be associated with sexual minority status in young men but not young women. In other words, a homosexual orientation may not compound the already greater risk of attempting suicide in women compared to men.

- It is not known whether the risk for attempted suicide among sexual minority youth varies with race or ethnicity.

- It is not known whether the increased risk for attempted suicide among sexual minority individuals peaks between the ages of 15-25 years or remains constant throughout the life span.

- It is not known whether sexual minority youth have an increased risk for contemplated suicide. Although the 1989 Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide concluded that sexual minority youth may comprise of up to 30% of completed suicides annually, there is no research or clinical evidence that currently supports this.