

Guidance to States and Communities on Using Federal Funding To Support Mental Health Services for LGBTQI+ Youth

On June 25, 2022, President Biden signed into law the [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act \(BSCA\)](#), providing an unprecedented investment in mental health funding for children and families across the country. The historic legislation included: supplemental funding for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant; funding to support new child- and family-serving mental health grantees; supplemental funding for States, Territories, and Tribes to expand and enhance the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline services; and funding to expand the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) program nationwide.

In the two years since enactment, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has distributed millions of dollars in BSCA funding. This guidance outlines how states and communities can use SAMHSA funding to support mental health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other gender diverse youth (LGBTQI+) with examples from BSCA grantees.

Mental Health Block Grant:

The [Community Mental Health Services Block Grant \(MHBG\)](#) is a formula grant distributed annually to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and six Pacific jurisdictions to support State Mental Health Authorities (SMHA) in the development and expansion of a comprehensive, community-based, mental health service system for adults with serious mental illness (SMI) and children with serious emotional disturbance (SED). As part of BSCA, states and territories receive supplemental MHBG funding each fiscal year (FY), from FY 2022-2025.

Three states used the MHBG funded Technical Assistance/Transformation Transfer initiative contract to train their public mental health workforces, including peer services staff, on the specific needs of LGBTQI+ youth with SMI/SED and develop and provide specific trainings for crisis services teams to assist youth with SMI/SED in crisis.

In addition, the Michigan Department of Health is utilizing MHBG funding to support the development of LGBTQI+ recovery homes in an effort to more adequately provide safe housing for this disparity population.

SAMHSA encourages other SMHAs to utilize their MHBG funding to engage LGBTQI+ youth with SMI/SED in similar innovative ways.

Child and Family Serving Grants:

BSCA provides vital resources to support the mental health of children and families across the country. On December 31, 2022, SAMHSA [awarded \\$185.7 million in funding](#) for 299 child and family-serving grant recipients: Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT), Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma (ReCAST), Trauma-Informed Services in Schools,

National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI), and Project Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (Project AWARE). These grantees are supporting mental health efforts across 231 cities in 47 states, DC, and three territories. Grants were awarded for four years, and grantees will complete their projects no later than December 2026.

Project AWARE grants support the development of a sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services. Grantees have undertaken a number of efforts to support LGBTQI+ mental health, including the following:

- The Mental Health and Recovery Board of Union County, based in Marysville, OH, utilized Project AWARE funding to support LGBTQI+ youth activities and employ an LGBTQI+ specialized therapist.
- Project AWARE Bradley in East Providence, RI, supported an online continuing education course “Suicide & Non-suicidal Self-Injury Among Sexual & Gender Minority Adolescents: A Stress Perspective.”
- The Hawaii State Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Project AWARE grant supported the formation of a Sexual and Gender Minority & HIDOE Collaboration Workgroup; training for students and staff; engagement with Gay-Straight/Genders & Sexualities Alliances clubs at schools; and supportive youth forums in partnership with the state legislature.

Project AWARE grantees funded either through BSCA or other SAMHSA Project AWARE funding may undertake similar activities with their funds to support LGBTQI+ youth.

National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI) is a program that improves the quality of trauma treatment and services in communities for children, adolescents, and their families across the country who experience or witness traumatic events. NCTSI grantees have engaged in several efforts to support LGBTQI+ mental health:

- Children’s Aid Society in New York, NY, which works with families and youth impacted by domestic violence and inter-personal violence, provided a training “Intro to Trauma-Informed Care with LGBTQI+ Children, Youth & Their Families.”
- The University of Iowa hosted a Native Roundtable celebrating Two-Spirit Pride and an Indian Youth podcast.
- NCTSI grantees in the following locations utilized grant funding to train staff on LGBTQI+ trauma-informed approaches:
 - Memorial Hermann Hospital, Texas Medical Center (Southeast Texas)
 - L.U.K Crisis Center (Central Massachusetts)
 - Centerstone of Tennessee (Tennessee and Kentucky)
 - Mountain Comprehensive (Eastern Kentucky and Central Appalachia)
 - Youth and Family Alliance (Austin and Travis Counties, Texas)
 - University of Missouri, St. Louis (Missouri)

NCTSI grantees can engage in these and other activities that support LGBTQI+ youth impacted by trauma including those who have survived so-called “conversion therapy.”

Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) grants increase mental health literacy by preparing and training individuals and communities to respond appropriately and safely to persons with mental health conditions to enable early intervention. MHAT grantees have used funds to train mental health and related workforce, school/higher education systems, first responders, law enforcement, diverse human service organizations, and other community members.

- Chenango Health Network in Norwich, NY provides Mental Health First Aid training to members of the local community and educates community members on LGBTQI+ terminology, health disparities, resources, and healthcare access needs.
- FORGE anchored in Milwaukee, WI, is an organization that reduces the impact of trauma on transgender/non-binary survivors and communities by empowering service providers, advocating for systems reform, and connecting survivors to healing support. FORGE is using its MHAT grant to increase the number of transgender and nonbinary individuals who can access appropriate and respectful mental health support. FORGE has developed and conducted trainings related to mental health support and de-escalation tactics.
- The Los Angeles LGBT Center's RISE (Recognize Intervene Support Empower) project seeks to address local barriers like the lack of LGBTQI+-affirming mental health services and mental health promotion by training professionals who encounter LGBTQI+ youth in systems of care in the innovative RISE curriculum as well as the evidence-based Mental Health First Aid training.

Other MHAT grantees may undertake similar activities with their funds to increase mental health literacy and support LGBTQI+ youth.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

BSCA provided significant additional funding to expand the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and help strengthen the crisis care system across the country. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides 24/7 support for people who may be struggling or in crisis. State, Territory and Tribal grants were awarded with the BSCA funding and some of the grantees are using their funds to address suicide and crisis care among the LGBTQI+ population.

- New Hampshire is utilizing cultural brokers – individuals who help bridge cultural gaps and link between groups – from various communities, including LGBTQI+ youth and young adults to ensure 988 Lifeline services are culturally relevant and accessible. This work supports a comprehensive data collection process to inform the cultural responsiveness of New Hampshire's crisis system and to better understand barriers to utilizing the 988 system as well as offering tangible next steps to strengthen New Hampshire's 988 Lifeline Centers.
- Wabanaki Public Health, a tribal grantee, is working closely with the Wabanaki Two Spirit Alliance, whose mission is to represent the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical well-being and interests of Two Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQI+ individuals and groups in Wabanaki territory. With the grant, they are developing a cultural humility training in collaboration with Maine's primary 988 Lifeline Center, The Opportunity

Alliance, to ensure 988 Counselors in Maine are knowledgeable about supporting Two Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQI+ individuals.

- In Montana, the state’s primary 988 Lifeline Center, Help Center, is providing an LGBTQI+ Ally Training to identify strategies to incorporate into the Center’s Follow-Up Program to ensure a safe and empowering space for Montana’s LGBTQI+ community as well as on inclusive language and policies. Additionally, 988 counselors participated in several LGBTQI+ friendly events, providing information about services and returning with resource information to equip 988 Counselors with tools needed to position the Center as a community ally.

SAMHSA encourages 988 State, Territory, and Tribal grantees to address the needs of the LGBTQI+ population and to promote the specialized services for LGBTQI+ youth. LGBTQI+ youth and young adults who want to connect with a counselor specifically focused on meeting their needs can text “Pride” to 988, call 988 and select option 3, or access the service via chat on 988lifeline.org.

Conclusion:

These examples highlight some of the important work that has been done by SAMHSA grantees to support LGBTQI+ mental health. SAMHSA acknowledges that there are many additional examples of grantees using BSCA and other funding to support LGBTQI+ mental health and appreciates the work of all grantees.

To learn more about SAMHSA’s efforts to address LGBTQI+ individuals with and at risk for behavioral health conditions, visit: www.samhsa.gov/lgbtqi.