



YOUTH SERVICES

**For Immediate Release**

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## **At-risk LGBTQ Youth Population Lack Education, Job and Medical Options**

*Larkin Street Youth Services Brief Signifies Challenges LGBTQ Young People Face*

**SAN FRANCISCO—Oct. 13, 2009**—Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco's leading provider of housing and support services for homeless and at-risk youth ages 12 to 24, recently released its research brief, *"Best Practices for Meeting the Needs of LGBTQ Homeless Youth,"* highlighting the unique challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The report's findings underscore the growing gap between the increasing demand for educational, housing, job assistance, medical and social programs among this vulnerable homeless youth population and their viable options.

The Larkin Street *"Best Practices for Meeting the Needs of LGBTQ Homeless Youth"* research brief details the extraordinary challenges faced by LGBTQ youth living on the streets today:

- Many LGBTQ youth have fled from the discrimination they encountered in their homes or communities based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Only half of Larkin Street's LGBTQ youth are from California.
- Forty-six percent of Larkin Street's LGBTQ youth became homeless before age 19, and these youth often leave home before learning life skills and, therefore, are more susceptible to outside influences.
- Approximately half of Larkin Street's LGBTQ youth have their high school diploma or GED. These individuals are even more likely than at-risk heterosexual youth to find themselves in circumstances where they trade sex for money, shelter or other basic needs which puts them at greater jeopardy for exposure to HIV, mental health issues and substance abuse. Twenty-nine percent of LGBTQ youth said they participated in survival sex compared to 12 percent of non-LGBTQ youth at Larkin Street.
- Half of LGBTQ youth at Larkin Street have no health insurance and 26 percent of LGBTQ youth arriving at Larkin Street intake programs in 2009 were in poor to fair health and are twice as likely as non-LGBTQ youth to be under psychiatric care.

Larkin Street's programs currently reach more than 60 percent of the total estimated population of 5,700 homeless youth living on San Francisco's streets. Accordingly, over 30 percent of Larkin Street's youth self-identify as LGBTQ versus an average of 3 to 5 percent in the overall U.S. population signifying a need with citywide reach. Demand for emergency services by all homeless youth in Larkin Street's drop-in and emergency shelter programs continues to increase and has risen by 25 percent already in 2009.

Larkin Street, in collaboration with other public and nonprofit service providers in San Francisco, pioneered the Castro Youth Housing Initiative in 2004. This is one of the first, and one of the few, housing solutions for LGBTQ youth. This comprehensive model combines case management, access to mental health and substance abuse services, education, employment services and health care for homeless LGBTQ youth. The success rate of this program is high with seventy-seven percent of youth housed within the Castro Youth Housing Initiative moving on to stable housing when they leave the program.

For a complete copy of *"Best Practices for Meeting the Needs of LGBTQ Homeless Youth,"* please visit [www.larkinstreetyouth.org](http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org) or contact Elizabeth Amrhein in Larkin Street's Research and Evaluation Department at 415-673-0911, ext. 229.

### **About Larkin Street Youth Services**

Founded in 1984, San Francisco's Larkin Street Youth Services is a globally recognized leader providing innovative, effective housing, medical, social and educational services to at-risk homeless and runaway youth ages 12-24 across 25 programs and 13 sites. Eighty percent of youth who complete Larkin Street's comprehensive programs exit street life. For more information, please visit [www.larkinstreetyouth.org](http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org).