

# Program Evaluation of Fiesta Youth, a Nonprofit Organization that Provides Social Support to LGBTQ+ Youth

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## BACKGROUND

- 50-40% of LGBTQ+ youth have adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Schnarrs et al., 2019; Sterzing et al., 2017).
- Mitigating ACEs: Provide community-level support to the youth (Ahuja et al., 2015; Mustanski et al., 2013; Russell & Fish, 2016).
- Create community-based organizations that provide social support to the youth (Ahuja et al., 2015; Mustanski et al., 2013; Russell & Fish, 2016).



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## METHODS

- Study design: Outcome and Formative Program Evaluations (cdc, 1999; Zeller-Berkman, 2010).
- Outcome: Mental Health Measures (n = 73) youth.
- Measures: Wellbeing (Diener et al., 2009); Self-Esteem (Robins et al., 2001); Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988).
- Formative: Interview (n = 20) youth.
- Example Questions: What coping methods do you use to address the stress, loneliness, or fear that comes with the pandemic? What could Fiesta Youth do to make pandemic more bearable for LGBTQ+ youth?

## RESULTS

### Outcome Evaluation Results:

- Over a six month period, newcomer LGBT+ youth (n = 47) relative to regular LGBT+ Fiesta Youth attendees (n = 26) had no significant difference in rates of depression or social support.
- Of 26 youth, the top three activities to cope outside of Fiesta Youth included streaming services (n = 21), listening to music (n = 19), and video games (n = 18).
- Discrepancy was noted in sources of social support (time with family n = 4, time with SO n = 10, time with friends n = 15).

### Formative Evaluation Results:

- **Facilitators:** The youth viewed the weekly meetings as a way to cope with depression, anxiety, and loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Also, beyond the pandemic, the youth viewed the weekly meetings as a space to receive social support that validates their sexual and gender minority identities and make connections with youth who are facing similar emotional and social challenges.
- **Barriers:** The majority of youth prefer the in-person weekly meetings to the online zoom meetings. The in-person meetings give youth the freedom to connect with specific friends.
- A few youth mentioned that they would prefer to attend age-specific meetings. For example, have one meeting for high-school age youth and one meeting for middle-school age youth.
- A few youth mentioned that their caregivers were not supportive of their sexual and gender minority identities and they had to be stealth about attending the meetings.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Recommendations:

- In the zoom meetings, create break out rooms where the youth can socialize with specific friends.
- Once a month, FY could offer age specific meetings (middle school age and high school age).
- FY could organize a mutual aid network among the youth. This offering would provide youth with ways to connect with the youth outside of the meetings. This would create a way to work around caregivers who are not supportive.
- FY could play an active role in bringing LGBT+ youth closer to their families by organizing events inclusive of their care providers

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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