

**CHAPTER 8**

**LGBT YOUTH AND  
SUBSTANCE USE**

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

LGBT youth are at elevated risk for substance use in comparison to heterosexual and gender-conforming peers. This chapter explores research on LGBT youth behavioral health, risk factors, and treatment needs.

OVERVIEW

Adolescent substance use increases the risk of adult substance use problems, and LGBT youth present with a higher prevalence of substance use than their heterosexual peers. Risk and protective factors are related to the initiation and ongoing use of drugs, alcohol, and nicotine. LGBT youth experience a confluence of general and LGBT-specific factors. The latter include minority stress, the difficulties of the coming-out process, family rejection, school and peer rejection, unhealthy coping strategies, histories of trauma owing to physical and sexual abuse, and homelessness. Several major providers have offered comprehensive recommendations for working with LGBT youth in clinical settings, and the role of family is highlighted. Also, substance abuse prevention strategies for LGBT youth are in development, including strategies focused on building resilience.

KEY TERMS

LGBT youth; LGBT youth substance use prevalence; protective factors; risk factors; minority stress; coming-out process; rejection; homelessness; coping strategies; trauma; childhood sexual abuse; LGBT youth treatment recommendations; prevention; family involvement; resilience

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### NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

- 1 Case study adapted from Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, *A Provider's Introduction to Substance Abuse Treatment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals* (Rockville, Md.: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2001), 103.
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