



YOUTHOUTLOOK

THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC VISION

OCTOBER 2022 - OCTOBER 2025



ABOUT THIS VISION

At Youth Outlook, we love to dream. Our staff and board of directors are pleased to share this strategic vision, launched at our 2022 Dare to Dream gala, which outlines our dreams for impacting the lives of LGBTQ+ youth, their families, and communities over the next three years. And you know the best thing about dreams? Making them come true—together.

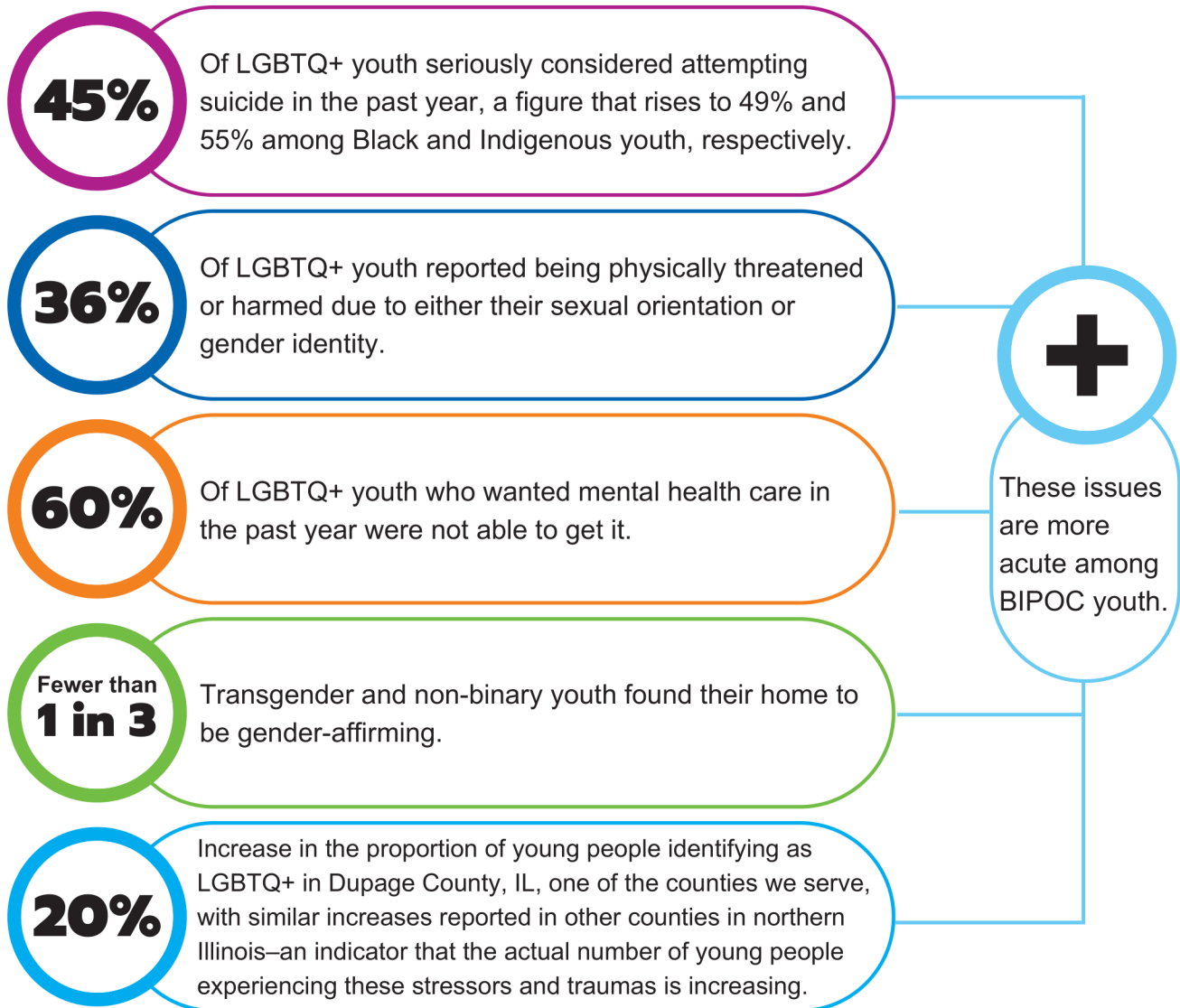
Care and Community Save and Enrich Lives

We all need community and collective care to thrive. This is especially true for LGBTQ+ young people. Yet, for far too many LGBTQ+ youth, care and community are not a given. The movement for our rights and wellbeing has made a lot of progress, but the hurdles preventing LGBTQ+ young folks from thriving are high, costly, and worsening in light of anti-LGBTQ+ political and cultural trends. National media highlight increasing conflict and vitriol at school board meetings over library books and transgender youth participating in sports, and whether schools should teach inclusive, affirming curriculum. From governors' mansions to state capitols, conservative politicians push “Don’t Say Gay” legislation that reaches into schools and homes, threatening parents seeking life-saving, gender-affirming healthcare for their children.



These trends inform the data that keep us up at night.

Consider the following from the Trevor Project 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health and the 2022 Illinois Youth Survey:



But through it all, we see bright spots emerging.

The 2022 Trevor Project Survey also found that LGBTQ+ youth who felt high social support from their family reported attempting suicide at less than half the rate of those who felt low or moderate social support. Youth living in a community accepting of LGBTQ+ people reported significantly lower rates of attempting suicide than those who do not.



WHO WE ARE





At Youth Outlook, we work directly with LGBTQ+ youth, their families, and their communities to create the care and community needed for youth to thrive.

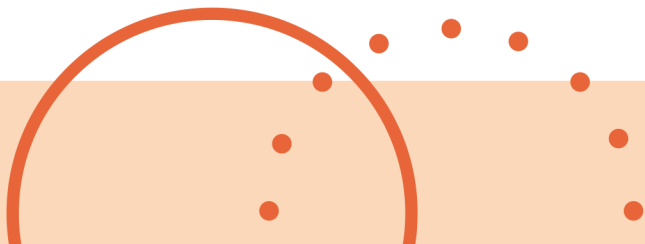
Mission

Youth Outlook celebrates, empowers, advocates for, and provides services to meet the ever-evolving needs of LGBTQ+ youth and their families, friends, and communities.

Values

Our values guide everything we do. We are a diverse team that strives to create the best outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth. At Youth Outlook, we value:

-  *Youth as experts of their experience*
Youth lead and inform our work at all levels.
-  *Non-judgemental, anti-racist attitudes*
We embrace and value individual differences inside and outside our organization.
-  *Learning, making mistakes, and growing*
Living an empowered life is an achievable goal.
-  *Harm reduction and honoring confidentiality*
Our spaces are trauma-informed and anti-oppressive.



OUR APPROACH

To create inclusive communities, our staff and volunteers use three core approaches to programming:

1 LGBTQ+ youth programming

That offers refuge and affirmation, fosters new social networks, and builds leadership skills on topics like advocacy and solidarity. Programs include weekly drop-in centers for LGBTQ+ youth across northern Illinois, Transcend groups specifically for transgender and non-binary youth and young adults, and our Youth Leadership Program. These spaces are powerful antidotes to the isolation and hostility many LGBTQ+ young people, especially trans and non-binary young people, experience on a daily basis. Supported and facilitated by caring, trained staff, youth co-create their experience in drop-in centers and other programs and leave with the energy, knowledge, and connection needed to face the world, grow, and thrive.

2 Parent and family programming

To give families the tools, community, knowledge, and resources to support their children and foster affirming communities. Working with families is powerful because it can affect those in closest contact with LGBTQ+ youth with the potential to make the biggest difference in their lives. In addition to serving as a resource for any caregiver to a LGBTQ+ young person, Youth Outlook's Thrive parent and caregiver group is a safe, confidential space for parents to share experiences with fellow parents and access trained staff who provide resources and education.

3 Community education and professional development

In partnership with school systems, businesses, physical and mental health professionals, social service providers, and others. LGBTQ+ youth exist in all of our communities. We provide training, education, and consultation on policies and best practices for making community spaces affirming for LGBTQ+ youth. Schools are especially important, and schools with inclusive, affirming policies and curriculum for LGBTQ+ students are safer. When we support LGBTQ+ students to stay in school, they are more likely to stay out of child welfare, homelessness, and criminal legal systems.



Since opening our first drop-in center in 1998, demand and partnership have led to our present 14 drop-in centers across 7 counties along with a growing, nationwide online community that reaches over 400+ young people per year and counting.

**We are here, we are queer, we are allies, we are parents, we are youth,
we are friends, we are staff, we are volunteers, we are learners, we are
teachers, we are advocates. We are a home away from home.
We are Youth Outlook.**

“Youth Outlook is one of the most important things in my life in all honesty. Being able to be with friends and just have fun is something I wish I was able to have access to earlier in life. For me, being able to guide and help younger kids is probably the part I love most, since I can understand what they're going through and let them know that it does get better.” - Ash, Drop-in Center Attendee and Youth Leader

“I will be forever grateful to Youth Outlook and all of the volunteers. My child was able to go to a place and freely be themselves. My child grew in confidence and, within a year, was a peer volunteer. My child would not be this amazing 18-year-old without all of the love, support, encouragement, time, patience, glitter, and knowledge they were lucky enough to receive from Youth Outlook.” -Parent

“Besides offering a great overview of language, the presenter offered a variety of ways we can support LGBTQ+ youth and their families, including resources that can be used with individuals, as well as resources to share with youth and families. Excellent presentation!” -Professional Development Attendee

“Youth Outlook is a home, it is hope, and it's family. Everything that makes being queer a struggle can be eased through the Youth Outlook community.” -Juno, Drop-in Center Attendee and Youth Leader

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Youth Outlook supports LGBTQ+ youth and helps communities thrive, and we are incredibly proud of our journey to date. And baby, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

We must stay vigilant to build a bright future for LGBTQ+ youth, their families, and their communities. Getting there means we need to invest in our people, our skills, and our reach.

By the 2025 Dare to Dream gala, we hope to be celebrating the realization of the following dreams:

- 1** Youth experiencing mental health and other crises receive support from trained adults; Youth Outlook enlists professionals and builds the capacity of staff and volunteers with training and professional development to adeptly navigate conflicts and crises at and beyond drop-in centers.
- 2** Parents and guardians of LGBTQ+ youth can access Youth Outlook caregiver groups in every community Youth Outlook offers youth drop-in centers.
- 3** At least ten more schools adopt and implement policies and programs to better educate all students and staff in ways that affirm and support LGBTQ+ youth, including more safe spaces for youth and adults alike and not exclusive to implementing affirming state laws, because of Youth Outlook's support.
- 4** Youth Outlook co-creates a strategy and menu of resources on a variety of topics in multiple, accessible formats with and for families and allies to better build LGBTQ+ youth's base of support; resources may include retreats, workshops, online resources, or other media.
- 5** BIPOC youth participate in programming at rates proportional to local demographics supported by diverse and representative staff and a Board of Directors driving inclusivity, diversity, and belonging organization-wide.
- 6** Youth Outlook is ready for impact at a greater scale and with greater strategic insight equipped with streamlined and standardized offerings, procedures, and methodologies and informed by landscape assessments of key data and trends in need.

JOIN US IN BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Youth Outlook is working to raise an additional \$1,000,000 to achieve our dreams. Each dollar will go toward our direct services and strategic goals. To reach our target and make our dreams come true, there are four ways you or your organization can help:

1 Grant Opportunities

Youth Outlook is looking to increase new and existing philanthropic support for our work. Get in touch with Youth Outlook staff to discuss how investing in Youth Outlook can further your strategic grantmaking.

2 Vision of Pride Society

Calling all individual donors! Join our Vision of Pride Society by committing to giving at least \$1,000 per year for five years. By joining Vision of Pride, you are providing sustainable and reliable funding toward our core mission of creating safe and affirming spaces and programming for LGBTQ+ youth, their families, and communities. Or, talk to our staff about an endowment!

3 Education and Professional Development

Hire Youth Outlook to support your school, agency, or business's DEI and professional development goals. We provide customized workshops and presentations to meet your needs, increasing your organization and staff's capacity to build a better world for LGBTQ+ people.

4 Host a Fundraiser for Youth Outlook

Consider Youth Outlook for your next company event or fundraiser! Whether it's Giving Tuesday or your annual summer picnic, inviting donations or selling tickets to benefit Youth Outlook's programs can make a huge impact and contribution.



This dream is dedicated to our incredible community of young people, caring families, excellent educators, dedicated volunteers, and superstar staff who inspired and informed these ideas.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Youth Outlook!

We can't wait to hear from you.



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