

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2012

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Tackles LGBT Suicide

By Kellan Baker and Josh Garcia

Kellan Baker is a health policy analyst with the LGBT Research and Communications Project at the Center for American Progress and a member of the Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention LGBT Task Force. Josh Garcia is an intern with the Project.

Before he completed suicide at the age of 26 in 2010, [Joseph Jefferson](#) recorded his final words on Facebook: "I could not bear the burden of living as a gay man of color in a world grown cold and hateful towards those of us who live and love differently than the so-called 'social mainstream.'"

Though LGBT suicide is frequently portrayed as a wholly youth phenomenon, Joseph was an LGBT activist who had built a life for himself as an adult after getting through what many people assume to be the only tough part of an LGBT person's life—adolescence.

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#), the public-private partnership aimed at saving the more than 34,000 lives in the United States lost every year to suicide, has taken a lead in changing public misperceptions about LGBT suicide. In particular, the Action Alliance task force that concentrates on the LGBT population has changed its name from the LGBT Youth Task Force to the LGBT Populations Task Force, acknowledging the struggles with suicide ideation, suicide attempts, and death by suicide that many LGBT people confront at different points in their lives.

The reasons that [suicide is a lifelong concern for many LGBT people](#) are complex and dynamic. These risk factors include family rejection, lack of social support, lack of access to culturally competent healthcare providers, and the stress of living with discrimination and prejudice.

Because of family or employment obligations, many LGBT adults, like most LGBT youth, do not get to choose where they live and work—often leaving them trapped in hostile environments with family members, co-workers, or neighbors who do not accept them.

Certain protective factors may mitigate these risks. Such factors include family acceptance, affirming and culturally competent mental and behavioral health services, and policies that extend legal protections and promote acceptance.

Indeed, the past several years have seen several advances across the country on behalf of fairness for LGBT people. New York state passed marriage equality for same-sex couples in 2011, and Washington state and Maryland followed suit in 2012. And, recently, the federal government has taken an active role in implementing LGBT-inclusive laws and policies.

But much remains to be done to help eliminate suicidal thoughts and behavior among LGBT individuals. In addition to increased legal protections and working to change stubborn social prejudices, there is a particularly pressing need for further research and data collection regarding mental health and suicide among the gay and transgender population.

Currently, there are [no national data](#) regarding suicidal ideation or suicide rates among the LGBT population as a whole. Nor are there sufficient data regarding the experiences of specific segments of the LGBT population, including LGBT youth and elders, transgender adults, and LGBT people of color, who may be at increased risk because of the multiple burdens of discrimination they bear.

Thus, as part of the implementation of the upcoming *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* (NSSP), the Action Alliance must take the lead in pushing for nationally representative data on suicide rates among the LGBT population. These data will inform the development and implementation of evidence-based interventions that can help protect the lives of LGBT people.

Such interventions may include initiatives fostering resilience and help-seeking behaviors among LGBT people, connecting them with providers who are both familiar with mental and behavioral health issues and comfortable accepting and respecting their LGBT clients, and promoting supportive school, work, and other environments.

In addition to driving research that can guide efforts to prevent LGBT suicide, the ultimate purpose of the Action Alliance is to save lives by decreasing the rate of suicide in our country. And to do this, each one of us—whether LGBT or ally, pastor or policymaker, researcher or activist—must respond to the moral imperative to help build a world where LGBT people count and are counted, and where they can live their lives free from discrimination, harassment, and the violence of suicide.

Posted by [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) at 11:55 AM



Labels: [advocacy](#), [Center for American Progress](#), [data](#), [hope](#), [Josh Garcia](#), [Kellan Baker](#), [LGBT policy](#), [LGBT](#), [LGBT law](#), [LGBT youth](#), [mental health](#), [same sex](#), [suicidal ideation](#), [suicide](#), [suicide prevention](#)



ABOUT THIS BLOG

[Action Alliance](#)

[View my complete profile](#)

OUR LINKS

[Action Alliance Website](#)

[Action Alliance Leadership](#)

[Sign up for our newsletter](#)

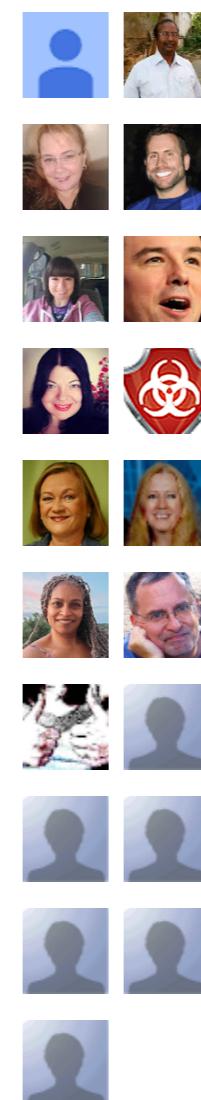
[Find us on Facebook](#)

[Connect with us on Twitter](#)

[View our videos on YouTube](#)

FOLLOWERS

Followers (19)



[Follow](#)

BLOG ARCHIVE

▶ [2015](#) (7)

▶ [2014](#) (8)

▶ [2013](#) (5)

▼ [2012](#) (5)

▶ [September](#) (1)

▶ [August](#) (2)

▼ [April](#) (1)

[National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Ta...](#)

▶ [January](#) (1)

▶ [2011](#) (6)



[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)