



**PREVENTION OF LGBTIQ+ YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**

**MANUAL FOR YOUTH WORKERS**



**QUEER NEST**

## Prevention of LGBTIQ+ youth homelessness - Manual for Youth Workers

---

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

#### HOMELESSNESS AND LGBTIQ+ YOUTH

##### *Housing Exclusion*

- Understanding the Concept of Housing Exclusion for Young LGBTIQ+ Individuals
- The Specific Impact and Consequences of Housing Exclusion and Homelessness on LGBTIQ+ Youth

##### *Minority Stress*

- Minority stress and LGBTIQ+ Youth
- Mitigating the Consequences of Minority Stress for LGBTIQ+ Youth: *The Role of Youth Work and Youth Workers*

2

---

#### PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS - *Fostering Stability and Dignity for All*

##### *Principles of prevention*

##### *Levels of prevention*

- Primary Prevention of Homelessness: Addressing the Root Causes
- Secondary Prevention of Homelessness: Early Interventions to Mitigate Crisis
- Tertiary Prevention of Homelessness: Providing Stability and Support for Those in Crisis

##### *Prevention strategies*

#### GOOD PRACTICES



**QUEER NEST**

## **HOMELESSNESS AND LGBTIQ+ YOUTH**

### **HOUSING EXCLUSION**

In the course of our work, we draw upon concepts that significantly shape our understanding of the existential challenges faced by young LGBTIQ+ individuals and all the associated risk factors and consequences. Understanding housing exclusion and homelessness is of paramount importance if we are to grasp the complexity and dynamism of inadequate housing situations. Simultaneously, we must take into account certain specific circumstances that accompany LGBTIQ+ individuals and social phenomena that profoundly influence their daily lives and life trajectories.

Housing exclusion is a multifaceted societal issue that transcends mere homelessness, delving into the broader realm of inadequate housing situations that compromise an individual's overall well-being and sense of security. This complex concept encompasses a wide array of circumstances, conditions, and experiences that hinder individuals and communities from enjoying stable, safe, and dignified housing arrangements. To gain a comprehensive understanding of housing exclusion, it is essential to explore its meaning, manifestations, causes, and the far-reaching implications it has on individuals and society.

The concept of housing exclusion and homelessness is derived from the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion – ETHOS, which was developed by the organization FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless) with the aim of fostering a more unified and comprehensive understanding and monitoring of homelessness in the European context. Its first version was released in 2005, and since then, it has been adapted and enhanced. The latest version, translated into several European languages was published in 2017.

The numerous translations represent a significant document for the national professional communities dealing with homelessness, as it facilitates both a unified understanding of the issue and the use of standardized concepts and language in research. Regardless of the language in which it is read, the typology provides a categorization of various housing situations that are considered inadequate. At its core, housing exclusion refers to the systematic denial of access to adequate and secure housing. It signifies the inability of individuals or households to obtain and maintain a place to live that ensures their physical, psychological, and social well-being. Housing exclusion manifests in various ways, extending beyond literal homelessness to encompass precarious living conditions, overcrowding, inadequate housing, and experiences of violence within the home:



**QUEER NEST**

### **1. Rooflessness (Rough Sleeping):**

Rooflessness, often referred to as rough sleeping, represents the most acute form of housing exclusion. It entails the complete absence of shelter, with individuals resorting to sleeping in outdoor environments, often exposed to the elements and lacking even the most basic accommodations.

#### **EXAMPLES**

- A homeless person, wrapped in layers of clothing and blankets, seeks refuge on a park bench or in a makeshift tent under a bridge during freezing winter nights.
- An individual experiencing severe economic hardship finds themselves without any form of shelter, resorting to sleeping in doorways, on sidewalks, or in public parks.
- In densely populated urban areas, rough sleepers may form makeshift communities in tents or makeshift shelters, forming vulnerable and marginalized pockets within the city.

4

### **2. Houselessness (Temporary Shelter):**

Houselessness refers to a state where individuals have access to temporary forms of shelter, such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, or institutional accommodations. While they may have a place to sleep, it lacks the stability and permanence associated with secure housing.

#### **EXAMPLES**

- A homeless family with children takes refuge in a local homeless shelter, sharing communal spaces with other families in similar circumstances.
- A person fleeing domestic violence seeks safety in a women's shelter, where they are provided a temporary place to stay while they work towards securing more permanent housing.



**QUEER NEST**

- Youth experiencing homelessness find shelter in drop-in centres or hostels, where they have a bed for the night but must vacate during the day

### **3. Insecure Housing (Risk of Exclusion):**

Insecure housing denotes living situations characterized by ongoing uncertainty and vulnerability. Individuals or families in insecure housing often face the imminent risk of exclusion due to factors such as uncertain rental conditions, looming evictions, or exposure to violence within their living environment.

#### **EXAMPLES**

- A tenant faces eviction due to rising rents in their neighbourhood, causing anxiety and instability in their housing situation.
- A family residing in substandard housing conditions is at constant risk of eviction because their landlord refuses to make necessary repairs.
- Individuals who are victims of domestic violence remain in insecure housing situations, fearing reprisal from their abuser if they attempt to leave.

5

### **4. Inappropriate Living Conditions (Substandard Housing):**

Inappropriate living conditions encompass a range of substandard and often unsafe housing environments. These conditions can include living in trailers, cars, illegal camps, overcrowded spaces, or structures with structural and health hazards, rendering them unsuitable for habitation.

#### **EXAMPLES**

- A group of migrant workers share cramped living quarters in overcrowded trailers with inadequate sanitation facilities and ventilation.



**QUEER NEST**

- Homeless individuals may gather in makeshift encampments in vacant lots, lacking access to proper sanitation and basic utilities.
- Families in poverty may occupy dilapidated, hazardous housing units, where issues like mould, lead, or structural instability pose severe health risks.

Expanding on these housing exclusion categories with detailed descriptions and examples underscores the multifaceted nature of the issue. Each category represents a different facet of the complex challenge of housing exclusion, highlighting the diverse circumstances individuals and families may face in their struggle to secure safe and stable housing.

The ETHOS typology, along with other scholarly literature addressing housing exclusion and homelessness, underscores the importance of broadening our understanding of the concept of homelessness and appreciating the numerous dynamics that shape inadequate housing situations. Such situations extend well beyond literal homelessness, as they encompass a wide range of circumstances and conditions that do not fall under the category of suitable housing. Apart from the obvious, such as a lack of sleeping space and shelter in homeless shelters, we must also consider situations where individuals lack the necessary material conditions for habitation (access to electricity, water, heating, inadequate living spaces due to poor construction or age) and instances where individuals lack physical and emotional security. By adopting this comprehensive understanding of housing exclusion and homelessness, we can recognize that individuals who experience various forms of violence (psychological, physical, material, sexual) or live in fear thereof are also at risk of housing insecurity.

6

## **UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF HOUSING EXCLUSION FOR YOUNG LGBTIQ+ INDIVIDUALS**

Housing exclusion is a pervasive societal challenge, one that resonates deeply within the lives of countless individuals worldwide. Yet, the experience of housing exclusion is far from uniform, and for some of the most vulnerable members of society—LGBTIQ+ youth—it takes on a uniquely complex and often harrowing dimension. To comprehensively understand the profound impact of housing exclusion on LGBTIQ+ youth, it is essential to delve into the intricate interplay of social power relations, minority stress, and broader societal dynamics that contribute to their heightened vulnerability.

Housing exclusion is not confined to economic hardships or individual misfortunes; it is an issue deeply rooted in the structural imbalances of power that pervade society. LGBTIQ+ youth, who



## QUEER NEST

already contend with the complexities of navigating their sexual orientation and gender identity, find themselves ensnared within these power dynamics that shape their access to safe and stable housing. Discrimination, economic disparities, and familial rejection are just a few facets of this multifaceted issue that conspire to render LGBTIQ+ youth more susceptible to housing exclusion.

At the heart of this vulnerability lies the concept of **social power relations**. These relations are woven into the fabric of society, dictating who holds privilege and who is marginalized. Discrimination and stigmatization of LGBTIQ+ individuals remain pervasive, manifesting in housing contexts where prospective tenants may be denied shelter or subjected to hostile living environments due to prejudice. Economic disparities within LGBTIQ+ communities further exacerbate this vulnerability, as limited access to stable employment and financial resources can hinder the ability to secure housing independently. The impact of family dynamics, heavily influenced by societal norms and expectations regarding sexuality and gender, cannot be understated. Family rejection following a youth's coming out experience often results in homelessness or housing instability, pushing them further to the margins of society.

However, the vulnerability of LGBTIQ+ youth to housing exclusion extends beyond these power dynamics alone. The concept of minority stress, as conceptualized by psychologist Ilan Meyer, adds a layer of complexity. This theory acknowledges the additional stressors and challenges that marginalized groups experience due to their minority status. For LGBTIQ+ youth, the stressors are compounded by their age, leading to a unique set of challenges that affect their housing situation profoundly. Constantly concealing one's identity, whether due to fear of discrimination or violence, places immense psychological pressure on these youth, affecting their overall well-being and housing stability. Bullying and harassment, often more prevalent in schools and communities, contribute to social isolation, trauma, and, in the worst cases, homelessness. The lack of safe and affirming environments, both within families and society at large, exacerbates minority stress, as LGBTIQ+ youth may find themselves in hostile or non-affirming living situations, further heightening their vulnerability to housing exclusion.

Furthermore, the notion of intersectionality recognizes that individuals hold multiple social identities simultaneously, compounding their experiences of discrimination and marginalization. This intersectionality is especially relevant to LGBTIQ+ youth, who may find themselves at the crossroads of various axes of identity. Factors such as race and ethnicity, gender identity, and disability intersect with their LGBTQ+ identity, presenting unique challenges. For instance, LGBTIQ+ youth of color may experience housing exclusion differently due to the intersection of racial and sexual minority identities, encountering racism within LGBTQ+ spaces or facing immigration-related housing challenges. Transgender and gender-diverse youth grapple with additional layers of discrimination, often resulting from transphobia, and may struggle to access gender-affirming housing options. LGBTIQ+ youth with disabilities may encounter barriers to safe and suitable housing, as societal attitudes toward both disability and LGBTQ+ identities intersect, creating



**QUEER NEST**

distinct challenges. Understanding how all of the abovementioned factors intersect sheds light on the heightened vulnerability of LGBTIQ+ youth to housing exclusion:

### **1. Discrimination and Rejection:**

Young LGBTIQ+ individuals often experience discrimination and rejection from their families and communities due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. This rejection can lead to homelessness or precarious housing situations as they are forced to leave unsupportive environments. For instance, a transgender teenager may be kicked out of their home by unsupportive parents, leaving them without a stable place to live.

### **2. Housing Insecurity:**

Housing insecurity for young LGBTIQ+ people can manifest as the fear of being "outed" or facing harassment from roommates or neighbours. This fear can compel them to hide their identity, leading to a sense of isolation and anxiety. An example might be a lesbian college student who conceals her identity out of fear of discrimination from her roommates, affecting her mental health and well-being.

### **3. Unsafe Shelters:**

Shelters designed to provide refuge for homeless individuals are not always safe or affirming spaces for young LGBTIQ+ people. These shelters may lack policies and staff training to address the unique needs of this demographic. A gay teenager who seeks shelter in a facility that is not LGBTQ+-friendly may face harassment or abuse from other residents.

### **4. Economic Disparities:**

Young LGBTIQ+ individuals often grapple with economic disparities, as discrimination can limit their access to quality education and employment opportunities. This economic disadvantage can make it challenging to secure stable housing. For example, a non-binary person may encounter job discrimination, making it difficult to afford safe and affirming housing options.





**QUEER NEST**

### **5. Mental Health Impact:**

Housing exclusion can have a profound impact on the mental health of young LGBTIQ+ individuals. The stress of navigating discrimination, homelessness, or unstable housing can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. LGBTIQ+ youth experiencing homelessness may struggle with depression and suicidal thoughts due to the challenges they face in accessing safe housing.

### **6. Hidden Homelessness:**

Some young LGBTIQ+ people may experience "hidden homelessness," where they do not fit the traditional image of homelessness but lack stable housing. They might couch-surf, stay with friends, or engage in survival sex work to secure a place to sleep. This form of housing exclusion often goes unnoticed and unaddressed.

### **7. Housing Vulnerability in Transition:**

Young LGBTIQ+ individuals going through transitions, such as coming out or transitioning gender, are particularly vulnerable to housing exclusion. Their housing situation may become unstable as they navigate these changes. For instance, a transgender person undergoing gender-affirming surgery might face discrimination from their landlord or roommates during their transition, leading to eviction or unsafe housing.

9

Housing exclusion among LGBTIQ+ youth is a multifaceted issue intricately woven into the fabric of social power relations, minority stress, and the intersectionality of identities. Addressing this pressing concern requires a comprehensive approach, one that dismantles the discriminatory structures and biases that perpetuate the vulnerability of these youth. It necessitates the promotion of acceptance, the creation of safe and affirming environments, and the provision of affordable housing options. Supporting LGBTIQ+ youth in their housing needs extends beyond addressing economic disparities; it is a matter of recognizing and challenging the complex social dynamics that shape their experiences and ensuring that they have equal access to secure and dignified housing.



**QUEER NEST**

## **THE SPECIFIC IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF HOUSING EXCLUSION AND HOMELESSNESS ON LGBTIQ+ YOUTH**

Housing exclusion and homelessness are particularly harsh and distinctive experiences for LGBTIQ+ youth. The intersection of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and age creates a unique set of challenges that intensify the impact of homelessness and housing exclusion. Understanding these specific consequences is crucial for crafting targeted interventions and policies that address the needs of this vulnerable population.

### **1. Mental Health Struggles:**

LGBTIQ+ youth experiencing homelessness are at a significantly higher risk of mental health issues compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. The stress of homelessness, coupled with the additional burden of discrimination and stigma related to their LGBTQ+ identities, can lead to depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Many homeless LGBTIQ+ youth face rejection from their families due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, compounding their emotional distress.

10

---

### **2. Increased Risk of Violence:**

Homeless LGBTIQ+ youth are disproportionately vulnerable to violence, including physical assault and sexual abuse. They may become targets of hate crimes due to their LGBTQ+ identities. The search for a safe place to sleep often forces them into dangerous situations and environments where they are at a heightened risk of victimization.

### **3. Survival Sex and Exploitation:**

To meet their basic needs for shelter, food, and clothing, some homeless LGBTIQ+ youth engage in survival sex—exchanging sexual favours for necessities. This risky behaviour exposes them to a range of physical and emotional dangers, including sexually transmitted infections, violence, and exploitation.



**QUEER NEST**

#### **4. Disrupted Education:**

Homelessness disrupts the education of LGBTIQ+ youth, exacerbating the challenges they face due to discrimination. These young individuals may have to change schools frequently, leading to academic gaps and hindering their future prospects. Access to educational resources becomes limited when they lack a stable place to study.

#### **5. Social Isolation and Rejection:**

Homeless LGBTIQ+ youth often face social isolation due to the fear of judgment and discrimination. They may withdraw from social networks and supportive communities, making it difficult for them to access resources and assistance.

#### **6. Disproportionate Risk of HIV/AIDS:**

LGBTIQ+ youth experiencing homelessness are at a higher risk of HIV/AIDS due to a lack of access to healthcare and safe sex resources. Limited knowledge about safe sexual practices and the absence of stable living environments contribute to this elevated risk.

11

#### **7. Criminalization and Discrimination:**

Some homeless LGBTIQ+ youth may be criminalized for engaging in activities related to homelessness, such as sleeping in public spaces or panhandling. Discrimination, both within the homeless community and society at large, compounds their vulnerability to mistreatment by law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

#### **8. Higher Rates of Substance Abuse:**

The stress and trauma associated with homelessness often lead to substance abuse as a coping mechanism. LGBTIQ+ youth may turn to drugs or alcohol to numb their pain and alleviate the emotional distress of their situation.



**QUEER NEST**

### **9. Limited Access to LGBTQ+ Support Services:**

Homeless shelters and service providers may not be equipped to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ+ youth. A lack of LGBTQ+-affirming environments and resources can deter these youth from seeking assistance.

### **10. Long-Term Impact:**

The consequences of housing exclusion and homelessness on LGBTQ+ youth can have lasting effects, hindering their social, economic, and psychological well-being well into adulthood. Breaking free from the cycle of homelessness becomes increasingly challenging as they age.

In summary, the impact and consequences of housing exclusion and homelessness are magnified for LGBTQ+ youth due to the intersection of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and age. These young individuals face heightened risks of mental health struggles, violence, survival sex, and social isolation. Their access to education, healthcare, and LGBTQ+ support services is often limited, compounding their challenges. Addressing the unique needs of homeless LGBTQ+ youth requires a comprehensive approach that includes safe and affirming housing, mental health support, and policies that combat discrimination and promote inclusion. Recognizing the specific consequences of housing exclusion for this population is essential for advocating for targeted solutions that prioritize their well-being and future prospects.

In addition to the unique vulnerabilities faced by LGBTQ+ youth, it's essential to acknowledge that housing exclusion and homelessness can affect straight and cisgender youth as well. However, LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately overrepresented within the homeless youth population, emphasizing the urgent need for tailored interventions and support. The insights gained from understanding the challenges faced by homeless LGBTQ+ youth are also valuable in supporting other marginalized and vulnerable groups of youth who experience housing exclusion. By addressing the intersectionality of identities and recognizing the common threads of discrimination and systemic barriers, we can develop more inclusive strategies that uplift all young individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or identities.



**QUEER NEST**

## **MINORITY STRESS**

Minority stress is a term that encapsulates the unique psychological and social stressors experienced by individuals who belong to marginalized or minority groups within a society. These stressors are a result of the discrimination, prejudice, and societal inequalities that these individuals face based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other characteristics that make them part of a minority group. Minority stress has gained increasing recognition in recent years as researchers and mental health professionals seek to understand its profound impact on the well-being and mental health of marginalized individuals.

Minority stress is specific to individuals who belong to marginalized or minority groups within a given society. It arises from the unique experiences of discrimination, stigmatization, and social exclusion that these individuals face based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other characteristics that make them part of a minority group. This specificity underscores that minority stress is not simply a generalized form of stress but is intricately tied to an individual's membership in a particular marginalized community.

Persistent in nature, minority stress is not limited to isolated incidents but is woven into the fabric of marginalized individuals' daily lives. Unlike many other stressors that may be episodic or short-lived, the stress experienced by minority individuals is often ongoing, resulting in long-term exposure to stressors with enduring effects on their mental and physical health.

Deeply ingrained in societal structures, minority stress reflects the systemic and structural inequalities present within a given society. These structures include discriminatory policies, institutional racism, and prejudiced attitudes that create and sustain the conditions for minority stress to thrive. Recognizing this parameter underscores the need for broader societal change and systemic interventions to address and mitigate the impact of minority stress on marginalized individuals.

## **MINORITY STRESS AND LGBTIQ+ YOUTH**

In the intricate tapestry of minority stress, there exists a deeply nuanced and often overlooked dimension, one that intimately involves the lives of LGBTIQ+ youth. The journey of these young individuals towards self-discovery and acceptance is marked by distinct challenges that find their origins in the intersection of societal norms, structural inequalities, and interpersonal dynamics. This exploration delves into the profound manifestations of minority stress as it pertains specifically to LGBTIQ+ youth, shedding light on the complex and interconnected web of factors that shape their experiences.



## QUEER NEST

Within this context, **structural discrimination** emerges as a formidable adversary, casting its shadow over the lives of LGBTIQ+ youth. It takes shape in myriad forms, from laws that restrict their rights to marriage or adoption to educational systems that often neglect to provide comprehensive sex education, leaving these young individuals without essential information, which in turn contributes to disparities in sexual health and relationships. Moreover, the absence of legal protections against discrimination in employment and housing further exacerbates their vulnerability, potentially leading to job insecurity and even homelessness.

On the interpersonal front, LGBTIQ+ youth are no strangers to the bitter taste of **discrimination** that permeates their daily lives. Within school environments or even within their own families, they may grapple with bullying, harassment, or exclusion. These experiences cultivate a hostile and fear-laden environment, one in which they constantly navigate the treacherous waters of potential targeting and ostracization. Such conditions heighten their stress levels and frequently give rise to profound mental health challenges, particularly during adolescence, a pivotal stage where peer relationships are integral to personal development.

However, the adversity does not end there. LGBTIQ+ youth often find themselves confronting the specter of **internalized stigma**, a deeply ingrained self-doubt cultivated by societal messages that portray their identities as deviant or undesirable. This self-stigmatization manifests as feelings of shame, guilt, and low self-esteem, often compelling them to attempt suppression or concealment of their authentic selves. The consequences of these efforts can be dire, casting a shadow over their mental health and overall well-being. In some cases, they may even struggle with fully embracing their own identities due to the relentless negative stereotypes perpetuated by society.

14

This intricate tapestry of structural discrimination, interpersonal discrimination, and internalized stigma is not a mere amalgamation of distinct challenges; it is a complex web where each thread intersects and compounds the others. Structural discrimination, for instance, may limit access to support systems, thereby making it even more arduous to cope with the interpersonal discrimination they encounter. Internalized stigma exacerbates these challenges further, creating barriers that hinder their ability to seek help or connect with their peers. Recognizing the specific origins of minority stress for LGBTIQ+ youth is not only essential but also a cornerstone for the development of tailored support systems and interventions that aim to alleviate their burden and foster resilience, empowerment, and well-being.



● **Structural Discrimination for LGBTIQ+ Youth:**

- Encounter legal inequalities (e.g., restrictions on marriage and adoption rights).
- Lack of comprehensive sex education in educational systems, leading to disparities in sexual health and relationships.
- Absence of legal protections against discrimination in employment and housing, resulting in job insecurity and homelessness for some.

● **Interpersonal Discrimination for LGBTIQ+ Youth:**

- Experience bullying, harassment, or exclusion in daily life, especially in school or within their families.
- Creates a hostile environment, perpetuating fear of being targeted or ostracized.
- Increases stress levels and poses mental health challenges, particularly damaging during crucial adolescent years.

● **Internalized Stigma for LGBTIQ+ Youth:**

- Arises from societal messages that portray their identities as deviant or undesirable.
- Leads to feelings of shame, guilt, and low self-esteem.
- May result in attempts to suppress or hide their true selves, adversely affecting mental health and well-being.
- Some struggle with fully accepting their own identities due to negative stereotypes perpetuated by society.

**MITIGATING THE CONSEQUENCES OF MINORITY STRESS FOR LGBTIQ+ YOUTH:  
THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK AND YOUTH WORKERS**

Youth work and youth workers play a pivotal role in mitigating the consequences of minority stress for LGBTIQ+ youth. By fostering supportive environments, providing education, and offering emotional guidance, they can make a significant difference in the lives of these young individuals.



In this exploration, we delve into the ways in which youth work and youth workers can help reduce the consequences of minority stress.

### 1. Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces:

- **Physical Safe Spaces:** Youth workers can establish physical spaces where LGBTIQ+ youth can gather without fear of discrimination or judgment. These spaces become sanctuaries where they can express their true selves and find like-minded peers.
- **Online Communities:** In the digital age, online communities can also provide safe havens for LGBTIQ+ youth. Youth workers can moderate and facilitate these spaces, ensuring they remain supportive and free from cyberbullying.

### 2. Education and Awareness:

- **Comprehensive Sex Education:** Youth workers can advocate for and provide comprehensive sex education that includes information relevant to LGBTIQ+ youth. This empowers them with knowledge about sexual health, relationships, and consent, reducing disparities in this area.
- **Anti-Bias Training:** Youth workers themselves can undergo anti-bias training to ensure they provide an inclusive and affirming environment for LGBTIQ+ youth. This training helps them understand the unique challenges faced by this group and equips them with the tools to be effective allies.

### 3. Mental Health Support:

- **Mental Health Workshops:** Youth workers can organize workshops on mental health awareness and coping strategies, providing LGBTIQ+ youth with tools to manage stress and emotional challenges.
- **Referral Services:** Youth workers should be knowledgeable about local mental health services and be prepared to connect youth to appropriate resources when needed.

### 4. Peer Support and Mentorship:

- **Peer Support Groups:** Creating peer support groups where LGBTIQ+ youth can share experiences and coping strategies can be immensely beneficial. Youth workers can facilitate these groups or connect youth to existing ones.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Youth workers can establish mentorship programs pairing experienced LGBTIQ+ individuals with youth, offering guidance and role models.





**QUEER NEST**

## 5. Advocacy and Policy Change:

- **Advocacy Initiatives:** Youth workers can engage in advocacy efforts to promote policies and initiatives that protect and support LGBTIQ+ youth, such as anti-discrimination laws, inclusive school curricula, and access to gender-affirming healthcare.
- **Youth Participation:** Encouraging LGBTIQ+ youth to participate in advocacy and community engagement empowers them to be agents of change.

## 6. Family Support:

- **Family Counselling:** Youth workers can offer family counselling services to improve communication and understanding between LGBTIQ+ youth and their families.
- **Parent Support Groups:** Providing support groups for parents and caregivers can help them navigate their child's journey, reducing rejection and fostering acceptance.

## 7. Empowerment and Resilience Building:

- **Empowerment Workshops:** Youth workers can organize workshops aimed at building resilience, self-esteem, and self-acceptance among LGBTIQ+ youth.
- **Skill Development:** Offering skill development programs can enhance the employability and economic independence of LGBTIQ+ youth, reducing the impact of structural discrimination.

## 8. Crisis Intervention:

- **Hotlines and Crisis Services:** Youth workers can establish or promote hotlines and crisis intervention services that are accessible to LGBTIQ+ youth in times of acute distress.

By embracing these strategies, youth work and youth workers can serve as catalysts for positive change in the lives of LGBTIQ+ youth. Their role extends beyond providing support; it encompasses advocacy, education, and the creation of spaces where these young individuals can thrive free from the burden of minority stress. In doing so, they contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society for all.



**QUEER NEST**

**PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS: *Fostering Stability and Dignity for All***

Homelessness is a profound societal challenge that affects individuals and families across the globe. Witnessing people without homes, struggling for shelter, and enduring harsh living conditions underscores not only a distressing social issue but also a collective failure of our responsibility as a society. While providing immediate assistance to those experiencing homelessness is essential, there exists a critical and proactive dimension to addressing this complex problem: the prevention of homelessness. Homelessness prevention embodies a comprehensive approach aimed at breaking the cycle of homelessness before it begins. It encompasses a spectrum of strategies and interventions designed to tackle the root causes and contributing factors that lead individuals and families to lose their homes. Unlike reactive measures such as emergency shelters and temporary housing, prevention strategies operate on the foundational belief that each person deserves the opportunity to maintain stable housing and regain self-sufficiency.

The quest for effective homelessness prevention begins with a fundamental recognition: that all individuals are holders of inherent human rights. This recognition shifts our perspective, compelling us to address not just the immediate symptoms of homelessness but to target the systemic causes that lead to it. It emphasizes proactive measures that prioritize safeguarding individuals' rights before they find themselves in crisis, rather than reacting only after everything has gone awry. A human rights-based approach to homelessness prevention is more than a moral stance; it is a legal obligation. This approach compels us to reconsider the way decisions and funding are allocated, necessitating a fundamental shift in how society approaches this complex issue. It underscores the importance of creating a policy and funding framework that holds various branches of government accountable for their roles in preventing homelessness, including but not limited to health, child protection, justice, and others. Addressing homelessness from this perspective means delving deep into the systemic causes that underlie this crisis. It involves acknowledging that homelessness is often not a result of individual failings but a consequence of systemic inequalities, inadequate support systems, and discriminatory policies. By targeting these root causes, we can aim to dismantle the barriers that lead to housing instability.

Homelessness prevention extends far beyond the surface of preventing mere housing instability; it represents a profound commitment to alleviating the multifaceted suffering inflicted by homelessness. Its aspirations reach into the very essence of human existence, aiming to prevent not only the physical, emotional, and social hardships but also to safeguard the very core of human dignity. Homelessness prevention is a profound declaration of society's commitment to uphold the fundamental rights and worth of every individual. It is a recognition that every person, regardless of their circumstances, deserves the opportunity to flourish in a stable and supportive environment. Through its efforts, it aims to create a world where homelessness is not just prevented but where



**QUEER NEST**

the essence of human dignity is preserved, and where the indomitable spirit within each of us is given the chance to shine.

## **PRINCIPLES OF PREVENTION**

### **Principle 1: Crisis resolution.**

Every situation that could result in homelessness is a crisis for the person experiencing it. Crisis resolution responses must include:

- rapid assessment and triaging, based upon urgency;
- an instant focus on personal safety as the first priority;
- de-escalation of the person's emotional reaction;
- definite action steps the individual can successfully achieve;
- assistance with actions the individual is temporarily unable or unwilling to attempt;
- and returning the person to control over their own problem-solving.

### **Principle 2: Client choice, respect and empowerment.**

People in crisis may feel paralyzed by the urgency and the potentially devastating consequences of their situation. Homelessness prevention services must help people in crisis regain a sense of control and feeling of empowerment to actively overcome obstacles. A constant emphasis on the client's goals, choices, and preferences, an unwavering respect for their strengths, and reinforcement of progress are essential for empowerment. This does not mean clients are protected from the natural consequences of their actions.

19

### **Principle 3: Provide the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible.**

Respect includes "letting go" as soon as the person has the resources, knowledge and tools to continue their lives however they choose to live them. Providing "just enough" to prevent homelessness enables a program to help far more people in crisis. Often this means ensuring resources are used to help persons at-risk of losing housing of any kind—persons who would otherwise end up on the street or in an emergency shelter—before using resources to provide assistance for other needs. Providing non-essential assistance to a program client will cost someone else in the community their housing.

### **Principle 4: Maximize community resources.**

Mainstream assistance programs are intended to be the backbone of every community. Creating



**QUEER NEST**

duplicate services for a sub-population such as people at risk of homelessness allows mainstream agencies to continue to bypass or ineffectively serve people who have a right to better quality and access. Duplication also wastes valuable, limited resources that could be spent to keep more households from becoming homeless.

**Principle 5: The right resources to the right people at the right time.**

The earlier a program intervenes in a housing crisis, the lower the cost. The outcomes may look impressive, but research shows that most people who receive prevention assistance would not have become homeless even without assistance. The later the intervention, the more costly and the lower the success rate. But at the latest stages of an individual's housing crisis, it is virtually certain she or he would have become homeless without assistance. Good prevention programs strive to target people who have the highest risk of becoming homeless but who also have a good chance of remaining housed if they receive assistance.

*Source:*

[Homelessness Prevention: Creating Programs That Work, The National Alliance to End Homelessness, pp 2-3](#)

**LEVELS OF PREVENTION**

20

**PRIMARY PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS: ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES**

Primary prevention focuses on addressing the root causes of homelessness to prevent individuals and families from ever becoming homeless. This proactive approach recognizes that, to effectively combat homelessness, it is essential to address the underlying factors that lead to housing instability. It represents the initial line of defense in tackling issues. It focuses on stopping problems before they even begin. The primary prevention approach aims to prevent the occurrence of a problem among the general population or specific high-risk groups. Key features of primary prevention include health promotion, addressing root causes and community engagement. In public health, primary prevention often involves health promotion campaigns and education. For instance, vaccination programs, health awareness initiatives, and lifestyle counseling are primary prevention strategies aimed at reducing the risk of diseases. In social issues like homelessness, primary prevention delves into addressing root causes. This might involve policies and programs that target poverty reduction, affordable housing initiatives, and employment support to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. Engaging communities and raising awareness are common tactics. Encouraging healthy behaviors, fostering a sense of community, and promoting social equity are essential elements of primary prevention efforts.



Primary prevention involves:

1. **Addressing Root Causes:** It entails addressing structural and systemic factors that contribute to housing instability and the risk of homelessness, effectively "working upstream."
2. **Universal and Targeted Interventions:** Primary prevention employs both universal interventions for entire communities and targeted interventions for "at-risk" communities, all with the aim of reducing risk and enhancing protective factors.
3. **Proactive Measures:** Activities include information campaigns, educational programs, and strategic interventions designed to tackle problems that might eventually lead to homelessness well before they become critical.
4. **Multifaceted Strategies:** Strategies encompass poverty reduction, the construction and maintenance of affordable housing, anti-violence initiatives, early childhood support, and anti-discrimination efforts.
5. **Strengthening Protective Factors:** The overarching goal is to strengthen protective elements, promote housing stability, improve access to essential support services, and foster social inclusion, all with the ultimate objective of reducing the likelihood of individuals or families experiencing homelessness in the first place.

### Primary Prevention Examples:

1. **Information Campaigns:** Launching public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the importance of financial planning, responsible spending, and housing security to prevent future homelessness.
2. **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Implementing policies and programs that promote the construction and maintenance of affordable housing units to address the root cause of housing instability.
3. **Poverty Reduction Programs:** Implementing economic policies, such as job training, minimum wage increases, and social safety nets, to reduce poverty and mitigate homelessness risk.
4. **Anti-Violence Campaigns:** Running campaigns aimed at reducing domestic violence and its contribution to homelessness, particularly for victims who might be forced to leave their homes.
5. **Early Childhood Support:** Offering early childhood education and support programs to vulnerable families to enhance the long-term economic stability of households.



**QUEER NEST**

Primary prevention of homelessness is significant for several reasons. Preventing homelessness through primary prevention is often more cost-effective than addressing it once people are already homeless. Emergency services, shelter, and support for the homeless can be expensive, while preventive measures can help save public resources in the long run.

### **SECONDARY PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS: EARLY INTERVENTIONS TO MITIGATE CRISIS**

While primary prevention strategies aim to address the root causes of homelessness, secondary prevention focuses on early interventions to mitigate housing crises and prevent individuals and families from slipping into homelessness. It encompasses a set of strategies and interventions that target individuals and families who are at immediate risk of losing their housing. Unlike primary prevention, which addresses the broader systemic factors leading to homelessness, secondary prevention seeks to identify and support those on the brink of homelessness and provide timely assistance to stabilize their housing situations.

Secondary prevention strategies are designed to intervene at the earliest signs of housing instability or homelessness risk. These strategies can vary depending on local resources, policies, and priorities, but they generally include the following key components:

1. **Rapid Rehousing Programs:** Rapid rehousing is a central component of secondary prevention. These programs provide short-term rental assistance and supportive services to quickly move individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis into stable housing. Rapid rehousing aims to prevent the downward spiral into chronic homelessness by addressing the immediate housing needs of at-risk households.
2. **Emergency Financial Assistance:** Many individuals and families face housing crises due to unexpected financial setbacks, such as job loss, medical emergencies, or unexpected expenses. Secondary prevention efforts may involve providing one-time financial aid or grants to help individuals or families stay in their current housing or secure new housing quickly.
3. **Mediation and Legal Aid:** Housing instability can result from disputes with landlords, eviction notices, or legal issues. Secondary prevention includes interventions that offer mediation services to help resolve conflicts between tenants and landlords. Legal aid services can also assist tenants in understanding their rights and navigating the legal process, preventing wrongful evictions.
4. **Family and Youth Support Programs:** Families with children and at-risk youth are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Secondary prevention efforts may include providing shelter,



**QUEER NEST**

case management, and support services tailored to the needs of these populations. Family support programs can include interventions like family reunification services and parenting support to prevent family breakdowns.

**Secondary Prevention Examples:**

1. **Rapid Rehousing Services:** Providing immediate assistance, such as temporary housing and financial support, to individuals or families on the brink of homelessness to prevent them from losing their homes.
2. **Mental Health Diversion Programs:** Collaborating with mental health services to identify individuals at risk of homelessness due to mental health challenges and offering them appropriate support and treatment.
3. **Family Mediation Services:** Intervening in family disputes and providing counselling to prevent family breakdowns that might lead to homelessness.
4. **Re-entry Programs:** Assisting individuals leaving the criminal justice system with housing and support services to reduce the likelihood of homelessness upon release.
5. **Emergency Financial Aid:** Offering financial assistance to those facing immediate eviction or foreclosure due to financial crises.

23

The significance of secondary prevention in addressing homelessness cannot be overstated. It provides timely assistance when households are on the brink of homelessness, reducing the likelihood of individuals and families entering the shelter system or becoming chronically homeless. Preventing homelessness at this stage is often more cost-effective than addressing it once people have become homeless. The cost of emergency shelter, healthcare, and other services for the homeless far exceeds the cost of providing rapid rehousing and supportive services. Secondary prevention helps preserve housing stability, which is essential for individuals' and families' overall well-being, including maintaining employment, children's education, and access to healthcare. Early interventions minimize the disruption caused by homelessness on communities, schools, and social services and help prevent a temporary housing crisis from escalating into a long-term, chronic homelessness situation.



**QUEER NEST**

**KEY-WORDS**

- **Timely Intervention**
- **Minimizing Disruption,**
- **Cost-Effective**
- **Preventing Escalation**
- **Preservation of Stability**

**TERTIARY PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS: PROVIDING STABILITY AND SUPPORT FOR THOSE IN CRISIS**

Tertiary prevention of homelessness is a crucial component of a comprehensive strategy to address this pressing social issue. While primary prevention focuses on addressing root causes, and secondary prevention aims to intervene early in housing crises, tertiary prevention is dedicated to providing support and assistance to individuals and families who are already experiencing homelessness. It acknowledges that homelessness can have severe and lasting consequences on a person's physical and mental health, as well as their overall well-being. Tertiary prevention strategies are designed to address these challenges and help homeless individuals transition back into stable housing and self-sufficiency:

1. **Transitional Housing Programs:** Transitional housing provides individuals and families with temporary shelter and support services to help them stabilize their lives and prepare for permanent housing. These programs often include case management, life skills training, and access to social services.
2. **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** PSH is a critical element of tertiary prevention. It offers long-term housing with ongoing support services for individuals who face chronic homelessness and have complex needs, such as mental illness or substance use disorders. PSH helps residents maintain housing stability and access essential services.
3. **Case Management:** Tertiary prevention relies heavily on case management services. Case managers work closely with homeless individuals to develop individualized service plans, connect them with resources, and navigate the complex web of social services.
4. **Homelessness Outreach:** Outreach teams engage with unsheltered homeless populations, connecting them with services, shelter, and housing options. Outreach efforts are essential in reaching those who may be hesitant or unable to access services through traditional channels.





**QUEER NEST**

5. **Behavioral and Mental Health Services:** Many homeless individuals face mental health and substance use challenges. Tertiary prevention includes access to mental health treatment, counseling, and substance abuse programs to address these issues.

Tertiary prevention holds a profound significance in our collective efforts to address homelessness. It extends a helping hand to individuals and families who have already experienced the harsh realities of homelessness, aiming to restore dignity and stability to their lives. It recognizes the intrinsic value and worth of every individual. It affirms the principle that each person deserves the opportunity to regain stability and self-sufficiency, irrespective of their past experiences. Homelessness often takes a severe toll on both physical and mental health. Tertiary prevention steps in to address these health challenges by providing access to essential healthcare and behavioral health services, allowing individuals to heal and recover.

**KEY-WORDS:**

- Upholding Human Dignity
- Promoting Health and Well-being
- Empowering Rebuilding Lives
- Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
- Fostering Community Well-being



**QUEER NEST**

**PREVENTION STRATEGIES:**

**1. TITLE: SOLIDARITY HOUSE**

**Type: Housing Stability**

This strategy aims to promote autonomy through the acquisition of personal, social, functional and professional skills. In addition, we want users to feel that they are in a family unit and not in a project.

**Level: Tertiary Prevention**

The aim is to reduce the likelihood of regressing to homelessness and give them the tools they need to acquire greater stability and autonomy when they become part of a home.

**Target group: Young LGBT People in Homeless/At Risk Situations from 18 years old**

**Description and methodology:**

1. First, we work individually with the user to define their needs and gaps. For this, we used a clinical interview and filled out a psychosocial plan. After this, together with the user, we create an individual intervention plan that contains their objectives, expectations, resources, support network, among others.
2. Integration in the group where the skills mentioned in the individual intervention plan are worked on. Examples: group dynamics, social skills, training-planning and domestic management; group reflection for suggestions for improvement.
3. Work in pairs or in small groups. Example: a user who has difficulties is integrated with a peer who has already developed this competence, helping those who are still in the initial phase.
4. Carry out mid-term evaluations between activities with aim of improving services and user satisfaction.



**QUEER NEST**

**2. TITLE:** POP UP

**Type:** Early Prevention

**Level:** Primary Prevention

**Target group:** General Population

**Description and methodology:**

- DIY
- Peer to peer
- Learning by doing
- Group dynamics



**QUEER NEST**

**3. TITLE: INSECURE HOUSING**

**PART 1:**

**Type:** Early Prevention

**Level:** Primary Prevention

**Description and methodology:** Psychological Support

How to sponsor the project?

- School → flyer inside and outside + presentations in the classes.
- Hospital.

What is in the flyer?

- Email + phone number.
- How people can search.
- Disclaimer for the child about the fact that they can come if they are inside of an emergency.

28

**PART 2:**

**Type:** Early Intervention

**Level:** Secondary Prevention

**Description and methodology:**

- Email/phone assessment of the situation, give a code of the situation (green/yellow/red). You have to call and make an appointment.
- First interview: focus on the principal needs → understand if the person needs: social services, police, to have contact with a hospital, etc.



**QUEER NEST**

**4. TITLE: BUILDING A HOME**

**Type:** Early Intervention and Housing Stability

**Level:** Primary and Secondary Prevention

**Target group:** LGBTQIA+ Youth in Housing Exclusion

**Description and methodology:**

The project provides housing and empowers homeless people. It transforms abandoned apartment buildings into livable homes.

Application project:

- Description
- Team
- Financial plan
- Timeline
- Available buildings (identify what needs to be restored; people to hire).
- Apply to European funds.
- Fundraising (services or entities and personal donations).

29

Users apply:

- Interview that explains what the project is and how they can contribute.
- Identify the skills of the users.
- Assign the tasks (painting walls, making furniture, helping professionals and making decorations).
- Providing temporary/housing for the users.
- Transforming a building into a home.
- Moving into the home.

Follow-up activities to see how they are adjusting to the new homes.



**QUEER NEST**

**5. TITLE:** VOICES FROM THE STREETS

**Type:** Systemic-early-structural

**Level:** Primary and Tertiary → engage homeless people

**Target group:** General Population/Homeless

**Goals:**

- Empowering people that lived in a homeless situation.
- Sensibilization of the general population.
- Engage homeless people in an informal plan that is more accessible. Let people know about the existence of services. Give them some tools to learn how to have access to services.
- Create interaction peers' network.
- Create dialogue between two parts of the society that usually don't talk to each other.

**Structure:**

Personal: professional photographer.

Economical: money for fees and printing

Material: 1 computer, cameras and all the photography stuff. Material for exhibition.

30

**Description and methodology:**

FIND THE TARGET:

- Explain the activity at the beneficiary of the project.
- Opportunity to have psychological support before and after the activity.
- Explain that their photographs will be sold and they will do a trip around Europe.



**QUEER NEST**

**6. TITLE: INTERNAL TRAINING**

**Type: Systemic**

**Level: Tertiary Prevention**

**Description and methodology:**

Construct a team-training to reflect about the practices, including exercises groups theory, to empower the knowledge of the working group.

The focus is on the good existing practices and also the missions.

The activity might be structured on a week or 3 days, out of the common context with the contribution of a facilitator.



**QUEER NEST**

**7. TITLE:** HUMAN LIBRARY PHOTO-EXHIBITION AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

**Type:** Structural

**Level:** Primary and Secondary Prevention

**Target group:** Social Services and Beneficiary

**Description and methodology:**

Construct a training to social services, policy makers and our beneficiary (LGBT+ homelessness), doing a human library → co-construction, in terms of empowering the abilities of social workers and LGBT+ homeless people.





**QUEER NEST**

## **GOOD PRACTICES**

The **Psychosocial Methodology** in the development of individual intervention plan with the LGBTQIA+ community

### **Organisation:**

Opus Diversidades – Casa de Acolhimento Temporário de Emergência (CATE)

### **Objective(s):**

- Create a safe space and environment for people from the LGBTQIA+ community to develop psychosocial skill and economic stability.
- Diminish the risk and poverty situations in the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Establish a plan aiming autonomy, focused on biological, social and psychological dimensions of the individual.

33

## **Methodology**

### **Description:**

The methodology used is usually the Psychosocial Methodology, in which the approach must focus on the individuals and their context, combining the influence of psychological factors and the surrounding social environment of an individual's life. In order to succeed with this methodology, we need to develop an Intervention Plan, with both of these dimensions considered, connecting people to formal and informal networks.

Sometimes we also must apply the Crisis Intervention Method, which focuses on the urgent and temporary care given to an individual, who are in distress and to help them cope with the situation, usually addressing variety of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation, aiming to return the individual to their usual level of pre-crisis functioning.

### **Target Group:**

Our target group is People from the LGBTQIA+ community, in fragile situations, mostly: in extreme poverty situation due to the difficulty of labour integration and the economic and housing crisis our



**QUEER NEST**

society lives in nowadays; Situation of risk, discrimination and violence aimed to this community; Homelessness or lack of safe living spaces situations.

### **Implementation Steps:**

The intervention is parted in three crucial moments:

First the reception, usually a sensitive moment, in which is developed the first intervention plan. The main point is to establish the needs that require more attention and develop a step-by-step path to achieve success.

The second phase is usually the following of the initial plan, that requires a moment of adaptation to the new environment. Social, psychological, and legal support are essential in this phase, mostly because the individual needs guidance from these three fields to achieve the goal of autonomy. It includes regular psychological appointments, regular social endeavours to reduce the fragile social and economic situations, reevaluation of the plans if needed.

The last phase, closer to the end of the intervention is the one in which the individual must be freer of attachments to the support given, closer to the autonomy goal and conclusion of the individual plan and departure from the program.

### **Success Indicators:**

- Integration into the Labour Market.
- Increase of social skills.
- Increase of connections with supporting networks (including families and other associations in the community).
- Continuous Psychological support, with significant improvements.
- Decrease in anxious/depressive symptoms.
- Resolution of legal issues.
- Better financial literacy.
- Greater autonomy in the decision-making process.
- Greater financial stability.

34

### **Challenges and Lessons Learned:**

Every individual had its own expectations, believe systems and own ambitions. Our intervention must take that in consideration to fulfil the autonomy standard of the intervention.

These community suffers with a wide variety of issues, more than the usual ones found among the disadvantaged population, due to stigma and preconception around LGBTQIA+ conversation. From these group, mostly trans people are still targeted by public opinion and misinformation, adding to the already to internalized issues.



**QUEER NEST**

In Portugal, there are few spaces free from judgement and able to receive these community with no struggles. Everyone must have safe space to live with no boundaries to their existence.

**Recommendations:**

In order to create dignified conditions and the human right's concretization, the change is imperative. Even though there are laws in Portugal to protect the LGBTQIA+ community, we still have a long way to go as a society. There must be assertive policies to create more responses adapted to the specific needs of this community.