

## Hotline Advocacy Summary

The LGBTQ+ community faces unique challenges leading to a pressing need for mental health resources that are focused on their specific needs. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are disproportionately at risk for adverse experiences and discrimination. A study assessing the health needs of LGBTQ+ people in New York found that more than 60% of participants had experienced symptoms of chronic depression. Almost half of the participants reported fair to poor mental health alongside one-third of them reporting thoughts of self-harm. This study also reported higher rates of illicit drug use, smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption, further demonstrating potential markers of poor mental health. Even with high rates of mental wellbeing concerns, only one-third of participants reported receiving treatment, which shows a significant gap in the mental health care of LGBTQ+ people (Eliscu, 2023).

These challenges clearly demonstrate the critical need for LGBTQ+ services. A 2018 study aiming to determine the need for an LGBTQ+-specific hotline found that most respondents would not have contacted another hotline or would not have known who to contact if an LGBTQ-specific hotline was not available (Goldbach, 2018). The Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit source on national health issues, found that LGBTQ+ individuals have increased difficulty with typical police responses to mental health crisis calls (Dawson, 2024). These findings exemplify the need that identity-focused hotlines fill in mediating crises and averting harm for those in need.

To help mitigate these challenges, Congress passed legislation that requires the 988 hotline to have resources directed to LGBTQ+ people. When this was passed in 2020, it was met with bipartisan support; however, this has since eroded. In June 2025, Donald Trump announced that these resources directed to LGBTQ+ people would no longer be offered (Epstein, 2025). To fill this gap left by the federal government, several organizations have adapted their resources. The Trevor Project, one of the world's largest LGBTQ+ focused organizations, has said that they received over 231,000 crisis contacts in 2024. Supporting the apparent need for LGBTQ+ focused crisis care, they contributed nearly 250 counselors and staff members to the 988 hotline (Trevor Project, 2024).

Within Cincinnati, multiple LGBTQ+-affirming resources focused on mental health are available; however, access to these resources remains limited. Central Clinic Behavioral Health provides specialized counseling and other psychiatric services for LGBTQ+ people. The Cincinnati Center for DBT offers dialectical-behavioral therapy that is specifically focused on the needs of LGBTQ+ people. NAMI Southwest Ohio, PFLAG Cincinnati, and Prism Cincinnati offer peer and community support through their organizations. However, significant gaps are still present, especially in long-term specialized therapy, services for LGBTQ+ people of color, and the visibility of already existing resources.

Combining all these findings stresses the urgent need for investment, advocacy, and expansion of inclusive mental health resources. Building a network of identity-affirming services is essential to tackle disparities, decrease harm, and promote the well-being of LGBTQ+ people in both Cincinnati and nationwide.

## Resources

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- Epstein, K. (2025, June 19). *Trump administration ends LGBTQ youth option on US Suicide hotline*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwyqlv7y31go>
- Goldbach, J. T., Rhoades, H., Green, D., Fulginiti, A., & Marshal, M. P. (2018). Is there a need for LGBT-specific suicide crisis services? *Crisis*, 40(3), 203–208. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000542>
- Trump administration orders termination of National LGBTQ+ Youth Suicide Lifeline, effective July 17th | the trevor project. (2025, June 18). <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/trump-administration-orders-termination-of-national-lgbtq-youth-suicide-lifeline-effective-july-17th/>