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The UCLA EMPWR Program

Promoting well-being and resilience in LGBTQ youth

EMPWR (“empower”) is a joint initiative of the UCLA Division of Child Psychiatry and the UCLA Division of Population Behavioral Health designed to promote well-being and resilience in LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning) children, teenagers and young adults.

EMPWR provides a safe, affirming environment for LGBTQ youth with mental health concerns related to stressful and/or traumatic experiences. This program links families to an expert team of attending psychiatrists and psychologists as well as supervised advanced trainees who deliver comprehensive mental health care. Specialized individual, family and group programs build on personal strengths, foster healthy identity formation and mitigate the consequences of stressful and/or traumatic experiences.

Services provided:

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Family therapy
- Comprehensive psychiatric evaluation
- Medication management services



Individual therapy

Evidence-based individual psychotherapies are offered to address symptoms related to trauma and stress, including trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety and depression, and dialectical behavioral therapy skills training for improving emotion regulation.

Based on need, individual therapy may focus on:

- Supporting sexual orientation and/or gender identity development
- Recovery from trauma, bullying, and/or discrimination
- Exploration of social and/or medical transitions
- Identifying personal values and setting goals

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LGBTQ Teen Resilience Group

Resilience describes a person's ability to overcome stressors and handle tough situations. The group builds on teens' strengths and teaches new skills to manage stress.

The LGBTQ Teen Resilience Group is designed for teens 12 to 17 years old who identify as LGBTQ. Each group includes three to eight teens matched by age and/or similar concerns.

Informed by cognitive behavioral therapy, the group teaches practical skills to improve day-to-day functioning. Sessions are led by professional mental health providers and are designed to be educational, interactive and social. Skills are practiced between sessions to bolster learning.

Over eight sessions, teens learn how to:

- Increase enjoyment and self-care
- Build strong and supportive relationships
- Improve communication with family and trusted supports
- Solve common challenges
- Increase awareness of emotional states and manage difficult feelings
- Identify personal values and set goals

When

Wednesdays, 5:30 to 6:30 pm

Where

Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior
760 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90095

To sign up, please call 310-825-7573

Family therapy & parent education

Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS) is an eight-session, evidence-based intervention to reduce psychosocial stress and improve functioning and resilience within the family system for LGBTQ teens who are experiencing mental health symptoms. Additionally, support for parents/caregivers is available to improve parent-child communication, increase understanding of minority stress, and increase awareness about the negative impact of stigma, discrimination, and family rejection on LGBTQ youth.

Medication management

Integrated psychiatric evaluation and medication management services are offered in conjunction with evidence-based psychotherapies. Evaluations are typically conducted by advanced trainees under the supervision of board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrists.

Contact information

UCLA EMPWR Program
Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior

760 Westwood Plaza, Room A7-417
Los Angeles, CA 90095

310-825-7573
EMPWR@mednet.ucla.edu

For information about accepted health plans, please visit uclahealth.org/health-plans