

# Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth provide update, resources

The following is a special announcement regarding COVID-19 from the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth:

The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth is closely monitoring the situation with COVID-19 (or coronavirus) and how it will affect our operations and services for the remainder of the spring. The safety and wellbeing of those we serve is of the utmost importance.

While canceling large events is prudent with respect to containing the virus, we also recognize that this can increase social isolation – a problem that is particularly challenging for LGBTQ youth and others who face social marginalization. We encourage those who serve youth to be particularly cognizant of the impact of social isolation on LGBTQ youth, who may rely on services such as school GSAs, LGBTQ conferences and events, drop-in centers, and group therapy services, all of which may be unavailable as the situation progresses. We also encourage youth to exercise self-care and consider ways to stay connected to your community even when physical separation may occur.

LGBTQ populations are especially at risk for COVID-19 infection due to a variety of factors, including higher rates of respiratory issues relating to smoking and other factors; higher rates of HIV, which can compromise immune systems; and lower rates of health insurance, lack of trust in the healthcare industry, and other factors that make it more difficult to seek care. The Commission therefore urges policymakers and those offering services to respond to COVID-19 to take special consideration of LGBTQ communities in

Massachusetts.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can offer you support or information during this challenging time. Emailing us at [commission@ma-lgbtq.org](mailto:commission@ma-lgbtq.org) is the best mode of contact, or you can leave a voicemail at 617-624-5495, and we will return your call within one business day.

**Annual Recommendations:** First and foremost, we will be postponing the publication of our annual report and recommendations from April 7th to June 18th. While we could have published our report online on the original date, finalizing the content of the report has been challenging with many of our partners in government responding to this emergency situation and with interruptions to our staffing and operations. We also hope to maintain the sense of community, solidarity, and celebration that has accompanied the publication of our report throughout the years.

We welcome you to RSVP for the rescheduled event, which will now take place at 10am on June 18th at the State House Library. In the case that it is still not safe to release the recommendations with a public event on that date, we will still release our report in June through a virtual event. In the meantime, we will make interim recommendations available to our agencies and other government partners to ensure the important work we are doing together will not be delayed.

**School Programming:** Currently, we have canceled all training and technical assistance requests through April 7th but are still accepting requests for after that date and evaluating them on a case-by-case basis. We encourage those submitting requests to consider holding requests until June to lower the risk of cancellation.

We have also decided to cancel our student GSA leadership programming through June. However, we will be offering a virtual space for students and staff to connect with one

another. This information will be shared with our participants via their listserv and Facebook groups. If you have questions, please contact [commission@ma-lgbtq.org](mailto:commission@ma-lgbtq.org).

**Resources to Address Social Isolation:** The following resources may help youth stay connected during this time. Please let us know at [commission@ma-lgbtq.org](mailto:commission@ma-lgbtq.org) if you have additional resources for us to be aware of.

[www.ma-lgbtq.org](http://www.ma-lgbtq.org) -This is the Commission's interactive map of local resources throughout Massachusetts. Many local LGBTQ youth organizations – for example, BAGLY, Boston GLASS, Framingham GLASS, and Out MetroWest, to name a few – have already shared ways in which they will stay connected to clients virtually throughout this pandemic. Contacting these organizations directly using the information found in our resource map is the best way to stay up-to-date on virtual offerings they have during this time.

[www.qchatspace.org](http://www.qchatspace.org) – Find and give support, have fun, connect around shared interests and get good information. Chat with like-minded peers in live chats designed for you & by you, facilitated by folks who care. Q Chat Space provides online discussion groups for LGBTQ+ teens ages 13 to 19. It is not a forum. It is live and chat-based; there is no video or audio. Everyone is chatting during the same pre-scheduled time.

[itgetsbetter.org](http://itgetsbetter.org) – Connects young LGBTQ+ people with the global LGBTQ+ community by providing access to a vast collection of inspiring stories of hope and resilience. The It Gets Better Project builds community by creating a network of international partners that support LGBTQ+ youth in their home countries, engaging with young LGBTQ+ people both on and offline, and connecting them to local community service providers that can provide on-the-ground assistance.

866-488-7386 or [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org) – 24/7 suicide prevention & support line for LGBTQ & GNC youth. The Trevor

Project Lifeline offers phone calls with trained counselors, while Trevortext connects by text with a specialist. If you need someone just to chat with Trevor Chat is free and confidential. TrevorSpace is an online forum and social network for LGBTQ+ youth and their allies under 25.

[www.glbtnearme.org](http://www.glbtnearme.org) – Find the largest collection of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender resources on the web. Find the closest social and support resources, the closest community centers, the closest youth groups, and much more! All you have to do is type in your zip code, the distance you are willing to travel, and choose from 26 categories of information including bisexual, transgender, crisis, recovery, youth, etc.

[www.glbthotline.org](http://www.glbthotline.org) – The LGBT National Help Center provides vital peer-support, community connections, and resource information to people with questions regarding sexual orientation or gender identity. Utilizing LGBT volunteers, they operate three national hotlines, LGBT National Hotline, LGBT National Youth Talkline, and LGBT National Senior Hotline. They also offer private volunteer one-to-one online chat, that helps both youth and adults with coming-out issues, safer-sex information, school bullying, family concerns, relationship problems and a lot more. They run weekly moderated chat rooms for LGBT youth and teens to find support and community.

[www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org) – The Trans Lifeline offers direct emotional and financial support to trans people in crisis – for the trans community, by the trans community. Additionally, they have a living library that contains multiple tables, holding info ranging from Federal down to specific county information per state about name changes & gender marker changes on IDs.

[www.creative-capital.org](http://www.creative-capital.org) – This site offers a list of resources for artists during COVID-19.

**Healthcare Access:** The Massachusetts Health Connector has designated a temporary special enrollment period beginning on March 11, 2020, and ending on April 25, 2020, for currently uninsured Massachusetts residents. More information may be found [here](#). If you work with clients/patients who are currently uninsured, please consider this opportunity to assist them to enroll in health insurance coverage for which they are eligible. The BRIDGE Program at CRI can assist in health insurance enrollment. They can be reached at (617) 502-1747 or [www.crine.org/BRIDGE](http://www.crine.org/BRIDGE)