Incorporating Best Practices for LGBTQ Youth of Color into the School System

Tricia Lemelle, MD
Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Georgetown University, Washington, DC

Background
- Outside of the home, school is the main environment responsible for educating, socializing, and providing services to youth in the United States.
- The majority of youth thrive in school, but the school system can be a hostile and unwelcoming environment for students of intersecting and marginalized identities, such as black LGBTQ youth.
- High school students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual face significant risks to their physical and psychological wellbeing at a much higher rate than their heterosexual peers. These risks are even higher for LGBTQ youth of color.
- Data shows that LGBTQ youth of color experience higher rates of harassment, discrimination, physical assault, depression, and substance use in hostile school environments.

Methods
A needs assessment is currently being conducted at Thurgood Marshall Academy (TMA), a public high school located in Washington DC composed of predominantly black students.

GLSEN survey will be administered to approximately 400 students in 9th through 12th grades as to better understand the school’s climate.

Prior to initiating the survey, school staff and leadership concur that TMA’s LGBTQ students could potentially benefit from increased supports at the school.

Next Steps & Discussion
- In collaboration with MedStar Georgetown WISE Center and TMA school personnel, we plan to increase access to supportive resources in school, such as the following:
  - GSA (Gay Straight Alliances)
  - Ethnic/cultural clubs
  - Inclusive and supportive policies
  - Access to LGBTQ professional role models
- Evidence shows welcoming school environments contributed to a range of positive outcomes:
  - Fewer days of missing school
  - Improved academic performance
  - Greater sense of belonging to the school community
  - Lower risk of mental health problems

References:

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