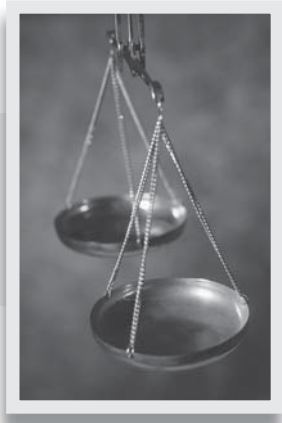


## About the **EQUITY** Project



The Equity Project is an initiative to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth in the justice system are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. The Equity Project examines issues that impact LGBT youth during the entire delinquency process, ranging from arrest through post-disposition.

### Core activities of the Equity Project:

- Gathering information from stakeholders about LGBT youth in the justice system
- Identifying obstacles to fair treatment
- Reporting findings
- Crafting recommendations for juvenile justice professionals

## **EQUITY** Project Partners

Legal Services for Children  
[www.lsc-sf.org](http://www.lsc-sf.org)

1254 Market Street, 3rd floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
tel. 415.863.3762  
fax 415.863.7708

Equity Project Contact:  
Shannan Wilber, Executive Director

&

National Center for Lesbian Rights  
[www.nclrights.org](http://www.nclrights.org)

870 Market Street, Suite 370  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
tel. 415.392.6257  
fax 415.392.8442

Equity Project Contact:  
Jody Marksamer, Staff Attorney

&

National Juvenile Defender Center  
[www.njdc.info](http://www.njdc.info)

1350 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 304  
Washington, DC 20036  
tel. 202.452.0010  
fax 202.452.1205

Equity Project Contacts:  
Patricia Puritz, Executive Director  
Julia Kernochan, Staff Attorney

[www.equityproject.org](http://www.equityproject.org)

# THE **EQUITY** PROJECT

ensuring

*Fairness  
&  
Respect*



for LGBT youth in the justice system

Legal Services for Children  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Juvenile Defender Center

[www.equityproject.org](http://www.equityproject.org)

# The Need for the **EQUITY** Project

Precise information about the numbers of LGBT youth in justice systems nationwide is not available, partly because youth are socialized to hide their identities for their safety. However, LGBT youth are disproportionately represented among youth who are at risk for juvenile justice contact.

Risk factors that increase the likelihood of juvenile justice contact for LGBT youth:

- Homelessness and runaway status, after youth are kicked out or flee domestic abuse by family members unable to accept the youth's gender identity or sexual orientation
- Involvement in survival crimes such as theft and prostitution
- Violence and harassment in school, causing LGBT youth to skip classes, perform worse, and lower their aspirations
- Social isolation from the wider community, including some civic institutions and extended family networks
- High rates of depression, chronic stress, and substance abuse due to family and societal rejection

“The staff think that if a youth is gay, they want to have sex with all of the other boys. It’s not true. They would not help me when the other youth abused and raped me.”

– A gay youth in a juvenile correctional facility

LGBT youth are also highly vulnerable once they enter the juvenile justice system. A few of the documented threats that face LGBT youth:

- Court and law enforcement officials’ lack of understanding about sexual orientation and gender identity issues
- Verbal, physical, and sexual abuse by staff and fellow residents in court-ordered placements
- Unnecessary use of isolation and segregation in confinement
- Inappropriate sexual offense charges arising from consensual same-sex conduct

Juvenile justice professionals desperately need more information, training, and resources to ensure that LGBT youth are treated fairly. LGBT young people have the same rights as other youth in the justice system, including: effective assistance of counsel, protection from harassment and harm, individualized disposition plans, and fair and respectful treatment. These rights are guaranteed by the federal Constitution and by state non-discrimination provisions where applicable.

# Please Share Your Stories

The Equity Project will craft recommendations for improving delinquency court proceedings based on the experiences and needs of practitioners and LGBT youth. We are collecting comments and stories from:

- Delinquency court judges
- Probation officers
- Juvenile prosecutors
- Juvenile defenders
- Juvenile justice agency and facility administrators
- Youth advocates
- Youth
- Parents of court-involved youth

Please contact us at [info@equityproject.org](mailto:info@equityproject.org) for more information or if you have a story to share.

All remarks will be kept confidential.

“They treat me  
like I’m not human.”

– A transgender youth in  
the juvenile justice system