

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2017



**HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE**  
EMPOWERMENT, EDUCATION & ADVOCACY FOR LGBTQ YOUTH  
NEW JERSEY

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## Letter from the Executive Director

*“Our prime purpose in this life is to help others.  
And if you can’t help them, at least don’t hurt them.”*

*- Dalai Lama*

What a remarkable year 2017 has been here at HMI: New Jersey. We’re now serving more young people than ever before. Along with our growth, however, we have also faced some very sobering realities as well. Our young people continue to struggle with hostility, violence, chronic homelessness, and a myriad of other potentially life-threatening challenges, which many confront on a daily basis—all because of their sexuality. These struggles, coupled with the ever-changing political landscape of our country, serves to further disenfranchise the youth we serve.

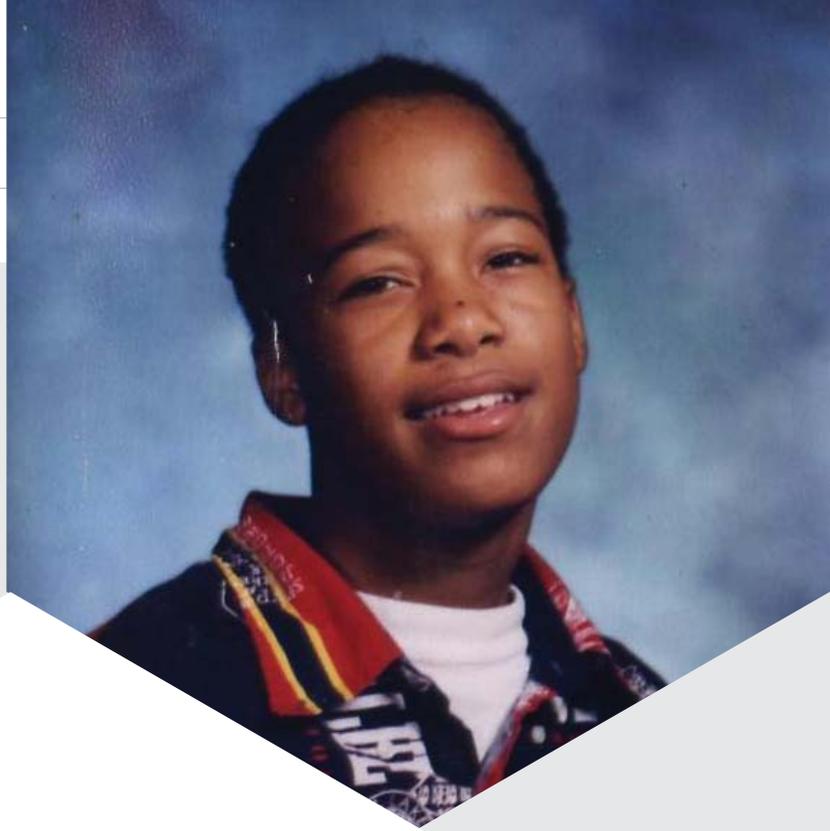
At HMI: NJ, one of our primary goals is to provide a secure and nurturing safe space where youth can leave their daily trauma at the doorstep. Simply by walking into the doors of our new home, our young people have the opportunity to escape what is for many the grim reality of living at the intersection of being LGBTQ, poor, marginalized, and labeled as “at-risk.” As we address the many issues facing this fragile population, our core afterschool program continues to grow and flourish to address their needs.

We are also expanding our work to help as many young people as possible through the establishment of “satellite sites” in several schools here in Newark, including West Side High, Covenant House and Shabazz High. Easy access to services can make a huge difference in the lives of our youth. That said, I am proud to report that our social work team members provide both one-on-one and group counseling at these schools as a way of delivering a continuum of care to our youth members—and especially those who cannot make it to our main site. Additionally, our NJ Training Institute provides training sessions to a wide range of youth-service providers—all geared toward establishing safer schools and communities in an effort to prevent the bullying and victimization of LGBTQ youth statewide. To date we have trained more than 500 providers statewide.

As 2017 draws to a close, we remain motivated and committed—knowing that we are changing lives, one child at a time. While we will continue to reach out to LGBTQ youth through any means available to use, we know that education is the most promising vehicle for moving young people out of poverty, into a place of self-respect and acceptance, and on the path toward a college education. I know you stand with us along every step of the way and I thank you wholeheartedly for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ashawnda Fleming  
Executive Director



## Remembering **Sakia**

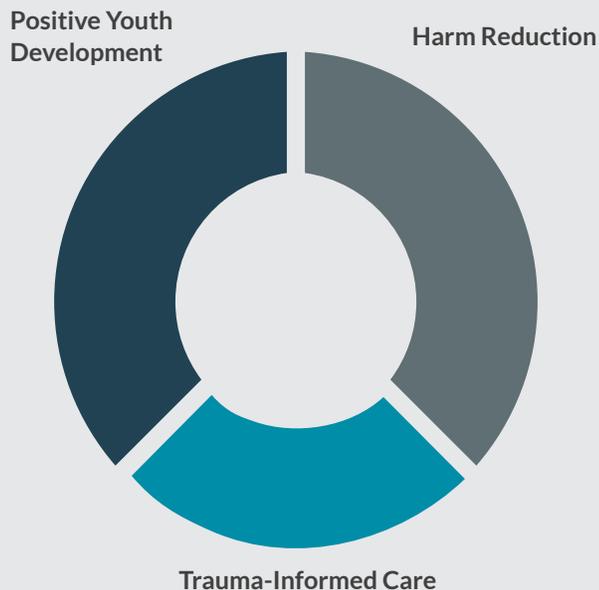
The 2003 murder of 15-year-old Sakia Gunn, an African-American lesbian, in a hate crime in downtown Newark precipitated an outpouring of support and commemorations. More importantly, it also mobilized her friends, other students in the city's public high schools, and the wider Newark community. Indeed, the response to her death signaled a turning point in Newark's LGBTQ history.

At 3:30 AM on Sunday morning, May 11, 2003, Gunn was waiting for a bus at the corner of Broad and Market Streets in downtown Newark. Gunn had returned on the PATH train from Greenwich Village with three friends, also young, out lesbians. She was on her way to her home in Newark's far western Vailsburg section where she lived with her mother and grandmother. At the bus stop, two men emerged from a white car and propositioned Gunn. When she refused—stating that she was not interested because she was gay—one of the men stabbed her, returned to his car, and calmly drove off. Gunn died in the arms of her friend while en route to University Hospital.

Over the ensuing years, LGBTQ Newarkers purposefully and strategically have drawn attention to the tragic consequences of stigma, exclusion, harassment, and violence. Cory Booker, who became mayor in 2006, created the Mayor's Advisory Commission on LGBTQ Concerns. The office of the Essex County Executive followed suit by creating an LGBTQ Advisory Board. In 2007, four years after Sakia's murder, Booker raised a rainbow flag in front of City Hall. It was within this tragic, yet galvanizing, context that the Hetrick-Martin Institute's New Jersey project (HMI: NJ) was born in 2011, which was modeled on HMI's 36 years of successful LGBTQ youth services in New York City. HMI: NJ became the first comprehensive LGBTQ out-of-school program for youth in Northern New Jersey dedicated to providing LGBTQ youth who are at-risk for harassment, abuse, neglect, homelessness and disconnection with a safe, supportive environment in which to grow and thrive.

# How We Approach Our Work

At HMI: NJ, we create and deliver our range of services according to best practices outlined in three specific models: Positive Youth Development (PYD), Harm Reduction, and Trauma-Informed Care.



**Positive Youth Development** is a strengths-based view of adolescence that stresses the importance of “development in context.” Central to its philosophy, the PYD model suggests that “if young people have mutually beneficial relations with the people and institutions of their social world, they will be on the way to a hopeful future marked by positive contributions to self, family, community, and civil society.” Toward that end, HMI: NJ uses the five guiding tenets of PYD—namely, competence, confidence, connection, character and caring—to develop opportunities for youth to enhance their interests, skills, and abilities.

At HMI: NJ, we also employ best practices associated with **Harm Reduction** (or harm minimization) in formulating a range of public health policies designed to reduce the harmful consequences associated with various, sometimes illegal, human behaviors.

Finally, we also base our services on **Trauma-Informed Care**, which is an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the complex effects of all types of trauma. It is important to note that all HMI: NJ social workers have been trained in Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy<sup>1</sup> (TF-CBT), which is an evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents impacted by trauma. Research shows that TF-CBT successfully resolves a broad array of emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with single, multiple and complex trauma experiences.

Specifically, we conduct initial assessments of our youth members and their situation with respect to the range of trauma they have endured. Whether located at our main HMI: NJ site or at any of our five satellite sites, our social workers are trained to identify survivors during the intake process, after which they continue to assess all youth through their engagement in group programming and on an individualized basis. This plan includes essential interventions, cognitive restructuring, jointly-developed short- and long-term goals, one-on-one supportive counseling, groups for storytelling and narrative, and the development of coping skills and trigger plans that will help them escape cycles of violence.

<sup>1</sup> <https://tfcbt.org/>

# How Your Donation Can Work



can purchase daily hot meals for all the youth in the program for one year



can support mental health counseling for youth members for a month



can purchase toiletries (deodorant, toothpaste, sanitary products, soap, hair products, etc.) for the site for one year



can purchase bus tickets to get young people to and from the program for a year



can purchase art supplies for the Open Arts Studio for a year



can sponsor a monthly outing for the youth in the program (show and dinner, ice skating, bowling, etc.)

# Health and Wellness Program

Among all the youth who entered our program for the first time this year, 32% reported that they had not visited a doctor for routine medical care over the prior 12 months, and an even larger number (45%) had not had a dental exam in more than 6 months. Thanks to the generous ongoing support of the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, we continue to be able to provide comprehensive health and wellness programming for all of our youth members. This critical partnership enables us to further our goal of improving public health in the City of Newark by highlighting the importance of routine medical and dental care, starting at an early age. By assisting our youth in this way, they are less likely to utilize a local hospital's emergency room for non-emergency care, which then lessens the burden to area taxpayers.

From the perspective of harm reduction, we also educate our youth on ways to minimize or eliminate their risk for preventable diseases and other negative health and wellness outcomes—most notably, violence. Trained clinicians provide all HMI youth members with counseling on how to connect to the care they need, as well as how to seek shelter and/or navigate the legal system. Our Health and Wellness Coordinator (HWC) provides health and wellness assessments and refers youth to medical and dental clinics, HIV and STI/STD testing, substance-abuse counseling and treatment, reproductive care, and connection to Medicaid—ultimately creating a comprehensive health plan in order to assist youth in reaching their specific health and wellness goals. Our staff also work with local

shelters to provide referrals and can access a database of available beds and contacts within shelters to facilitate the referral.

During the intake process to become an HMI: NJ member, we assess every individual to determine their health needs, such as frequency of access to a primary doctor and dentist, overall risk for violence, use of substances, sexual and reproductive health, nutritional status, and frequency of exercise. This year, we are proud to note that we have also begun to provide referrals for our youth who need optical care—to include free eye exams and eyeglasses. Regardless of their point-of-entrance into our program at any one of our six sites, all of our youth engage in individualized assessment sessions that are designed to assist them in reaching their specific health and wellness goals. We utilize the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) approach for achieving those goals through the creation of individualized health and wellness plans. Moreover, our HWC reviews and updates those health and wellness plans on an ongoing basis to track progress. During weekly one-on-one sessions with each youth member, the HWC assesses his or her progression towards established, agreed-upon goals, as well as recommends techniques for accomplishing a specific goal on the personalized health and wellness plan, which are then updated monthly. This schedule provides regular opportunities for the HWC and the youth member to assess progress, address new or emerging health and wellness concerns, and/or try different strategies to reach a goal that has not been accomplished. Our youth also take part in group therapy sessions that address specialized health and wellness topics. To date, we have offered sessions on sex education, violence prevention, substance abuse, yoga, meditation and mindfulness, nutrition, positive body image, HIV prevention, rapid HIV testing, PEP and PrEP<sup>1</sup>, and safety strategies for those living with HIV and AIDS. Additionally, our youth are taught skills that promote impulse control, mood management, emotional and cognitive regulation, and positive decision-making. In addition to conveying valuable information, our group sessions promote an overarching goal of HMI:NJ—namely, fostering a sense of community for young people who have been marginalized and yearn for a sense of belonging and self-worth.

45%

of youth entering our program in 2016 had not received routine medical care in the prior 12 months

32%

of youth entering our program in 2016 had not had a dental exam in the prior 12 months

<sup>1</sup> PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) PrEP is a daily pill for HIV-negative people that can help prevent HIV infection before exposure to the virus. PEP is an emergency medication for HIV-negative people that can help prevent infection after exposure to HIV.

# Summer 2017



A key component of our youth development activities involves socialization. At HMI:NJ, we pride ourselves on creating outings for our youth that foster their sense of community, expand their horizons and enrich their understanding of the world around them. We remain convinced that, through these diverse and engaging experiences, our youth are not only introduced to new places, people, and opportunities—but they are also afforded the chance to develop new aspects of themselves. Through our trips, we teach our youth that there is a place for them in the larger world, despite the obstacles that they face in their home and the larger community.

In addition to our year-round commitment of ensuring that our youth have a safe place to spend their time and enjoy a meal with friends and their HMI:NJ family (indeed, many of our youth do not enjoy proper nutrition in their home setting), we organized several Summer 2017 outings that both engaged them and challenged them to view their world a little differently.

The first trip of Summer 2017 was our trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The youth enjoyed learning about cultures and civilizations from the past as reflected in the remarkable art and historical artifacts available at the MET. In particular, the Egyptian exhibit seemed to be a favorite of those on this day-long excursion. After leaving the museum, we took the youth on a walk through Central Park and enjoyed a mid-afternoon picnic. The youth were amazed at the beautiful botanical gardens of Central Park.

Another favorite excursion for our youth was our LGBTQ History Tour. During this trip, we visited the historical LGBTQ sites of The Center and The Stonewall Inn in New York City. At each location, skilled guides explained the historical and ongoing importance of each site for the LGBTQ community. The youth were particularly impressed with The Center's all-gender restrooms. During the trip to The Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, which many believe represents the birthplace for the gay rights movement in the U.S., some of our youth became visibly emotional upon hearing about both the persecution and courage of LGBTQ people in New York City during the 1980s.

We celebrated the end of summer with our annual picnic at Weequahic Park—a much-anticipated opportunity for food and fun in the sun. The youth enjoyed playing sports in the great outdoors and interacting with their friends and HMI:NJ staff members. However, a crowd favorite of this event was the scavenger hunt, which required them to work in teams in order to complete the tasks.

The Summer of 2017—like all summers—seemed to pass all too soon. The memories we made, however, are sure to last forever.



## Youth Summit

On Friday, May 19th, Hetrick-Martin Institute: New Jersey, in partnership with Newark Public Schools and the LGBTQ & Intercultural Resource Center at Rutgers University, hosted its **3rd Annual LGBTQ Youth Summit**. Over 200 high school students enrolled in Newark Public Schools took part in the event. Entertainer and “Queen of Comedy,” Harmonica Sunbeam, welcomed students at the opening of the Youth Summit with dancing and laughter. The students then engaged in a range of workshops offered this year under the theme of “No More Drama: Love is Not Abuse.” The workshops focused on trauma prevention, risk reduction, hate crime prevention/reporting, domestic violence prevention/reporting, and child sexual abuse prevention/reporting. Additionally, HMI: NJ offered ten different sessions designed to promote better physical, emotional, and psychological health. They included

*Mindfulness Meditation; Love is Not Abuse; Story Slam; Yes Means Yes! The Power to Consent; Love in the Fourth Dimension: Relationships On-Line; Kundalini Yoga; Art from the Heart; A Healthy Me, A Healthy You: Building Relationships; Breaking Up is Hard to Do: Ending Relationships Healthy; and Sexual Health.* Both HMI staff and a dedicated cohort of community volunteers facilitated these well-attended workshops. The Annual LGBTQ Youth Summit concluded with a keynote speech by Jane Clementi, Founder of the Tyler Clementi Foundation ([www.tylerclementi.org](http://www.tylerclementi.org)), who engaged our students about the incredibly dangerous effects of cyber-bullying—as well as how to get help if they found themselves targeted by this kind of violence. Special Guest, SuSu Stewart, Chair of the City of Newark’s LGBTQ Commission, joined as a host to inform participants about citywide initiatives benefiting LGBTQ youth.

# After School Program at HMI:NJ

The young people we serve tend to be disconnected from support systems—a gap that results in social, educational, and economic barriers that can impact their lives over both the short and long term. As a foundation for the services we provide at HMI: NJ, our after-school program offers a stable, safe, and nurturing space where youth can obtain survival basics on a daily basis: food, clothing, personal care items, and refuge from unstable or unsafe environments. Our social work team interacts strategically with each youth member to help them formulate and achieve their goals. In our safe space, youth can use a laptop to do homework, attend a group session on a range of topics, or just find a quiet space to re-center after being bullied at school or in the community for their sexuality or gender expression.

Our Social Work Team first determines the urgency of a youth's needs in terms of whether they require immediate assistance for any crisis situation, or just need to talk about their day. Youth are then afforded a crucial, yet often missing, component in their young lives—the ability to socialize with other LGBTQ youth and straight allies in a safe and supportive atmosphere where they can truly be themselves. When connected to peers who elevate and inspire them, as well as staff who recognize their strengths, youth feel safe in accepting other forms of help. Thus, once these young people understand that they are safe and secure, HMI: NJ works to provide them with a range of wraparound services, such as working with a counselor to ensure academic success, scheduling and escorting youth to medical/dental/vision appointments, providing sex education, and offering individualized and group counseling to decrease maladaptive coping behaviors and increase self-confidence.

Each day in our after-school program, youth are invited to join a group designed to increase emotional and cognitive regulation, address trauma, and reduce substance use with evidence-based interventions delivered by licensed social workers. Groups are tailored to provide a stimulating, creative, and affirming experience for our young people. For instance, “Mic Drop,” a weekly discussion group that creates a safe space for externalizing narratives about traumatic experiences, combines Hip Hop freestyle with prompts that invite youth to talk about traumatic experiences in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Other groups incorporate art therapy to aide in storytelling and support for self-directed identity formation and holistic healing. At HMI: NJ, we continue to keep abreast of proven therapies and strategies that will assist our LGBTQ youth in overcoming any barrier put before them.





## BASF and Horizon Trips

We at HMI: NJ always look forward to the summer—a time when we are able to offer extended hours, academic and cultural enrichment programming, AND field trips and internships at corporations throughout New Jersey. Indeed, it is essential to our mission that our youth have the opportunity to visit the offices of our corporate partners in order to gain meaningful exposure to the business world. These corporate trips represent a central component of our commitment to utilizing the Positive Youth Development model of care. With many of our youth facing obstacles both large and small, these visits represent potentially critical opportunities to explore the professional world in an authentic setting, as well as hear personal stories from employees and interns who were in their shoes not so long ago. Through these trips, youth are able to have a conversation that helps make the corporate world more relatable, accessible, and achievable.

At the Catalysts Division of the BASF Corporation in Iselin, for instance, our BASF hosts gave our HMI youth a tour of the facility, where they also enjoyed presentations about careers at BASF. The visit concluded with a luncheon where they were able to meet one-on-one with culturally-competent mentors and ask questions about career paths. We know that many of our young adults are interested in a career in a high-tech industry

with potential for economic gains and professional growth. Accordingly, BASF mentors stressed that since technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in our society, it will no doubt continue to impact the job market in significant ways—thus highlighting the importance of education and preparedness. *Special thanks to William Jaglowski and Dr. Stephanus Axnanda for coordinating our visit!*

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey hosted its **3rd Annual Career Day** for HMI: NJ at their Newark Headquarters. The event was facilitated by the Spectrum LGBTQ Affinity Group (SAG), which provides valuable outreach and support to LGBTQ youth in the local community. HMI youth met with professionals at SAG, during which they were able to discuss a wide variety of career paths in the insurance industry—from communications and human resources, to risk management and accounting. Horizon INROADS interns also joined the event to talk about their personal experiences and opportunities for youth. The trip culminated with a pride-themed luncheon where youth could meet one-on-one with SAG members. *Special thanks to Jacqueline Bonforte and the Spectrum LGBTQ Affinity Group for coordinating our visit.*



# HMI: NJ 2017 Events

On Thursday, May 4th, the Hetrick-Martin Institute: New Jersey honored leaders in the LGBTQ community at the **6th Annual Spring Soiree** at Maize Restaurant in Newark. Two special honorees took center stage for the evening. The first was Gary Paul Wright, the Executive Director of the African American Office of Gay Concerns (AAOGC), and the second was the Spectrum Affinity Group (SAG) of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey. In particular, we thank Alison Banks-Moore and Minal Patel for accepting the award on behalf of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey. As with all our prior spring soirees, we were incredibly gratified to be able to honor these advocate-leaders of the LGBTQ community on a night dedicated to their service and contributions. *Most notably, thanks to supporters like you we exceeded our goal of \$100,000 to support LGBTQ youth in New Jersey!*

On Saturday, June 17th, we hosted our **2nd Annual Summer Solstice: The Jersey Shore Affair** at The Asbury Hotel on their rooftop bar, Salvation. Guests enjoyed cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, while laughing with host and entertainer, Marti G. Cummings. HMI: NJ alumni, Josh, and youth member, Dante, shared their stories on how HMI: NJ has impacted and empowered their lives. It was a great kickoff to the summer season – and, thankfully, the rain held out until the end of the event!

We would like to acknowledge the generous support of our Presenting Sponsor for the Summer Solstice event: MINI Cooper! In particular, three MINI dealerships contributed to this special early-summer party: MINI of Edison, MINI of Monmouth, and MINI of Morristown. Thank you all for your sponsorship!

We'd also like to thank our other event sponsors: The Asbury Hotel, BASE, Dr. Ashawnda Fleming, Horizon, Dr. Gerald Iacullo, Bari Mattes, Jeff Spelman & Ivan Lo, Dennis & Isabella Speigel, Doug Stroup & Steve Porter, PNC, Verizon, Dan Zanella & Steven Horn, Andrew Lark, EDGE Media Network, and Out in Jersey.

A special note of thanks goes to our amazing host committee: James Cotten, Lauren Craig, Jeffrey Nelson, John Olguin, Jeffrey Spelman, and Dan Zanella. *You guys rock!*



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## HMI: NJ's Executive Director Selected as a National Fellow

Hetrick-Martin Institute: New Jersey's own Executive Director, Dr. Ashawnda Fleming, was chosen as one of 20 national fellows for the year-long fellowship, "Lead the Way: Building the Pipeline of Women of Color Leaders in the Social Sector." This fellowship, which is sponsored by the Center for Research and Policy in the Public Interest (CR2PI) at the New York Women's Foundation, represents a capacity-building and leadership initiative designed to support the efforts of women of color who are mid-level managers and emerging leaders working in U.S.-based nonprofit and community-based organizations. Fellowship recipients are recognized as talented executives who will lead social change initiatives of the future. Following a nationwide competitive application and selection process, Dr. Fleming was identified as one of only twenty women to be honored in this way.

*Lead the Way* fellows are selected from applicants who work in fields related to education, public service, social service delivery or social change; in particular, awardees had to demonstrate a record of commitment to women and girls of color, people of color, low-income individuals or marginalized communities. Since its inception in 2004,

more than 150 exceptional women of color leaders have participated in the program. Over the course of the year-long fellowship, Dr. Fleming will take part in a five-day intensive leadership retreat meant for high-impact leaders to reflect, sharpen skills, and connect with others who share her passion and commitment to building a more just and equitable society. She will also receive over 60 hours of instruction, technical assistance, and one-on-one coaching.

Throughout the year, the CR2PI also conducts original research at the intersections of race, gender and class in cities and communities across the country on a range of important issues, from poverty to economic security to health disparities and violence. The goal of these research and advocacy efforts is to inspire action and change by local leaders within the halls of power for low-income women, families, and communities. We offer gratitude and appreciation to the New York Women's Foundation for giving this opportunity to Dr. Fleming. In our view, this honor also recognizes the tireless efforts of the Hetrick-Martin Institute: New Jersey to offer a safe and supportive environment to all youth, regardless of sexual orientation or identity.

# Open Society Foundations Combatting Hate Program

HMI: NJ was one of only 92 awardees nationwide to be selected to receive an **Open Society Communities Against Hate** grant in response to the increase in hate crimes stemming from the outcome of the 2016 political election. According to their website (<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/>), “The Open Society Foundations (OSF) work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable and open to the participation of all people.” Through a range of activities, the OSF seeks to strengthen the respect for human rights, the role of minorities in a democratic society, and the importance of a diversity of opinions. It was based on these goals that HMI: NJ was so honored as an organization that shares the values of OSF and delivers programming that is likely to lead to lasting social change.

Because of the unparalleled, divisive political climate that resulted from the 2016 presidential election, our care partners throughout the Newark area have expressed a growing need on how to address the increase of hostile incidents experienced by LGBTQ youth and young adults in their care. Under the aegis of the OSF, HMI: NJ provided professional development training to youth service providers in Newark including teachers, administrators and social workers citywide. Through this funding we also provided direct services to 112 LGBTQ youth who experienced adverse events stemming from hate crimes/bullying.

While this program will ultimately serve all HMI: NJ-affiliated youth, it is focused on our transgender youth who are especially vulnerable to the effects of bias, ignorance, and intolerance in this shifting political climate. Indeed, funds from this grant are providing crisis services in the form of counseling and legal services to 35 transgender-identified youth members who have been targeted in hate crimes. Sadly, we must note that, in conjunction with Newark Mayor, Ras Baraka, HMI recently held a vigil for a trans woman who was brutally assaulted.

We are committed to working with law enforcement to increase their cultural competency when working with transgender victims. Critically, we will continue our outreach all LGBTQ youth who are victims of verbal harassment, bullying, vandalism, slurs, intimidation, threats, name-calling, physical abuse, transphobia and cyberbullying.

## HMI: NJ Satellite Sites

Sadly, LGBTQ youth are at a higher risk for homelessness, dropping out of school, physical or emotional abuse, depression, substance abuse, rape and suicide. In schools, LGBTQ youth often experience a disconnect from peers due to bias against their gender expression and sexuality; in the extreme, some face remorseless bullying or even violence. In order to reach more youth in Newark, we have brought HMI: NJ into the Newark Public School system so that youth can access much-needed services during their school day. Working with school administrators, teachers, and social workers, we have become part of the support system in a unique way – by incorporating trauma-informed care in the wider Newark area.

LGBTQ youth of color, who comprise almost 95% of the students served by HMI: NJ, face persistent and frequent harassment and bias-based bullying from peers and school staff. Due to their real or perceived sexual orientation, our youth are harassed and bullied—making the school environment feel hostile and negatively impacting their opportunity to graduate. Moreover, students are often blamed for their own victimization or bullying; they’re told by teachers and administrators that if they just act like other students, they wouldn’t get bullied. Additionally, our youth members typically experience increased surveillance and policing, relatively greater incidents of harsh school discipline, and consistent blame for their own victimization. Regrettably, they are also at higher risk for “school push-out,” which refers to when a student is marginalized in school and/or driven out of school prior to graduation, which feeds the school to prison pipeline. This phenomenon differs from “dropping out” in that it acknowledges the multiple school-based conditions and forces at play in marginalizing students, both within the classroom and beyond its walls—the end result being that students feel pressured to leave school prematurely. Students who are pushed out of school tend to abandon academics altogether, have very high rates of delinquency, and are at a higher risk for entering the criminal justice system.

According to a recent study, the school-to-prison pipeline disproportionately impacts students of color, students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students (LGBTQ), and gender-non-conforming students (GNC)<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, these groups bear the brunt of discriminatory and exclusionary school discipline practices. LGBTQ or GNC youth are frequently suspended or expelled because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, which is viewed as both a disruption and a challenge to the school’s authority<sup>2</sup>. HMI: NJ recognized the need for services in schools and shelters throughout the city of Newark and purposely adopted the satellite site model to support young people where they are.

<sup>1</sup> LGBTQ YOUTH OF COLOR: Discipline Disparities, School Push-Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Gay-Straight Alliance Network. Accessed 5/5/2017 at [https://gsanetwork.org/files/aboutus/LGBTQ\\_brief\\_FINAL-web.pdf](https://gsanetwork.org/files/aboutus/LGBTQ_brief_FINAL-web.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> LGBTQ Youth & the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Advancement Project. April 27, 2015. Accessed 5/5/2017 at <http://www.advancementproject.org/blog/entry/lgbtq-youth-the-school-to-prison-pipeline>.

# U.S. Department of Justice Program Update

Among all the youth who access services at the Hetrick-Martin Institute: New Jersey—and yearly we serve about 200 adolescents and young adults—approximately 40% report having been physically attacked, which is a shocking and completely unacceptable statistic. Moreover, we know from initial assessments that most of our youth are survivors of child sexual abuse, domestic violence, stalking and/or dating violence. In 2016, HMI: NJ applied for and received a federal grant through the Department of Justice: Office of Violence Against Women (OVW), which will enable us to expand our current services to LGBTQ youth who find themselves victims of domestic violence, stalking, and child sexual abuse.

We proudly note that this grant recognizes and reinforces the community-wide impact of the work of HMI: NJ; indeed we are the only LGBTQ direct-services organization nationwide to have received a federal grant of this nature. According to HMI: NJ Executive Director, Dr. Ashawnda Fleming: “Having regional and national support for the programs provided by HMI: NJ is not only organizationally validating, but systemically encouraging... our society is beginning to recognize the trauma experienced by this nation’s LGBTQ youth and is taking steps to do something about it.”

Our work begins with outreach to a range of community partners who may be able to help us reach this vulnerable population, and then providing the targeted training needed to improve outcomes. Since beginning this crucial work in December of 2016, we have received an enthusiastic response to our outreach efforts regarding increasing LGBTQ cultural competency, as well as in response to our more specialized trauma-treatment training for child protective case managers, educators, direct service providers, mental and medical health providers, and school administrators. More broadly, we provide our community partners with the knowledge and skills to create safer spaces for LGBTQ youth, as well as lift up the voices of all youth who have been marginalized, oppressed, and/or survivors of violence.

This OVW grant has also augmented the outreach efforts of our community partner, Covenant House, a youth homeless shelter that delivers LGBTQ-specific services related to sexual violence and other issues commonly found among LGBTQ homeless youth. Additionally, this grant will help us promote enhanced capacity-building skills for Covenant House staff and volunteers. HMI: NJ staff meet with clinicians at Covenant House to develop specific treatment protocols for individual residents, as well as amplify broader support, education and advocacy for all LGBTQ residents of the shelter. The individualized meetings encompass clinical issues such as any observable mental health symptoms or substance use, recommended medical/dental/vision care, and behavior in the LGBTQ support group and art therapy group. Each member of our clinical staff is trained to carefully track and assess the outcomes of specific services such as housing referrals, employment support, medical referrals, and individual and group counseling so we can ensure that every identified survivor is able to meet treatment goals. Moreover, we track progress by both service delivery type and by victim categories, which ensures accurate data collection.

Finally, this OVW grant has expanded our ability to reach out to Spanish-speaking survivors with limited English proficiency by providing interpretation services by clinical staff fluent in Spanish who can translate individual sessions, groups, and materials. Additionally, to facilitate outreach to Spanish-speakers who attend identified area schools with a large number of Spanish-speaking students, printed materials promoting services have been translated into Spanish. Our outreach efforts to publicize our expanded survivor services have been very successful, as evidenced by the fact that we receive calls on a weekly basis about LGBTQ victims in need of services.

# HMI: NJ Training Institute: Supporting Youth & Serving Providers Statewide

Thanks to support from the Frances L. & Edwin L. Cummings Memorial Fund, HMI: NJ was able to launch the **HMI: NJ Training Institute** in the Fall of 2016. The goal of the Training Institute is to provide capacity-building training workshops to service providers in our state who assist our LGBTQ youth, such as teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, etc. Our staff members include highly-trained professionals from a range of disciplines, all of whom have experience with diverse populations of urban adolescents from various cultures and backgrounds—and, critically, who are well trained in the issues that our LGBTQ youth confront on a daily basis. Over the past year we have trained over 500 youth-serving professionals from 70 schools and agencies statewide.

The cornerstone of our LGBTQ sensitivity training is “Suspending the Rules: Creating a SAFE Environment for LGBTQ Youth.” Through this program we provide an overview of the LGBTQ community and the challenges they face, which first includes defining terms such as gender, sex, sexual orientation, cis-gendered, and others. Participants then discuss in depth the impact of intersectionality where sexual identity, race, religion, income, and ability status can compound the trauma that LGBTQ youth often face. Common biases are also discussed in this workshop and in other training that we offer, as well as the impact that uninformed beliefs can have on LGBTQ youth.

What many in our community do not fully appreciate is that trauma can occur for LGBTQ youth at home, through interactions with their peers, by engaging with the broader community, and even within systems or institutions that are expressly intended to support them. For example, HMI: NJ works with Essex County’s Department for Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P) to provide training to staff in their seven local offices, which currently include about 200 staff members. Importantly,

working with DCP&P affords us the opportunity to assist some of our most vulnerable adolescents and young adults by engaging in meaningful dialogue with youth-serving staff about the range of trauma experienced by LGBTQ youth. For example, these individuals are at greater risk for substance use, truancy, physical and sexual assault, and bullying. And all too often, many LGBTQ youth come from homes where their sexual or gender identities are not accepted, putting them at greater risk for homelessness. As a consequence, we educate service providers on how behavioral problems can best be addressed by creating trauma-informed safe spaces, referring those in need to LGBTQ community support systems, reducing re-victimization, and connecting victims to competent individualized care.

Through monthly meetings with DCP&P workers, clinical staff at Covenant House, and high school administrators and social workers at our satellite sites, we have been able to improve the community’s understanding of the effects of sex- and gender-specific trauma on youth. And we know we are making a difference because we administer pre- and post-tests to participants to gauge the impact of our programming; encouragingly, we nearly always see improvements in test scores upon completion of the training.

This past spring we introduced a new training program focused on trauma, entitled “Addressing Trauma in LGBTQ Youth.” In this training, we deepen the conversation about the marginalizing experiences of LGBTQ youth, including the nature of the LGBTQ youth experience, the common obstacles they face, how youth-serving professionals can ensure their safety, and how to best address the range of effects of trauma.

HMI: NJ offers training programs statewide. For more information on our training, please contact [arosales@hmi.org](mailto:arosales@hmi.org).

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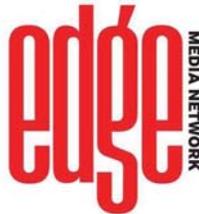
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