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According to national statistics there are somewhere between 1.6 and 2.8 million homeless youth in the United States. An inordinate percentage of these homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. The causes of homelessness among this group as well as the needed services are multifaceted and complex, making it what many would refer to as a wicked problem. This article argues that in order to address the wicked problem of homelessness among LGBTQ youth, collaborations across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors must occur. Examples of such collaborations are offered for consideration of others looking to address the issue.

According to national statistics, there are somewhere between 1.6 and 2.8 million homeless youth on any given day in America (Center for American Progress, 2010). Definitions of homeless youth differ by jurisdiction, but commonly people are considered to be homeless youth if they are under the age of 24, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, and do not have access to a safe and stable living environment. While the definition of a safe and stable living environment may also vary by jurisdiction, typically it is similar to that defined in the Minnesota Homeless Youth Act, which states that homeless youth lack a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" and such residences do not include shelters designed for temporary living, transitional housing, temporary housing with a friend or family member, or a public or private place not designed or usually used for regular sleeping accommodations (MN Statutes, 2015).

Serving all homeless youth is a challenge in the United States, because there are not nearly enough programs, shelters, and services to reach all those in need of support. The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that there are only 4,000 shelter beds for homeless youth nationwide. Of particular concern to advocates is the fact that LGBTQ homeless youth are estimated to constitute 20–40% of all homeless youth, despite the fact that it is estimated that the LGBTQ population constitutes only 7–10% of the full population (Center for American Progress, 2010; Maccio & Ferguson, 2016). While all homeless youth need services, LGBTQ homeless youth are particularly vulnerable and often need targeted support and services; however, there are very few programs or funds directed specifically at helping this population despite its overrepresentation in the homeless youth population.

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Like many social problems, LGBTQ youth homelessness falls under the rubric of a "wicked problem;" that is, it lacks clarity and is ill-defined, particularly in relation to the multiple causes and thus possible solutions that shape the issue (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Increasingly, those who work with wicked problems have noted that the complexity of the issue requires solutions that bridge the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Such multisector collaboration allows organizations from each sector to bring their respective comparative advantages to the table while building and implementing solutions (O'Regan & Oster, 2000). This article examines the issue of LGBTQ youth as a wicked problem that may best be addressed through cross-sector collaboration as well as provides examples of how collaboration across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors can help provide housing and services for this particularly vulnerable population.

WICKED PROBLEMS

The concept of wicked problems arose in the 1970s in relation to the challenges of addressing complex social issues. According to Rittel and Webber (1973), the differences between societal problems and those of the applied sciences means that those addressing public problems cannot apply typical scientific methods in problem-solving. While the problems faced by natural sciences are more clearly definable and separable, according to Rittel and Webber (1973), the wicked problems faced by planners and public policymakers do not have these qualities and instead possess the 10 following properties:

1. They have no definitive formulation, and are instead complex and include several related factors that are hard to separate.
2. They have no stopping rule, meaning there are too many causal links to consider, making it difficult if not impossible to know when or where a solution is found.
3. The value of solutions is measured on a scale of good or bad and not true or false. Whether a solution is good or bad depends, in part, on the perspective and values of those weighing the outcomes.
4. Each solution has its own consequences, which are not usually clear until after implementation.
5. There is no easy way to test solutions. Unlike the natural sciences, which can operate in a lab environment and control the effects of failure, solutions to social problems only get one chance, and the consequences of failure are great.
6. It is impossible to identify all of the possible solutions. This runs counter to rational decision-making models, which assume full information and ability to weigh all options.
7. Every wicked problem is unique; thus there are no "one size fits all" solutions.
8. Each wicked problem is likely a symptom of another problem that also needs to be addressed.
9. How a problem is defined influences the solutions considered to address it.
10. Decision-makers are liable for the consequences of their actions in implementing the proposed solution to wicked problems in society.

Because of these characteristics, wicked problems like homelessness among LGBTQ youth pose particular challenges to organizations addressing these types of complex issues.

Several scholars have considered the role of wicked problems in public policy and administration (Drury, 2014; Head & Alford, 2015; Termeer, Dewulf, Breeman, & Stiller, 2015; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; Wexler, 2009). One thing that many of these scholars note is the need to look outside the traditional boundaries of public sector governance for solutions to wicked problems. For example, in their work, Termeer et al., 2015 note that decision-makers need to look at wicked problems from outside of their traditional roles and organizations in order to see aspects of the issue that may fall outside their scope of activity. They argue that traditional governance models may actually inhibit the ability of organizations to find alternative solutions or strategies to wicked problems. Head and Alford (2015) also note that debates about the proper role of government can provide challenges for looking outside of traditional governance structures to find solutions to wicked problems. They go on to argue that collaboration across boundaries is one way to work around the challenges of addressing wicked problems. Such collaborative relationships are "likely to enhance the understanding and addressing of those wicked problems where there are multiple parties with differential knowledge, interests or values" (Head & Alford, 2015, p. 725). One form of such collaborative relationships is the cross-sector or multisector partnership formed by public, private, and nonprofit organizations to address wicked problems.

MULTISECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

As the number of multisector collaborations has increased, several scholars have investigated different aspects of such partnerships, including their relation to dealing with wicked problems. As noted by O'Regan and Oster "in the real world, activities are not typically partitioned cleanly. … rather, activities comprise multiple tasks, and sectors differ in their strengths at performing subactivities" (p. 120). According to the authors, such a division of labor across sectors realizes efficiencies that come with comparative advantage. That is, each sector has strengths it brings to the collaboration, such as the taxing authority of the public sector, mission-driven workers from the nonprofit sector, and capital and products available from the private sector.

In their work examining ways to better measure the impact of cross-sector partnerships, van Tulder, Sietanidi, Crane, and Brammer (2016) note the exponential growth of cross-sector partnerships that tend to focus on community good rather than the needs of special interests. This also relates to work on wicked problems, as such social issues most often fall under the wicked problem rubric. As van Tulder et al. note, "Cross-sector partnerships are, therefore, expected to deliver improved and innovative solutions for economic, social, and environmental problems via the combination of the capacities and resources of organizational actors across different sectors" (2016, p. 2). The authors' argument is thus not whether or not cross-sector partnership should exist, but instead, given the inevitability of such collaborations, how to best measure their impact.

In yet another analysis of cross-sector social partnerships, Kolk, van Dolen, and Vock (2010) move away from the macro-level question of how such collaborations serve society or even the organizations involved and instead examine the effects of such interactions on the micro-level of the individuals involved. The authors state that most of the literature related to cross-sector partnerships focuses on either the macro-level of what social good is addressed or the meso-level of how the partnering organizations benefit. They argue that there are trickle-down effects

that also affect the individuals involved, including such factors as trust, organizational commitment and work motivation, job satisfaction, loyalty, and personal satisfaction (Kolk et al., 2010). Looking at the benefits across all three levels may help to explain why some partnerships designed to address wicked problems succeed and others fail.

USING CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION TO ADDRESS THE WICKED PROBLEM OF LGBTQ YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The scholarship on wicked problems and cross-sector collaboration highlights the growing connection between the two. Given the multifaceted nature of wicked problems, it is logical to conclude that one sector alone will not be able to provide the resources necessary to address such issues. Instead, using the assumptions of comparative advantage, collaboration across or between public, private, and nonprofit organizations provides the best opportunity to deliver solutions. Many addressing the wicked problem of LGBTQ youth homelessness have moved to cross-sector collaboration in an attempt to meet the complex needs of this population.

As noted in the introduction, LGBTQ youth make up a disproportionate percentage of all homeless youth. There are several reasons why LGBTQ youth may become homeless, but the most cited reasons include running away because of rejection by families once they reveal their sexual or gender identity, being kicked out of their home because of their sexual or gender identity, leaving the foster care system either because they age out or are in unwelcoming or abusive settings due to their sexual or gender identity, or escaping sexual or physical abuse that starts once they reveal their sexual or gender identity, especially in juvenile justice and foster care systems (Hunter, 2008; Hussey, 2015; Keuroghlian, Shtasel, & Bassuk, 2014; Maccio & Ferguson, 2016; National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth, 2009). Along with the multiple causes of homelessness among LGBTQ youth, there are several challenges that they may face beyond finding stable housing.

All homeless youth, regardless of sexual or gender identity, have multiple support needs in order to help them get off the streets and find safe and stable living conditions. However, those who work with and/or study LGBTQ youth have identified additional challenges that are faced by this overrepresented subpopulation of homeless youth. For example, while there is a shortage of beds for all homeless youth, LGTBQ youth face additional challenges due to the fact that shelters may discriminate against them because of their sexual and gender identity or because they may not feel safe in a shelter if its policies do not protect them from verbal, physical, and sexual abuse (Cray, Miller, & Durso, 2013; Hussey, 2015; Keuroghlian et al., 2014). LGBTQ youth also tend to have higher instances of mental health risks. As Keuroghlian et al. (2014) note, LGBTQ youth are more likely to suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal ideation than their heterosexual peers. They are also more likely to have attempted suicide, have anxiety issues, and engage in self-harm. Researchers have also noted that LGBTQ youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to have engaged in survival sex: that is, sex in exchange for food or housing, or to have been sexually victimized, including being at high risk for sex trafficking (Cray et al., 2013; Keuroghlian et al., 2014). Because of the high rates of sexual abuse and survival sex, LGBTQ youth are also at higher risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections and HIV, leading to the need for increased medical care and monitoring. Transgender youth are considered to be among the most vulnerable of the LGBTQ

homeless population and face additional issues of the need for counseling and medication if they desire to transition and not being provided bathroom and shower facilities that respect their gender identity (Hussey, 2015; Keuroghlian et al., 2014). Finally, LGBTQ youth looking to become financially independent tend to face higher rates of employment discrimination and need extra support in finding work.

The complex causes of LGBTQ youth homelessness, along with the additional service and support needs this group has, fit the rubric of a wicked problem; that is, it is a problem that is complex, meaning it has no one clear cause and no simple solutions. It is a multifaceted issue that requires collaboration among several players in order to address the problem and create solutions. Because this is not a one-size-fits-all community with consistent needs, programs that serve LGBTQ youth need to be flexible, creative, and call on the resources of players across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to find effective solutions to the multiple issues at hand.

CURRENT SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

At the federal level, funding to support programs to help homeless youth comes through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). This legislation was originally passed in 1974 as the Runaway Youth Act and reauthorized in 2013 as the RHYA (Cray et al., 2013). There are three streams of funding that come through this act. The Street Outreach Program provides education to youth on the streets about issues such as substance use and treatment, sexual health, available shelter and counseling services, and crisis intervention. The Basic Center Program funding provides support for shelters and counseling for up to three weeks, and the Transitional Living Program supports longer-term housing and support programs, such as employment help, education, and mental health counseling (Cray et al., 2013). According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012), funding for these programs remained flat in the decade between 2001 and 2012, and still does not meet the needs of the homeless youth population. Of added concern is the fact that there are no provisions to guarantee funding to serve the particular needs of the LGBTQ homeless youth population despite their over-representation in the population as a whole. As Maccio and Ferguson (2016) note: "Less than 1% of the federal government's budget for homeless programs goes towards homeless children and youth … . Moreover, the federal government offers no funding for LGBTQ-specific homeless services" (p. 48). Along with the RHYA, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides additional federal funding, aimed particularly at helping homeless youth gain access to schools and remove barriers to education (Cray et al., 2013). Again, this legislation does not specify funds to help LGBTQ youth. Besides federal funding, states often pass their own homeless youth legislation and provide support; however, even combined federal, state, and local aid to programs that prevent or support homeless youth are not sufficient to meet the demand.

NEEDS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR LGBTQ HOMELESS YOUTH

As noted above, LGBTQ youth make up a disproportionate percentage of all homeless youth and also face additional challenges that require programs and resources specifically targeted

to their needs. Even when programs are designed to help LGBTQ homeless youth, organizations often lack sufficient funding and other resources to provide the services necessary. Several scholars and advocacy groups have studied the needs of this particular group and put forth recommendations for policies and practices. For example, in their work, Maccio and Ferguson (2016) note that the particular needs of the LGBTQ homeless youth population vary across several factors, but the main needs expressed are safe housing, acceptance and emotional support, transition support for transgender youth, LGBTQ-specific sex education, and LGBTQ peer support. In the same report Maccio and Ferguson (2016), the authors talked with those working with LGBTQ homeless youth and identified the following as the services they felt were most needed:

- Housing, including crisis beds, permanent supportive living and housing for older youth.
- Educational services, including continuing education, college preparation, and housing and dining facilities staying open during school breaks.
- Employment services, including career planning, job development for those with special needs, community-based economic development, and addressing workplace discrimination.
- Family services, including promoting family support and acceptance, bicultural interventions, and preventive interventions for those youth still connected with their families.
- LGBTQ-affirming services, including specific programming, medical services, case management, and mental health services.
- Cultural competency training, including for staff in homeless shelters and to build cultural connections among LGBTQ, heterosexual, and cisgender runaway homeless youth.
- Advocacy and organizing, including consciousness-raising efforts in small and rural communities, working in coalitions, and creating public awareness campaigns.

In their report on the unmet needs of homeless LGBTQ youth, Cray et al. (2013) note similar needs among LGBTQ youth and include in their recommendations doing more outreach to homeless LGBTQ youth, developing relationships with other LGBTQ-focused community groups, working to gather better data through voluntary collection during intake, ensuring ease of transportation, and establishing schools that are free from bullying and harassment of LGBTQ youth. In her report on addressing the needs of homeless transgender youth in particular, Hussey (2015) also notes the need to provide resources for housing, education, and employment opportunities, and for prevention programs aimed at reducing HIV, Hepatitis C, and other health risks, by using promising practices to help with family intervention, implement strong anti-discrimination policies to help eliminate barriers to service, and working with law enforcement and the criminal justice systems to decriminalize behaviors that are tied to homelessness and sex work. Finally, a national report citing best practices for serving LGBT homeless youth sets out the following recommendations:

1. Improving Practices
   a) Treat LGBT youth respectfully and ensure their safety
   b) Appropriately address LGBT identity during the intake process

    c) Support access to education, medical care, and mental health care
    d) Support transgender and nonconforming youth participants
    e) Inform LGBT youth participants about local LGBT programs and services
2. Improving Organizational Culture
    a) Programmatic culture: creating a safe and inclusive environment
    b) Adopt and implement written nondiscrimination policies
    c) Adopt confidentiality policies
    d) Provide LGBT competency training to all agency employees and volunteers
    e) Establish sound recruitment and hiring practices
    f) Develop agency connections to LGBT organizations and the LGBT community
    g) Collect and evaluate data
3. Improving Residential Services
    a) Keep LGBT youth in safe shelters and other residential services. (National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth, 2009)

The varied needs of and recommendations for services for LGBTQ homeless youth highlight the complexity of the issue and the multifaceted approach to providing help and support that makes providing services for LGBTQ youth a wicked problem best addressed through cross-sector collaboration. Along with the lack of sufficient funding, it is clear that no one agency or organization alone can provide for all the needs of this population. Cooperation and collaboration across agencies and sectors is likely the only way that adequate services and support can be provided to help homeless LGBTQ youth get off the streets and into safe and stable life situations.

EXAMPLES OF MULTISECTOR COLLABORATION

As noted earlier, wicked problems, by definition, require multisector collaboration to find solutions. The wicked problem of LGBTQ youth homelessness is no exception. The complexity of causes, needed services, and suggested best practices means that several organizations must work together if the needed solutions are to be implemented. The discussion in the following subsections highlights some examples where communities have thought outside the box and collaborated across agencies and sectors when creating programs and services for homeless LGBTQ youth.

The Zebra Coalition

According to its website, the Zebra Coalition is

> A network of organizations which provide services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and all youth (LGBT+) ages 13–24. The Coalition assists young people facing homelessness; bullying; physical, sexual and drug abuse; and isolation from their families with individualized programs to guide them to recovery and stability. (Zebra Coalition, n.d.-a)

Services provided by the Zebra Coalition include a youth center, crisis hotline, short-term housing, food and clothing, medical care and resources, mental health counseling, continuing education, employment counseling, transportation, and peer support—all items cited as needs and best practices in the previous section. The coalition makes it clear that the services provided

are made possible by a "unique network of Central Florida social service providers, government agencies, schools, colleges and universities." It also notes that while coalition members provide essential services in various ways, "none of them can provide a full continuum of services alone" (Zebra Coalition, n.d.-b). Members of the coalition include healthcare providers, churches, business associations, higher education, nonprofits, and community service providers. It is a prime example of collaboration across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to assure a continuum of care for LGBTQ youth.

Sunburst Youth Housing Project

Beginning in 2002, the San Diego LGBT Community Center began working with community partners including churches, family services, city council members, the YMCA youth and family services, and a local hospital, on the development of an affordable and supportive housing project for LGBTQ and HIV positive youth (Norris, 2005). The Sunburst Youth Housing Project took advantage of an existing 23-unit apartment building in San Diego that was already near schools, work, community health facilities, and public transit. The project opened in February 2006 and provides supportive housing for youth between 18 and 24 "with a special focus on LGTBQ and HIV + youth" (San Diego LGBT Community Center, n.d.-b). The San Diego LGBT Community also runs the Hillcrest Youth Center, which is a drop-in rec- reational center "dedicated to the needs of LGBTQ and HIV + youth." The Hillcrest Youth Center provides programming for LGBTQ + youth between the ages of 14 and 18 including computer access, health and financial education, leadership training, and peer support groups. Both the youth center and the Sunburst Housing Project are examples of collaborative efforts that meet the varying needs and recommended best practices in serving LGBTQ youth (San Diego LGBT Community Center, n.d.-a).

The Ali Forney Center

New York City's Ali Forney Center was named after Ali Forney, a homeless, gender noncon- forming youth who served as an advocate for LGBTQ youth and was murdered in 1997 at the age of 22 (Ali Forney Center, n.d.-a). The center is one of only a few shelters that provide services to New York's LGBTQ homeless youth. The center's services include a drop-in center with access to food, medical care, mental health, and other services, outreach programs for LGBTQ youth and their families, emergency housing, transitional living, programs and support for transgender youth, job readiness and education support, and healthcare services. The center receives support from and works with several partners across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in order to meet their missions to protect LGBTQ youth from the harm of homelessness and to support them in becoming safe and independent as they move from adolescence to adulthood (Ali Forney Center, n.d.-b).

The Bridge for Youth

The Bridge for Youth is a nonprofit service organization in Minneapolis (Bridge for Youth, n.d.). It was founded in 1970 and serves youth in crisis and their families in an effort to prevent

youth homelessness. The Bridge is one of the contracted providers of shelter and support for youth in Hennepin County, Minnesota, but also receives support from other nonprofit and private organizations (personal communication, August 24, 2016). While The Bridge serves all youth, it has specific programming for LGBTQ youth as part of its services. The Bridge provides emergency shelter and transitional housing as well as health care, mental health care, and a crisis line. For LGBTQ youth, The Bridge offers the longest-running LGBTQ peer support group known as "So What If I Am." It also has staff dedicated to 20 hours/week of outreach to LGBTQ youth, and it partners with organizations such as the St. Paul public schools, Out for Equity, and local police departments to provide education for adults in how to support LGBTQ youth (personal communication, August 24, 2016). Staff and volunteers also receive cultural competence training to better prepare them to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth who seek services. Funding for programming comes from federal, state, and local government, private grants, contributions, and loans. Local companies often provide volunteers to help with programming and on the crisis hotline. In order to help youth create a safety plan and gain access to other needed services, The Bridge partners with other government and community service providers to help assure that LGBTQ homeless youth have information on where to go for services not directly provided at The Bridge (personal communication, August 24, 2016).

Avenues for Homeless Youth

Like The Bridge for Youth, Avenues for Homeless Youth is a nonprofit service provider for all homeless youth in Hennepin County, Minnesota. It also receives funding and support from government, nonprofit, and private sources. One of its housing facilities is owned by the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority and leased to Avenues at no cost. Avenues also collaborates with several other community partners to assure that a broad range of services is available to youth. According to its annual report,

> The annual budget of Avenues is raised from a diverse mix of public and private sources; no single funding source is projected to exceed 12% of the total budget. Public funding contributes approximately 40% and private donors contribute 60% of the annual budget (Avenues for Homeless Youth, 2013, p. 7).

While Avenues serves all youth, it does have programming particularly aimed at support for LGBTQ youth. One of its most successful programs, moves "outside the system" and creates collaboration with private citizens. In its ConneQT Host Home Program, Avenues recruits, screens, and trains volunteers who open their homes to LGBTQ youth (personal communication September 12, 2016). Along with its emergency shelter and transitional housing programs for LGBTQ youth, the Host Home program provides another option for LGBTQ homeless youth in need of longer-term, stable housing, and support. Those willing to host youth in their homes go through screening and intensive training. Youth are allowed to select their host home, versus being assigned to one, and the Avenues staff continues to work with the hosts and youth to provide support and connections to appropriate community agencies that can help provide the continuum of care that the youth need (personal communication, August 12, 2016). This is yet another example of how collaboration across sectors can help build the types of programs and services needed by LGBTQ youth.

Nicollet Square and West 66

While not directed specifically at LGBTQ homeless youth, the last two programs noted here are prime examples of cross-sector collaboration that helps meet the longer-term needs of homeless youth. The models described can easily be adapted to address the specific issues facing LGBTQ youth. Both programs begin with the organization known as Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative. This group works with local communities of faith to build and support affordable and supportive housing for youth, seniors, and the workforce. Beacon serves as the project coordinator, bringing the appropriate players together to make sure the housing is built and staffed to serve its target community once the tenants move in.

One of the notable Beacon projects directed at homeless youth is Nicollet Square. This 42-unit apartment complex in south Minneapolis provides supportive housing to youth looking to transition to stable independent living. Beacon estimates that it costs $12,000 per year per tenant to provide the services necessary to help tenants move to independent living. This funding comes from a mix of public and private resources. The facility is supported by donors, volunteers, congregations, local business, and the neighborhood. Supportive services are provided by staff from Youthlink and the property is managed by Common Bond, both community partners. Tenants pay rent and also receive support with continuing their education and job training. Local businesses, including a coffee shop located at the street level of the building, provide internships and employment training for youth who then often move on to other full-time employment. Nicollet Square has proved to be a highly successful collaborative model for providing supportive transitional housing for homeless youth (Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, n.d.).

Another project managed by Beacon Interfaith is the West 66 Apartments. Construction on this 39-unit apartment building began in July 2016 (Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, 2016). The facility is located in Edina, Minnesota, a wealthy suburb west of Minneapolis where there is currently a shortage of shelter and support options for homeless youth. As with Nicollet Square, this project is a collaboration across local and state government, communities of faith, private funders, and community service providers. It will be staffed by Simpson Housing Services and provide opportunities for education and employment. Again, local businesses are being approached to provide entry-level jobs and internships so the youth can gain the skills and experience necessary to move into self-sufficiency. West 66 Apartments and Nicollet Square are prime examples of how cross-sector collaboration can address the wicked problem of youth homelessness. It would be easy, with the addition of the right partners, to assure that these programs also include services that meet the specific needs of LGBTQ homeless youth.

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT LGBTQ HOMELESS YOUTH

The examples noted above show how collaboration across public, private, and nonprofit organizations can help address the wicked problem of homelessness among LGBTQ youth. The varying causes of homelessness among this group, the wide range of services required, and the call to meet best practices make it necessary for organizations to collaborate to create appropriate solutions. Funding, services, and resources from one sector alone are not sufficient

to address this complex problem. All three sectors—public, private, and nonprofit—have roles to play in meeting the needs of LGBTQ homeless youth and working to reduce their numbers.

While addressing the issues of LGBTQ homeless youth is, by definition, a matter that requires collaboration across sectors, as the main provider of funding and policy direction there are some specific things that government can do. First, any federal state, and local laws and ordinances regarding homeless youth should include provisions that provide protections and specific programming for LGBTQ youth. As an overrepresented subpopulation of homeless youth, it is clear that protections against discrimination as well as more resources are needed to help this group. Legislation had been introduced at the federal level to pass a Runaway and Homeless Youth Inclusion Act (https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/2955) that would amend the current law to include support for the specific needs of LGBTQ youth (Cray et al., 2013). Introduced in 2013, this bill went no further than referral to a subcommittee. It is also clear that with less than 1% of all federal homelessness programming dollars going toward children and youth, there is not sufficient funding to address the need, leaving a large gap for the private and nonprofit sectors to fill. Even the best-constructed collaborations cannot meet the demand when programs are so extremely underfunded. Caring for youth, regardless of sexual or gender identification is a public good. It is important when providing a public good not to exclude a vital portion of the population, in this case LGBTQ homeless youth. It is easy for those who work in or teach about particular sectors to stay in silos when thinking about problems and their solutions. Wicked problems, such as homelessness among LGBTQ youth, require breaking down silos and collaborating across sectors to develop the most comprehensive solutions to the complex problems our society faces. Combating LGBTQ youth homelessness is no exception.

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