

The Center for Children & Youth Justice

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PREPARED FOR THE  
CENTER FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH JUSTICE

# Needs Assessment of LGBTQ+ Youth in the Sex Trade

Creatively envisioning a future where  
LGBTQ+ youth experiencing the sex trade  
are supported to be healthy, safe, and well

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## A Note on Terminology

This report discusses youth (under 18) and young adults (18 – 24) who have exchanged sex for resources. The client, the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ), along with legal and political actors at state and federal levels, refer to all minors who have engaged in commercial sexual activity as victims or survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or CSEC (Commercially Sexually Exploited Children). The legal definition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation identifies any act of minors trading sex for resources as fundamentally abusive and exploitative of the child.<sup>1</sup> CSE terminology is instrumental in challenging historic political and legal rhetoric that labeled certain youth involved in the sex trade as criminal, rather critically examining the social and economic conditions that lead youth, particularly marginalized youth, to trade sex for resources.

We recognize that identifiers like “CSEC” and “trafficking victims” are commonly used by actors like CCYJ who seek to mobilize services supporting the well-being of *all* youth who trade sex for resources, regardless of whether or not there is a third-party profiting from the acts. We also recognize that the labels and identifiers used by institutions and policymakers are often distant from the labels that youth use to identify themselves and their experiences.

We made an effort to employ person-first language in the research and report that speaks to both legal and political advocates, as well as direct service-providers, self-advocates, and those with lived experiences. We consulted with the client, organizational partners, and community-based literature to find nuanced language that people use to describe themselves and avoid ascribing labels; to allow people to speak to their own experience and uplift their voices; and to acknowledge diverse experiences with the sex trade.

After considering our options that encompass a myriad of experiences and using person-first language that respects self-determination we have chosen to use the terms **“youth with involvement in the sex trade”** and **“youth experiencing the sex trade”** in this report.

### What is the Sex Trade?

The Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP) is a Chicago-based organization led by women of color with current or former experiences in the sex trade and street economies that advances the following definition of the sex trade. We defer to their expertise and lived experience in defining the term.

*“YWEP defines the sex trade as any form of being sexual (or the idea of being sexual) in exchange for money, gifts, safety, drugs, hormones, or survival needs like housing, food, clothes, or immigration and documentation – whether we get to keep the money/goods/service or someone else profits from these acts. The girls we know have a wide range of experiences in the sex trade.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> USDJ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.” Webpage [Accessed May 2019]. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/csec\\_program.html](https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/csec_program.html)

<sup>2</sup> Young Women’s Empowerment Project, “Girls Do What They Have To Do To Survive: Illuminating Methods used by Girls in the Sex Trade and Street Economy to Fight Back and Heal.” *YWEP* (2009).

## What is an LGBTQ+ Identity?

Based on the precedence of CCYJ's *Protocol for Safe and Affirming Care*, we have chosen to use the acronym LGBTQ+ in this paper to describe people who identify as having a sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression outside of the binary, heterosexual constructions of biological sex. To quote the *Protocol*:

*“Understanding what it means to be a person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning takes more than a list of definitions. Terminology is constantly evolving and what was once an inappropriate or offensive term may now be an affirming one. “Queer” was widely used as an insult and is now commonly used as an affirming, umbrella term for the LGBTQ+ community. Conversely, terms that were once used to describe the LGBTQ+ community are now insufficient... most importantly, developing relationships with LGBTQ+ individuals is the best way to understand what it means to be LGBTQ+.”*

<sup>3</sup>

*Please see Appendix A for a more in-depth list of key terms and definitions.*

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<sup>3</sup> Oakley, Nicholas. "Protocol for Safe and Affirming Care" *CCYJ eQuality Project*. (Jan 2017).

## **Executive Summary**

The Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) advances child welfare and juvenile justice reform in Washington State and advocates for better services for marginalized youth, including LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade. CCYJ's previous initiatives led to the creation of the Protocol for Safe and Affirming Care which guides service professionals in identifying and affirming LGBTQ+ youth and the Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. Knowing that LGBTQ+ youth experience a higher likelihood of sex trade involvement and recognizing that intersecting identities and experiences lead to further discrimination and barriers, CCYJ funded our team of UW researchers to examine the problem that **LGBTQ+ youth in Washington State who experience the sex trade face challenges in accessing services that support their health, safety, and well-being.**

This report responds to the following two research questions:

- 1. What needs are shared among Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade?**
- 2. To what extent can service professionals provide services to better support these youth in achieving health, safety, and wellness?**

In conducting the needs assessment our team used a mixed-methods approach that entailed a research synthesis of relevant studies (n=10), an online survey of youth-serving professionals (n=66), and three focus groups with young adults who identified as LGBTQ+ and had experienced the sex trade as a minor (n=10).

The team aimed to develop a culturally-responsive and community-based research design. We consulted with over 20 service professionals, community partners, researchers, and members of the study population during the research methods development. Focus groups were designed in an innovative and empowering format where participants acted as paid consultants tasked with designing a mobile app to reach a world where their peers feel healthy, safe, and well.

The data collection and analysis from all three methods found that LGBTQ+ youth in Washington State who experience the sex trade share needs for:

- **Culturally-responsive care** that is non-judgmental and affirming of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and their experiences in the sex trade; as well as responds to their mental health needs and history of trauma.
- **Access to safe housing and healthcare** where they can access services consistently and without fear of violence, stigmatization, or discrimination from peers or professionals.
- **Opportunities for connection** with diverse peers of shared experiences, online and in-person, for both support, community, and information sharing purposes;
- **Centralized and coherent services** that operate at accessible hours and locations, have the ability to respond to crises, and refer youth to safe, LGBTQ+ affirming care;
- **Support in practicing self-determination** through youth-led conversations and becoming involved in the policies and services that impact their ability to thrive.

We offer recommendations in three categories:

- **Recommendations for CCYJ:** Incorporate the findings of this report into existing trainings on LGBTQ+ youth and youth experiencing sexual exploitation, develop addendums to the existing protocols to discuss the intersection of these identities and experience, and conduct a statewide Community-Based Participatory Research needs assessment for the population.
- **Recommendations for service providers:** Use culturally-responsive and affirming language to engage the population, facilitate peer-to-peer support, and increase safety within housing and healthcare for LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade.
- **Recommendations for policy makers:** Require training and implementation of CCYJs protocols, develop metrics for measuring the health, safety, and wellness of the community, and continue supporting resources for targeted services for marginalized youth involved with child welfare, juvenile justice, and other systems of care.

While recommendations fail to avoid tradeoffs, we recommend CCYJ consider the options in their targeted response to service barriers inhibiting the health, safety, and well-being of Washington's LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade.

# **Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Definition**

## 1.1 Report Overview

Youth with marginalized identities, such as LGBTQ+ youth, face disproportionate social and economic barriers and therefore have higher risk factors for involvement in the sex trade. Systemic and societal homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, heteronormativity, discrimination, and violence can create socioeconomic conditions which work against the self-determination of LGBTQ+ youth and seek to limit their access to opportunities. In Washington State LGBTQ+ youth likely make up about 30 – 70% of the population experiencing the sex trade as a minor.<sup>4</sup>

CCYJ's desire to advance targeted policy and programming for LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade requires research on this specific population's shared needs. CCYJ contracted our team of Masters of Public Administration candidates at the University of Washington to conduct a needs assessment of LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade. The data collection and writing of this report took place over a 7 month period from December 2018 – June 2019. This report aims to fill the gap in local research through uplifting the voices of the target population to better understand their needs and to recommend strategies to support their health, safety, and wellness.

### **Problem Definition**

To frame the research process, our research team arrived at two questions to address the problem that **LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade face challenges in accessing services that adequately support their health, safety, and wellness.**

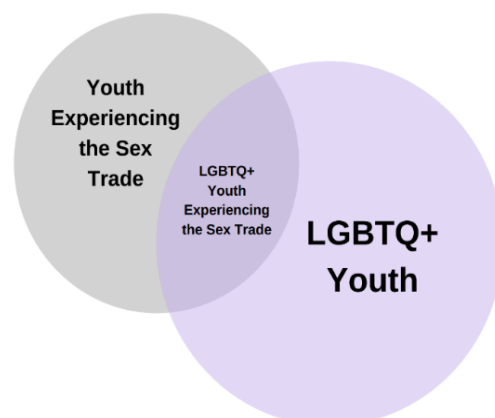
In the research context, health, safety, and wellness are not solely about the sex trade, but rather about the conditions that youth often enter and experience the sex trade through, including: housing instability, sexual assault, trauma, health problems, mental health disorders, formal employment barriers, legal problems, discrimination, and lack of stable support systems.

The two guiding research questions that informed this report were:

1. **What needs are shared among Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade?**
2. **To what extent can service professionals provide services to better support these youth in achieving health, safety, and wellness?**

### **Notes on Report Structure**

This report contains four chapters and an appendix.



<sup>4</sup> This estimate comes from estimates found in the research synthesis, summarized in Chapter 3.3



- **Chapter One: Introduction and Problem Definition** reviews the report's topic, client background, research objectives, and previews overall findings and recommendations.
- **Chapter Two: Research Methodology** details our process, frameworks, positionality, and the mixed-methods data collection approach.
- **Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Findings** presents themes that emerged during each portion of data collection.
- **Chapter Four: Discussion and Recommendations** outlines overall findings and offers a menu of recommendations for CCYJ's consideration.
- **The Appendices:** contains additional supporting documents and tables referenced in the report.
- **Direct Quotations:** The selected quote boxes throughout the report are direct quotes from target population focus group participants and from service professional survey participants. Quotes are delineated as "Focus Group" or "Service Professional."
- **Collages of Art:** The collages included in the report are compilations of the app designs created by focus group participants.

## 1.2 Client Background

The Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization that advocates for the needs of youth involved in child welfare, juvenile justice, and related systems of care in Washington State. Founded in 2006 by Justice Bobbe J. Bridge, CCYJ's mission is to create better lives for generations of children and youth through reforming the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Inconsistent perspectives on health, safety, and wellness between youth-serving systems inspire CCYJ's work to support better, more communicative, person-centered systems to promote better lives for youth, families, and community.

CCYJ acts as a bridge in Washington State between advocates, service professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders to change systems of care. CCYJ leverages these partnerships to uplift the voices of youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, particularly those without a platform to share their stories, including: LGBTQ+ youth, homeless youth, youth affected by gang activity and street violence, and youth experiencing sexual exploitation.

CCYJ primarily builds relationships across the following four sectors:

- Juvenile Courts and Detention
- Homeless Youth Service Providers
- Child Welfare (Foster Care)
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) Resource Providers

To a lesser extent, CCYJ also works with the education and healthcare sectors, however their partnerships in these two sectors are not yet as robust as in the service areas listed above.

### Relevant Projects

CCYJ currently spearheads two critical and ongoing projects related to this report. The *eQuality* project builds capacity for providers to serve LGBTQ+ youth; *Project Respect* seeks to combat child sexual exploitation by building victim-centered response networks across Washington State. Each project has implemented protocols that guide service professionals across the child

welfare, juvenile justice, and related systems of care to identify, engage, and support each distinct population. The urgent challenge for CCYJ's mission is building awareness and capacity to meet the needs of youth at the intersection of these identities and experience.

## 1.3 Research Objectives and Methods Preview

### Research Objectives for the Needs Assessment

- To assess the population's shared needs in achieving health, safety, and wellness;
- To understand what practices service professionals use to serve the population;
- To discern emerging or promising practices and opportunities to improve services for the population;
- To provide policy and program recommendations for improving the population's health, safety, and wellness; and
- To propose future research opportunities for measuring and evaluating evolving services and needs of the population.

### Methodology Preview

The research methods included a research synthesis of relevant studies (n=10), an online survey of service professionals (n=66), and three focus groups with youth who identified as LGBTQ+ and having experienced the sex trade before age 18 (n=10).

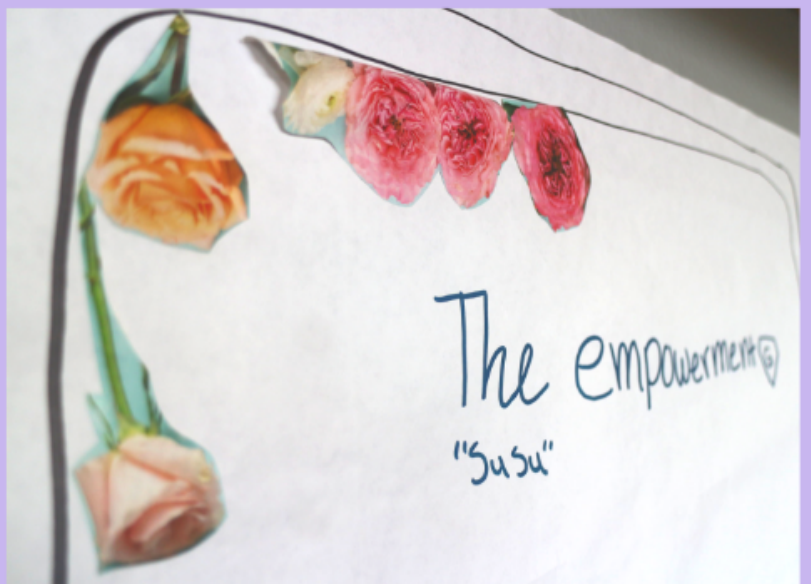
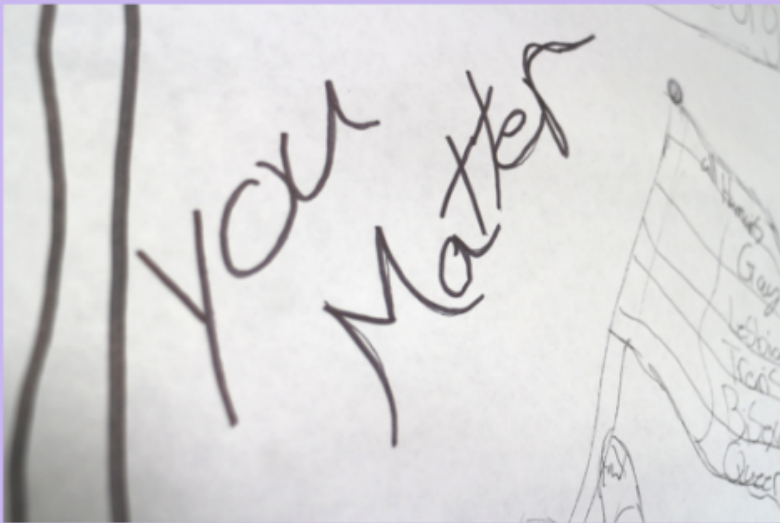
The focus group protocol that we designed drew upon participatory and culturally-responsive data collection methods. Focus group participants acted as paid "consultants" tasked with designing a mobile app that supported their peers' health, safety, and wellness. We developed the simulation's components through consultations researchers and providers with diverse expertise in culturally-responsive and community-based research with vulnerable populations. While designing the focus group protocol demanded extensive time and resources, the process resulted in an innovative and original approach for collecting data, navigating discussions on potentially traumatic experiences, and allowing participants to share their ideas and expertise in an affirming and supportive environment.

## 1.4 Preview of Key Findings

**Figure 1.4: Key Findings for Unmet Needs of LGBTQ+ Youth Experiencing the Sex Trade**

Unmet Need	Characteristics of Need	
<i>Culturally-responsive care</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• affirming</li> <li>• individualized</li> <li>• trauma-informed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• empowering</li> <li>• harm-reduction approach</li> </ul>
<i>Safe access to housing and healthcare</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gender-neutral facilities</li> <li>• methods for reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gender-affirming healthcare</li> <li>• access to hormones</li> </ul>
<i>Opportunities for connection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community engagement</li> <li>• safe spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• human connection</li> <li>• communal healing</li> </ul>

<i>Centralized and coherent services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● crisis response</li><li>● easily accessible information</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● adequate referrals</li><li>● knowledgeable providers</li><li>● accessible location/times</li></ul>
<i>Support in practicing self-determination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● youth-led conversations</li><li>● platform for voice</li><li>● leadership opportunities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● compensation</li><li>● involvement in improving systems and processes</li></ul>



## **Chapter 2: Research Methodology**

### 2.1 Research Methods Summary

#### **Restatement of Research Questions and Research Objectives**

Our team asked two guiding research questions to assess opportunities to support Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth with involvement in the sex trade:

- 1. What needs are shared among Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth who experience the sex trade?**
- 2. To what extent can service professionals provide services to better support these youth in achieving health, safety, and wellness?**

The research objectives of the needs assessment were:

- To assess the population's shared needs in achieving health, safety, and wellness;
- To understand what practices service professionals use to serve the population;
- To discern emerging or promising practices and opportunities to improve services for the population;
- To provide policy and program recommendations for improving the population's health, safety, and wellness; and
- To propose future research opportunities for measuring and evaluating evolving services and needs of the population.

This chapter outlines the mixed-methods approach we used to conduct culturally-responsive and community-based research to meet the research questions and objectives.

*See Appendix B for a table summary of research methods.*

### 2.2 Approaches to Designing A Culturally-Responsive Research Methodology

#### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The researchers drew on the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory, feminist theories, and queer theory to design ethical and rigorous culturally-responsive data collection.

*Critical Race Theory* posits that policy interventions targeted at people of color will likely falter in eradicating barriers if they discount the ways people of color are individuals and communities.<sup>5</sup>

*Feminist Theories* remind researchers that so-called "knowledge" is situated in power and that "data" and "evidence" are historically collected and measured to favor dominant classes.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Myers, Samuel L. "Analysis of Race as Policy Analysis," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 26 no. 2 (2002).

<sup>6</sup> Ackerly, Brooke and Jacqui True. *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*. Red Globe Press (2010).



*Queer Theory* destabilizes the gender binaries that govern sexualities in the public sphere. It assumes social identity is fluid, embodied, societally constructed, and constantly “becoming”.<sup>7</sup> We chose to draw on these three theoretical frameworks because they aligned with the goal of uplifting the stories of sex trade-involved LGBTQ+ youth in a way that empowers and mitigates adverse outcomes among participants. Examining the shifting and intersectional experiences of our lives in relation to power, privilege, and oppression helps us encounter nuances and complications in data collection. In exploring participants’ lived realities and their relationships with systems we practiced “embracing ruptures” during focus groups by carefully listening to perspectives, clarifying responses, and facilitating deeper, more-personal conversation.

### Locating the Researchers

Throughout the process the research team coordinated and sought feedback on activities from the client CCYJ. The client provided necessary permission to conduct the study and fostered access to community partners. CCYJ’s community partners assisted in facilitating the recruitment and participation of individuals in data collection. The study’s affiliation with CCYJ helped reconcile tensions that arose from applying theories and methodologies to a new and understudied context.

Our team consists of three people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. While we have diverse experiences with the sex trade, sexual assault, homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, and classism, we all have a degree of distance from many individuals whom this report centers. As University of Washington graduate students conducting focus groups with the target population, we believe our lived experiences as students and researchers shaped the focus group discussions in ways that we sought to limit through our discussion’s participatory structure.

Our team members had no experience or clinical training in social work or formal qualitative research involving youth who have experienced trauma. Thus, we relied heavily on the expertise and consult of researchers and service professionals to design a strengths-based and research plan that focused on visioning and service needs as opposed to barriers and potentially traumatic experiences. We attempted to adequately center the voices of impacted individuals, use methods of informed consent and confidentiality, and fully compensate participants for their time, expertise, and labor.

Our commitment to examining our own positionality in this fieldwork grounds itself within a larger ethnographic tradition. Feminist theory advised us on the importance of “trustworthiness” in conducting effective research.<sup>8</sup> We spent six months building relationships with organizational partners to help us connect and establish trust with participants throughout the focus group processes. Additionally, accountability to research subjects transcends the study design and fieldwork stages, the continuous and ongoing examination of our social positions made producing transformative scholarship more possible.<sup>9</sup> In sum, we aimed to understand and acknowledge the social, political, and cultural institutions shaping the needs and

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<sup>7</sup> Giffney, Noreen. “Denormatizing Queer Theory: More Than (Simply) Lesbian and Gay Studies.” *Feminist Theory*. 5: 73–78 (2004).

<sup>8</sup> Jaggar, Alison M. “Love and knowledge: Emotion in feminist epistemology.” *Inquiry* 32, no. 2 (1989).

<sup>9</sup> Nagar, Richa. “Collaboration Across Borders: Moving Beyond Positionality.” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 24, no. 3 (2003).



lived-experiences of Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth who have been involved in the sex trade and recognize our place in those social, political and cultural institutions.

### Consultations with Subject Matter Experts

The research team ultimately consulted with 21 subject matter experts regarding best practices for engaging the study population in a participatory, trauma-informed, and culturally-responsive fashion. The team engaged the client, community partners, other researchers, and self-advocates for input and feedback throughout the planning and design, data collection, and analysis and recommendations stages. We relied heavily on the expertise and feedback of local service providers and researchers in crafting our methodology.

The development of the focus group protocol was an iterative process done in collaboration with organizational partners, anti-violence activists, and community leaders who identified as LGBTQ+ and previously involved in the sex trade. Their feedback and guidance proved to be vital in assuring focus group participants had an empowering and beneficial experience.

The common themes that emerged from these conversations included:

- Coordinate focus group recruitment with youth-serving providers;
- Incorporate strength-based language and framing into activities;
- Be your “authentic” selves during the sessions;
- Recruit a strong co-facilitator on staff who has trust with the participants;
- Compensate participants, preferably in cash (or cash equivalent);
- Seek ways to build trust with participants;
- Focus on strengths and needs, not experiences;
- Use affirming, accessible, and relatable language; and
- Incorporate art and creative forms of expression.

Community partners often suggested allowing participants to lead group discussions. While participants did influence decisions around activity modifications and agenda changes during the sessions, we explore opportunities to facilitate participant or youth-led sessions in our limitations and recommendations sections.

Our team also met with multiple researchers to learn more about trauma-informed methodologies used in their past studies of youth in the sex trade. Our consultations lasted approximately one to two hours, and we met with some individuals on multiple occasions to clarify lingering questions or concerns. These meetings offered opportunities to explore techniques for conducting culturally-responsive and community-based research that empower participants and address imbalanced power dynamics among those involved.

The following themes arose in meetings with research experts:

- Focus on questions about needs rather than on potentially traumatic experiences;
- Enlist a trusted advocate or staff person to be on-site and available for debrief;
- Use creative methods to facilitate storytelling;
- Find ways to establish a tone of support and confidentiality; and
- Limit participation to less than 10 people for each session.

Furthermore, experts often expressed that trauma-informed research can give participants a platform to tell their stories and share their ideas – an experience that can be affirming in itself.

A member of our team enrolled and completed two online courses on “Human Subjects Protection Training” and “Responsible Conduct of Research” through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program. Furthermore, we referenced CITI’s modules on community-based participatory research to support collaboration with community partners during the focus group protocol’s development and to guide our recommendations for future participatory studies in the report’s final chapter.

## 2.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection involved a mixed-methods approach to address the research questions:

- **Research Synthesis** of the findings of recent studies on similar populations;
- **Online Survey** of youth-serving professionals across Washington State affiliated with CCYJ’s partners in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, among others;
- **Focus Groups** with individuals self-identified as LGBTQ+ and having experienced the sex trade as a minor.

### Method #1: Research Synthesis of Relevant Studies

Our team began the research process with an extensive review of recent U.S.-based studies on similar populations. The examination allowed us to design our research methods with a robust knowledge of existing studies and literature about youth who have been in the sex trade. We also reviewed literature on best practices for youth-serving professionals working with those involved in the sex trade and/or identifying as LGBTQ+ and research methodologies for conducting empowering, trauma-informed research of individuals with these lived experiences.

After compiling all of our research sources, we distilled the literature review down into 10 relevant studies. Each study focused on subjects with shared experiences to our study population and each occurred within the last 10 years (with the exception of one Seattle-based study done in 2002, which we included due to its local context). Though very few studies explicitly examined the intersection of youth’s LGBTQ+ identity and their experiences in the sex trade, we found studies that focused on LGBTQ+ homelessness, transgender sex workers (language used in study), trans and gender-expansive youth in foster care, and other related intersections of identities and experiences. Almost all of the studies occurred in urban areas, such as New York City, Boston, Los Angeles, and Miami. Notably, as the terminology and norms of LGBTQ+ identities have been evolving rapidly, some reports only use the acronym LGB or GLBT. Additionally, not all reports used correct gender pronouns or gender markers when discussing transgender individuals. A summary of all 10 studies can be found in *Appendix C: List of Prior Studies*.

We summarized the demographics of other study participants and compiled the findings and recommendations of each study into major thematic groupings. We then grouped and distilled the findings of all studies into a list of common barriers and recommendations, which informed a significant portion of the design for the online survey of youth-serving professionals.

### Method #2: Online Survey of Service Professionals

We conducted an online survey of youth-serving professionals in Washington State to assess their opinions on the needs and barriers facing LGBTQ+ youth involved in the sex trade. We asked about existing barriers to accessing services and the potential changes that would improve this population's health, safety, and wellness. The survey was edited by our client team at CCYJ for clarity, content, and to ensure language would speak to a broad audience.

CCYJ sent out the survey, entitled "*Responding to the needs of LGBTQ+ Youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation*" to their lists of approximately 500 contacts and partners across Washington State in various youth-serving fields. We acknowledge that exclusively distributing the survey through CCYJ's existing contacts and partners had the limitation of convenience sampling and may not have provided a fully accurate sampling of professionals who serve youth with these identities and experiences across the state.

We administered the survey through the online platform Survey Monkey. Participants had the opportunity to be entered to win a random drawing for Starbucks gift cards (n=5) if they filled out the survey. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey and share it with colleagues at their organization.<sup>10</sup>

The survey questions covered a range of topics including:

- Position, field of work, and geographic areas served
- Practices relating to identifying CSE and LGBTQ+ youth
- The existence of unique needs of CSE LGBTQ+ youth
- The barriers CSE LGBTQ+ youth experience when accessing services
- System improvements for serving CSE LGBTQ+ youth

The respondents had to rank-order lists of barriers and improvements that were derived from the findings of our research synthesis. We also drew some of the options from consultations with local community partners. See *Appendix D for a copy of the service professional survey*.

### Survey Data Analysis

The results of the survey, which included both quantitative data from multiple-choice questions and qualitative data from open-ended comments sections on questions, were summarized, analyzed, and graphed in Microsoft Excel. The qualitative data was reviewed for themes and trends to provide additional context to the discussion of identified themes and barriers.

## Method #3: Focus Groups of LGBTQ+ Individuals with Experience in the Sex Trade

Our team conducted three focus groups with individuals who self-identified as LGBTQ+ and as having been involved in sex trade as a minor. The focus groups provided qualitative data on:

- Participants' visions of a world where their peers feel healthy, safe, and well;
- The factors and criteria that motivate access to services and spaces;
- Existing or potential information delivery strategies to reach this population.

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<sup>10</sup> We reopened the survey after closure to allow participants from one key organization serving LGBTQ+ youth involved in the sex trades to participate.

## Outreach and Recruitment Strategy

We approached three organizations working in King, Pierce, and Whatcom Counties to help us recruit and host focus groups. CCYJ staff assisted in identifying these organizations as key partners to recruit potential participants: Real Escape from the Sex Trade (REST) in Seattle, Oasis Youth Center in Tacoma, and Norwest Youth Services in Bellingham.

Through an iterative process of phone and in-person consultations with organizations about their client's needs and feelings about prior participation in research projects, we designed and collaborated on co-hosting a focus group at each partner organization's space. Community providers received a materials packet that included screening questions based on these criteria, a description of the focus group session, a recruitment flyer, a list of logistical requirements, and a proposed timeline in preparation for the sessions. Each organization implemented outreach and recruitment, primarily relying on relationships to identify and recruit participants. Allowing each organization to adapt their outreach strategies ensured our recruitment responded to each organization's customs, practices, and met the needs of their clients. *See Appendix E for the provided materials.*

Individual participants were recruited based on the following criteria:

- At least 18 years old;
- Identify as LGBTQ+ or not heterosexual;
- Involved in the sex trade as a minor (i.e., traded sex for money, food, shelter, etc.); and
- Interested and willing to share ideas and expertise about improving services for peers who have shared experiences.

Northwest Youth Services was unable to host a focus group after facing challenges in recruiting participants that fit the 18 or older recruitment criteria. While we were unable to host a Northwest Washington focus group, we were able to host two separate focus groups with our organizational partner in King County.

## Designing the Focus Group Protocol

We developed the focus group protocol and data collection instruments to be flexible, strengths-based, and generative of high-quality data. The focus group protocol asked participants to act as "business consultants" in a simulation exercise in which they designed an imaginary mobile app to support their peers in accessing and receiving services. We incorporated our organizational partner's advice to use art and visual media to allow participants to answer questions without asking them to relay past experiences. Participants completed a three-step business plan using art, visual media, individual reflection, and group brainstorming to access their own expertise in navigating systems and services. Figure 2.3 outlines the focus group activities and how each activity fed into answering our research questions. *See Appendix for the complete Focus Group Protocol and Facilitation Guide.*

**Figure 2.3: Description and Purpose of Focus Group Activities**

Activity	Description	Questions Answered
Establishing the Purpose and Agenda	Researchers introduced themselves and their purpose, reviewed community agreements, demographic, and	<i>No data collection except field notes. Established trust and process.</i>

	confidentiality forms. Food was provided.	
<b>Step 1: Crafting a Vision Statement</b>	Participants describe a world where their peers feel healthy and safe. <i>Tools: Post-it notes, group share-out.</i>	How do participants conceptualize and define health, safety, and wellness?
<b>Step 2: Creating a Prototype</b>	Participants brainstorm factors that influence their peers' engagement with services. Then they use art materials to design their app and present it to the group. <i>Tools: Factors worksheet, presentations</i>	What criteria and factors motivate participants to use or access services?  What do positive interactions with services look like? What do negative interactions with services look like?
<b>Step 3: Marketing Strategy</b>	Participants develop and present "elevator speeches" that pitch their app to the group, including marketing strategies for sharing the app with others. <i>Tools: Pitch worksheet, marketing brainstorm</i>	What communication strategies do participants use to share information about services?  What effective communication strategies to reach participants' communities?
Exit Survey and Evaluation of Focus Group	Participants rank and respond to the lists of barriers and improvements from the provider survey. Opportunity for feedback about the focus group experience.	How do opinions between youth and providers differ on supportive services?

We conducted a focus group pilot with a group of five peers prior to hosting a session with actual participants. None of the pilot participants were associated with our project. The pilot allowed us to assess format and facilitation techniques, identify potential modifications that could be made for varied attendance numbers or to meet participants' needs, and assess each tool's ability to produce sufficient and relevant data to answer our research questions.

### Data Collection and Logistics

Our team held all three focus groups in the span of one week in May 2019: two sessions in South Seattle and one in Tacoma. Community partners offered space in their facilities to hold the focus groups to provide a familiar place that participants could associate with trust, support, and belonging.

One research team member co-facilitated the focus groups with a staff advocate at each location. The other two members of our research team recorded written notes and provided other supports during the session. The focus groups were not recorded, except for some of the participants who consented to having the presentations of their app designs audio recorded. All participants consented to the researchers keeping their visual app designs for the report. Each focus group lasted about two hours. All participants received a \$60 Visa gift card as compensation and were provided lunch and snacks during the session.

Beyond the field notes taken during each focus group, we collected data from:

- **Post-it notes** describing health and safety
- **Worksheets** of factors and reasoning in evaluating services
- **Direct quotes** from the audio recordings of presentations
- **Visuals and artistic representations** of the app
- **Group notes** from the marketing strategy brainstorm

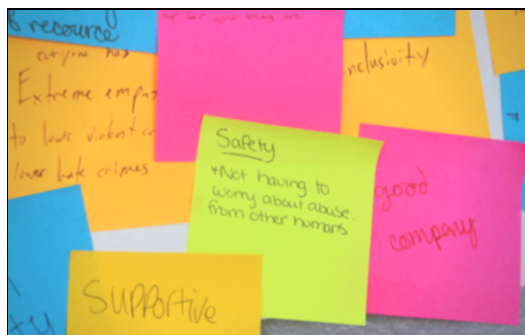
The agenda outlined for each focus group was flexible. Facilitators allowed more time to be spent on a section if participants desired. Due to time constraints, the Marketing Strategy portion of each group was shortened from the original design to be a full-group brainstorm, rather than individual pitches. A facilitator collected notes during the group discussion on a sheet of butcher paper on the wall.

### Team Debriefs and Field Notes Comparison

Researchers immediately met to debrief and share field notes after participants' departures after each session. Each debrief began with a structured check-in about how each part of the session went and whether any immediate shared themes arose during the activities. The researchers also reviewed additional conversations they had with individuals outside of the structured sections. We concluded each debrief by reviewing opportunities to revise the curriculum and agenda timing for better outcomes in the next focus group based on our experience and participants' feedback.

### Data Analysis Methods

We compiled the qualitative data from the focus groups and systematically categorized the data into subsets. To code the data, we settled on 15 broad thematic categories that emerged during the sessions and which we felt encapsulated most of what was said over all three focus groups. See *Figure 3.1a* in Chapter 3 for a chart outlining the 15 distinct coding categories and thematic descriptions of each. Researchers analyzed the 15 thematic codes and the frequency with which each one occurred during focus group sessions.



### Post-it Notes

Across the three focus groups, we collected individually written notes on post-its as responses to the prompt to “envision a world where everybody, including your peers, are healthy and safe.” Descriptions of such a world were collected from both the post-it notes and the facilitated share-out notes and recorded in a spreadsheet (n=74). Upon compiling the responses, two team members reviewed and coded each response using the 15

established category codes.<sup>11</sup>

### Worksheets

In the second focus group activity, participants designed a mobile app that would meet the goals of their collectively imagined world from the first activity. Using the worksheet, participants listed factors that they believed are important for their peers in considering accessing services, akin to the various factors that influence your decision to visit somewhere based on Yelp or a Google Review (see *Appendix for Focus Group Protocol, Addendum 4* for this worksheet). We recorded individual responses (n=71) into a spreadsheet and coded these items using the same 15 category codes.

### Direct Quotes

<sup>11</sup> Each response was coded into either one or two of the 15 categories.



Researchers audio recorded eight participants' presentations of their app to the whole group.<sup>12</sup> Our team later transcribed these presentations using intelligent verbatim transcription methods<sup>13</sup> before deleting the audio recordings. From the transcriptions we pulled anonymous direct quotes to incorporate participant voice into our report and frame compelling examples of specific experiences and needs.

### ***Visuals***

Researchers digitally photographed all visual designs of the created apps. Researchers digitally cropped and collaged pieces of participant designs to incorporate into this report.

### ***Group Notes***

We compiled the notes from the group marketing brainstorming into a single table about the best methods information could be shared with their peers. The table of marketing strategies is located in Chapter 3.

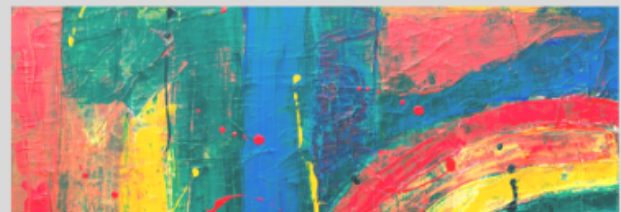
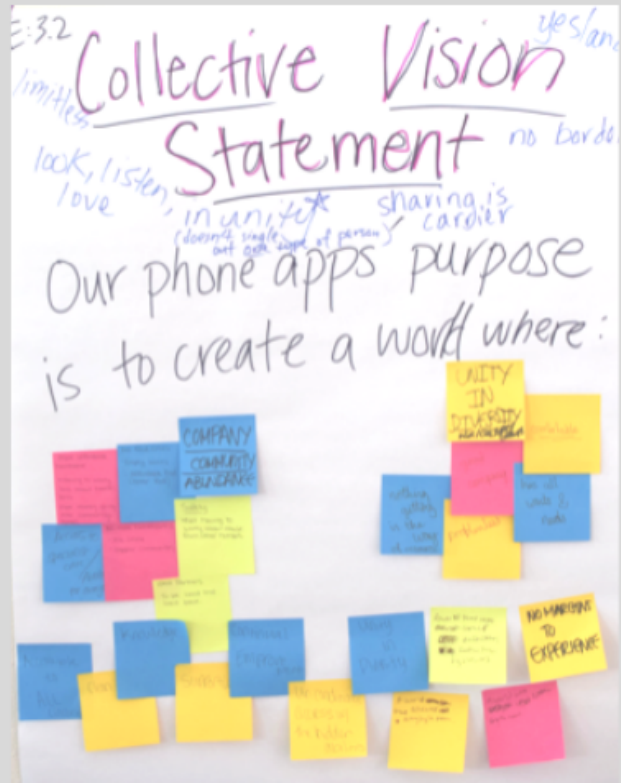
### ***Field Notes***

The context in which the research took place- including CCYJ, the two host organizations, and the researchers themselves- was a valuable source of data. Researchers combined notes from debrief sessions about comments and questions participants had regarding the process outside of the actual focus group activities. These comments and conversations are captured in our recommendations section for the next steps of this research.

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<sup>12</sup> Two participants chose not to verbally present their app designs.

<sup>13</sup> Verbatim transcribing that excludes filler and duplicate words "to provide a more readable transcript while staying true to the voice and intended meaning of the participants."



## **Chapter 3: Analysis, Findings, and Limitations**

The findings presented are results from the synthesis of prior research, the online survey of service professionals in Washington, and most importantly, the series of focus groups with LGBTQ+ individuals with experiences in the sex trade.

### 3.1 Findings from Target Population Focus Groups

The voices of 10 young adults who identify as LGBTQ+ and as having experienced the sex trade have elevated our study's findings. Their expertise, wisdom, and willingness to share their service needs has shaped the tone and messages of resilience and beauty that we hope our findings and recommendations capture. Three intersecting layers of marginalization, namely age, sexuality/gender, and involvement in the sex trade, separate these young people from positions of power and influence in the systems and services that impact their daily lives. We are presenting our findings from the focus group because the opinions and voices of LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade are the most important voices in this report.

#### Demographic Characteristics

		n	%
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Non-binary	5	50%
	Genderqueer	1	10%
	Transgender Man	1	10%
	Cis Female	1	10%
	<i>No response</i>	2	20%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Gay	3	30%
	Bisexual	2	20%
	Pansexual	3	30%
	Queer	1	10%
	Abrosexual <sup>14</sup>	1	10%
<b>Race</b>	White alone	7	70%
	Mixed	1	10%
	Two or more races	2	20%
<b>Living situation experience</b>	Homelessness or housing instability	8	80%
	Foster care	1	10%

**Figure 3.1a: Demographic characteristics of participants (n = 10)**

<sup>14</sup> Abrosexual is commonly defined as an alternative term for “queer”, meaning experiencing fluidity in attraction to a range of people and genders. This may not have been the participant’s definition of their sexual orientation.

	Neither	2	20%
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Participants self-reported their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and whether they had experiences with homelessness or been in the foster care system (n=10).<sup>15</sup> Seventy percent of participants identified as white only and 30% identified as mixed race or selected two or more racial categories. Sixty percent of participants identified as non-binary or genderqueer, one identified as a transgender man, and one as a cisgender woman. Two participants chose not to respond to the gender identity question. Eighty percent of participants reported having experienced homelessness or housing instability (80%). See **Figure 3.1a** for a full summary of demographic characteristics.

Over half of focus group participants reported a non-binary gender identity. The presence of varied gender identities suggests further research should explore how service needs vary across gender nonconforming youth. Instilling a broader understanding of gender identity, especially with service professionals, would better address the needs and experiences of transgender individuals. Just as LGBTQ+ is a catch-all phrase accounting for many different identities, the terms *transgender* and *queer* encompass a wide variety of experiences. Over half of focus group participants reported a non-binary gender identity. The presence of varied gender identities suggests further research should explore how service needs vary across gender nonconforming youth. Instilling a broader understanding of gender identity, especially with service professionals, would better address the needs and experiences of transgender individuals. Just as LGBTQ+ is a catch-all phrase accounting for many different identities, the terms *transgender* and *queer* encompass a wide variety of experiences.



### Activity 1: Envisioning Health and Safety

We asked participants to imagine a world in which everyone, including their peers, felt healthy and safe.

Through a mixture of individual writing and sharing out in pairs or with the whole group, participants identified a multitude of characteristics that this imagined world would have.

Upon compiling the individual responses from participants (n=74) across all three focus groups, we coded each response and grouped them into the 15 chosen categories (shown in Figure 3.1c). We then tallied the frequency with which each category presented itself in the list of all individual responses [see table # for more]. Across the three focus groups, the major themes that emerged during this section were around *abundance*, *community*, and *safety*. See **Figure 3.1b** below.

We use *abundance* as a catchall descriptor to include a variety of characteristics that centered around thriving, both individually and as a community. The theme of abundance showed up in a variety of ways, including basic needs being met, accessible educational opportunities, and environmental sustainability. *Community* was a common topic of discussion in each focus group, with participants focusing on friends, networks, feelings of belonging, and diversity. *Safety* was

<sup>15</sup> Two participants chose not to disclose their gender identity. Everyone provided answers to all other questions.

also frequently cited as a desired characteristic, specifically physical safety, sexual safety, and emotional safety.

**Figure 3.1b Responses to Visioning Exercise: Imagine a world where everyone feels healthy and safe**

Key Characteristics	Participant Descriptions
<i>Abundance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Happier communities</li> <li>o No food crisis, no hunger</li> <li>o Continual self-growth</li> <li>o Education</li> <li>o All wants and needs</li> <li>o Sustainability</li> </ul>
<i>Community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Unity in diversity</li> <li>o Good company</li> <li>o Everyone has a group or clique</li> </ul>
<i>Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Free from abuse</li> <li>o Everyone has a safe place to go</li> <li>o Ways to report violence and clients without repercussion</li> <li>o Self-defense</li> <li>o Online safety tips</li> <li>o Crisis prevention and response</li> <li>o Understanding consent</li> <li>o No hate crimes</li> </ul>

Secondary themes that were also common topics of discussion concerned *knowledge*, *human connection*, and *healthcare*. In this imagined world, knowledge presented itself as networks, directories of truly accessible care (including legal and medical services), and trainings on topics such as financial literacy and sexual health. The need for human connection was also distinguished from more generalized feelings of belonging within a community. Participants often described feeling love, both to be loved and to love, as well as empathy, understanding, care, and acceptance. Access to adequate healthcare presented itself as individualization, comprehensiveness, financial affordability, and affirming.

**Activity 2: Creating a Prototype**

The second primary aspect of our focus

**Figure 3.1c: Data Analysis Coding Categories**

Distinct Categories	Thematic Descriptors
<b>Body and space</b>	comfort, aesthetic, personal space
<b>Case manager issues</b>	referrals, inconsistent, dismissive
<b>Community</b>	social network, peer-to-peer, connection, local
<b>You are needed and affirmed</b>	identity/experience affirmations, positivity, reassurance



<b>Reproductive health</b>	sex education, HIV and stigma, medication, other STIs
<b>Healthcare barriers</b>	cost, non-affirming, insurance
<b>Human connection</b>	providers and peers, empathy, love, authenticity
<b>Mental health</b>	self-care, therapy, crisis response
<b>Mobility/location</b>	transportation, distance
<b>Timing of services</b>	availability, hours, waitlists
<b>Housing</b>	shelters, stability, place, basic needs
<b>Safety</b>	physical, sexual, emotional, fear of getting in trouble
<b>Other not accessible</b>	any other way services deemed inaccessible
<b>Knowledge gaps</b>	individual, systems communicating, dual-diagnoses
<b>Abundance</b>	wellness, thriving, growth, wants and needs fulfilled

group sessions asked participants to design a mobile app to meet the goals of this collectively imagined world from the first activity. We asked participants to list the factors that they believed would be important for their peers in accessing services through the app. Individual characteristics were recorded across the three focus groups (n=71). Participants also presented their app designs to the whole group, and these pitches were recorded (n=8).<sup>16</sup> Both the written characteristics and transcribed pitches were again coded using the same 15 categories. The most common factors that participants discussed during this section were *availability of information* and *feeling needed and affirmed*.

*Availability of information* was one of the most prominent points of conversation throughout the entirety of each focus group session. People discussed the need to know what resources are available and how to get them, as well as sometimes needing help to actually figure out what their needs are. Beyond individual-level information, participants also focused on the ability for systems to communicate more effectively with each other, including professionals knowing what resources are available and where to refer someone.

The theme of feeling needed and affirmed came across in many ways, primarily around seeking assurance that youth will be accepted for who they are and that they can be vulnerable and share their experiences. Additionally, interacting with professionals who do not “blame the victim” and are validating of peoples’ experience and understanding of queer issues.

Additional themes that were frequently discussed include *healthcare*, *human connection*, *body and space*, and *abundance*. Healthcare presented as being financially affordable and queer-affirming. Human connection was described as empathy, understanding, and love. Body and space needs were primarily described as comfort, consent, and communal spaces. *Abundance* encompassed both individual and community-oriented

“we are looking for a person to get really personal with us”  
-Focus Group Participant

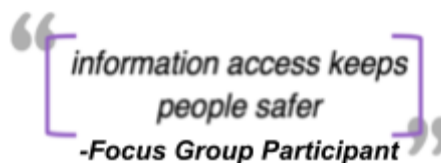
<sup>16</sup> Two participants chose to not verbally present their designs, so eight total pitches were captured.



aspects, including continual growth, choice and self-direction in services, basic needs fully met, and overall ability to thrive.

### Activity 3: Marketing and Communicating to Peers

Due to time constraints in each focus group session, we replaced the original design of participants individually developing an “elevator pitch” that included marketing strategies with a facilitated group brainstorm. Participants were asked how they would market their app to get it out to their peers. The prompt was still aimed at answering the original questions: *What communication strategies do participants use to share information about services? What effective communication strategies to reach participants’ communities?*



Participants presented marketing ideas that involved both in-person and online strategies. **Table 3.1c** outlines participants’ ideas regarding the most effective mechanisms of sharing information with their peers.

**Table 3.1d: Strategies for Marketing the App**

<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Instagram</li> <li>• Snapchat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TikTok</li> <li>• Tumblr</li> <li>• Twitter</li> </ul>
<b>Community Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairs</li> <li>• Markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queer Events</li> <li>• Community Boards</li> </ul>
<b>Networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Word-of-Mouth</li> </ul>	
<b>Social Service Offices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling Centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Centers</li> <li>• Temporary Housing</li> </ul>
<b>Communal Spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Libraries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulletin Boards</li> </ul>

### Overall Themes from Focus Groups

We analyzed data across all focus group activities to determine the broader thematic areas in which participants identified significant unmet needs and barriers to accessing services. The five primary themes that we identified from the focus groups emphasized particularly strong needs for affirming and individualized care, clearer information and communication, addressing basic needs, community connection, and opportunities for self-determination, leadership, and supports to thrive.



#### *Better Affirming and Individualized Care*

A major barrier to accessing adequate care is a fear of mistreatment. Participants provided many examples of instances in which an individual

service provider was not affirming, was disrespectful, or was even actively causing them harm. Feeling needed and affirmed was a primary desire voiced by participants, and such a need may be especially relevant for this population given the intersection of their LGBTQ+ identities and lived experiences. Language was cited as an important aspect of providing affirming care. Beyond basic gender-affirming language, participants discussed the effects of stigma, primarily around substance use, sex work, and HIV status. The consequences that non-affirming care can have for an individual's mental health and feelings self-worth were strongly conveyed in discussions.

Additionally, regarding language and individualized care, there was a need for listening instead of judging; one participant said "LGBTQ+ youth experience more anxiety and depression and need mental healthcare."



#### *Clearer Information and Communication*

While the setup of the app design simulation lent itself to conversations about information sharing and ease of access, there were nonetheless fruitful discussions about both access to information about resources *and* communications between systems. Knowing what services are available, where they are located, and how to access them are essential for individuals to be able to make informed decisions about their lives. Participants provide ideas for how to effectively reach their peers (**Table 3.1c** above). It was also noted that it can be sometimes beneficial to have assistance in determining what services are needed, tying back to the need for individualized and empathetic care. Advocates and professionals need to know what resources are available and where to refer someone. A lack of system communication was noted as a frustrating and sometimes detrimental factor in being able to access services.



#### *Addressing Basic Needs*

Multiple aspects of meeting basic needs were often discussed, including housing, food, healthcare (general, reproductive, and mental), as well as physical safety. Housing, healthcare, and safety were three of the most common threads that emerged, and many participants shared specific stories and examples of times when their needs were not being met. While the barriers varied from non-affirming care to gendered facilities to physical abuse, the needs described reflected universal human needs. Participants voiced their frustration with services in which there are prerequisites to receiving basic care. However, meeting basic needs was never discussed in isolation; the need for self-determination and community is alongside, not after, basic needs being adequately met.



#### *Community Connection*

The need for connection and community was described both in terms of individual human connections and broader communal networks. Love and empathy were prominent themes throughout group discussions, as was the importance of being in spaces where one can be vulnerable, authentic and feel affirmed and supported. Drop-in centers and safe spaces were examples of how having a *space* to be in community with others, especially LGBTQ+ youth, can be an important factor in fostering stable connections and maintaining a sense of belonging. Networks play an especially important role in the lives of unsheltered LGBTQ+ youth in navigating resources and meeting basic needs. Participants consistently upheld diversity, acceptance, and strength in unity. Feeling organized as a community fostered a communal sense of strength and self-determination.



### *Opportunities for Self-Determination, Leadership, and Support to Thrive*

Having a platform with which to share their ideas and inform services was an affirming and meaningful process for most participants. Some conveyed their excitement directly to the research team or to their advocates about having their ideas and feedback heard, affirmed, and shared with service providers. Some individuals mentioned that they would like to stay involved in CCYJ's efforts and help with this research, such as by assisting with future focus groups. Participants also discussed their desire for personal growth through education, trainings (specifically around sex education and self-defense), and resources for self-care and safety. Self-determination, empowerment, and leadership were the most palpable themes throughout the discussions.

## 3.2 Findings from the Survey of Service Professionals

The purpose of surveying system professionals was to garner the opinions and thoughts of the individuals working to provide services to and improve the safety and well-being of our target population. Based on our research synthesis, we believed the key youth-serving professionals or organizations most accessed by the target population were homeless youth service providers, domestic violence/sexual assault services, human trafficking/CSEC services, and healthcare providers. Many in the target population are also involved in juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

The representation of these fields in our list of respondents was informed by CCYJ's relationships and contacts within these specific fields. CCYJ provided personal email outreach to Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) and homeless youth organizations in order to boost their participation in the survey. Healthcare providers proved to be one of the largest gaps (only 6% of responses), which was expected as CCYJ has only recently started targeted relationship-building in the healthcare sector.

The online survey was filled out by youth-serving professionals from across Washington State (n=66). The survey consisted of 21 questions and had an 86% completion rate. The majority of the questions were structured as multiple choice with optional comment boxes for free response. The multiple-choice format was decided upon after receiving advice from our client team that having open-ended questions had significantly lowered completion rates on past surveys.

The thematic areas of questions we asked were:

- Position, field of work, and geographic area served
- Practices for identifying CSE and LGBTQ+ youth
- The existence of unique needs of CSE LGBTQ+ youth
- The barriers CSE LGBTQ+ youth experience when accessing services
- Potential improvements for better serving CSE LGBTQ+ youth

### **Descriptive Summary of Respondents**

Of the respondents to the online survey (n=66), the top two professional roles that people reported working as were advocates (26%) and juvenile probation counselors (20%). Other responses included program coordinators (18%), therapists (9%), case managers/workers

(7.5%), attorneys (3%), law enforcement (3%), social workers (3%), and educators (3%), among other various administrative roles.

In terms of the field in which respondents work, nearly 40% reported their field of work as the Juvenile Courts (mostly juvenile probation counselors and therapists) and 30% reported working in Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault or Human Trafficking/CSEC services (mostly advocates). Homeless youth service providers accounted for 12% of respondents, and healthcare professionals accounted for 6% of respondents.

The geographic distribution of services for our participant's organizations covered 18 out of 39 counties in Washington State, with a few organizations working statewide, including tribal lands. The highest concentration of respondent's services were targeted in King (38%), Clark (14%), Pierce (12%), and Whatcom (9%) counties, as well as Statewide (12%). There were no respondents from coastal western Washington nor from northeastern Washington, and there were very few responses from central or eastern Washington.<sup>17</sup>

Respondents also identified to which culturally-specific groups their organizations provided targeted programming. The majority of respondents identified working with youth and young adults aged 12-24 years, and slightly more than half identified as having some programming targeted towards LGBTQ+ youth broadly. Every racial and ethnic groups that the survey provided as an option had 20 - 30% of respondents reporting that their organization provided targeted services.

*“ not everywhere is Seattle where there are a lot of different resources ”*  
-Focus Group Participant

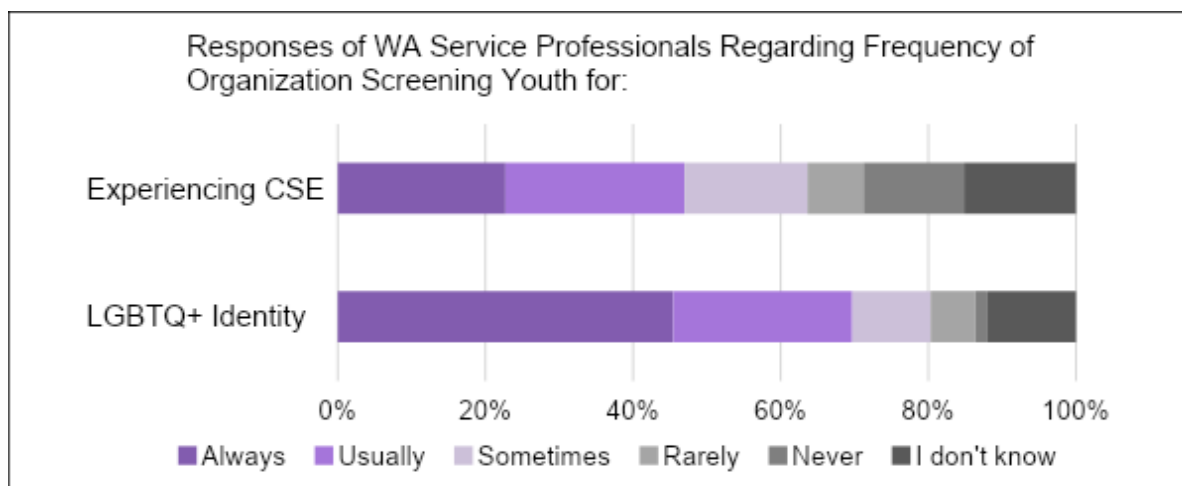
### Organizational practices relating to identifying CSE and LGBTQ+ youth

Eighty-eight percent of respondents said they had received formal trainings in the last five years related to LGBTQ+ cultural competency. Similarly, 88% of respondents reported they had received CSEC competency trainings in the last five years. Notably, of the few who had not received CSEC training, about half commented that trainings in Whatcom County had been frequently cancelled due to low enrollment.

When asked if their organization inquired about gender identity and sexual orientation during intake, about 70% of respondents indicated that they “always” or “usually” did so. When asked if their organization officially or formally screened for youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation, the spread of responses was much less skewed, as is shown in **Figure 3.2a**.

### Figure 3.2a

<sup>17</sup> While respondents only representing slightly less than half of all counties in Washington is a limitation of our sample, we also believe it maps onto gaps in CCYJ's network, perhaps due to a lack of relevant services provided in more rural areas of Washington State. Several survey respondents noted in responses to other questions that LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade who live in non-urban areas of the state have very few services and experience more cultural bias and discrimination.



The optional free-response comments on the question regarding CSEC screening revealed a variety of reasons for the spread of responses, with some individuals indicating that staff were trained to look for warning signs, but there was not a consistent or “official screen” for identifying youth experiencing CSE. A couple of respondents did indicate that their organizations would like to have a tool for CSE screening.

### Necessity of services targeting LGBTQ+ youth involved in the sex trades

We asked respondents to select from a range of “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” in response to a few questions about the existence of shared barriers for homeless LGBTQ+ youth and LGBTQ+ youth involved in the sex trade. Our client suggested including questions such as these to determine if CCYJ’s audience, which spans multiple professions, were convinced that this was an important, specific population to be targeting for services. Our results showed that a large majority of respondents agree with each statement below in **Figure 3.2b**: respondents generally believe that youth experience more barriers and need more affirming services.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 3.2b**

<sup>18</sup> It is probable that these results are at least partially due to selection bias. A larger sample size of professionals engaged with youth would probably have more mixed results than our sample, who consisted of professionals who chose to answer a survey entitled, “Responding to the Needs of LGBTQ+ Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation.”



When asked if LGBTQ+ youth impacted by the sex trade needed tailored services, 84% of respondents said they either agreed or strongly agreed. One commenter stated their belief that culturally specific services are critically important, because queer and trans youth in the sex trades have nuanced experiences that should be met with programming informed by LGBTQ+ folks who have experienced the sex trade as well. Another commenter noted that the intersectional layers of marginalized identities can separate youths from services, so culturally specific outreach and services are needed to reduce those barriers.

Despite mostly affirming responses that it is necessary to have culturally specific services to serve this population, there were several respondents who asked questions about the actual numbers of youth at this particular intersection of identity and experience. Some professionals commented that they have none or very few of these youth on their caseload, and thus receiving a training on LGBTQ+ youth and a training on CSEC was sufficient.

Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that they agreed that LGBTQ+ youth generally experience more discrimination in accessing housing compared to non-LGBTQ+ peers, and a few commenters noted that emergency shelters and housing can tend to discriminate towards trans youth. Another commenter noted that untrained or unsupported staff can struggle in knowing how to ensure safety of LGBTQ+ youth in housing arrangements. A few also noted that accessing teen housing is difficult for all youth.

### Opinions on system barriers and potential system improvements

For the final section of the survey, we asked our respondents to share their opinions and expertise about the real barriers and possible service improvements for LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade in achieving health and safety. Pulling directly from the findings of our research synthesis and from pre-survey consultations with experts in the field, we created two lists for the providers to choose from. One list included 11 barriers and one list included 14 service or policy improvements. Participants were asked to rank the three items from each list that they believed were the most important. The online tool randomized the lists presented to respondents to avoid order bias. After the providers ranked the list, they were asked which

barriers/improvements were missing from the options. All questions provided space to elaborate freely on their selection as desired.

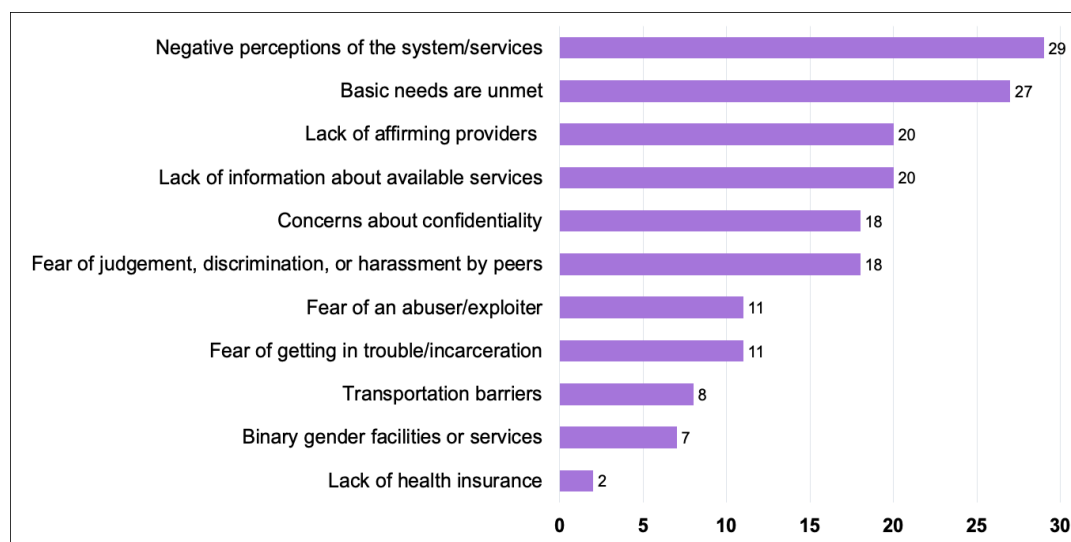
In addition the survey of professionals, we also included the same two lists in the exit survey of our focus groups. The lists given to the focus groups were not randomized, and most participants opted to not rank the options, but simply check 3 or more selections. We used the results of the focus group survey to further analyze the themes that providers identified.

### Findings for Barriers

We asked providers what they believed were the greatest barriers for LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade in accessing the services their organization provided. A complete summary of the number of times a barrier was selected in a respondent's top 3 is provided below in **Figure 3.2c**. The most frequently selected barriers selected were:

1. Negative perceptions of the system/services,
2. Basic needs being unmet (shelter, food, etc)
3. Lack of information about available services **and** lack of affirming providers (tie)

**Figure 3.2c: Frequency a Barrier Was Selected as Top 3 Most Important**



### *Negative Perceptions of the System/Services*

The barrier most often chosen in the top three was a negative perception of the system or services. Based on the comments, providers felt that such negative perceptions overlapped with confidentiality and mandatory reporting, as well as with inadequacies in the information about what services are available. Additionally, it was noted that the negative perception of the system held by this population can often be shaped by a history and current presence of discrimination and judgement from services and service providers, leading to mistrust between marginalized populations and the systems. One respondent further shared their view regarding youths' interactions with law enforcement:

“ youth-serving organizations so frequently betray the trust of youth and ultimately push them into criminal-legal processes ”  
**-Service Provider**

“LGBTQ+ youth in the sex trades express such extreme harassment, profiling, extortion, assaults, derogatory remarks, homophobia, and transphobia from police and criminal responses. Not only is decriminalization needed for prostitution, but similar charges like loitering, smoking marijuana outside, or even using condoms as evidence are all practices that need to end. In an ideal world, police would not be first responders at all for LGBTQ+ youth in the sex trade and raids, arrests, and detention would not be seen as benevolent responses to sexual exploitation of children-- these are deeply traumatic to young people and not neutral or "for their own good" as often described. There would also be robust support to help clear criminal records and ensure that criminal history wasn't a barrier to accessing housing and other necessary resources.”

Of the barriers that focus group participants noted as important, negative perceptions of the system was **the least checked barrier for all participants**, with only one participant checking it. We think the discrepancy between negative perceptions being the most selected barrier for providers and being the least selected for individuals could have been the language of the option. Negative perceptions imply that the system is actually good, youth only perceive it as bad- whereas youth participants may truly view the system as untrustworthy and not affirming, making them more likely to check “Fear of getting in trouble/incarceration,” which about 40% of youth did select.

### *Basic Needs are Unmet*

Based on the comments of providers about the basic needs being unmet, they often saw barriers related to basic needs presented in the form of a lack of time and capacity for youth to engage with multiple systems and services. Some providers in the legal system commented that the basic needs barriers are often overlooked- the legal system can provide all the affirming care possible, but the most affirming care is a safe place to sleep and enough to eat. Basic needs being unmet was also the barrier most frequently identified by focus group participants, with about 80% of respondents checking basic needs as a major barrier.

### *Additional Barriers*

A fear of judgement, discrimination, or harassment by peers was also often selected by providers in the top three barriers. The comments from the survey as a whole reveal that peer-to-peer or client-to-client violence or harassment against LGBTQ+ youth commonly occurred in youth detention, housing, and shelter facilities. Some respondents noted that trans women in particular can face extreme violence when forced into men's shelters or facilities. If staff are unable to protect LGBTQ+ youth from violence from other youth within their facilities, this is a significant barrier to youth accessing safety and stability within systems.

Additionally, findings from the focus group exit survey also found that fear of harassment from peers was **the second biggest barrier for youth** accessing services. Not surprisingly, physical safety and freedom from violence was one of the major themes that was present in the focus group findings.

Barriers in accessing adequate healthcare was also a common theme that emerged from the focus groups. One survey respondent described their view of these barriers:

“LGBTQ+ youth are often experiencing further trauma and violence when engaging with medical providers and LGBTQ+ people broadly tend to avoid medical treatment because of discrimination and ignorance by providers. This includes but isn't limited to gender-affirming



healthcare. Truly gender-affirming healthcare would allow trans youth and queer youth to feel seen, heard, and respected when accessing STI testing, rape exams, dental work, etc.”

Youth-serving professionals identified **multiple barriers as missing from the provided list:**

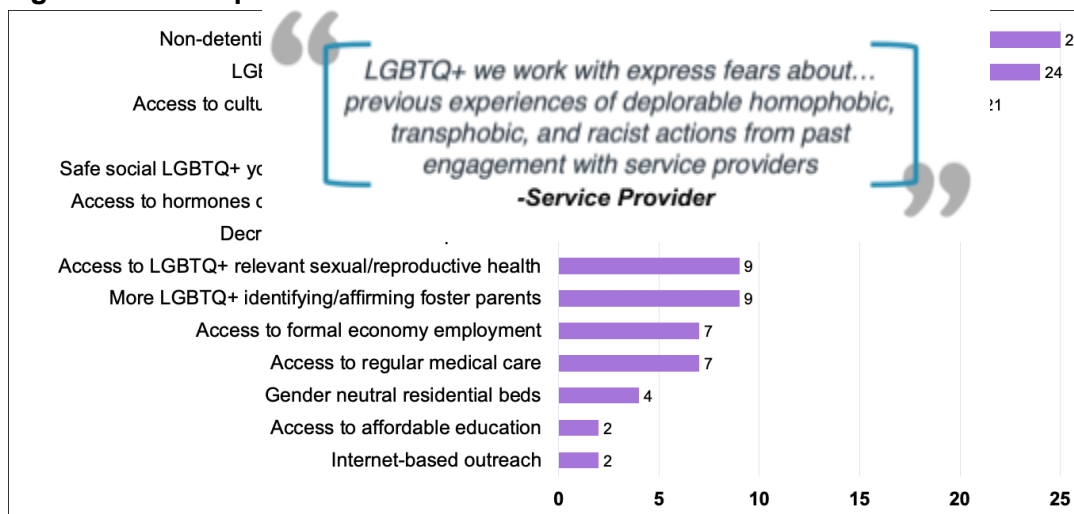
- Criminal history
- Hesitation of service-professionals to have open conversations about the sex trade or LGBTQ+ topics
- Judgement from the system
- Lack of LGBTQ+ specific mental health resources
- Historic and current systemic discrimination,
- Intersection of race with these identities/experiences
- Under 18 vs. over 18 and legal rights
- Fewer services for boys in DVSA
- Lack of referrals from law enforcement/courts/CPS to certain organizations
- Mandated reporting and lack of trust
- Youth have a lot going on and often simply don't have time to talk to an advocate or seek support services.

### Findings for Improvements

We asked respondents what service improvements or policy changes, regardless of expense or other constraint, they believed would be the most important for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing CSE? The most frequently selected barriers were:

1. Non-detention residential beds for survivors
2. LGBTQ+ affirming housing/shelters
3. Access to culturally relevant mental healthcare

**Figure 3.2d: Frequency a Need Was Selected as Top 3 Most Important**



The two most commonly selected improvements both addressed housing: *Non-detention residential beds for survivors* and *LGBTQ+ affirming housing/shelters*.

One respondent elaborated:

“I think it's essential to stress that detention not be seen as a neutral or benevolent response to youth living through traumatic violence and instability. LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade and otherwise navigating homelessness face extreme violence while navigating shelter resources, especially trans women relegated to "men's" shelter spaces. LGBTQ people are frequently raped, abused, threatened, harassed, and assaulted in communal housing settings (residential, emergency shelter, DV shelter). We need to be incredibly thoughtful about building safe housing options for LGBTQ+ youth and not seeing the violence experienced in housing as secondary to or less significant than CSE. Youth are often reporting that they felt safer trading sex for places to stay than in communal shelter-- often that felt more empowered to negotiate, screen people they stayed with, and that they were able to maintain more autonomy. Programs often let bias about the perceived inherent violence of sex exchange override believing the lived experiences of these youth. We need to take the violence of detention and other housing "options" seriously in creating solutions.”

### *Additional Improvements*

Beyond the specific service improvements and policy changes that we offered as options on the survey, some providers emphasized that improved system cohesion is necessary. One respondent described the disconnect between services directed at LGBTQ+ youth and services supporting youth involved in sex trade:

“In general, existing services are targeted for either LGBTQ+ youth or victims/survivors of CSE. Those who have experienced CSE may not feel comfortable accessing "mainstream" LGBTQ+ services. Those who access CSE services may feel like they are targeted at that specific issue to the point of ignoring the impact of also being LGBTQ+.”

Another survey respondent elaborated on the lack of system cohesion:

“Philosophical divides on the validity of sexual labor, sexual purity, de/criminalization of prostitution, root causes of sexual violence and exploitation, and self-determination/harm-reduction vs rescue models, prevent agencies from meaningfully collaborating to support this population even when there is agreement that violence and exploitation should stop, and that youth deserve to access safety and support. Additionally, sometimes the perception that referring to or partnering with a culturally-specific organization signifies that a more mainstream organization isn't competent to work with LGBTQ+ youth is also a barrier. We often hear that other organizations do not want to refer because they believe it indicates homophobia or transphobia at their agency, even when a young person would benefit from working with someone who shares their identities and intimately understands their experiences.”

### **Further Considerations**

Beyond the commonly cited barriers and improvements, survey respondents included these additional items for consideration:

- More peer support and mentors
- Residential facilities with dual diagnosis
- Need to take violence experienced within shelter and housing situations seriously when considering housing solutions
- Police not being the first responders for LGBTQ+ youth in the sex trade
- Legal help clearing criminal records
- More housing services that are not faith-based

### 3.3 Findings from Synthesis of Prior Research

#### Varying Experiences in the Sex Trade

In synthesizing the research of 10 recent studies of similar populations, we identified a spectrum of overlapping but distinct experiences with commercial sexual exploitation and the sex trades, as well as varying levels of acknowledgement by system professionals and researchers of the agency of youth. On one end of the spectrum, many children who experience the sex trade are forced into the trades by an actor (typically described as a pimp) who controls and benefits financially from the sexual transaction. Pimping often takes place in the street economy, but is also perpetrated against young children by a family member or foster family member.<sup>19</sup>

According to one study conducted with younger populations in Miami-Dade County, many youth who experience third-party exploitation from a family member or intimate partner do not mentally frame their experience as exploitation and often exhibit intense emotional attachments to their abuser.<sup>20</sup> On the other end of the spectrum of experience, many youth involved in the sex trades were not forced into the sex trade by a specific third party, but are engaged in trading sex as a way to meet their survival needs. For youth engaged in survival sex and the street economies, although a pimp may still be involved, youth can have greater agency, empowerment, or support from their community<sup>21</sup>.

Regardless of a youth's point of entry into the sex trade, it is evident that no part of the spectrum of experiences with the sex trades is clearly distinguishable by the age of the involved youth, nor is the presence of personal agency clearly agreed upon in the differing perspectives of the law, social service agencies, and other professionals engaging with these youth. What is apparent is that the relationship between involvement in the sex trade and those who have marginalized gender, sexuality, and racial identities is nuanced and complex. We believe it is important to acknowledge the range of differences in experiences and self-identifications of sexual exploitation or involvement in the sex trades, as well as the potential variations these differences mean for LGBTQ+ youth in determining their own health, safety, and wellness.

#### Overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ Youth and Youth of Color in the Sex Trade

In every study focused on youth experiencing the sex trade that we reviewed, there was a significant overrepresentation of youth of color, women (both cisgender and transgender), and LGBTQ+ youth generally (n=10). Across 9 studies with young people involved in the sex trades, homeless youth services, or juvenile justice in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Miami and Minneapolis nearly 100% participants were black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, or mixed. Significant to our Washington-based research, the only study that had fewer youth of color (48%) was a 2002 Seattle-based study on homeless LGBTQ+ youth<sup>22</sup>. However, youth of color were still significantly overrepresented for the demographic makeup of the region. Of the studies that focused on CSEC or homeless youth involved in the street economies but did not

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<sup>19</sup> Michael B. Mukasey, et. al., "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: What Do We Know and What Do We Do About It?" National Institute of Justice, *Issues in International Crime* (2007).

<sup>20</sup> Monica Landers et. al., "Baseline Characteristics of Dependent Youth Who Have Been Commercially Sexually Exploited: Findings From a Specialized Treatment Program." *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 26, no. 6 (2017).

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Shepard, "From Community Organization to Direct Services: The Street Trans Action Revolutionaries to Sylvia Rivera Law Project." *Journal of Social Service Research*, 39 (2013).

<sup>22</sup> Bryan N. Cochran et al., "Challenges Faced by Homeless Sexual Minorities: Comparison of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Homeless Adolescents With Their Heterosexual Counterparts." *American Journal of Public Health*, 92, no. 5 (May 2002).

specifically focus on trans or LGBTQ+ youth (n=3), all reported 30- 70% of participants identified as LGBTQ+. **See Appendix D: List of Prior Studies** for a full summary of the demographic makeup of the prior research.

The general logic of why LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to be involved in the sex trade is that they are more often pushed out of their home due to family non-acceptance of gender-identity or sexual orientation, and therefore are more likely to be in foster care or homeless, and thus are more at risk for experiencing forced or unforced engagement in the sex trade. Statistics in Los Angeles County reveal that LGBTQ+ youth make up twice the percentage of youth in foster care than youth in the general public.<sup>23</sup> According to our research, even of the youth experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ+ homeless youth are almost twice as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to be solicited for sex on the street in exchange for money or other items of value.<sup>24</sup> The Seattle-based study regarding the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ homeless youth in comparison to heterosexual, cisgender homeless youth documented that LGBTQ+ youth are at higher risk for physical and sexual victimization while living on the streets.<sup>25</sup> Additionally LGBTQ+ youth also have higher rates of addiction and substance use, more psychopathology, and exhibit riskier sexual behaviors in comparison with homeless heterosexual adolescents.<sup>26</sup> LGBTQ+ youth reported an average of 7 more perpetrators of sexual abuse, and male LGBTQ+ youth are more often sexually victimized than cis-straight male youth.<sup>27</sup>

### Barriers to Stable Housing and Formal Economy Employment

The systemic and societal barriers facing LGBTQ+ youth, such as discrimination in housing, exclude youth from engaging with services that are supposed to support them and exclusion from the formal economy can result in a need for street-based exchange for survival. <sup>28</sup> Such barriers can be exacerbated for transgender and gender-expansive youth, as well as for youth of color. Specific obstacles that trans and gender-expansive youth face within child welfare systems are gendered residential facilities that put them in unsafe housing situations, difficulty in accessing gender-affirming medical care, and overall mistreatment, ranging from microaggressions to harassment to actual violence (from peers, foster parents, and system professionals). Transgender youth experiencing hostile environments within the system may choose to live on the street, which they may see as a safer alternative for them<sup>29</sup>.

One study that focused on the stories of trans or gender-expansive youth in foster care described experiential themes of increased placement disruption, lack of caregiver competency, and distinct barriers to housing, education, and employment.<sup>30</sup> Barriers for trans youth in accessing hormones is a prominent problem: youth have to take their requests through the

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<sup>23</sup> Mountz, Sarah, Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Elizabeth Pourciau, "Because We're Fighting to Be Ourselves: Voices from Former Foster Youth who are Transgender and Gender Expansive." *Child Welfare*, 96, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>24</sup>JM Van Leeuwen et al, "Lesbian, gay, and bisexual homeless youth: an eight-city public health perspective." *Child Welfare*, 85 no. 2 (2006).

<sup>25</sup> Bryan N. Cochran et al., "Challenges Faced by Homeless Sexual Minorities: Comparison of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Homeless Adolescents With Their Heterosexual Counterparts." *American Journal of Public Health*, 92, no. 5 (May 2002).

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> Mountz, Sarah, Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Elizabeth Pourciau, "Because We're Fighting to Be Ourselves: Voices from Former Foster Youth who are Transgender and Gender Expansive." *Child Welfare*, 96, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

courts, service professionals often do not acknowledge requests for hormones, and hormone treatment is often time-sensitive. Bullying in schools related to gender identity was a strong barrier to education, as was changing schools many times due to higher numbers of foster care placements. Bias and discrimination (specifically related to gender identity) in employment was a common barrier to legal employment. Two participants acknowledged their engagement in survival sex and sex work to support themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Even within LGBTQ+ advocacy, the needs of transgender individuals have often been relegated to the margins.<sup>32</sup> As such, services aimed at providing culturally competent care for LGBTQ+ populations tend to not address the specific safety and residential needs of transgender people seeking services. The need to engage in street economies is a logical result of discrimination in education, housing, and employment, as well as a lack of safe and individualized services<sup>33</sup>.

### Summary of Recommendations from Relevant Studies

Recommendations from previous studies about better services for LGBTQ+ youth primarily fall into the categories of prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, and affirming care. Recommendations include safe social community spaces and drop-in centers for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness or in foster care, as well as engaging the LGBTQ+ community to become foster parents or mentors. Additionally, creating early intervention programs, therapy, and education for families or foster families struggling with the identity of their youth in order to prevent youths from being pushed out of their homes.<sup>34</sup>

For youth with sex trade involvement, recommendations include early intervention and identification of victims of domestic abuse, as well as raising the visibility of the issue, as CSE is often a “low visibility” crime. In addition to recommending a survivor-centered approach, studies found that decriminalization needed to go in hand with creating more residential beds for youth so they are not housed by default in the juvenile justice system, which is counterproductive to building trust and promoting safe recovery from trauma.<sup>35</sup>

Studies of street sex workers called for harm reduction and “meeting people where they’re at,” using soft that is nonjudgmental and respectful language (avoiding the term “exploitation”), as well as more internet-based outreach, since online is an area in which many young sex workers are engaged. Additionally, establishing programming to “encourage acceptance of sexual minorities among street youths and in shelters may reduce the risk of [LGBT] adolescents being victimized in these locales.”<sup>36</sup>

One finding from the Chicago-based Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP) that aligned strongly with our focus group findings was the need for opportunities for self-determination. The YWEP members also built strength and safety in community and unity. In their own words “*Our community is often represented as a ‘problem’ that needs to be solved*

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Shepard, "From Community Organization to Direct Services: The Street Trans Action Revolutionaries to Sylvia Rivera Law Project." *Journal of Social Service Research*, 39 (2013).

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*

<sup>34</sup> Shahera Hyatt, "Struggling to Survive: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning Homeless Youth on the Streets of California." *California Homeless Youth Project: Voices from the Street* (2010).

<sup>35</sup> Rachel Naramore, et.al., "Youth Arrested for Trading Sex Have the Highest Rates of Childhood Adversity: A Statewide Study of Juvenile Offenders." *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* 29, no. 4 (2017).

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

*or we are portrayed as victims that need to be saved by someone else. We recognize that girls have knowledge and expertise in matters relating to our own lives that no one else will have. **We are not the problem – we are the solution.***<sup>37</sup>

Further considerations for better serving LGBTQ+ youth generally, and those youth involved in the sex trade, include:

- Taking an intersectional lens when addressing the needs of individual LGBTQ+ youth
- Providing gender-neutral and safe LGBTQ+ residential facilities
- Access to culturally-relevant mental health treatment<sup>38</sup>
- Providing intensified and tailored services to prevent risk of HIV infection<sup>39</sup>
- Ensuring access to hormones and other gender-affirming medical care<sup>40</sup>
- Supporting engagement with LGBTQ+ affirming cultural or religious organizations

### 3.4 Research Limitations

While our focus group participants were able to creatively dream up worlds with no constraints and unlimited resources, our project as a whole was unfortunately subject to a few constraints. Some restrictions limited our ability to adequately recruit and gather information, and thus limit our ability to generalize the findings of this report. Given that this was a fairly short-term research project and our team of three were all concurrently working and attending graduate school, there were obvious limitations regarding our available time and resources. Future studies will hopefully build upon the current research and address the specific gaps that are present in this report.

The demographic makeup of the 10 focus group participants we were able to recruit represents a significant limitation to our findings in multiple ways. We decided not to invite anyone under the age of 18 to participate in the focus groups for multiple reasons, as have been described, but this decision carries implications. Needs can change quickly, and our assessment of needs could be lacking more nuanced and recently emerging ones. Additionally, no youth were consulted in the creation of the survey or the focus group protocol. Ideally, we would have hoped to at least have feedback from and some accountability to youth, if not more of a participatory model of youth directing the conversations.

Service needs and experiences vary across the target population based on identities such as race, ethnicity, language, location, housing status, gender presentation, and education, among other factors. Beyond the age of our participants, this report lacks a robust presentation of the perspectives of LGBTQ+ people of color who have had involvement in sex trade. Additionally, experiences in the sex trade is a broad category which encompasses a breadth of experience with sexual violence and/or trading sex for resources. While we present these findings as

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<sup>37</sup> Young Women's Empowerment Project, "Girls Do What They Have To Do To Survive: Illuminating Methods used by Girls in the Sex Trade and Street Economy to Fight Back and Heal." YWEP (2009).

<sup>38</sup> Wendy L. Macias-Konstantopoulos et.al., "The Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the Boston Metropolitan Area: Experiences and Challenges Faced by Front-Line Providers and Other Stakeholders." *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk* 6, no. 1.4 (2015).

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, Erin et al, "Transgender Female Youth and Sex Work: HIV Risk and a Comparison of Life Factors Related to Engagement in Sex Work." *Springer* (2009).

<sup>40</sup> Mountz, Sarah, Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Elizabeth Pourciau, "Because We're Fighting to Be Ourselves: Voices from Former Foster Youth who are Transgender and Gender Expansive." *Child Welfare* 96, no. 1 (2018).

representative of the community at the intersection of LGBTQ+ and involvement in the sex trade, we acknowledge other factors shaped the focus group participants' individual ideas, responses, and service needs.

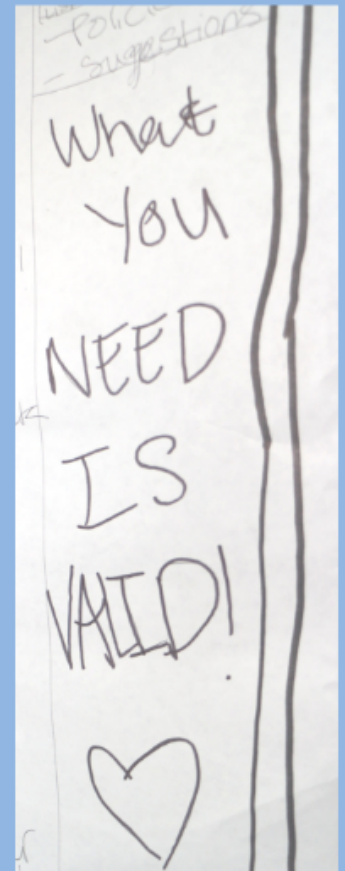
Additionally, our demographic questionnaire excludes options for intersex individuals to indicate their gender identity. An individual brought the omission to our attention after the final focus group, so previous groups had not received this option. By not fully capturing the identities of LGBTQ+ individuals, we indirectly erased such identities from the conversation and dismissed the experiences of our participants who identify as intersex. As has been described, the need and experiences within the LGBTQ+ community vary greatly, and our findings are less robust given this omission.

Furthermore, the project's time and resource constraints limited our ability to target outreach to the wide range of stakeholders in this arena. Just as the sample size of focus group participants does not depict the diverse and highly heterogeneous population of LGBTQ+ youth who have traded sex for resources, our survey of 66 service professionals should be considered as a limited representation of all the groups interested or invested in the population's health, safety, and wellness. Opportunities exist to reach service professionals in other sectors and geographic areas that our survey missed. Future research will benefit from more targeted sampling methods to non-CCYJ affiliated service professionals in addition to the convenience sample method used in our survey of CCYJ's current contact lists.

Our own social positions as researchers represents another limitation of our study design. Our identities shape our experiences, and each of our own lived experiences shaped the decisions we made during the research process. While each of the researchers identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, none of us live in close proximity to the population we were tasked with studying. Thus, future studies should consider using community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods to include the target population in the design, implementation, and analysis stages of research. While CBPR methods tend to be more time intensive than other studies because it demands recruitment and development of participant leadership to oversee the research process, we believe community-based research produces more culturally-responsive approaches and more accurate findings.

Despite these limitations, we believe that we have given our honest and intentional effort to conduct this research in a culturally-responsive, trauma-informed method that seeks to center the voices of those impacted. It is our hope that future studies will have the capacity and drive to at least include youth in the conversation, if not step back to provide youth the platform to lead the conversation.





## Chapter 4: Recommendations and Conclusion

Many of the individuals we met with over the course of this project voiced an appreciation that such a study was being conducted and expressed excitement about the opportunity to share their ideas. Everyone agreed that LGBTQ+ individuals with sex trade involvement should be supported to share their wisdom and expertise, as well as given the space and platform to lead conversations about systems change. Some individual participants inquired about how they could stay involved in the process of this research and CCYJ's work. It is evident that an ongoing and continual process of assessing needs and tailoring services is required.

To this end, we compiled overall themes that emerged from the data and used these themes to craft specific, actionable recommendations for CCYJ's future efforts.

### 4.1 Overall Themes from the Data

We analyzed and synthesized the data gathered across the three research methods to extrapolate overarching themes from national findings, regional service professionals, and local young people with experiences in the sex trade. Our research synthesis, the survey of system professionals, and the focus groups all provided unique perspectives on the needs of LGBTQ+ youth involved in sex trade. Our study has found that these youth specifically need:

- **Culturally-responsive care**
- **Access to safe housing and healthcare**
- **Opportunities to engage in community and build connections**
- **Centralized, comprehensive, and coherent services**
- **Space and support to practice self-determination**

#### *Culturally-Responsive Care*

Youth need individualized, strength-based services that are sensitive to their actual needs and lived experiences. Culturally-responsive care for LGBTQ+ youth involved in sex trade takes many forms, specifically:

- Gender-affirming and experience-affirming language and supports that recognize all journeys, needs, and experiences as valid.
- Trauma-informed care centering around strengths as opposed to trauma or struggles;
- Empowering youth to make decisions and practice their own agency by acknowledging their strength, wisdom, and capacity.
- Taking a harm reduction approach of “meeting someone where they’re at” absent of prerequisites for care.

The importance of language, conversations, and judgement were also common subjects in our research, especially around avoiding victim-blaming or stigmatizing language, and using supportive words to make someone feel seen, listened to, and understood. When a youth's lived experience is not affirmed or they are explicitly shamed, they may fear reporting or may not even seek out services. There is a need for service providers to effectively balance preventative initiatives with providing affirming and respectful care.

#### *Access to Safe Housing and Healthcare*

Two of the most basic needs that are difficult for the target population to meet due to inconsistent and

“  
being afraid to express yourself because  
of other peoples' inability to attempt to  
understand who you are  
-Focus Group Participant”

traumatizing experiences with services are housing and healthcare. All youth, particularly transgender and gender nonconforming youth, need access to services consistently and without fear of violence, stigmatization, or discrimination from peers or professionals. Accessible and safe housing and healthcare includes:

- Healthcare treatment that is gender-affirming, including hormones, reproductive health, sexual education, treatment for STIs, and mental healthcare;
- Housing, shelter spaces, and survivor residential beds that are either LGBTQ+ specific or truly safe for LGBTQ+ youth, especially trans and gender non-conforming youth
- Housing and healthcare without stigmatization, and with supports for HIV positive youth

#### *Opportunities for Connection*

Youth feel a sense of belonging within the LGBTQ+ community and want to have safe places to be themselves and make connections with their peers. These spaces and opportunities for connection can take many forms, including:

- Physical spaces such as LGBTQ+ community centers can help foster new connections and community
- Online platforms can facilitate peer-to-peer information sharing and social connections.
- Celebration and support for communal healing and good company.

#### *Centralized, Comprehensive, and Coherent Services*

The sheer amount of information and referrals a youth has to keep track of while navigating these systems made seeking services sometimes at odds with meeting their basic needs. The result is a need for more comprehensive services including:

- Consistency in case management, accountability to referring the youth to the right services, and knowing what resources are most affirming and able to meet needs.
- Communications between systems, referrals from law enforcement and CPS out to LGBTQ+ specific and human-trafficking specific organizations.
- Full crisis response and hours and more hours availability of drop-in centers that can work with youth schedules
- Aging out of services, need for ongoing care/support in transitioning out of systems

#### *Space and Support to Practice Self-Determination*

From our process of the focus group, we realized there was significant demand among the youth for them to be participants and have platforms to help their own community using their expertise and brilliance. Opportunities for self-determination include:

- Compensation and funding those experiencing problems to consult on solving the problem.
- Feeling organized as a community and making an impactful difference (came across in discussions of unity and community too)
- Self-advocates leading conversations- their ideas about needs or barriers being centered (only actual experts about experiences/needs)
- Feedback loop within systems for self-advocates input/ideas to be heard and incorporated
- Prevention and education

## 4.2 Recommendation Objectives and Evaluation

The following section discusses our recommendations for CCYJ, service professionals, and policymakers to consider in making improvements in services for Washington State’s LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade.

The findings call attention to the need for service professionals, both inside and outside the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, to develop skills for supporting the population in living healthy, safe, and well lives. Service professionals and other stakeholders should remain aware of the population’s exposure to unique challenges, take steps to mitigate potential harm, and intervene during moments of violence and discrimination.

Our findings suggest that CCYJ is poised to assist service professionals and policymakers in improving provisions for LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade.

## Recommendations Overview

This section outlines recommendations for service professionals, policymakers, and CCYJs’ response to the problem that Washington’s LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade face challenges in accessing services that support their health, safety, and wellness:

**Figure 4.2: Recommendations Summary**

Recommendations for CCYJ	#1 Incorporate findings on the study population’s specific needs for culturally-responsive and individualized care practices into CCYJ’s existing trainings for service professionals
	#2 Develop addendums on the specific needs of LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade in CCYJ’s Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care
	#3 Conduct a statewide community-based participatory research (CBPR) needs assessment if LGBTQ youth who have experiences in the sex trade
Recommendations for Service Providers	#1 Use culturally-responsive and affirming language with LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade
	#2 Ensure existing facilities encourage peer-to-peer support and accommodate diverse accessibility needs
	#3 Tailor individual services to the specific needs of LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement, especially for healthcare and housing-related provisions.
Recommendations for Policy Makers	#1 Require the training and implementation of CCYJ’s Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and Protocol for Safe &

	Affirming to all divisions and professionals within Washington State's child welfare and juvenile justice system
	#2 Support the Washington State Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Coordinating Committee in the development of assessment metrics for population's health, safety, and wellness outcomes
	#3 Increase resources and continue supporting flexible use of funds for providing services to LGBTQ youth with past sex trade experience and contact with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems

These recommendations emerge from our findings and observations during our assessment of needs shared among LGBTQ+ youth with sex trade involvement and of service professionals' practices for supporting their health, safety, and wellness. Pairing our findings with these observations suggest that's that CCYJ, service professionals, and policymakers should invest resources in targeted interventions tailored to the population's specific experiences that may not be fully recognized in current efforts. Furthermore, we posit these recommendations as explicit opportunities to identify, engage, and develop the population's leadership in improving services to better meet their needs.

## Objectives and Evaluation Criteria

We refined stakeholder interests and our findings into three objectives, each with measurable criteria, to evaluate recommendations for uprooting service barriers for LGBTQ+ youth who have traded sex for resources. The objectives offer clarity to each option's potential impacts on the population's health, safety, and wellness. We selected criteria to assist in the assessment of their capacity to achieve these wider objectives. Our criteria offer an explicit, nuanced, and consistent method to examine the recommendations and determine each option's costs, benefits, and trade-offs. While some measures can be more easily quantified than others, the criteria still allow for a comparison of recommendations.

### Objectives

- **Identify recommendations for improving CCYJ's efforts to improve the health, safety, and wellness of LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade:** Our team measures this objective by assessing how each option impacts determinants of the population's health, safety, and wellness, including: (1) Effects on short-term growth in service rates; (2) Impacts on long-term growth in health, safety, and wellness outcomes; (3) Engagement level of leaders and members of the target population in the design, implementation, and evaluation of strategies; and (4) Extent of culturally-responsive and community-based service delivery approaches used.
- **Clarify opportunities to challenge the ways traditional policy processes may pose barriers to the population's participation and leadership in decision-making processes:** The report examines this objective through an assessment of each option's capacity to engage community partners, gain support of service professionals, empower



the leadership of LGBTQ+ youth with lived experiences in the sex trade in decision-making processes, and employ culturally-responsive and community-based service practices.

- **Organizational and political feasibility:** Our team considered the likelihood of CCYJ's staff members, community partners, and policymakers to be an important factor in assessing the likelihood of a recommendation's adoption. Our report assesses this objective through three criteria, including: (1) Administrative costs to CCYJ; (2) Engagement of service professionals and community partners in decision-making processes; (3) Support of local and state policymakers; (4) Effects on short-term growth in population's service rates; and (5) Effects on long-term growth in population's health, safety, and wellness outcomes.

### Evaluation Criteria

- **Effects on short-term growth of the population's service rates:** This criterion assesses how each recommendation affects changes in the population's use of services in the first five years of implementation. We find the measure to be useful in assessing each option's achievement of the first and third objectives. The report measures this criterion on a scale of Unclear, Negative, Neutral, Positive, and Highly Positive.
- **Effects on long-term increases in population's health, safety, and wellness outcomes:** We calculate each recommendation's general impacts on the population's health, safety, and wellness against the backdrop of ongoing barriers to evaluate the likelihood of increases in the population's health, safety, and wellness under each recommendation. We assess this criterion on a scale of Unclear, Negative, Neutral, Positive, and Highly Positive.
- **Extent of culturally-responsive and community-based service delivery practices promoted:** This criterion evaluates how recommendations advance culturally-responsive and community-based services among service professionals – both factors that could prevent future barriers to the health, safety, and wellness of LGBTQ+ youth with history in the sex trade. Our team determines this criterion on a scale of low, medium, and high.
- **Engagement of Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth who have traded sex for resources in decision-making processes:** This criterion evaluates the extent each option uses community-based participatory techniques to identify, recruit, and develop members of the target population, which relates to all three objectives. We also use it to estimate each option's likelihood of support among LGBTQ+ youth with experience in the sex trade. Our report assesses this criterion on a scale of low, medium, and high.
- **Engagement of Washington State's service professionals and other community partners in decision-making processes:** This criterion measures the participation and likelihood of support among the state's providers, influential leaders, and service organizations. We assess this criterion by estimating how recommendations engage service professionals and how externalities could impact them. We assess this criterion on a scale of low, medium, and high.
- **Political support of local and state policymakers:** This criterion estimates the engagement and likelihood of support among local and state policymakers. We rate this criterion on a scale of low, medium, and high.
- **Administrative cost to CCYJ:** This criterion examines administrative costs to CCYJ involved in each option's implementation. Our report considers administrative costs to encompass the additional capacity needed to implement each option, resources required in execution, and the potential negative externalities to different stakeholders.

## 4.3 Recommendations for CCYJ, Service Professionals, and Policymakers

This section details recommendations for CCYJ, service professionals, and policymakers to implement in their efforts to support the health, safety, and wellness of Washington State's LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade. Our team offers three recommendations to each stakeholder group for a total of nine recommendations, with descriptions of each option paired with a discussion of potential benefits and trade-offs for stakeholders' consideration.

The combination of these recommendations addresses the policy problem by advancing community-based approaches to the policy process, incorporating our findings into the practices used by service professionals, and investigating ways to support and sustain efforts to care for LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement. Empowering the study population and service professionals to design, lead, and oversee implementation on micro, mezzo, and macro levels in our recommendations subverts traditional policy paradigms that have failed to engage the study population in a meaningful and empowering way. Despite lingering questions around resources, our team considers the combination of these strategies to be the most politically feasible. In sum, our recommendations offer an effective, meaningful, and transformative pathway to improve services to support the health, safety, and wellness of Washington State's LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade.

### **Recommendations for CCYJ**

CCYJ has advanced momentous reforms to improve services for youth involved in Washington's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. While these efforts have resulted in targeted interventions to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ+ youth and those who have been involved in the sex trade, our study has identified multiple barriers and policy gaps for those who identify with both experiences that demand CCYJ's attention.

This report offers three recommendations to guide CCYJ's efforts to enhance collaboration across the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, create resources that support the unique service needs of LGBTQ+ youth with sex trade involvement, and provide new pathways for the population to inform policies and programs that shape their lives.

#### **CCYJ Recommendation #1: Incorporate findings on the study population's specific needs for culturally-responsive and individualized care practices into CCYJ's existing trainings for service professionals**

Our study revealed participants' access to services varied according to their specific needs. These inconsistencies suggest that service professionals lack consistent and adequate tools for supporting the health, safety, and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth who have traded sex for resources.



We recommend CCYJ collaborate with community partners in developing resources to support service professionals in providing culturally-responsive and individualized care to the population. Our team advises CCYJ to consider developing the following:

- Share screening tools and practices for discussing LGBTQ+ identities and sex trade involvement in a positive way
- Coordinate with stakeholders to develop a robust and accessible directory of identity-affirming healthcare, housing, cultural, and social providers.
- Engaging and compensating self-advocates to provide feedback and keep training up-to-date and culturally responsive

**Benefits.** Adding the report's findings into CCYJ's existing trainings will have several benefits. First, the incorporation of our findings will improve existing workshops and trainings by adding research-based best practices for providing services to LGBTQ youth who experience the sex trade. Second, our findings uplift the population's voice and their inclusion in CCYJ's trainings could start to change the power dynamics that have traditionally excluded the population from conversations about service provision. Third, our findings point towards opportunities for further study and research. Policymakers and service professionals could be more likely to consider supporting future projects on the population if CCYJ shares these vital and important opportunities to further what we know about the population.

**Trade-Offs.** Two trade-offs emerge in advancing this option. First, it engages a relatively small number of individuals with lived experiences in the sex trades. This model focuses more on creating targeted service standards than it does on empowering the population to participate in decision-making processes related to services. Additionally, maintaining an active directory of affirming service providers could prove time consuming to update and criterion would need to be developed to create the list.

**CCYJ Recommendation #2: Develop addendums on the specific needs of LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade in CCYJ's *Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children* and *Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care* that detail practices for improving service interventions targeted at supporting the population's health, safety, and wellness and integrate culturally-responsive and community-based approaches into the content's development**

Most service professionals reported receiving training on service provisions for LGBTQ youth and/or youth with past sex trade involvement. While our survey did not assess the content or consistency of these trainings, focus group participants shared experiences of service professionals who lacked competencies in giving them care that felt responsive to their experiences as individuals with both experiences. Participants cited these moments as traumatic, discouraging them from reusing services, and disruptive of their search for housing or healthcare resources. Moreover, CCYJ and its partners lack significant resources on best practices and procedures for providing culturally-competent care to these individuals – which could prevent service professionals from delivering care that poses barriers to the population's health, safety, and wellness. In sum, CCYJ's current work positions it to both lead the development of population-specific service guidelines and leverage community partnerships to ensure their successful implementation across the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Our team recommends that CCYJ explores opportunities to develop addendums on the specific needs of LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement for the current *Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children* and *Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care*.

**Benefits.** This option offers several benefits to CCYJ's efforts to support LGBTQ in the sex trade. Primarily, the added addendums will provide service professionals and organizations with research-based best practices for providing services to the population. CCYJ should consider how to share these practices with their statewide networks, which would ensure its maximum impact on improving the cultural responsiveness of existing service provisions. Secondly, this option builds on CCYJ's existing infrastructure and programming. This option leverages CCYJ's strength as a bridge between many stakeholders by tasking the organization with developing and spreading vital information on how these stakeholders could better support the population.

**Trade-Offs.** Several trade-offs should be considered with this option. First, the extent of its effect on short and long-term improvements in service provisions relies on service professionals and organizations using the addendums to increase competencies in providing culturally-responsive and affirming care. Furthermore, the option falls short of getting at the root of the population's service barriers, as the protocol's implementation will have little-to-no effect if LGBTQ+ youth who have traded sex for resources cannot access services in the first place. Third, the option does not significantly engage the study population in its implementation. While some LGBTQ+ people with sex trade experience may support protocol's development, their disengagement could lead to protocol that is less effective and responsive to their needs. However, our team believes additional addendums on their specific needs is an initial step towards increased engagement and targeted interventions aimed at LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade.

**CCYJ Recommendation #3: Conduct a statewide community-based participatory research (CBPR) needs assessment of LGBTQ youth who have experiences in the sex trade**

Our initial two recommendations represent short-term actionable steps toward implementing system improvements for LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade. While focus group participants offered sufficient insight on service provisions to answer both research questions, the sessions' small sample sizes limit our findings' generalizability and represent a research area that demands further exploration. Furthermore, we witness multiple participants express a desire for opportunities to support CCYJ's advocacy efforts.

Our limitations and participants' desires for further engagement reveals an opportunity for CCYJ to deepen our findings and encourage the study population's participation in the research process. Thus, we recommend CCYJ initiate a two-year community-based participatory research (CBPR) assessment of Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth and their shared needs, preferences, and motivations for accessing services.

*What is Community-Based Participatory Research?*

Our team uses the definition of CBPR as a methodological approach that

“Focuses on social, structural, and physical environment inequities through active involvement of community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all aspects of the research process.”<sup>41</sup> CBPR’s focus on civic engagement in all stages of the research process makes it an enticing model for research with vulnerable populations. CBPR acknowledges the importance of activating individuals of a study population as “active and equal participants, in all phases of the research project, if the research process is to be a means of facilitating change.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, CBPR emerges as an alternative to traditional research approaches that should appeal to CCYJ’s integrated and data-driven approach to reforming the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

### Discussion of Benefits and Trade-Offs

Our team recommends CCYJ consider utilizing their network to implement a larger, more-extensive CBPR needs assessment of LGBTQ Youth with experiences in the sex trade.

We urge CCYJ to treat a CBPR study as an opportunity to conduct research that could reach beyond our study’s limitations. For example, the assessment should seek to engage the study population and service professionals in locations outside the Puget Sound. While our Seattle and Tacoma focus groups offered a glimpse into participants’ lives, needs and experiences likely vary across region and cultural context. Furthermore, CCYJ’s future assessment could engage more voices. While our focus group participants offered significant insight into potential service improvements, the sample’s size and demographic makeup poses limitations that could be mitigated with more time, resources, and relationships with other organizational partners.

The population’s participation in a CBPR study would likely increase short-term rates for two reasons. First, contact between service professionals and LGBTQ+ youth would increase due to the assessment’s activities (both in frequency and in type of engagement). Studies show that in-person contact (especially peer-to-peer communication) increases the likelihood that individuals will participate in services and assessment activities. Furthermore, increased engagement will likely result from CBPR methods for increasing participation by ensuring meetings are accessible and meaningful. Second, this option would increase short-term growth in service rates because the assessment would lead to more effective, culturally-responsive findings and recommendations for care. Thus, involving the study population throughout the research process enriches the option’s capacity to boost service rates.

This option will presumably result in long-term increases in the study population’s health, safety, and wellness for two reasons. First, CBPR studies have a higher likelihood of continuous and increasing engagement among members of the study population. CBPR’s core tenant states that community members serve as equal partners in knowledge production and research process, which could heighten the population’s long-term engagement in accessing services, especially as they grow relationships with service professionals and other stakeholders. Second, LGBTQ+ youth’s involvement in the assessment will probably lead to more effective, culturally-responsive findings and recommendations. Their expertise will result in better targeted interventions for improving the population’s health, safety, and wellness, while empowering many to get further involved in policy process.

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<sup>41</sup> Israel, Barbara, et.al. “Community-based Participatory Research” *Education for Health* vol. 14, 2 (2001).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

This recommendation should be considered in light of several trade-offs. First, the first and third options require CCYJ to make significant investments in each recommendation's implementation. Pursuing a CBPR approach is particularly resource intensive. However, we believe these approaches lead to other important and less measurable benefits, such as: (1) Increased engagement of the study population in the research process; (2) Strengthened relationships with community stakeholders; and (3) More accurate and culturally-responsive findings. Second, our report assumes CCYJ has the capacity to oversee any of the option's implementation. For instance, each option demands traveling across the state to engage stakeholders in a variety of activities. CCYJ's staff members already oversee other programs and policy efforts, and our team trusts the organization to decide where to invest staff energy. However, we do believe that any response to supporting the population requires reaching out to youth and service professionals across the state. In the end, our final recommendations' success depends greatly on CCYJ's willingness to foster a culturally-responsive and community-based strategy for addressing the problem that too many of the state's LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade face challenges in accessing services that support their health, safety, and wellness. Thus, these approaches could accomplish our objectives despite these tradeoffs.

## **Recommendations for Service Professionals**

Direct service professionals proved to be the most supportive interpersonal relationships and also the greatest source of tension in the target population's experience with services. From good case managers being able to know what an individual needs before they need it, to doctors failing to follow-up or treat these young people with respect, participants had a range of experiences, good and bad with service professionals.

This report offers three recommendations to guide the efforts of service professionals across the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in improving services to meet the unique service needs of LGBTQ+ youth with sex trade involvement and provide supports for them to engage with each other.

### **Service Professional Recommendation #1: Use culturally-responsive and affirming language with LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade**

Youth who have experienced the sex trade, transgender and gender non-conforming youth, and LGBTQ+ youth broadly live in a world where language is used to criminalize them, invalidate their gender identity and expression, and otherwise inflict harm. Additionally, stigma around mental health issues and depression seeks to invalidate the needs and feelings of these youth. Service providers must respond to youth in a way that speaks to the validity of their identity, experience, and self-determination.

Thus, we recommend service professionals incorporate the following culturally-responsive and affirming language practices into their approaches to supporting LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement:

- Incorporate harm reduction and “meeting people where they are at when discussing the sex trade and mental health needs;
- Push non-judgmental, supportive messaging, like “Your needs are valid;”
- Build trust and human connections;
- Address stigma, discrimination, and hesitation to engage in conversations about the sex trade and/or LGBTQ+ youth within organizations; and
- Refer clients to LGBTQ+ affirming care providers, including mental healthcare, healthcare, and housing.

### **Service Professional Recommendation #2: Ensure existing facilities encourage peer-to-peer support and accommodate diverse accessibility needs**

Community is something that has always bonded marginalized communities, and LGBTQ+ young people have so much to give and share with their community. For LGBTQ+ youth who are also involved in the sex trade, unstable and spread out housing situations can make it hard to access safe places to build and be in community. Additionally, LGBTQ+ youth centers geared towards younger populations and prevention models are not always designed to be affirming of and meet the needs of those with lived experience.

Although affirming and competent providers are important for helping youth navigate these systems, their peers and friends of shared identity and experience are crucial in supporting

young people in their mental health and well-being. Additionally the target population often relies on the expertise of their community to navigate systems.

Thus, we recommend service professionals and organizations leverage the benefits of community and assess how their current facilities encourage the following:

- Opportunities for LGBTQ+ peer-to-peer support and networking;
- Comfortable spaces with LGBTQ+ relevant messaging and signaling (ex: rainbows and florals, single stall bathrooms, art supplies);
- Internet-based outreach and resources, including video calls with case managers; and
- Consistently available services and access to drop-in centers.

**Service Professional Recommendation #3: Tailor individual services to the specific needs of LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement, especially for healthcare and housing-related provisions.**

The two most prevalent unmet needs of this specific population were accessing affirming and safe housing and healthcare. While recognizing that accessing youth housing is a problem for all youth populations, safety within housing is particularly an issue for LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade. Additionally, this population has unique needs for consistent access to medical care, for both hormones (for some youth) and regular testing and treatment for STI's including HIV. While youth find that most doctors who specifically specialize in gendercare like hormone therapy are competent and affirming of LGBTQ+ people, a number of the population access their medical needs through emergency rooms, where medical professionals are less equipped to fully meet their unique needs.

Our team recommends service professionals evaluate and modify practices to ensure existing provisions accomplish the following:

- Addressing stigma around HIV and helping clients who need treatment access caring and affirming healthcare; and
- Referring to gender-affirming medical care including exploring healthcare options to send youth to that can meet full crises outside of emergency rooms.

Additionally, we suggest service professionals and organizations consider implementing the following:

- Separate LGBTQ+ only-housing or safe spaces within housing; and
- Ensuring safety of LGBTQ+ in housing and shelters, particularly transgender and gender nonconforming youth.

**Benefits.** Building capacity and knowledge for service providers to better meet the unique needs of the population is perhaps the most direct way to impact the lives of current LGBTQ+ youth experiencing the sex trade. Addressing specific issues such as health care and housing, as well as empowering and providing space and opportunity for connection for LGBTQ+ youth to build and care for each other as a community is also an opportunity to meet needs that service professionals alone cannot meet. Additionally, providing opportunities to connect can help facilitate larger conversations around needs and exercising self-determination in policy.

**Trade-Offs.** Options to build capacity for individual service providers and the services their organizations provide is difficult because services are often dispersed and have differing levels

of competency. All service providers are at different levels regarding their experience and professional support to engage with these populations and the social services sector faces significant challenges with staff turnover. In the absence of mandates and funding to create, for example, separate safe spaces in facilities for LGBTQ+ youth, providers are resource limited.

## **Recommendations for Local and State Policymakers**

Local and state policymakers are poised to support improvements in service provisions aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ youth who have traded sex for resources. While policymakers have created task forces to coordinate a cross-sector collaborative effort to improved targeted services for LGBTQ+ youth and youth who have experienced the sex trade, our report's findings reveal the population's unique service needs could be better met if service professionals and organizations had the support and incentives to modify their current approaches to be more culturally-responsive, affirming, and individualized. These barriers require local and state policymakers to develop a strategy that addresses the problem that too many LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement face barriers to services that would support their health, safety, and wellness.

The following section outlines our three recommendations for local and state policymakers to consider in their efforts to implement policies and programs that meet the specific needs of Washington State's LGBTQ youth with sex trade experience.

### **Policymaker Recommendation #1: Require the training and implementation of CCYJ's *Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care* (including additional addendums on culturally-responsive and individualized care to LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade) to all divisions and professionals within Washington State's child welfare and juvenile justice system**

Developing solutions to the multi-faceted challenges faced by LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement demands policymakers, service professionals, and all other stakeholders to have a mutual understanding of the best approaches to supporting the population's health, safety, and wellness. Our team consulted with several service professionals who we believe understood the importance of enacting services that met the population's unique needs and experiences. However, focus group participants indicated that they often encountered providers who fell short of providing responsive care.

Our team did not identify the potential causes of inadequacies and inconsistencies in services for LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade. However, the study does illuminate the need for policymakers to develop and implement effective policies and programs that could adapt to the diverse and multifaceted challenges facing this community. Whether service professionals lack training in the specific culturally-competent practices required to care for the population or need additional public support in implementing our recommendations due to operating in a low-resourced field, local and state policymakers should consider policy and program options that could address these gaps.

Thus, we recommend policymakers take steps to require the training and implementation of CCYJ's *Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and*



*Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care* (including additional addendums on culturally-responsive and individualized care to LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade) to all divisions and professionals within Washington State's child welfare and juvenile justice system.

**Benefits.** This option creates: (1) A learning culture of shared understanding and collaboration towards meeting goals and objectives; (2) A clearer understanding of the population's service needs in achieving optimal health, safety, and wellness; (3) The guaranteed implementation of best practices across all divisions; (4) A strategy for bringing together professionals across divisions that embraces their different assets and talents; (5) A trusting environment between systems and their staff, and (6) A path towards addressing prejudices and misconceptions of the population between divisions.

**Trade-Offs.** The option should be considered in light of two trade-offs. First, this option does not consider existing barriers and challenges that may have prevented CCYJ from pursuing the implementation of their protocols as required for all service professionals within the child welfare and juvenile justice system. While we are not aware of any political or organizational barriers that may have inhibited this option in the past, we posit that the option's benefits outweigh any of these potential challenges. Second, the option is time and resource intensive. Training all service professionals will require incredible investment in revising and developing a training curriculum that applies to the diverse contexts that service professionals operate in across the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

**Policymaker Recommendation #2: Support the Washington State Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Coordinating Committee in the development of assessment metrics for population's health, safety, and wellness outcomes**

Our team understands the concepts of "health," "safety," and "wellness" as expansive, multi-dimensional, and subjective. While our research has sought to identify how to improve these outcomes among LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement, widely-accepted definitions of these concepts do not exist across relevant scholarship, advocacy efforts, and related-policy discussions. As survey and focus group participants observed, service professionals' approaches to treating their clients perceived needs vary. Additionally, stakeholders lack shared assessment metrics to evaluate current service provision or identify opportunities to improve approaches to supporting the population. This tension reveals an opportunity for local and state policymakers to convene stakeholders to collaborate on solutions.

Thus, our team recommends local and state policymakers take the following steps to develop measurement metrics for the population's health, safety, and wellness outcomes:

- The Washington State CSEC Coordinating Committee should lead the planning and development of assessment metrics for the population's health, safety, and wellness. Their ability to convene stakeholders across the child welfare and juvenile justice system will offer an opportunity to build consensus on the concepts' definitions and measurement metrics.
- The engagement of stakeholders in creating the definitions and measurement metrics for health, safety, and wellness will likely increase the outcomes' efficacy in producing accurate measures and the project's legitimacy among stakeholders.
- Increasing participation among all stakeholders will likely cause tension and disagreement between stakeholders. Consider contracting a professional facilitator to

help mitigate conflict and guide participants through a process that demands time, patience, and commitment.

**Benefits.** This option carries numerous benefits. First, it counters the subjective nature of health, safety, and wellness concepts. Service professionals likely have different understandings of each concept based on their role, division, training, lived experience, and other factors. Second, the option improves measurement systems that help gauge whether services are being delivered in an effective and accessible manner. Third, this approach could strengthen trust, partnership, and accountability across divisions if implemented in a collaborative way that brings a significant amount of stakeholders together to create the definitions and measurement metrics of health, safety, and wellness outcomes.

**Trade-Offs.** The following trade-offs should be considered: (1) Convening a sufficient number of stakeholders in developing the definitions and measurement metrics for the population's health, safety, and wellness would not be an easy task. It would require time, patience, political and financial resources, and skilled & visionary leaders who could guide the process; (2) While improving methods for measuring the population's health, safety, and wellness could support the evaluation of current service approaches, our team does not suggest that performance metrics offer a full picture of the efficacy of interventions aimed at supporting LGBTQ youth who have experienced the sex trade; and (3) Evaluating and reporting service outcomes may prove to be overly-burdensome on service professionals, especially those who face similar requirements from other entities. However, our team asserts that policymakers should consider this option as an opportunity to increase collaboration, accountability, and performance standards across divisions that aim to support LGBTQ youth with past sex trade involvement.

**Policymaker Recommendation #3: Increase resources and continue supporting flexible use of funds for providing services to LGBTQ youth with past sex trade experience and contact with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems**

The success of policymakers' efforts to join other stakeholders in improving the lives of LGBTQ youth with past sex trade experience hinges on their willingness to provide service professionals and organizations with an adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding model. Just

Thus, we recommend local and state policymakers investigate the following reasons to allocate flexible financial resources in their response to barriers inhibiting LGBTQ youth with past sex trade experience in attaining optimal health, safety, and wellness:

- Supporting the most marginalized or highest service need youth can lead to capacity building for organizations that has potential benefits for all youth accessing services
- Promoting stakeholder engagement and communication across organizations and fields of work leads to better systems

**Benefits.** This option carries several benefits. First, it gains political and logistical feasibility by building on Washington State's existing programs, such as the Office of Crime Victim Advocacy (OCVA) grant program. Service professionals brought up the OCVA's funding opportunities as a helpful (yet limited) resource throughout data collection. Second, it advances a predictable and long-lasting funding model that increases its likelihood of success in increasing the quality and availability of services to the study population. Second, it aligns with the Washington State Legislature's 2019 budget priorities around increasing resources to youth-oriented services,

such as K-12 education and behavioral health services. Third, this option could support service professionals in better coordinating across divisions and identify preventive and more-effective interventions that produce positive health, safety, and wellness outcomes in the study population. Integrated funding models (among other strategies discussed in the report) alleviate the effects of "silo government" by coordinating spending based on issue or population, which allows CCYJ to advance a multi-division intervention that targets the study population's specific needs.

**Trade-Offs.** CCYJ should examine whether this recommendation would prove to be politically unfeasible. Lobbying for funding increases for service provisions that benefit the study population would require a broad coalition of partners with a shared vision of how to attain better health, safety, and wellness outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth who have been affected by the sex trade. While local and state CSEC task forces' bipartisan membership might indicate the recommendation could gain sufficient support across political parties, advocates would likely face negative public discourse that tends to discriminate and under-resource LGBTQ youth, especially those who may have been involved in the sex trade. However, our team believes that uniting such a coalition is possible and worthwhile. We suggest messaging and framing such efforts in a way that presents efforts to fund services as strengthening our state's future by investing in our youth, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

### Final Discussion of Recommendations

We advise CCYJ to implement one or more of the recommendations. Our assessment reveals these options to best fulfill objectives compared to other interventions found in the research synthesis, even when important trade-offs have been considered.

Each recommendation enhances CCYJ's efforts to improve the health, safety, and wellness of Washington State's LGBTQ+ youth who have been involved in the sex trade. Additionally, our recommendations respond to a lack of information on LGBTQ+ youth in the sex trade. Research on youth involvement in the sex trade has seldom examined the population's specific experiences. Thus, their perspectives have been made invisible to policy processes that oversee interventions that directly impact the population's livelihoods. All three recommendations seek to fill the knowledge gap around LGBTQ+ communities' sex trade involvement in existing literature and offer a contribution towards LGBTQ+-inclusive and responsive policy, programming, and service delivery.

Our recommendations challenge existing policy processes that often exclude LGBTQ+ youth with experiences in the sex trade from participation and leadership in decision making. While traditional policymaking tends to rely on "top-down" decision-making measures, participant inclusion emerges as a central tenant in all three recommendations. This participatory approach for several reasons allows participants to partake in a study tailored to honor their experiences, recognize their participation with researchers as co-creators of knowledge, and acknowledge diverse needs and experiences with sex trade involvement. All three recommendations engage LGBTQ+ youth who have traded sex for resources in some manner. However, the third recommendation best fulfills this mandate compared to the other options, as it includes the target population to design, implement, and analyze the statewide assessment's findings. We note that research studies asking young people to discuss their current or previous experiences in the sex trade and opinions on policy and service delivery have resulted in participants

self-reporting significant perceived benefits, including validating their voices and including them in decision-making.

We determined organizational and political support would likely be as strong for these options as any others. While the participatory approach may attract criticism for being resource intensive, CCYJ's decision to fund collaborative projects will likely strengthen its relationships with community partners. Our recommendations' community-based approach seems consistent with CCYJ's previous responses to child welfare and juvenile justice reform. Furthermore, our recommendations mitigate disparate impacts on other stakeholders in comparison to other options, which likely outweigh increases in administrative costs to oversee the projects.

Our recommendations should be considered in light of several tradeoffs. First, the first and third options require CCYJ to make significant investments in each recommendation's implementation. Pursuing a CBPR approach is particularly resource intensive. However, we believe these approaches lead to other important and less measurable benefits, such as: (1) Increased engagement of the study population in the research process; (2) Strengthened relationships with community stakeholders; and (3) More accurate and culturally-responsive findings. Second, our report assumes CCYJ has the capacity to oversee any of the option's implementation. For instance, each option demands traveling across the state to engage stakeholders in a variety of activities. CCYJ's staff members already oversee other programs and policy efforts, and our team trusts the organization to decide where to invest staff energy. However, we do believe that any response to supporting the population requires reaching out to youth and service professionals across the state. In the end, our final recommendations' success depends greatly on CCYJ's willingness to foster a culturally-responsive and community-based strategy for addressing the problem that too many of the state's LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade face challenges in accessing services that support their health, safety, and wellness. Thus, these approaches could accomplish our objectives despite these tradeoffs.

## 4.4 Conclusion

CCYJ is poised to advance reforms in Washington State's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. CCYJ's eQuality and Project Respect initiatives have published successful protocols to assess service professionals in supporting the state's LGBTQ+ youth and those who have been involved in the sex trade. However, a lack of knowledge and resources about youth at the intersection has emerged as an important piece of CCYJ's work.

This study sought to identify opportunities for CCYJ to address the problem that **Washington's LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade face challenges in accessing services that support their health, safety, and wellness**. We implemented a culturally-responsive and community-based approach to assessing the population's shared needs and potential service improvements to better support their health, safety, and well-being.

In the end, significant study still must be conducted to truly understand how to best support the population. While our recommendations outline a few strategies for CCYJ to approach the issue, our team remains excited to see how CCYJ choose to continue their fight to improve the lives of all children and youth.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Key Definitions

The below table outlines terms used throughout the report and the definitions we use for them. If a definition was taken from a source other than a dictionary or our own words, it has been footnoted below.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Abrosexual	Commonly defined as an alternative term for “queer”, meaning experiencing fluidity in attraction to a range of people and genders. This may not have been the participant’s definition of their sexual orientation.
Affirming	To offer emotional support or give a heightened sense of value to someone or something; to not dismiss identities or experiences as irrelevant. In the context of gender-affirming, using language that aligns with someone’s gender identity (specifically for transgender, gender non-confirming, and gender expansive individuals) and expressing genuine support.
Cisgender	Describes a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.
CSE/CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. Referring to a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person. CSEC also includes situations where a child, whether or not at the direction of any other person, engages in sexual activity in exchange for anything of value <sup>43</sup> .
Culturally-responsive	Respectful of language, identities, cultural norms, and lived experiences of a community. In the context of providing care, addressing the specific and potentially unique needs of a population.
Involvement or experience	In the context of sex trade, participation in a transaction where sex was exchanged for anything of value, whether through coercion, exploitation, force, trafficking, and/or if the person exchanging sex identifies as having made the choice to do so.
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, as well as Intersex, Agender, and other sexual orientations and gender variant identities.
Misgender	To purposefully or accidentally refer to someone (specifically transgender, gender non-confirming, or gender expansive individuals) in a way that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify. Beyond naming a gender, this can be done by using the incorrect pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them) to describe someone.
Protocol	A document outlining a procedure with specific goals and guidelines.
Resources	Anything of value, including but not limited to: cash, food, clothes, drugs, protection, and shelter.

<sup>43</sup> USDJ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.” Webpage [Accessed May 2019]. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/csec\\_program.html](https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/csec_program.html)

Self-determination	The ability to make choices and decisions regarding one's own experiences and to control one's own life.
Sex trade	An umbrella term referring to the economy of exchanging sex for money that encompasses CSE and "any form of being sexual (or the idea of being sexual) in exchange for money, gifts, safety, drugs, hormones, or survival needs like housing, food, clothes, or immigration and documentation," <sup>44</sup> whether the person exchanging sex and/or being forced to have sex gets to keep anything or if someone else is profiting.
Stakeholder	Any person, organization, population, or other entity with any interest or stake in the conversation or field of discussion, whether or not they are directly affected and/or have any decision-making power.
Survivor	An identity and/or label with many meanings. In the context of the sex trade, someone who has had and/or is currently having involvement in the sex trade, typically by force or coercion, and who identifies as a survivor. Not all youth who have been involved in the sex trade identify as survivors.
Target population	In the context of this report, LGBTQ+ youth (primarily in Washington State) who have experienced or are currently experiencing the sex trade.
Transgender	Describes a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

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<sup>44</sup> Young Women's Empowerment Project, "Girls Do What They Have To Do To Survive: Illuminating Methods used by Girls in the Sex Trade and Street Economy to Fight Back and Heal." YWEP (2009).



## Appendix B: Summary of Research Methods and Applications

Research Method	Application in our Process
<i>Scoping tools</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish research questions and objectives with the client</li> <li>● Ground in Critical Race Theory, Feminist Theory, and Queer Theory to build a culturally-responsive design</li> <li>● Attend all-day CSEC training to familiarize our team with the language and norms of the field</li> <li>● Consult with 21 subject matter experts including service providers and researchers of marginalized populations</li> </ul>
<i>Initial review of existing literature, statistics, and reports</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify, compile, and review literature on relevant populations such as homeless youth and youth in foster care</li> <li>● Identify, compile and review literature on youth involved in the sex trades and the street economies</li> <li>● Identify, compile, and review literature on ethical research involving young people in the sex trade</li> <li>● Identify, compile, and review literature on best practices for service providers working with youth involved in the sex trade</li> </ul>
<i>Research synthesis of recent studies of similar populations (n=10)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review previous research methodologies for best practices</li> <li>● Synthesize findings and reflections of other studies</li> <li>● Distill findings into list of common barriers</li> <li>● Distill findings into list of needed system improvements</li> </ul>
<i>Online survey of youth serving professionals (n=66)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a multiple-choice online survey to with CCYJ input</li> <li>● Distribute survey to 500 providers Statewide via email</li> <li>● Analyze quantitative and qualitative survey data findings</li> <li>● Create visualizations of the data</li> </ul>
<i>Focus groups of LGBTQ+ youth with prior sex trade involvement (n=10)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish relationships with three organizations in the field</li> <li>● Work with providers to build an empowering and trauma-informed focus group protocol</li> <li>● Facilitate focus groups and collect data</li> <li>● Transcribe and analyze data and identify themes</li> <li>● Synthesize themes and artwork into findings</li> </ul>

## Appendix C: Research Synthesis, List of Prior Studies

Population of Interest	Location	Year	Citation
<b>Youth in foster care.</b> 100% youth of color. 100% Trans and gender expansive.	Los Angeles County, CA	2018	Sarah Mountz, Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Elizabeth Pourciau, "Because We're Fighting to Be Ourselves: Voices from Former Foster Youth who are Transgender and Gender Expansive." <i>Child Welfare</i> , 96, no. 1 (2018).
<b>Young CSEC involved in foster care or child welfare.</b> 100% Latina and black girls. No sexual orientation asked.	Miami/Dade County, FL	2017	Monica Landers et. al., "Baseline Characteristics of Dependent Youth Who Have Been Commercially Sexually Exploited: Findings From a Specialized Treatment Program." <i>Journal of Child Sexual Abuse</i> 26, no. 6 (2017).
<b>CSEC service providers.</b> Two providers LGBTQ+ specific providers	Boston Metropolitan Area, MA	2015	Wendy L. Macias-Konstantopoulos et.al., "The Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the Boston Metropolitan Area: Experiences and Challenges Faced by Front-Line Providers and Other Stakeholders." <i>Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk</i> 6, no. 1.4 (2015).
<b>Youth involved in sex trade.</b> 75% Women of color. 30% LGBT.	Minneapolis, MN	2013	Beth Holger-Ambrose, Cheree Langmade, Laurel D. Edinburgh & Elizabeth Saewyc, "The Illusions and Juxtapositions of Commercial Sexual Exploitation among Youth: Identifying Effective Street-Outreach Strategies." <i>Journal of Child Sexual Abuse</i> 22, no. 3 (2013).
<b>Girls in youth detention.</b> 100% youth of color. 100% LGBTQ+.	New York State, NY	2013	Sarah E. Mountz, "Overrepresented, Underserved: The Experiences of LGBTQ Youth in Girls Detention Facilities in New York State." University of Washington, School of Social Work (2013).
<b>Youth involved in sex trade.</b> 100% people of color. 100% Trans.	New York City, NY	2010	Jo Rees, "Trans Youth Involved in Sex Work in New York City: A Qualitative Study." Thesis for NYU Silver School of Social Work (2010).
<b>Homeless youth in the street economy.</b> 100% Latino, Black, mixed. 50% LGB, 14% Trans	New York City, NY	2009	Marya Viorst Gwadz et.al., "The Initiation of Homeless Youth into the Street Economy." <i>Journal of Adolescence</i> 32, no. 2 (2009).
<b>Young women in sex trade.</b> 99% Black, Latina, mixed. 70% LGB, 20% Trans women.	Chicago, IL	2009	Young Women's Empowerment Project, "Girls Do What They Have To Do To Survive: Illuminating Methods used by Girls in the Sex Trade and Street Economy to Fight Back and Heal." <i>YWEP</i> (2009).
<b>Youth involved in sex trade.</b> 95% Women of color. 100% Trans women.	New York City, NY	2009	Wilson, Erin et al, "Transgender Female Youth and Sex Work: HIV Risk and a Comparison of Life Factors Related to Engagement in Sex Work." Springer (2009).
<b>Homeless youth.</b> 48% Youth of color. 100% LGBT.	Seattle, WA	2002	Bryan N. Cochran et al., "Challenges Faced by Homeless Sexual Minorities: Comparison of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Homeless Adolescents With Their Heterosexual Counterparts." <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> , 92, no. 5 (May 2002).

## Appendix D: Provider Survey Questions

### Responding to LGBTQ+ Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey about the needs of LGBTQ+ identifying youth who have been or are being commercially sexually exploited (CSE).

This survey is being conducted by the UW Evans School of Public Policy in partnership with the Center for Children and Youth Justice (CCYJ). You will be asked about your experience working with LGBTQ+ youth and youth experiencing CSE. You will also be asked to share your thoughts about existing barriers and potential service improvements.

The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete. Results of this survey will be used in the development of trainings for service professionals interacting with youth. All answers will be anonymous. If you wish to be entered into the prize drawing, provide your contact information in the separate form linked at the end of the survey

#### 1. What is your professional role?

- Advocate
- Attorney
- Counselor
- Case worker
- Executive Director
- Judge
- Law Enforcement
- Medical provider
- Program Coordinator
- Trainer
- Other (Please specify)

#### 2. What field do you work in?

- DCYF
- DSHS
- Dept. of Commerce
- Domestic Violence or Sexual Assault Services
- Healthcare
- Homeless Youth Services
- Juvenile Courts
- Juvenile Detention
- Law Enforcement
- LGBTQ+ Drop-in Center
- School
- Other (Please specify)

#### 3. In what Washington county (or counties) do you provide services?

**Definitions:**

*LGBTQ+*: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, + Intersex, Asexual, and others.

*Gender Identity*: Concept of self as male, female, both or neither; how an individual perceives themselves and call themselves.

*Sexual Orientation*: Independent of gender identity, one's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to others.

*CSE*: Commercial Sexual Exploitation; the sexual abuse or exploitation of a minor for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value; when a minor engages in sexual activity in exchange for anything of value.

(Definitions based on those from [HRC](#) and [OJJDP](#))

4. What specific groups (if any) does your organization provide targeted programming or services for?

- African American/ Black
- Asian/ Asian American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American/ Alaska Native
- Middle Eastern/ North African
- Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian
- Immigrants/Refugees/Migrant populations
- Limited English Proficiency
- LGBTQ+ broadly
- Transgender or gender non-conforming
- Men/Boys
- Women/Girls
- Young children (under 12)
- Youth/Young adults (12 - 24)
- Other (Please specify)

5. Have you received any formal LGBTQ+ competency training in the past 5 years?

- No
- Yes

COMMENT SPACE

6. Have you received any formal CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children) competency training in the past 5 years?

- No
- Yes

COMMENT SPACE

7. Does your organization ask youth about their gender identity and/or sexual orientation during intake?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Usually
- Always

COMMENT SPACE

8. Does your organization officially screen youth for Commercial Sexual Exploitation during intake?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Usually
- Always

COMMENT SPACE

### **Agree/Disagree**

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

9. It is necessary to have specific services tailored to LGBTQ+ youth impacted by the sex trade and sexual exploitation

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COMMENT SPACE

10. In Washington State, LGBTQ+ youth experience more barriers to accessing services to support their health, safety, and wellness than their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COMMENT SPACE

11. Of the youth accessing housing services, LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience discrimination when compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COMMENT SPACE

### **Barriers and Improvements**

12. What do you see as the greatest barriers for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing CSE in accessing your organization's services? Please rank your top 3 barriers from the dropdown menus below.

1st greatest barrier, 2nd, 3rd,

- Basic needs are unmet
- Binary gender facilities or services
- Fear of getting in trouble/incarceration
- Fear of an abuser/exploiter

- Fear of judgement, discrimination, or harassment
- Lack of health insurance
- Concerns about confidentiality/mandatory reporting
- Transportation barriers
- Negative perceptions of the system/services
- Lack of information
- Lack of providers who are affirming of their identity

15. Please elaborate on any of these options or describe any options that are missing from this list:

16. In an ideal world, what service improvements or policy changes do you believe are the most important for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing CSE? Please rank your top 3 changes from the dropdown menus below

1st most important change, 2nd, 3rd:

- Safe social LGBTQ+ youth centers in every community
- More LGBTQ+ identifying or affirming foster parents
- Decriminalization of child prostitution
- Non-detention residential beds for CSE survivors
- More harm reduction services
- Combating stigma around sex work
- LGBTQ+ affirming housing/shelters
- Internet-based outreach
- Gender neutral residential beds
- More accessible mental healthcare that is culturally relevant
- Access to regular medical care
- Access to formal economy employment
- Access to affordable education
- Access to hormones or gender-affirming medical care

**Optional resource sharing:**

20. What resources do you refer youth involved in the sex trade or who have been commercially sexually exploited to within your community?

21. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation! All answers are anonymous and will be compiled into a larger needs assessment of CSE LGBTQ+ youth in Washington State. If you would like to be entered into the drawing for a chance to win one of five Starbucks gift cards, please enter your email address into the form linked [here](#).

## Appendix E: Recruitment Materials Provided to Partnering Service Professionals

### Focus Group Recruitment Email to Providers

#### Email Template

Subject: LGBTQ+ CSEC Focus Group

Hello [insert name],

Thank you again for connecting with us and for your willingness to partner on this project. As a refresher, we are conducting a needs assessment on behalf of CCYJ for LGBTQ+ youth involved in the sex trade in Washington.

We have decided to host a focus group-style conversation (see outreach and event details attached) and we are hoping to host an event sometime between [insert dates]. **Which dates and times would be ideal for you and your organization?**

We have attached a packet of preliminary information and logistical details about the focus group. I would love to schedule a phone call within the week to review the packet with you and incorporate any feedback. Would you be available for a 30-minute phone call during one of the following times:

- **[insert time options]**

Thank you again for your time, attention, and expertise. We are very excited for this event and I look forward to connecting with you this week!

-[insert contact]



### Emailed Event Packet

We hope to work with you to tailor the event and these details to meet the individual needs of the folks you serve.

- **Focus Group Overview**

After meeting with multiple providers and incorporating your feedback into our data collection plan, we are planning to co-host a series of focus group-style conversations aimed at visioning a better future for youth at two different sites (Seattle and Tacoma).

Participants will be asked to act as “consultants” in a simulation activity where they will be tasked with designing an app to better support their peers (LGBTQ+ youth involved in sex trade) in accessing and receiving services. These activities are designed to provide multiple options for expression and sharing in artistic, creative, written, or verbal ways, and our hope is for to be as victim-led and trauma-informed as possible.

- **Screening Questions-** to be used to determine if an interested individual would qualify for the study. Our goal is to recruit 6-8 participants.

- Are you 18 or older?
- Do you identify as LGBTQ+ or not heterosexual?
- Were you ever involved in the sex trade as a minor? (i.e. traded sex for money, food, a place to stay, etc.)
- Are you interested and willing to share your ideas and expertise about improving services for your peers?

- **Proposed Outreach Plan-** you will be the point of contact for individuals interested in participating and you will screen them using the above questions.

- A flyer (draft attached) to be posted wherever is deemed appropriate
- A pdf version of the flyer will be provided so it can be sent electronically to potential participants
- We will schedule a phone call with you after a week of recruitment to check-in on the process (see timeline below)

- **Logistical Requirements**

- Compensation- CCYJ will be providing compensation for participants in the form of Visa gift cards at the rate of \$30 per hour.
- Space- We will need a private room able to comfortably accommodate up to 12.
- Time- We are planning for a 1.5-hour session (including a 20 min break). We are thinking about slotting 2 hours to allow some flexibility and allow time for people to filter in.
- Staff- We would like to have at least one staff member present during the focus group to support participants.
- Debrief protocol- Staff available for conversation for post-focus group debriefing if participants need to access that.

- **Timeline**

- Week of April 8<sup>th</sup>- Outreach packet is reviewed, dates and details are decided
- Weeks of April 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>- Outreach and screening; follow-ups and reminders for participants; weekly check-in call with UW team

- Focus group- **TBD**
- Final report will be available after May 31st

## Sample Focus Group Recruitment Flyer

**LGBTQ+ FOCUS GROUP**

Build business skills while contributing to the health and safety of LGBTQ+ young people!

**ARE YOU:**

- 18 or older?
- Someone who identifies as LGBTQ+?
- Someone who was involved with sex trade when you were under 18?

**If so, you may be eligible to participate!**

**WHEN:**  
**Tuesday, May 7th**  
from 3PM - 5PM

**WHERE:**  
**Oasis Tacoma**  
2215 Pacific Ave

**DESCRIPTION:**

Participants will design an imaginary phone app that supports their peers in accessing and receiving services. We will use art and visual media to create a business plan that includes details of the app's purpose, features, and marketing. It is a great opportunity to build business skills!

**You will receive a \$60 Visa gift card for your participation. Food will be provided.**

Together, we can imagine a *healthier* and *safer* future for LGBTQ+ youth in Washington State!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:** **Name, Oasis Tacoma**  
**email@oasisyouthcenter.org**  
**phone number**

*This project is sponsored by Oasis Tacoma, Center for Children and Youth Justice, and the UW Evans School of Public Policy and Governance.*

## UW-CCYJ FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### **FOCUS GROUP OVERVIEW**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What needs are shared among Washington State’s LGBTQ+ youth in the sex trade?
- To what extent can youth-serving professionals provide services for Washington State’s LGBTQ+ youth in the sex trade to better support them in achieving health and safety?

#### **DESCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUP**

The focus group protocol asks participants to act as “business consultants” in a simulation exercise in which they design an imaginary mobile app to support their peers in accessing and receiving services. Participants complete a three-step business plan using art, visual media, individual reflection, and group brainstorming to access their own expertise in navigating systems and services.

The focus group protocol aims to identify the study population’s shared needs, preferences for receiving services, motivations for seeking services, and understandings of health and safety.

#### **OUTCOMES OF FOCUS GROUP**

By the focus group’s end, participants will have:

- Identified participants’ perspectives on how they define/conceptualize health and safety;
- Constructed participants’ visions for a world where all people feel healthy and safe;
- Assessed how participants rank providers’ services and spaces, determine their motivations for accessing those services and spaces, and/or identify specific practices that increase their health and safety;
- Gathered participants’ feedback on format, outreach, and other items.

Activity	Description	Questions Answered
Establishing the Purpose and Agenda	Researchers introduced themselves and their purpose, reviewed community agreements, demographic, and confidentiality forms. Food was provided.	<i>No data collection except field notes. Established trust and process.</i>
<b>Part 1: Creating a Vision Statement</b>	Participants describe a world where their peers feel healthy and safe. <i>Tools: Post-it notes, group share-out.</i>	How do participants conceptualize and define health, safety, and wellness?
<b>Part 2: Creating a Prototype</b>	Participants brainstorm factors that influence their peers’ engagement with services. Then they use art materials to design their app and present it to the group. <i>Tools: Factors worksheet, presentations</i>	What criteria and factors motivate participants to use or access services?  What do positive interactions with services look like? What do negative interactions with services look like?
<b>Part 3: Marketing Strategy</b>	Participants develop and present “elevator speeches” that pitch their app to the group,	What communication strategies do participants use to share information

	including marketing strategies for sharing the app with others. <i>Tools: Pitch worksheet, marketing brainstorm</i>	about services?  What effective communication strategies to reach participants' communities?
Exit Survey and Evaluation of Focus Group	Participants rank and respond to the lists of barriers and improvements from the provider survey. Opportunity for feedback about the focus group experience.	How do opinions between youth and providers differ on supportive services?

**AT-A-GLANCE AGENDA:** 3 hours

- **Opening:** 20 minutes
- **Simulation Overview:** 10 minutes
- **Part #1. Creating a Vision Statement:** 30 minutes
- **Part #2. Creating a Prototype:** 35 minutes
- **Break:** 10 minutes
- **Part #3. Marketing Your Product:** 30 minutes
- **Debrief and Closing:** 15 minutes

**PREPARATION**

**Butcher Papers:**

- “Bike Rack” Butcher Paper
- “Community Agreements” Butcher Paper
- “App Prototype” Butcher Paper
- Butcher Paper A: “Our Purpose”
- Butcher Paper B: “Today’s Agenda”
- Butcher Paper C: “Steps for Creating a Business Plan”
- Butcher Paper D: “How do your peers define *health* and *safety*?” (“Defining a Vision Statement” Activity Instructions)
- Butcher Paper E: “Collective Vision Statement”
- Butcher Paper F: “What is a Pitch?”
- Butcher Paper G: “Focus Group Evaluation: +’s and Δ’s”
- Butcher Paper H: “Designing a Prototype” (2)
- Butcher Paper I: “Developing a Marketing Plan for App’s Launch” (2)

**Other:**

- “Focus Group Demographics Questionnaire” (see Addendum B)
- “UW-CCYJ Focus Group Consent Form” (see Addendum C)
- “Mobile App Design Worksheet” (see Addendum D)
- “Marketing Your App: How to Create a Winning Pitch” Worksheet (see Addendum E)
- “UW-CCYJ Focus Group Exit Survey” (see Addendum F)

**PRE-WORK FOR FACILITATOR:**

- Create “product pitch” example

**Facilitation Guide Key**

*“Italics”* .....Script  
(A. \_\_\_\_\_).....Different Activity Parts  
**Highlighting**.....Directions  
**(STAGING)**.....Actions/Movement  
**Field Responses** .....Gather feedback

## AGENDA ITEM #1: OPENING – (20 minutes)

**Preview:** Facilitators and participants introduce themselves and review session purpose, session agenda, Group Agreements, and the Consent Form.

**Purpose:** This activity helps create a positive and collaborative environment for the session.

### ACTIVITY #1. WELCOME

**Purpose:** Facilitators and participants gather, introduce themselves, and review space logistics.

**Materials:** n/a

#### A. **Initial Introduction** (2 minutes)

- *Say:* “Welcome! Our names are [NAMES]. We will be co-leading today’s discussion with [ADVOCATES]. We are from the University of Washington and work for the Center for Children Youth Justice (“CCYJ”).”
- “CCYJ’s mission is to create better lives for young people by reforming the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. CCYJ’s eQuality Project and Project Respect programs unite young people, service providers, organizations (like [ORGANIZATION]), and policymakers from across Washington State to support LGBTQIA+ youth and those who have experienced the sex trade.”
- “We intend to use today’s conversation to get your opinions on how [ORGANIZATION] and other service providers can reach out to and involve young people who identify as not straight (or LGBTQ+) who may have experienced sex work, get information about what types of services and programs are needed, and how best to deliver them. For this reason, we consider all your responses and opinions to be valuable and important.”
- “We aim to explore these topics in a fun and creative way that allows you to bring your expertise and knowledge into statewide discussions on how to improve services. While your identity will be kept confidential, we plan to use content from today’s discussion in a report for the Center for Children Youth Justice that will inform statewide conversations on how to support LGBTQIA+ youth who have experienced the sex trade. CCYJ staff members have also pledged to follow up with you all to report how today’s discussion has impacted their work.”
- “Thus, your participation could have immense impact on statewide conversations on how to support your peers’ *health* and *safety*.”
- “Finally, we hope that you can provide us with feedback on today’s approach, as your wisdom can help us improve these activities for upcoming sessions!”

#### B. **Consent Letter** (5 minutes)

- “First, I would like you to read our information letter that tells you more about the project and what we will be doing today. You should have received a copy upon your arrival, which you can keep if you want.”
- *Ask:* “Can I have one or two volunteers read the letter aloud?”

#### **Choose volunteer(s) to read Consent Letter** – see Addendum B: “Consent Letter”

- “If anyone doesn’t want to participate, please feel free to go. You are also free to leave at any time during the session.”

#### C. **Introductions** (5 minutes)



**(STAGING) Distribute name tents to participants and facilitators – see Addendum C: “Name Tent Template”**

- “Let’s do a round of introductions so that we know who is in the room.”
- “Please say your preferred name, gender pronouns, and your answer to the following icebreaker prompt:
  - “Today’s activities task you with designing a phone app that would support your peers’ *health* and *safety*. Each of you will act as a consultants by bring your unique skills and expertise to the team and project.”
  - **“Based on your skillset, create a title that describes your role on the team!”**
  - *Additional framing:* “You could be a creative director, a master of technology, a marketing genius, or whatever you want!”
- *If needed:* “Pronouns are words that we use to refer to people (like *they/them/theirs*, *she/her/hers*, *he/him/his*, or even just their name). We believe it is important to give everyone the opportunity to state the pronoun that is correct to use when referring to them.
  - “Please include your pronouns during introductions. You can say: ‘I’m [FACILITATOR], and my pronouns are [PRONOUNS];’ ‘[FACILITATOR], I use they and them, but he is fine too;’ or ‘Please just use my name.’”
- “Would someone like to go first?”

**Choose volunteer to begin circle of introductions.**

**D. Accessibility and Space Logistics (Time TBD)**

- “Thank you! I am grateful for your willingness to share your expertise with us.”
- “[ORGANIZATION] has provided this space for our discussion. While you may be familiar with [ORGANIZATION]’s facilities, let’s review a few items around using this space.”

**Review [ORGANIZATION]’s accessibility and space logistics.**

**ACTIVITY #2. REVIEW GROUP AGREEMENTS**

**Purpose:** To help create a positive and inclusive sharing environment.

**Materials:** “Group Agreements” Butcher Paper

**A. Transition to Activity**

- “Let’s review our Group Agreements.”

**(STAGING) Reveal “Group Agreements” Butcher Paper**

**B. Review of Group Agreements**

- “Just to remind you, the activities and questions do not ask specifically about you, just about *young people who identify as a sexual minority that may have had contact with the sex trade in general*. This approach helps to protect your privacy and ensure that there is not chance that someone else in the group will accidentally share information about you outside of the group.”
- “We realize that you may be comfortable talking about yourself. But some people won’t be, and if everyone avoids doing so, no one will feel pressured. If you have information

that is about you that you want to talk about, you might talk about it as ‘someone you know’ or ‘other young people.’”

- “Our teams have created a few group agreements that we would like everyone to follow:
  - *What’s said here, stays here:* This is a private discussion. No one should share what has been said with people outside the group. However, we cannot guarantee that others will honor this agreement. Please be careful not to say things about yourself or someone else that you want to keep private.
  - *Do not name other people’s names.* You can just say “someone you know said this,” or “you heard someone did that.” What is important here is what they said or did, not who specifically did it.
  - *There are no ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers.* We want to hear your opinions! While your perspectives might differ from each other, we ask that you show respect for opinions that contrast from your own.
  - *One div@, one mic.* Two people should not speak at the same time during group discussions. Each person speaking should be allowed to finish what they are saying. If you want to speak right away, please raise your hand so that we can call on you when it’s your turn.
  - *We celebrate imagination and creativity.* We hope to use art and media to cover a range of topics. Some questions might make you feel sensitive, awkward, or even a little embarrassed. We understand! While we feel the importance of these issues makes it vital that we discuss them, it is fine to indicate and show that these are sensitive topics and to take your time thinking about these topics. Also, it is okay to say you do not want to participate in an activity.
  - *Self-Care and Community Care.* Pay attention to your bladder! Pay attention to your neighbor!”
  
- Ask: “Is there anything we need to add or change?”

**Field Responses.**

**Facilitation should be adapted to fit group’s needs.**

**ACTIVITY #3. SESSION OVERVIEW**

**Purpose:** Ensures participants know what they are working to create in the session.

**Materials:** Butcher Paper A: “Our Purpose,” Butcher Paper B: “Today’s Agenda”

**A. Transition to Activity**

- Let’s go over the purpose and agenda of today’s session.”
- “Can I have a volunteer read our purpose?”

**(STAGING) Reveal Butcher Paper A: “Purpose.”**

**Choose volunteer to read purpose from Paper A: “Purpose.”**

**B. Review of Session Purpose**

**C. Review of Session Agenda**

- “Now that we know what our purpose is for our discussion, let’s go over how we plan to (insert more...)”

**(STAGING) Point to Butcher Paper B: “Agenda.”**

**Review Butcher Paper B: “Agenda.”**

- “This agenda gives a structure to our time together. However, we hope you all will take the lead by (insert more...)”
- “We will give you more specifics about the simulation exercise in a few moments.”
- “How does this plan feel to everyone?”

**Ask participants to measure how comfortable they feel with the agenda. For example, ask them to rate it give it a thumbs up, sideways, or down.**

**Clarify any questions that arise among participants before next section.**

**AGENDA ITEM #2: SIMULATION OVERVIEW – (10 minutes)**

**Preview:** Participants learn the specifics of the focus group’s simulation.

**Purpose:** To review the simulation’s format, structure, and instructions.

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**ACTIVITY #1. SIMULATION INSTRUCTIONS – 10 minutes**

**Purpose:** To give participants an overview of the simulation, its purpose, and activities

**Materials:** Butcher Paper C: “Steps for Creating a Business Plan”

**Time:** 10 minutes

**A. Transition to Activity**

- “Let’s begin with a review of the three-step business plan that will lead us through today’s activities.”

**(STAGING) Reveal Butcher Paper C: “Steps for Creating a Business Plan”**

**B. Review of Simulation Instructions and Components of Business Plan**

- “Today’s discussion consists of three activities that will help you to design a business plan for an important product. While each activity has specific instructions, we want you to lead each activity with your creativity and brilliance.”
- “In a few moments, we will read you a scenario that explains what product we want you to design. However, let’s review the three components of a business plan that you will be completing today.”
- “Can I have a volunteer read the ‘Steps for Creating a Business Plan?’”

**Choose volunteer to read Butcher Paper C: “Steps for Creating a Business Plan.”**

**Give participants a few moments to review “Steps for Creating a Business Plan.”**

- “It may sound like a lot to handle at first! But [FACILITATORS] will be available to help you along the way. *Insert more...*”

- Ask: “How does that sound?”

**Clarify questions and field responses.**

**C. Introduce Simulation Prompt**

- “Great! Does anyone have questions before we get started?”

**Field Responses.**

- “We are now beginning the scenario! We will let you know when the simulation has ended, but please play along by following instructions...” (*Reword...*)
- “[FACILITATOR] will read the prompt. It will take about (#) minutes. We invite you to close your eyes or soften your gaze.”
- “Let’s get comfortable! Feel free to shift into a position that feels comfortable for you. Feel the surface beneath you... *Insert more...*”
- Let’s take a few breaths together.”

**Lead participants in taking a few breaths together.**

**Read Simulation Prompt to participants:**

- “Imagine that you’ve time traveled to the near future. You could be in what we now consider Seattle, somewhere far from here, or even outer space. You’re not sure if it is still 2019.”
- “You have been asked to design a mobile application (“an app”) that would support [CONSTITUENTS] in achieving better health and safety. As consultants, your leadership will ensure the final product is a useful resource to others, specifically those who have or could access [ORGANIZATION]’s services.”
- “Furthermore, a \$100 billion grant from [ORGANIZATION] has eliminated financial barriers – granting access to advanced technology, unlimited resources, and any other support your team could imagine! Use your imagination to dream up a tool that a tool that will serve your peers in achieving health, safety, and wellness. We encourage creativity!”
- “All three activities can be easily modified! Supporting your participation in activities may require alterations – sometimes planned, sometimes not! We commit to figuring out how to best meet your needs and desires during your consulting experience. We will review options for modifying the activities at the beginning of each section. While you can request additional changes during that time, please feel free to pull a facilitator or advocate aside.”
- “Your expertise will ensure the product’s success. Every one of your ideas, even those that feel out-of-this world or ridiculous, could turn the final product into something even more remarkable, revolutionary, and useful. Having fun is encouraged too!”

**AGENDA ITEM #3: CREATING A VISION STATEMENT** – (30 minutes)

**Preview:** Participants identify characteristics of living safe and healthy lives.

**Purpose:** To identify factors that influence participants' health and safety.

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**ACTIVITY #1. Note Card Activity** – 20 minutes

**Purpose:** To identify characteristics of living safe and healthy lives.

**Materials:** Butcher Paper D: "Free-Response Prompt"

**A. Transition to Activity**

**(STAGING) Have one facilitator distribute note cards while the other facilitator reviews instructions.**

- "Over the next **10 minutes**, you will have an opportunity to share what you believe health and safety means for your peers."
- "Each of you will take **5 minutes** to individually respond to a prompt about health and safety. You will take another **5 minutes** to share your reflection with a partner and identify how your responses feel similar and/or different for **5 minutes**."
- "Here's a few ground rules for this activity:
  - *Please limit interruptions while your partner shares their reflection.*
  - *Any questions or comments about your partner's response should be saved until after both have shared.*
  - *Everyone should share if their response could potentially trigger someone with a 'trigger warning' (if necessary).*
- "This activity requires us to practice active listening skills – an important job skill that could be useful in many situations!"
- "Listening is not a passive process and requires us, as listeners, to pay attention, provide feedback, and respond thoughtfully."
- "One way to practice active listening could be to share how your partner's response resonates with you."
- "For example, I could say: 'When you said **X**, it resonated with me because...'"
- "**Any questions?**"

**Clarify any questions that arise among participants before next section.**

**(STAGING) Reveal Butcher Paper D: "How do your peers define health and safety?" ("Defining a Vision Statement" Activity Instructions)**

**B. Free Response**

- Ask: "Can I have a volunteer read the prompt?"

**Choose volunteer to read prompt.**

- "Take the next **3 minutes or so** to respond to the prompt using the note cards we provided. You can write, doodle, draw, or respond in whatever manner you like! Do what works for you.

**Give participants 3 minutes to respond to "How do your peers define health**

**and safety?” prompt.****C. Pair and Share: “How where your responses alike and different?”**

- “Great! Let’s take a few minutes to share our responses with each other.
- “Find a partner! Each of you should take **2 minutes** to share your response. Make sure to practice active listening skills if you can!”

**Give participants 2 minutes to share their response with a partner.****Ask them to switch after 2 minutes.****(STAGING) Reveal Butcher Paper E: “Vision Statement”**

- “After you have each shared, take **a minute** to talk about how your responses were similar, different, and why that might be! Write your thoughts on Post-It Notes and stick it on our collective vision statement.”

**Instruct pairs to identify shared themes in their responses and write them on Post-It notes that can be posted on Butcher Paper E: “Vision Statement.”****ACTIVITY #2. Writing a Vision Statement** – 10 minutes

**Purpose:** To develop a collective statement that outlines the prototypes’ goals/purpose

**Materials:** Butcher Paper E: “Collective Vision Statement”

**A. Transition to Activity**

- “Now that we have shared our responses with a partner, let’s discuss as a group what we learned about your peers’ perspectives on *health* and *safety*.”

**B. Group Share-Out**

- Ask: “What did you and your partner talk about?”

*Probe:* “What did your responses have in common? What proved to be different? Why?”

**Field responses.****(STAGING) Capture additional responses on Butcher Paper E: “Vision Statement”****C. Review of Group Vision Statement**

- “Wow! You all had such rich and brilliant ideas to contribute about your peers’ perceptions of *health* and *safety*!”

**Review a few Post-It notes.****D. Group Reflections**

- *Read it together?*
- *What feels right about this vision? What do we want to grow? What does it leave behind?*



## AGENDA ITEM #4: CREATING A PROTOTYPE – (45 minutes)

**Preview:** Two teams of participants create a list of factors that influence their peers' perspectives on services, design a visual representation of those factors, and present a 30-second "business pitch."

**Purpose:** To identify factors that influence the decision of participants' peers in accessing services.

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### ACTIVITY #1: "Designing the App" Worksheet Activity – 15 minutes

**Purpose:** Participants identify factors (criteria) that influence their peers' perspectives on services.

**Materials:** Mobile App Design Worksheet (*see Addendum D, pg. #*)

#### A. **Transition to Activity**

- Ask: "Has anyone used the *Yelp* app before?"

*Probe:* "What did you use *Yelp* for? What kind of information proves to be useful? Why?"

#### **Field responses.**

- "This next activity asks you to create a similar app that allows your peers to [insert examples] just like *Yelp*, but for accessing [ORGANIZATION]'s and other groups' services."
- "We will divide you into two teams. You will work in these teams for the remainder of today's session."

#### **Divide participants into two groups.**

#### **(STAGING) Pass out "Mobile App Design" Worksheets**

#### B. **"Designing the App" Worksheet Activity**

- "You all, as consultants, have been tasked with designing a phone app that supports your peers in achieving health and safety as outlined in our purpose statement."

#### **(STAGING) Refer back to Butcher Paper E: "Purpose Statement"**

- "While your app can have as many features as you feel necessary, your client ([ORGANIZATION]) has made a specific request that the product include a survey feature that allows people to rate or review providers, services, and their organizations."
- "Specifically, we want to know what information would your peers want to know when searching for services!"
- "Your groups will have **10 minutes** to use the provided worksheet"
- "How does that sound?"

#### **Field questions.**

### ACTIVITY #2: Creating and Pitching a Prototype – 30 minutes

**Purpose:** Participants will present a visual representation of their list of factors (criteria) that influence their peers' perspectives on services and gather input from other group.



**Materials:** “Designing a Prototype” Butcher Sheets (2-3)

**A. Transition to Activity**

- “Let’s begin the activity’s next phase – visualizing and presenting your masterpiece!”
- “Take **10 minutes** to create a visual representation of your app! Please use the art supplies in front of you to capture the ideas, factors, and features from your worksheet on your group’s butcher paper!”
- “It’s okay if you weren’t done with the worksheet! Feel free to use this time to continue thinking out those ideas -- just make sure you get those ideas on the butcher paper!”
- “Your group will “pitch” your creation to the other group after **10 minutes**, so think through what you’d like the group to know about the app and who you’d like to present it!”
- “Any questions?”

**A. “Bringing the App to Life” Activity**

**Give teams 10 minutes to create their poster and develop a pitch.**

**B. Group Presentations** (8 minutes)

- “Let’s come back to the group and present our creations!”

**Give each team 2 minutes to present their app and 2 minutes to field questions or comments afterwards.**

**C. Closing and Review of Gallery Walk** (5 minutes)

- *Add closing question(s)...*
- “We will take a **5 minute** break before continuing with the last two sections!”
- “Please use the break to use the restroom, hydrate, and take care of your needs!”
- “Additionally, we would like you to... *insert instructions for Gallery Walk.*”

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\*\*\* **BREAK AND GALLERY WALK** (10 minutes)\*\*\*

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## AGENDA ITEM #5: MARKETING YOUR PRODUCT – 30 minutes

**Preview:** Two teams of participants begin planning a part of a communications strategy for spreading information about their products.

**Purpose:** To identify factors that influence the decision of participants' peers in accessing services.

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### ACTIVITY #1: Pitching Your Product – 30 minutes

**Purpose:** To identify factors that influence the decision of participants' peers in accessing services.

**Materials:** Butcher Paper F: “What is an Elevator Speech?,” “Marketing Your App: How to Create a Winning Elevator Speech” Worksheet (see Addendum E, pg. #)

#### A. Transition to Activity

- “Wow! We’re almost done! We have only one more step to complete before your app is ready to launch.”
- Ask: “How would you spread information about the app to your peers?”

*Probe:* “How would you use social media or in-person interactions to share your product with others?”

#### Field Responses.

- “An essential part of marketing your product will be coming up with something we call a ‘pitch.’ We’re going to use the remainder of today’s session to learn the components of a good pitch and create a pitch of our own!”

#### (STAGING) Reveal Butcher Paper F: “What is a Pitch?”

#### A. Review of Pitch Components

- Ask: “Has anybody heard of a ‘pitch’ before?”

#### Field Responses.

#### Review Butcher Paper F: “What is an Elevator Speech?”

#### Model an example pitch.

#### B. “Creating an Elevator Speech” Activity

- *Insert more here...*

#### (STAGING) Distribute “Pitching Your Product” Worksheet to participants.

#### Instruct individuals or groups to complete “Pitching Your Product” Worksheet

#### C. Pitch Presentations

**Instruct each person/team to present a 2-minute pitch to their peers.****B. Closing of Simulation**

C.

**AGENDA ITEM #6: CLOSING – (20 minutes)**

**Preview:** Participants review the session’s purpose, discuss takeaways, and evaluate the experience.

**Purpose:** To identify factors that influence the decision of participants’ peers in accessing services.

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**ACTIVITY #1: Debrief and Evaluation – 15 minutes**

**Purpose:** To identify factors that influence the decision of participants’ peers in accessing services.

**Materials:** Butcher Paper G: “Focus Group Evaluation: +’s and Δ’s”

**A. Transition to Activity (1 minute)**

- “Wow! We want to thank you again for participating in today’s session!”
- “Let’s take a look back at our purpose for this session and reflect on whether we met it.”

**(STAGING) Reveal Butcher Paper B: “Our Purpose”**

- Ask: “What were some of the takeaways from this session?”

*Probe:* “What did you learn? What skills did you bring to the session? What skills do you what to improve or grow?”

**Field responses.****B. Session Evaluation (# minutes)**

- “Let’s spend **5 to 10 minutes** discussing how you think today’s session went!”

**(STAGING) Reveal Butcher Paper G: “Focus Group Evaluation: +’s and Δ’s”**

- “We will create a list of +’s (*positives*) and Δ’s (*deltas*) for this evaluation.”
- “Items listed in the +’s (*positives*) column would be things that you think went well. This could include [insert examples].”
- “Δ (Delta) is the Greek symbol for change. Thus, we will list things we would like to change in the Δ’s (*deltas*) column.”
- Ask: “What did you think of today’s session?”

*Probe:* “What activities did you find most enjoyable? What felt less fun? Why?”

**Field responses.****Facilitation should be adapted to fit group’s needs.**

- “Thank you! We value your input and feedback.”

- “We will review this feedback with [ORGANIZATION] staff members and make changes where we can.”
- A. **Imagining a Feedback Loop**
  - “We want to keep you updated on the project!”
  - “Your feedback on how [ORGANIZATION] and similar organizations could improve their services has been insightful.”
  - “Our team wants to let you know how your expertise and knowledge (as consultants) is impacting statewide policy discussions for how to improve services for LGBTQ+ youth in the sex trade.”
  - “Thus, we want to use **3 to 4 minutes** to discuss how you would like to keep in touch!”

**ACTIVITY #2: Closing** – 5 minutes

**Purpose:** To provide closure and next steps regarding the focus groups and research project

**Materials:**

**Time:** 5 minutes

A. **Exit Survey**

**Instruct participants to fill out exit survey.**

B. **Debrief Protocol – Organized by Provider**

## ADDENDUM A: Preparation

***Butcher Papers:***

- “Bike Rack” Butcher Paper (1)
- “Community Agreements” Butcher Paper (1)
- “App Prototype” Butcher Paper (2)

**Butcher Paper A: “Our Purpose” (1)**

By the end of today’s session, we will have:

- Worked as paid consultants in building various parts of a business plan, including:
  - (1) Vision Statements
  - (2) Product Designs
  - (3) Marketing and Product Pitches
- Dreamed up a world where all people, including our peers, feel *healthy* and *safe*;
- Designed a tool that (while fictional) could impact policies and services;
- Given an “elevator pitch” and identified marketing strategies;
- Asked questions, given feedback, and felt affirmed in your brilliance about the focus group experience

**Butcher Paper B: “Today’s Agenda” (1)**

- **Opening:** 20 minutes
- **Simulation Overview:** 10 minutes
- **Part #1. Creating a Vision Statement:** 30 minutes
- **Part #2. Creating a Prototype:** 35 minutes
- **Break:** 10 minutes
- **Part #3. Marketing Your Product:** 30 minutes
- **Debrief and Closing:** 15 minutes

**Butcher Paper C: “Steps for Creating a Business Plan” (1)**

- **Vision Statement:** What world are you trying to create? What is the world like when your invention exists? What problems cease to exist?
- **Product Design:** How does your app manifest that world? What tools and features does it offer? How is it unique? How does it bring us closer to your vision?
- **Marketing and Communications:** How will you pitch your product to users? What’s important to them and how will you speak to those interests? How will you get the word out and increase users?

Dream big! We want to hear what you have to say!

**Butcher Paper D: “Free-Response Prompt” (1)**

How would your peers describe a world where everyone feels *healthy* and *safe*?

**Butcher Paper E: “Collective Vision Statement” (1)**

Our phone apps’ purpose is to create a world where:

*(Leave space for post-it notes.)*

**Butcher Paper F: “What is a elevator speech?” (1)**

An elevator speech is a clear, brief message, or “commercial” about you!

Successful elevator speeches consist of three parts:

1. **Who are you?** Open with a statement that grabs attention! Say who you are and what you do.
2. **What do you offer?** Explain what problems your app solves, what makes it unique, how it benefits others, and why the listener should be interested.
3. **Plan-to-Win and Call for Action:** Give a concrete example of how you plan to share your app with others. Don't forget to include a specific request from the listener! Maybe a business card, job reference, or more information about opportunities.

**Butcher Paper G: “Focus Group Evaluation: +’s and Δ’s” (2)**

+’s	Δ’s

ADDENDUM B: Demographics Questionnaire

**Focus Group Demographics Questionnaire**

**Gender Identity (check all that apply):**

- Non-binary
- Genderqueer
- Agender
- Transgender woman
- Transgender man
- Cisgender woman
- Cisgender man
- Intersex

*Not Listed:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Sexual Orientation (check all that apply):**

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Asexual
- Heterosexual
- Questioning or unsure

*Not Listed:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Race (check all that apply):**

- African American/Black
- Asian/Asian American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Middle Eastern/North African
- Native American/Alaska Native
- Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
- White
- Mixed

*Not Listed:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you ever experienced homelessness or housing instability?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Unsure \_\_\_\_\_

**Were you ever involved in the foster care system as a youth?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Unsure \_\_\_\_\_

For Office Use Only:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDENDUM C: Consent Form

**UW-CCYJ Focus Group Consent Form**

We are asking you to take part in a research study being done on behalf of the Center for Children Youth Justice (CCYJ) by a team of students from the University of Washington.

We are holding a focus group to learn more about the needs of LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced the sex trade, and how support services and systems could be improved.

The focus group will last about 2 hours. You will be led through multiple activities aimed at designing an app to improve the experiences of your peers, primarily related to accessing services.

You can choose to not answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You can leave the group at any time.

We will keep the data we collect confidential and we will not collect or share any personal information.

We will be taking notes about what is said during the activities.

We will ask you and the other people in the group to use only first names during the focus group. Please do not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person said. However, we cannot guarantee that each participant will keep the discussions private.

Being in this study is completely optional. Please tell the researcher if you do not want to participate.

Questions? Please contact Morgan Cain at mmc11@uw.edu if you have any questions or concerns.

Signature/Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*For Office Use Only:*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_



ADDENDUM D: Mobile App Design Worksheet

**Mobile App Design Worksheet**

*For Office Use Only:* Date: \_\_\_\_\_ | Location: \_\_\_\_\_

What factors do your peers consider in accessing services and why is that important or necessary? (examples: location, affirming care, peer reviews, etc.)

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Why?</u>

**How will the app provide information about each of these? What features will the app include? (use your large paper to answer these questions visually)**

ADDENDUM E: “How to Create a Winning Elevator Speech” Worksheet

## Marketing Your App: How to Create a Winning Elevator Speech

*For Office Use Only:* Date: \_\_\_\_\_ | Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Instructions

- Follow along as we read “What is an Elevator Speech?” section
  - Take 8 minutes to complete the “Creating a Winning Elevator Pitch” section
  - Include at least 3-4 strategies that you would use to market your app in your “Plan-to-Win!”
  - Share your elevator pitch and “Plan-to-Win” with the group!
- 

### What is an Elevator Speech?

Imagine stepping into an elevator and meeting a person who says, “Hi, I’m a billionaire investor who might want to support your cell app. Tell me about it!” You only have 30 seconds to introduce yourself in a way that sparks their interest! *Uff, no pressure!*

An elevator speech is a clear and short message about you. It is like a commercial that provides *just* enough information and enthusiasm to make listeners want to learn more. In the job search setting, you can use the pitch helps to set yourself apart from the others. They often consist of three parts:

- 1. Who are you?** Open with a statement that grabs attention! Tell who you are and what you do.
- 2. What do you offer?** Explain what problems your app solves, what makes it unique, how it benefits others, and why the listener should be interested.
- 3. Plan-to-Win and Call for Action:** Give a concrete example of how you plan to share your app with others. Don’t forget to include a specific request from the listener! Maybe a business card, job reference, or more information about opportunities.

*Feel free to ask us questions elevator speech after today’s session!*

---

## **Creating a Winning Elevator Speech**

**Who are you?**

**What do you offer?**

**Plan-to-Win and Call for Action!**

1. Marketing Strategy #1:

2. Marketing Strategy #2:

3. Marketing Strategy #3:

## ADDENDUM F: Exit Survey

**Focus Group Exit Survey**

We gave these 2 questions to youth-serving professionals and asked them to rank their top 3 from each list. We want to compare what the system thinks are the reasons youths don't access housing, legal, healthcare, or support services, to the reasons you think you and your peers might not access these services.

1. What do you see as the biggest reasons for you and your peers LGBTQ+ youth involved in the sex trade or experiencing commercial sexual exploitation not accessing services?

**Please rank your top 3 reasons. Feel free to rank more than 3.**

- Basic needs are unmet (shelter, food, etc.)
- Binary gender facilities or services
- Fear of getting in trouble with the system/ incarceration
- Fear of abuser/ exploiter
- Fear of judgement, discrimination, or harassment by peers
- Lack of health insurance
- Concerns about confidentiality/ mandatory reporting
- Transportation barriers
- Negative perceptions of the system/ services
- Lack of information about available services
- Lack of providers who are affirming of your identity and/or experiences

2. What service improvements or policy changes do you believe would be the most important for LGBTQ+ youth involved in the sex trade or experiencing commercial sexual exploitation?

**Please rank your top 3 reasons. Feel free to rank more than 3.**

- Safe social LGBTQ+ youth centers in every community
- More LGBTQ+ identifying or affirming foster parents
- Decriminalization of child prostitution
- Non-detention residential beds for survivors
- More harm reduction services
- LGBTQ+ affirming housing/shelters
- Internet-based outreach
- Gender neutral residential beds
- Access to culturally relevant mental healthcare
- Access to regular medical care
- Access to formal economy employment
- Access to affordable education
- Access to hormones or gender-affirming medical care
- Access to LGBTQ+ relevant sexual and reproductive health services

**Do you have any final feedback, opinions, or thoughts that you would like to share with us -or- that you think would be valuable for decision-makers to know?**

**Is it okay for us to include your response in our report?**

**Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**