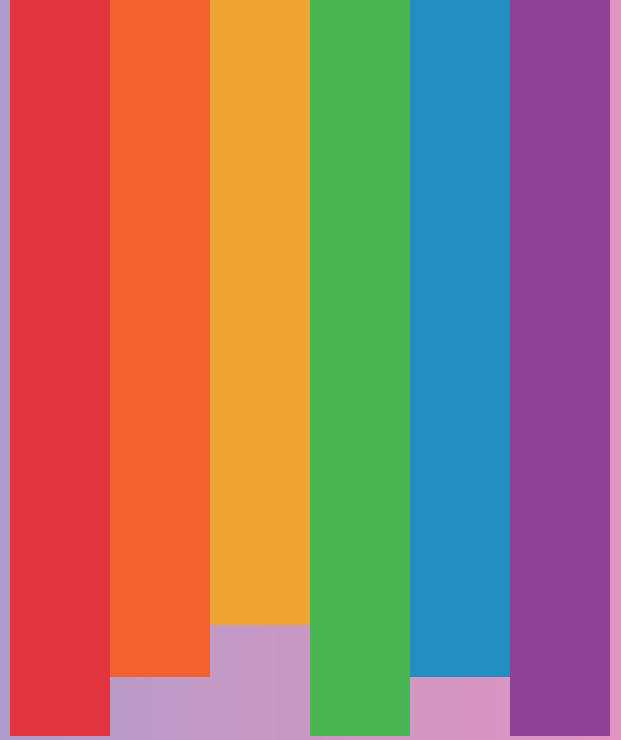


# RAISING THE BAR FOR 2SLGBTQ+ YOUTH



## Call to Action:

### Raising the Bar for 2SLGBTQ+ Youth

Developed by Wisdom2Action in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Planned Parenthood Toronto, the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, the Child Welfare League of Canada and Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

Funded by:  **THE SANDBOX PROJECT**

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## CALL TO ACTION

Despite meaningful progress on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion in Canada, significant gaps remain to guarantee that 2SLGBTQ+ young people have access to safe, affirming and truly inclusive youth services across community, education, health and social service sectors.

2SLGBTQ+ young people deserve access to services that are not only welcoming, but actively, intentionally and holistically inclusive. Too often, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion within the youth-serving sector is an afterthought. Too often, 2SLGBTQ+ youth are told services are accepting, but meet significant barriers within those same services.

We recognize the complex realities of youth-serving organizations. We recognize that organizations often struggle to make ends meet, and juggle numerous and sometimes competing priorities. However, 2SLGBTQ+ youth suffer in our inaction. 2SLGBTQ+ youth experience higher rates of mental health problems, homelessness, suicidality, substance use issues and so much more. 2SLGBTQ+ youth depend on our youth-serving organizations to provide essential and life-changing services and supports, often in the absence of safe homes and families.

Given the crucial role of youth-serving organizations in supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth, providing them with safer spaces and access to life-changing services, we call upon this sector to raise the bar for 2SLGBTQ+ youth.



# SETTING THE STAGE FOR 2SLGBTQ+ INCLUSION

Understanding the context of 2SLGBTQ+ young people within the youth-serving sector - and more broadly within Canadian society - is integral to raising the bar and embedding 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion in youth-serving organizations. We call upon organizations across the youth-serving sector to:

Recognize the history of the youth-serving sector, and indeed institutions across Canada, in failing to meaningfully support 2SLGBTQ+ communities. The history of our sector and institutions is rife with homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia and other forms of oppression that have directly harmed 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

Understand that 2SLGBTQ+ young people experience higher rates of mental health problems, homelessness, poverty, violence and substance use issues due to systemic homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression.

Acknowledge that the youth-serving sector has an opportunity to stop the cycle of harm experienced by 2SLGBTQ+ young people and to provide 2SLGBTQ+ youth with the inclusive spaces and services they need to thrive.

Acknowledge that 2SLGBTQ+ young people are the best experts in their own experiences and must be actively involved in leadership roles within the youth-serving sectors and guide efforts towards 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion.

Commit to holistic, comprehensive organizational culture change to embed 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion as a core practice and policy within each organization and across the youth-serving sector.

Acknowledge that 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion cannot happen without the necessary resources. Culture change cannot happen without financial and staff resources to do it justice.

Recognize that 2SLGBTQ+ communities are not homogenous. 2SLGBTQ+ youth are impacted by racism, classism, ableism, colonialism and other forms of oppression. 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion must be enacted alongside broader efforts towards anti-oppression in the youth-serving sector.

# DELIVERING ON 2SLGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE SERVICES IN THE YOUTH-SERVING SECTOR

Doing justice for 2SLGBTQ+ young people across the youth-serving sector requires an on-going commitment. 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion cannot happen without organizational culture change. 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion requires an intentional review of all organizational policies, ongoing capacity building for staff at all levels, and a commitment to working hand-in-hand with 2SLGBTQ+ young people. As such, we recommend that organizations across the youth-serving sector undertake the following:

- Engage 2SLGBTQ+ young people in your community to guide your efforts on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion. Ensure 2SLGBTQ+ young people are actively engaged at all levels of your organization, including representation on boards of directors, within advisory committees and on staff teams.
- Build authentic and reciprocal relationships with 2SLGBTQ+ organizations in your community. Ensure relationships are based in mutual respect and mutual benefit.
- Conduct a 2SLGBTQ+ inclusivity audit of all programs, policies and services to identify gaps and opportunities, in partnership with youth from 2SLGBTQ+ communities and local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations.
- Create and implement a comprehensive strategy to embed 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion throughout your organization, based on the findings of an inclusivity audit and engagement with 2SLGBTQ+ young people. Review and update this strategy on a recurring basis.
- Allocate necessary staff and financial resources to fund efforts towards 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion. Ensure resources are sufficient to engage in full implementation of the 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion strategy.
- Ensure 2SLGBTQ+ communities are represented on your staff teams through inclusive hiring policies and proactive outreach to 2SLGBTQ+ communities and organizations.
- Enact organizational policies pertaining to 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, including anti-discrimination policies, inclusive human resources policies and inclusivity policies.
- Ensure ongoing and comprehensive training for all staff, including front-line service providers, administrative staff and leadership team members on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion.

We believe in the capacity of the youth-serving sector to rally for and with 2SLGBTQ+ young people to raise the bar on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion. We firmly believe in our capacity to enact culture change within our organizations and across our sector to ensure 2SLGBTQ+ young people have access to life-changing services and supports.