

## AFFIRM Youth: Affirmative Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning (LGBTQ+) Populations

**Program Description:** AFFIRM Youth is an evidence-based, eight module, manualized coping skills training intervention focused on reducing mental health issues and behavioral risks experienced by LGBTQ+ populations. Developed specifically for LGBTQ+ youth, AFFIRM Youth has been found to be efficacious with this vulnerable population across a range of settings (e.g., schools, health care centers, behavioral health clinics) and recently with young and middle-age adult populations.

### AFFIRM Youth

- ✓ Is manualized
- ✓ Provides training to new practitioners
- ✓ Requires fidelity adherence
- ✓ Requires data collection
- ✓ Provides expert coaching to new implementers

**Program Delivery:** As a manualized intervention, AFFIRM Youth is typically delivered by trained and certified counselors, social workers, and other mental health professionals in a group-based format. In addition to the effectiveness with youth and adults with a myriad of identities, AFFIRM has been successfully tailored to the needs of transgender and non-conforming youth and adults as well as racialized, newcomer, and refugee groups. AFFIRM has also been translated into Chinese, Dutch, Spanish, and Urdu. The eight modules are designed for flexible implementation with all LGBTQ+ youth populations, making them easy to integrate into existing school and other settings (e.g., into existing counseling groups).

**Who is the program for?** AFFIRM Youth is designed for any LGBTQ+ young person, including those who are not presenting with clinical symptoms. It can be administered in a variety of settings and with various age groups. However, it is recommended that cohorts are all age-appropriate and that young people attend cohorts with other young people in their age range. For example, a cohort of 18-21 year olds would be separate from a cohort of 12-14 year olds.

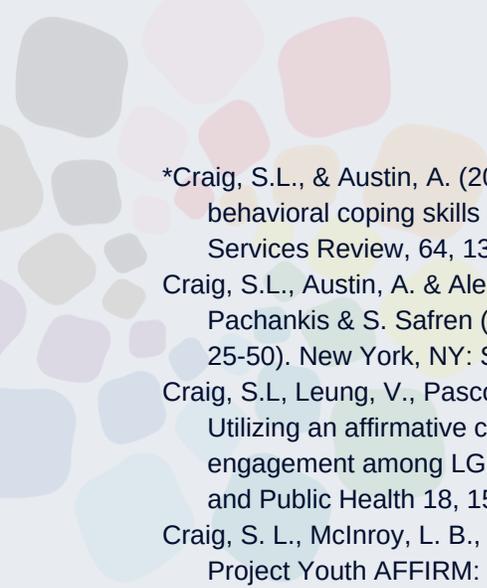
**Program Evidence:** AFFIRM Youth is based on extensive research demonstrating that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is among the most effective interventions for child, adolescent, and adult depression, anxiety, and suicidality while simultaneously attending to the unique needs, experiences, and challenges of LGBTQ+ young people through a trauma-informed and affirmative approach.



AFFIRM Youth has significant empirical evidence indicating that it reduces depression and promotes increases in healthy decision making and coping for LGBTQ+ youth (e.g. Craig et. al, 2021, Craig, Austin & Alessi, 2019; Craig et. al, 2019; Craig & Austin, 2016\*). AFFIRM addresses the stressors that LGBTQ+ youth encounter in school and community settings (e.g., bullying, discrimination) and helps them develop effective coping skills that support healthy behaviors and foster wellbeing.

### How do I get AFFIRM Youth to my organization?

To implement AFFIRM Youth in your practice or within your organization, please email the National Quality Improvement Center on Tailored Services, Placement Stability, and Permanency for LGBTQ2S Children and Youth in Foster Care at [SOGIECENTER@UConn.edu](mailto:SOGIECENTER@UConn.edu) or contact the AFFIRM co-creators directly at [mail@affirmativeresearch.net](mailto:mail@affirmativeresearch.net).



\*Craig, S.L., & Austin, A. (2016). The AFFIRM open pilot feasibility study: A brief affirmative cognitive behavioral coping skills group intervention for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 64, 136-144

Craig, S.L., Austin, A. & Alessi, E. (2019). Cognitive behavioral therapy for LGBT youth mental health. In J. Pachankis & S. Safren (Eds.), *Handbook of evidence-based mental health practice with LGBT clients* (pp. 25-50). New York, NY: Springer.

Craig, S.L, Leung, V., Pascoe, R., Pang, N., Iacono, G., Austin, A. & Dillon, F. (2021). AFFIRM Online: Utilizing an affirmative cognitive-behavioural digital intervention to improve mental health, access and engagement among LGBTQA+ youth and young adults. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, 1541, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041541>

Craig, S. L., McInroy, L. B., Eaton, A. D., Iacono, G., Leung, V. W. Y., Austin, A., & Dobinson, C. (2019). Project Youth AFFIRM: Protocol for implementation of an affirmative coping skills intervention to improve the mental and sexual health of sexual and gender minority youth. *JMIR Research Protocols*. 8(6):e13462. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2196/13462>

