

Project: Reducing Isolation through Support & Empowerment (RISE)

The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity



LOCATION

Bakersfield, CA



GROUPS SERVED

- LGBTQ+
- Bi/Pansexual+
- Transgender & GNC
- Family members
- Rural Setting

CONTACTS

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OVERVIEW

The Center was founded in 2011 to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ persons living in deeply conservative Kern County, California. We know that many people who identify as LGBTQ+ experience stressors including social and familial rejection, unique gender-related medical concerns, stigma and hate from the community at large, homophobia, and transphobia. Attempts to cope with these stressors can lead to isolation, depression, anxiety, and, in some cases, self-harm.

Our RISE Program seeks to:

- Provide a safe and positive supportive environment and affirming services;
- Support individuals in developing better self-knowledge, coping skills, and resilience;
- Effect change in the wider community to create a more affirming external environment in which to live, work, and play.

GOALS

GOAL 1. Provide Safe Spaces for LGBTQ+ persons including physical spaces and offices, social media, and community events, all of which will be affirming and supportive of our communities.

GOAL 2. Reduce feelings of Isolation among members of the LGBTQ+ community through affirming activities and supportive services.

GOAL 3. Improve the acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ+ persons throughout the county. People deserve to feel safe and valued as their authentic selves in school, at work, at home, and anywhere within our county.



STRATEGIES

We use community input and ongoing feedback to create and improve our programming.

Services for Individuals: Counseling services; multi-week support workshops for Transgender and Bi/Pansexual+ individuals.



Education within the community: Cultural Competency training within the Lesbian and Gay communities about more marginalized identities, including Bi/Pan+, Trans, Gender Non-Conforming, and others.



Education in the wider community: Cultural Competency training to assist organizations, agencies, and businesses seeking to provide affirming care and services to LGBTQ+ populations.

Providing Resources and Advocacy: Educating in our community through representation and engagement.

OUTCOMES

- 1,196 counseling sessions provided to 181 clients through June 2019.
- 18 multi-week support workshops serving 194 persons were conducted through June 2019.
- 1,402 persons attended 56 Cultural Competency trainings through August 2019.



NEXT STEPS

- Partnering with Kern Behavioral Health & Recovery Services to receive sustaining funding through MHSA and other funding mechanisms.
- Adding support workshops for Asexual/Ace individuals, Youth, and Queer Persons of Color.