

1. How have you engaged, convened, and maintained relationships with your community/communities?

To maintain our relationship with the community, Triple point engages in regular outreach to Gay Straight Alliance and/or Diversity groups in local schools. Triple point can provide guidance and resources to educators and students as well as encourage youth to attend meetings held at Triple point. Additionally, we provide “Creating Safe Spaces” trainings for schools, non-profits, medical clinics and other social service organizations in the community. These trainings allow for better interactions between LGBTQ+ youth and the institutions and administrators with whom they may come into contact. Triple point makes participation in programs free and provides tours of the facility to promote client participation in programs. Triple point is a part of the community and we participate in community events such as resource fairs and church services. Finally, we make strategic partnerships with organization like PFLAG, YWCA, and Planned Parenthood which includes regular attendance at staff meetings.

2. How have you co-designed or co-created solutions with your community/communities?

The way Triple Point runs weekly group meetings is the result of 20 years of collaboration between employees, interns, volunteers, and youth participants. Support groups are employee/volunteer facilitated, but peer-directed. Group rules/norms developed organically through these interactions and have resulted in a safe harassment-free space essential for the success of the program. Similar groups such as GSA’s are youth-led and are often not as successful without active adult engagement to maintain safety.

Some concrete examples of co-created solutions are the development of middle school groups, drop-in groups, and “Gender Blender” groups at some sites. The middle school groups were created out of concern about the difference in age and maturity that lead the youth to have different sets of problems. Drop-in groups were created due to requests by youth for more informal group time in addition to structured content. Gender Blender is for trans, gender non-conforming, and gender-questioning youth. Although under the banner of LGBTQ+, the gender blender group has different experiences, problems, and needs. They have benefited from having a standalone group away from their cis counterparts who may not be as attuned to their issues.

The content for support group conversations comes from the youth. Some topics are addressed during unstructured time in group, or prepared for future presentations. Youth surveys are completed every six months to gather feedback about relevance and impact of program content. Triple Point youth participate on local Consumer Advisory Boards or focus groups to represent LGBTQ youth voice in the community. Staff from community partners are invited to give presentations during meetings regarding topics relevant to youth requests (e.g., resources for Sexual Assault survivors by YWCA, healthcare resources by Planned Parenthood, etc.) Wisdom from the development of Triple Point as a safe space was condensed into our “Creating Safe Space” training which are provided to community organizations by Triple Point staff.

3. How have you addressed systematic inequities that affect health (such as power differentials or racism) as part of your community engagement work?

To address systemic inequities that affect health we have partnered with organizations (e.g. Planned Parenthood) for prepared presentations to increase youth awareness about resources, rights, public policy etc. We have role-play exercises during support group where we review how to talk to professionals (e.g. doctor) about name/pronouns. The “Creating Safe Space” trainings that are given to community organizers help address some of the inequities and misunderstandings that come along with being LGBTQ+. Triple Point alumni are a regular part of public presentations and have a wealth of experiences to share with people in the health field. Some sites have had the opportunity to provide space specifically for the youth to make their own, while other sites have a consistent communal space that is dedicated for the youth during group hours. Having dedicated space at some sites (within a multi-service organization) for LGBTQ youth programming has proven to be valuable for the success of this program.

4. What about your organization’s way of working has made you successful? How has your organizational culture or structure changed to allow for authentic community relationships? Include examples of how your staff and your board (if relevant) contributed to the culture and values that enabled your success.

Children’s Home Society of Washington as an organization values a culture of change and continuous improvement. The organization strives to hire staff and volunteers that reflect the community, and provide a range of culturally-specific services. It also values staff within various service specialties (e.g., therapists, early learning professionals). The organization values and seeks inter-departmental and community partnerships as a multi-service agency.

The organization values and emphasizes continuous improvement and embraces change, as evidenced by the way CHSW has evolved with the changing needs of children, youth and families for over 120 years. CHSW was one of the first organizations in the country to offer support groups for LGBTQ youth, and for LGBTQ parents adopting children. Another example of the value the organization places on changing to meet the needs of children and families is the creation of its own Office of Innovation, demonstrating the agency’s dedication to continuous improvement and creating authentic community relationships. Being such a large organization allows CHSW to make this investment, as there is a buffer against financial risk.

The organization values its programs and ensures they have the ability to offer services with consistency (e.g., weekly groups rain-or-shine have worked, monthly groups in rural communities often are unable to meet the same level of consistency).