

# COUNTYWIDE LGBTQIA+ SERVICE ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**CONTRA COSTA**  
COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

## PURPOSE

In late 2024 Contra Costa County District IV Supervisor Ken Carlson sought out an approach to better understand the scope of LGBTQIA+ services in the County. With the support of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Carlson funded a study by La Piana Consulting to identify the range of services currently providing LGBTQIA+ specific and LGBTQIA+ welcoming services. Although identifying gaps was not the primary objective, several became evident through the course of the work and are noted here.

**This summary highlights the major findings at a high level; the report and appendices provide more information for readers seeking deeper information.**

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## METHODOLOGY

This assessment is focused on direct service providers that fulfill essential needs, including mental and behavioral health, housing, legal assistance, food security, and other services.

To conduct the assessment, La Piana Consulting surveyed service providers across the County, conducted interviews with select providers for deeper understanding, and reviewed publicly available information to verify services.

While extensive, the results are not exhaustive. Some organizations may not have been reached, school-based services were not included as they are not generally available to the general public, and a few providers declined to describe their LGBTQIA+ services due to concerns about federal funding restrictions or backlash.

This assessment organizes service providers into the following:

- **Dedicated LGBTQIA+ Service Providers:** Organizations with a primary mission to serve the LGBTQIA+ community.
- **General Service Providers with LGBTQIA+ Programs:** Providers that serve the broader public but operate specialized programs designed specifically for LGBTQIA+ residents.
- **LGBTQIA+ Welcoming Organizations:** General organizations that do not have specific LGBTQIA+ programs but have documented cultural competency through indicators including staff training, designated LGBTQIA+ liaisons, high numbers of LGBTQIA+ staff, or by being named by LGBTQIA+ dedicated providers or programs as trusted partners for their clients.

Classification is based on survey responses, interviews with providers, and publicly available information.



## KEY FINDINGS



### **Only one dedicated LGBTQIA+ direct service provider**

Contra Costa County has just one organization — Rainbow Community Center (RCC) — whose core mission is to provide LGBTQIA+ direct services. Several additional LGBTQIA+ community and advocacy organizations contribute through social connection, community building, advocacy, and training, but do not offer direct services as defined in this report.



### **General service providers play an important role**

A number of service providers serving the general public also operate LGBTQIA+-specific programs, addressing needs such as behavioral health support, HIV services, youth supports, and social and community programs.



### **Many organizations are LGBTQIA+ welcoming, but competency varies**

Several providers indicate they are LGBTQIA+ welcoming through practices including staff training, dedicated staff to support LGBTQIA+ clients, or high LGBTQIA+ representation among staff and board members. However, many reported no LGBTQIA+-specific training and no data collection on LGBTQIA+ clients, staff, or board members — suggesting inconsistent cultural competency among County service providers.



### **Residents seek services outside the County**

Many LGBTQIA+ residents access services in Alameda and San Francisco counties. This may be due to barriers such as limited local options, inconsistent LGBTQIA+-competent providers for specialized services, lower barriers to entry through community spaces and events, and transportation barriers.



### **Federal funding pressures influence how services are described**

Some providers expressed concern that publicly identifying LGBTQIA+ programs could jeopardize federal funding, leading to less visibility of LGBTQIA+ services and making them harder for residents to access.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Strengthen County leadership in response to federal funding threats**

County leadership should be prepared to take a visible and proactive role if federal policies restrict or penalize LGBTQIA+-affirming services. This may include preparing advance legal preparation, identifying funds to continue targeted services in the case of budget recissions, and responding with strong statements of support for local LGBTQIA+ residents and services.

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### **Expand LGBTQIA+ training and improve data collection**

To ensure consistent, culturally competent services across the County, social service providers may benefit from expanded LGBTQIA+ training and collection of basic data on LGBTQIA+ clients. Strengthening training and data practices would help providers understand who they serve and how well they meet residents' needs.

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### **Support the stability and capacity of dedicated LGBTQIA+ service providers**

The County currently has only one dedicated LGBTQIA+ direct service provider – Rainbow Community Center (RCC) – which plays a unique and essential role in community building and service provision. Policy makers and funders may wish to explore ways to support dedicated LGBTQIA+ programs including those provided through RCC, promote long-term sustainability for such programs, and support efforts to expand dedicated services to ensure LGBTQIA+ residents in all regions have access to culturally competent services.

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### **Improve visibility and accessibility of LGBTQIA+ services**

The County should plan to update this report on an ongoing basis, perhaps assigning the responsibility to the Contra Costa County Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. Further research on LGBTQIA+ residents' needs could provide additional policy guidance around which services to prioritize for addition or expansion.

