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## An affirmative coping skills intervention to improve mental & sexual health of sexual & gender minority youth (AFFIRM): Interim results of an implementation study

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- Experience disproportionate mental health stressors, low levels of coping, and elevated prejudice and health-risk sexual behaviors.
- Higher rates of depression, substance use, and suicidality.

- Early interventions are critical to addressing risk factors and thwarting the loss of psychological health in LGBTQ+ youth.

- LGBTQ+ youth are underserved in clinical health and mental health practice settings in Ontario.

Benibgui, 2011; Craig & Austin, 2016; King et al., 2008; Martin-Storey & Crosnoe, 2012; Mustanski, Andrews, Herrick, Stall, & Schnarrs, 2014; Russell & Fish, 2016; Scourfield et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2011

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AFFIRM is holistic-focused on the intersection between context, psychosocial factors and mental health ”

## Evidence-informed intervention

(Craig & Austin, 2016; Austin & Craig, 2015)

- 8 weekly 1hr cognitive behavioural group sessions, delivered by two trained facilitators
- Designed for LGBTQ+ youth and adults
- Created in partnership with community
- Grounded in realities of contemporary mental health service delivery
- Systematically developed through practice-based research to enhance the practice “toolbox”

## Community-based intervention

- Designed to be flexibly implemented in group or individual formats
- Can be delivered in natural settings (e.g., schools, LGBTQ+ community centers etc.)
- Can be easily integrated into existing programs
- Cost-effective and evidence based

For full detail on AFFIRM’s intervention structure and methods of the current trial, see

<https://www.researchprotocols.org/2019/6/e13462/>

<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT04318769>

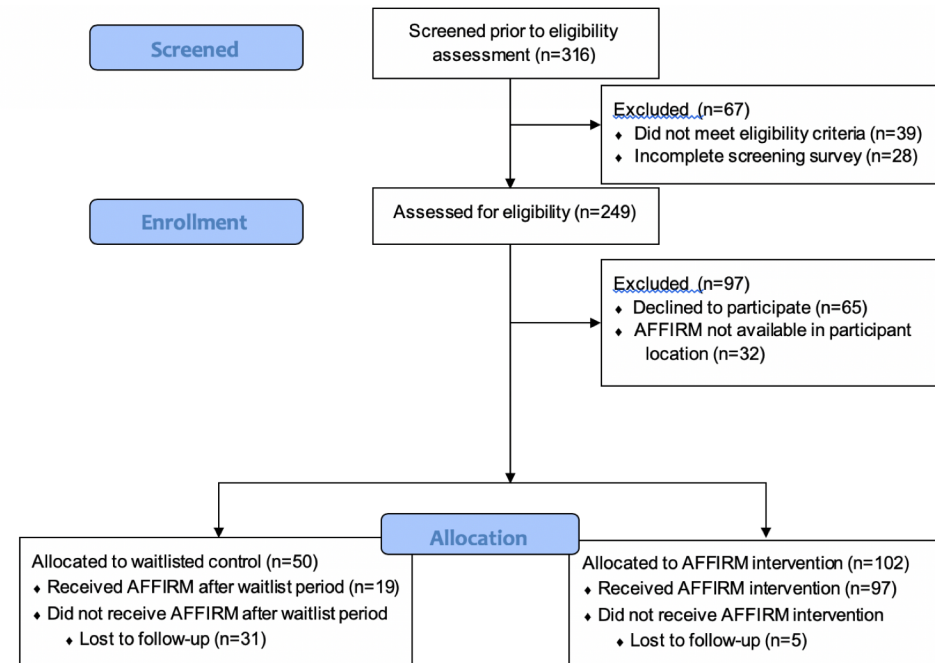
<http://www.projectyouthaffirm.org>





# Results & Discussion

- AFFIRM is midway through a five-year stepped wedge trial in Ontario where participants receive the intervention immediately or after two months in a waitlisted control
- Since April 2017, AFFIRM has been offered 25 times at ten sites to LGBTQ+ youth aged 14-29
- The following slide shows significant changes to sexual health self-efficacy, depression, hope, & coping
- AFFIRM is a potentially scalable intervention for LGBTQ+ youth to foster coping with identity-based stressors & positive health behaviours



Measure	Condition	Time	Time * Condition
Depression	0.23*	0.19***	-0.22*
Stress Appraisal - Challenge	-0.44**	-0.71***	0.53**
Stress Appraisal - Threat	0.39**	0.39***	-0.33**
Stress Appraisal - Resources	-0.47**	-0.45***	0.32*
Emotional support	-0.27	-0.45***	0.50**
Instrumental support	-0.27	-0.34***	0.61***
Positive framing	-0.19	-0.35***	0.44**
Planning	-0.35**	-0.29***	0.42**
Reflective coping	-0.16	-0.20***	0.26**
Hope - Agency	-0.53	-0.69***	0.63**
Hope - Pathway	-0.45	-0.60***	0.64**

