

# **LGBTQ+ Teen Clothing Swap**

*Nathan Hynes*

## **Program Objectives and Rationale**

Teens are in a period of time during the developmental process where they are exploring aspects of their identity. One method by which teens can safely explore these aspects of themselves is to make alterations to their physical expression, via clothes and accessories. However, teens also may have financial limitations preventing them from making changes to their wardrobe. Clothing decisions are also often difficult to make due to the influence of parental figures on style choice, controlling “appropriateness” of teens’ clothes. The clothing swap program will allow teens to freely make changes to their expression, providing the means to experiment with different facets of their forming identities. This resonates strongly with The Search Institute’s list of developmental assets, particularly those regarding “Positive Identity” - personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose, and positive view of personal future (1997).

The objectives of this program are as follows:

- To encourage teens to feel comfortable to come to the library.
- To encourage teens to explore alternate and new-to-them clothing as a means of expression.
- To have 8-12 teens participate meaningfully in the event.
- To give teens the opportunity to learn about LGBTQ resources available in their community/at the library.

## **Program Description**

At the clothing swap, teens will be encouraged to bring in their clothing and accessory items, and then in exchange take some of the other items that are more suitable for them. Participants will not be required to bring an item to be allowed to take something. Items can be dropped off at the public library in the days leading up to the event, and at the conclusion of the event any additional items will be donated. During the program, there will be some light food and drink options to encourage attendance and longer time spent browsing and socializing with other teens at the event.

## **Target Audience**

This event will be open to all teenage patrons of the library, though a library card will not be required for participation. The event is targeted at specifically LGBTQ teens (though the program could be offered with the same structure to a more general audience). This segment of the population would particularly benefit from an event like this. Oftentimes, trans and gender nonconforming teens will find themselves in need of a radically different wardrobe and have few (or zero) resources to obtain it. The program would also be of particular use for teens of low-income. The expected age range for the audience of this event will be teens ages 15-18, though no one will be turned away.

## **Scheduling**

This program would be a one-time event, which could be held again in the future, if the program is determined to be successful, every six to twelve months, or seasonally if interest persists. The initial event will be scheduled to occur directly prior to or during Pride Week (July 18th to 28th, 2019), to join in the city-wide celebrations. The program will be scheduled for approximately 3:30-5:30pm, though teens will continue to be able to drop off and retrieve items at the library for several days after the initial date, before items are brought to a local charity.

## **Staffing Requirements**

Prior to the event, a small amount of staff time will be required to loosely sort donated items by type (shirt, pant, etc.) and size. During the event, staff will be on-hand to assist teens with any questions they have, as well as to invite teens in the library at that time to come check out the items available. Members of the teen advisory committee will also be encouraged to attend and help out with the event's setup and teardown - staff will be required to supervise the youth in this role.

## **Community Partnerships**

This event can be run entirely with existing library resources and staff. However, as with any event targeted at LGBTQ populations, the teens attending this program would also benefit from additional contact from related local organizations. The library will contact LGBTQ groups in the area (such as The Youth Project) for donations and other resources, so that during the event staff can share this information. Businesses will also be contacted for donations - specifically, Venus Envy, a sexual health store that stocks gender-affirming clothing items and accessories such as binders. These items are often difficult for teens to acquire and would be a valuable addition to the items available during the program.

## **Proposed Publicity Methods**

This program will be advertised in several ways: on the library website, on the library's social media accounts, via posters in the library (with a focus specifically on posters in the teen section). In addition to these methods, staff posted in the teen section will be asked to spread the word when chatting with teen patrons and encourage them to invite friends to donate and/or participate in the event. Outside of the library, the community partnered organizations will also be promoting the event through their own channels, using either their own promotional materials or ones we share with them (posters, text, etc).

## **Proposed Budget**

The proposed budget for this program would be approximately \$40. The program, as it is currently organized, will only require funding for the drinks and snack items on the day of the program. Food items purchased will be non-perishable, to allow for any leftovers to be used for future programs. There are no additional materials or supplies needed to be purchased for the event aside from staffing requirements. At the end of this document are some additional optional extensions to this program to add if additional funding would be available.

## **Use of Library Resources**

As part of the promotion for the event, a small display could be set up in the teen section, highlighting YA novels with covers featuring clothing items. Other display ideas could include novels with LGBTQ protagonists, or non-fiction books about clothing or crafts projects that can be done with clothing (tie-dye, simple alterations, etc.).

## **Equipment Needed**

During the program, use of the activity room and several tables to display the donated items and food will be all that is required. Each table will hold a category of clothing item - shirts, pants, etc. - roughly categorized by size where possible. While not strictly necessary, it may be helpful to have bins or cardboard boxes to allow for better division between the various categories.

## **Program Evaluation Method**

One method to evaluate the program will be to count or estimate the number of people who donated, attended, and took something away from the program. This will give a general idea about the amount of interest in such an event and would inform the repeatability of the program. Another method of evaluation will be by making observations at the event itself - are the teens who attend happy with how the program is run, the selection available, and do they appear comfortable making choices that suit them from the donated items? These observations will be made by the on-hand staff. These observations would also include directly asking some of the participants what their thoughts were regarding the event. Afterwards, the teen advisory committee will be asked their impressions of the event and asked for ways in which the event could be improved. This aligns with the YALSA programming guidelines - allowing teens to be involved in the organization, planning, and evaluation of their own programs (2005).

## **Optional Extensions**

This program could be expanded to include some additional activities alongside the main clothing swap.

- A photo booth setup where youth could be encouraged to try on various items, take photos, and share on social media. (The library may already have supplies for such a setup from previous events).
- An activity for some crafts projects relating to clothing or accessories, using some existing library resources.
- Presentation or information session from a partnered community group or organization.

## **References**

The Search Institute. (1997). *The developmental assets framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/developmental-assets-framework/>

Young Adult Library Services Association. (2005). *Teen programming guidelines*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/teen-programming-guidelines>