

# Services lacking for young gay black men

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Physical, sexual and emotional abuse among young gay black men is a pervasive problem, yet there remains a lack of social services and resources available to help them, a Michigan State University scholar argues in a new study.

The trauma they experience—often at a young age—is related to depression, substance abuse and high-risk sexual behavior, said Robin Lin Miller, professor of psychology.

"Young black men who are gay and bisexual have few resources available to them that are tailored to their specific needs and concerns, despite how common these [traumatic experiences](#) are," Miller said.

Miller and colleagues interviewed 180 black gay and bisexual males aged 14 to 24 from across Michigan. Nearly a third of participants reported experiencing sexual assault; the average age of first exposure was 10. About 74 percent of participants reported at least one type of [physical violence](#) and 91 percent reported [emotional abuse](#) such as being ridiculed by peers, family members and others.

Most of the young men experienced multiple forms of abuse. This was associated with higher rates of drug use, depression and [unprotected sex](#).

While estimates of HIV infection in the United States have remained stable since 2007, it has increased significantly in people aged 15-24, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Michigan, young black men who are gay or bisexual account for about

60 percent of all newly diagnosed HIV infections in this age group.

What few service providers are available to help these victims typically lack expertise in the unique experiences of young gay black men, Miller said.

"Collaboration among diverse specialists at the local and state level may be required to develop innovative and effective prevention, screening and treatment responses to meet the needs of this vulnerable population of young men," the study states.

The findings are published in the *Journal of HIV/AIDS & Social Services*.

Provided by Michigan State University

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