



Ruth Ellis Center (REC) is named in honor of the life and work of Ruth Ellis, who was respected and loved for her longevity and endurance as one of Detroit's oldest and proudest African-American lesbians and for her many years of service to all people in need. Ruth was born in 1899 and came out as a lesbian in 1915. Beginning in the 1930s, Ruth provided shelter, physical support and spiritual affirmation to those whose race, sexual orientation or both set them apart from the dominant culture. Ruth lived to the age of 101, seeing the Center come to being prior to her passing in 2000. The work we continue to do at the Ruth Ellis Center is built upon her model of responsibility to oneself and one's community.



Over a 18-year history, REC has established a national reputation for quality and innovation in providing trauma-informed services for runaway, homeless and at-risk lesbian, gay, bi-attractional, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth and young adults of color. What began as a 500-square-foot safe space in Highland Park, MI has evolved into a multi-faceted organization, operating a 10,000 square foot facility in Highland Park, providing outreach and safety-net services, integrated primary & behavioral health care services and case management, skill building workshops, HIV

prevention programs, and family preservation programming; as well as the operation of the only State licensed and contracted residential foster care program specifically for LGBTQ youth in the Midwest, Ruth's House located a short drive from the Center in Detroit.

Ruth's House, our residential program, is currently located on East Philadelphia Street in Detroit. Ruth's House is the location of our Intensive Treatment Unit (ITU) for youth age 12 to 17. The ITU is a private child caring institution that is licensed and contracted with the State of Michigan Department of Health & Human Services. Our ITU program serves young people in the foster care or juvenile justice systems by providing services in a home-like setting that meet the individual needs of the youth while they are in care. Currently, Ruth's House may serve up to nine youth in foster care at any given time.



The Second Stories Drop-In Center, a 5,000 square foot space located on the second floor of 77 Victor Street in Highland Park, MI, provides low-barrier access to critical safety-net and support services. It includes meeting space, a large recreational space, cyber center, kitchen, laundry, and showers. Drop-

In Center services include: Street, venue-based and online outreach; peer-facilitated workshops such as *TransJustUs*, and *Journey Ahead*; Peer support/social identity groups; Leadership development opportunities such as Youth Advisory Board and Summer Internships; Basic needs services, including safe space, hot meals, groceries and nutrition, clothing, safer sex/hygiene/personal care supplies, free laundry, showers, access to emergency shelter, phone use, cyber center with internet access, and mailboxes; Case management, including assessment, housing services (including emergency shelter), substance abuse screening, linkage to services, victim's assistance, coaching and life planning; Case managers will also work with youth as needed to obtain copies of their birth certificates, state-issued identification cards, and provide an address as necessary for enrolling in State and Federal benefit programs including Medicaid and Food Assistance Programs.



Ruth Ellis Center has enhanced the agencies service array by establishing the **Ruth Ellis Health & Wellness Center (HWC)**, which includes integrated primary and behavioral health care services. The HWC meets the critical unmet need of improving overall health and wellbeing outcomes for homeless



LGBTQ youth in Metro Detroit as a direct result of increased access to high-quality, culturally-competent health care at no cost to youth. Currently, no coordination of health services of this nature is available in Michigan. In May, REC entered into a formal service agreement with the Henry Ford Health System (HFHS) School-Based and Community Health Program, and the HFHS Global Health Initiative (GHI). The HFHS GHI is aimed at identifying health issues that affect

marginalized and vulnerable populations at home and abroad, and to implement and evaluate sustainable solutions. It is anticipated that this innovative partnership will produce ground-breaking results of national importance in serving at-risk LGBTQ youth.

In October 2015, Ruth Ellis Center began a **Family Preservation** pilot program designed to help LGBTQ children and youth who may be at risk for removal from their families by the State (Child Protective Services) and there is evidence that parental mistreatment may be related to the child's sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. The program has key goals of family engagement, preservation, and support. The program is being implemented as a collaboration between the Ruth Ellis Center, Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, and Dr. Caitlin Ryan of the Family Acceptance Project (FAP) at SF State University.

As part of the pilot, REC has trained almost every Child Protective Services case worker in Wayne County to identify abusive and harmful behaviors related to a child's LGBT identity and gender expression. The Ruth Ellis Center receives referrals from the county's Child Protective Services case managers and may provide up to 13 months of intense home-based family support services.