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Tulare, King counties gay, lesbian and bisexual youth still face bullying, harassment

The bullying began in the seventh grade for 17-year-old Calen Valencia.

He struggled through rampant homophobic taunts and other harassment at the hands of his peers after coming out as bisexual.

So much so that his parents transferred him out of his Tulare-area middle school by the eighth grade. ?It was a really bad and toxic environment to be in,? said Valencia, a high school senior who adopted the name ?Calen? and now self-identifies as a transgender, and as a male.

Students and advocates say too few outreach services and support networks exist for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth in Tulare County.

That?s one of the reasons why Valencia started a Gay-Straight Alliance club on his high school campus a year ago. The meetings, thus far, have been well-attended by a crosshatch of the school?s population, and the immediate support has made Valencia feel less isolated, he said. But the efforts outside of the school setting, he said, have not gone as far.

?There?s this stigma about LGBT youth,? Valencia said. ?People here are taught not to speak about it.?

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News Article
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/visaliatimesdelta/access/2814058... [1]
Visalia Times Delta - Tulare Advance-Register
Brian Moxey

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