



# ANNUAL REPORT

2019 – 2020

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# WHO IS SQSH?

SQSH, the St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline, is affectionately pronounced as “squish”. “Squish” references both the feeling of a hug and a term describing a queerplatonic crush (developed by asexual and aromantic communities). We are a **community-based, grassroots organization** formed by and for the St. Louis Metro Area LGBTQIA+ community.

Our mission is to strengthen the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community—by providing empathetic **listening**, connecting individuals to queer-affirming **resources**, and **advocating** for LGBTQIA+ needs. We envision our work radically transforming queer St. Louisans’ ability to support each other as peers, creating a cohesive, caring local LGBTQIA+ community with endless opportunities to thrive in a just and equitable St. Louis region.

# FOUNDING SQSH

We founded SQSH to address the disparities caused by gender- and sexuality-based oppression, which limits the potential of humans of all genders and sexualities, but disproportionately harms LGBTQIA+ individuals in under-resourced regions with hostile political and social climates. One in seven LGBT Missourians experience workplace discrimination<sup>1</sup>, and 61.6% of LGBT St. Louisans have experienced homophobic violence/victimization over their lifetime<sup>2</sup>.

As a result, queer St. Louisans:

- + Disproportionately face negative mental health outcomes, including higher risks for depression, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts/ attempts. **At least 2/3 of trans St. Louisans don't have their mental health needs fully met.**<sup>3</sup>
- + Are disproportionately poor, unemployed or underemployed, and unhoused. Queer adolescents in St. Louis face higher risks of homelessness, sexual victimization, and substance abuse; yet **many St. Louis shelters are unequipped to work with queer youth.**
- + Lack access to identity-affirming healthcare and risk medical providers' harassment or ignorance. **In Missouri, queer-affirming healthcare services are limited and medical staff lack training in LGBTQIA+ health issues.**

SQSH's work addresses these disparities by empowering queer St. Louisans to:

## HEAL

Provide a safe, peer-led outlet to heal from everyday injustices

## CONNECT

Strengthen our connection to LGBTQIA-vetted resources

## UPLIFT

Amplify our voices in local socio-political systems

<sup>1</sup> Missouri Foundation for Health, 2012  
<sup>2</sup> Greater St. Louis LGBT Health and Human Services Needs Assessment, 2010  
<sup>3</sup> Trans Education Service, 2018

# THE HISTORY OF SQSH

## 1980s TO 2019

Before SQSH, no queer-specific helpline had existed in St. Louis since the 1980s.

## MARCH 2019

We - a group of queer individuals dedicated to St. Louis - founded SQSH in response to a community needs assessment highlighting the violence, discrimination, abuse, health disparities, and barriers to resources faced by the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community.

## MARCH - APRIL '19

Drawing on identity-based peer support models and survivor-support experience, we developed a 50-hour LGBTQIA-focused peer counseling training curriculum.

## AUGUST 15, 2019

We held a Launch Party to celebrate with our community; over 100 attended!

## AUGUST 10, 2019

We graduated our first training class of queer/trans peer counselors.

## APRIL - AUG. '19

We recruited volunteers from all over St. Louis to train and serve on our Peer Support Helpline.

## SEPT. 20, 2019

We launched our Peer Support Helpline and received a call the first day we opened

## SEPT. 2019 TO NOW

Since then, our local presence has grown as we built genuine relationships with our community. Our volunteers have supported callers in many ways, including helping to ground shelter residents experiencing panic attacks, provide space for QTPOC activists to feel heard, and facilitate healing for victims of sexual abuse.

# ACHIEVING QUEER LIBERATION

Gender- and sexuality-based oppression is rooted in cis-heteronormative cultural attitudes, entrenched in policy and structures maintained by people in power. For example, trans shelter residents are often misgendered or misplaced because of cisnormative policies that house residents by their gender marker<sup>4</sup>. Shelters normalize such policies because trans residents lack the power to make their concerns heard.

Instead of applying band-aid solutions to symptoms of injustice, SQSH's work:

- + strengthens the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community through **peer support and skill-building**
- + reduces queer St. Louisans' barriers to accessing resources through our **resource database**
- + amplifies LGBTQIA+ priorities in the region through **data collection and advocacy**
- + creates a shared vision for queer liberation through **community partnerships**

<sup>4</sup> The gender assigned on one's identification documents, narrowly construed as "M" or "F" in most states and countries and often designated by medical personnel based on one's biological sex assigned at birth.

We build power for the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community by:

01

**Radically transforming queer humans' ability to support each other as peers.**

Our support programs create spaces for emotional healing where queer people are genuinely centered and heard.

02

**Making queer community knowledge accessible by using our resource database to connect users with LGBTQIA-affirming services.**

Our resource database catalogues 1000+ St. Louis resources, consolidates vetting information from queer-led groups, and invites community feedback on service providers.

03

**Using call data to identify community needs, present trends to policymakers, and advocate for LGBTQIA+ concerns.**

Queer populations are underrepresented in research. As the only group collecting both qualitative and quantitative data while offering a valuable service to the St. Louis queer community, we offer unique, evidence-based insights into the joys and challenges in queer St. Louisans' lives.

04

**Working with community partners to create a world where everyone has access to queer-affirming resources.**

We offer trainings in LGBTQIA-affirming peer counseling and service interaction skills to improve the queer competency of local service providers.

# 2020 SUMMARY

2020 was a year of enormous challenge and growth for SQSH. Between 2019-2020, we built the foundation for SQSH's six key programs:

**01** Peer support helpline service for emotional support

**02** SQSHBook resource guide for resource referrals

**03** Call data analysis for systemic advocacy

**04** Volunteer program for grassroots engagement

**05** Community courses for collective skill-building

**06** Training & education for partner organizations

As a brand-new grassroots organization founded in 2019, we hit our one-year mark in the same year that the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the U.S. The top 3 challenges we faced were:

## Under-funding

Since peer counseling is a new, emerging best practice in the mental health field, the nonprofit world lacks understanding of peer support's benefits and funding for peer-led programs. Hard-hit by the pandemic, **our monthly average income shrunk by 75%** from November 2019 to November 2020 **while our monthly call volume increased by 1,200%**.

## Volunteer burnout

As a peer-led organization, **our volunteers face the same disparities and barriers that our service population faces.** Amidst the pandemic, our volunteers struggle with food and shelter; juggle multiple jobs and caretaking responsibilities; and cope with various mental and medical health conditions. In particular, our peer counselors abruptly transitioned to remote shifts, losing support from in-person shift partners.

## Barriers to sustainability

We experienced firsthand the difficulty of starting a new non-profit from scratch. Without the resources that wealthy founders bring, **we had to source for funding, expertise, volunteer hours, logistics, and space directly and frequently from our community.** We're still trying to figure out a funding/programming model that will work for us long-term.

Despite these challenges in 2020, we grew stronger as an organization and were proud to achieve the following accomplishments:

Transitioned rapidly from in-person to remote helpline shifts and meetings.

Gained 501(c)(3) status in June 2020



Reviewed and improved our peer counseling curriculum while moving to virtual learning

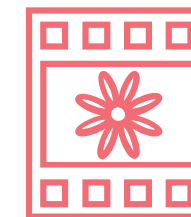


Expanded our helpline hours and launched an appointment system.

Recruited and trained our third class of 12 peer counselors, learning from 2019 trainees who stepped up as 2020 trainers

Transferred our SQSHBook resource guide from document to spreadsheet format

Collaborated with STL Mutual Aid to start the Mutual Aid hotline, providing rapid mutual aid assistance to St. Louisans affected by COVID-19.



Filmed and launched our Community Video in a virtual viewing event co-hosted with Metro Trans Umbrella Group (MTUG)

Raised \$9760.59 in our Winter Fundraiser, an 840% increase from our last fundraiser in 2019



Facilitated honest, difficult internal conversations about conflict, burnout, and sustainability, and pivoted our priorities towards fundraising, grants, staff employment, and volunteer stipends as our areas for growth.

# A LETTER FROM OUR CO-FOUNDER

Gosh, what a year 2020 has been. Is SQSH only in its second year? Looking back on 2020, we had to juggle so many challenges (and opportunities!) as a new organization. Let me share some of our key highlights with you.

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, SQSH rapidly transitioned to remote operations. We quickly developed guidelines for remote helpline shifts, Zoom meetings, and virtual event hosting. Between March and June, we co-launched the Mutual Aid Hotline with STL Mutual Aid organizers, providing rapid-relief assistance to impacted St. Louisans.

As the pandemic stretched on, we began to offer appointments through our newly launched Call Request Service. Knowing how hard it can be to pick up the phone and call for support, we tapped on people's familiarity with therapy appointment systems to offer a more structured, scheduled form of peer counseling.

In June, our SQSHBook Team successfully transferred our SQSHBook resource guide from a 300-page document to a spreadsheet, making it much easier to search for relevant resources. I found myself using it frequently for our resource needs, and recommending it more confidently both to our helpline volunteers and to other community members.

Between March and August, we recruited and trained 13 new trainees for our third cohort of helpline volunteers. We revamped and improved entire sections of our training curriculum while shifting to

virtual training and supporting remote learning. Trainees from 2019 training classes stepped up to take on trainer roles, passing on their wisdom to new trainees.

In September, I began to zoom out and reassess the big picture. I reached out to local activists for support and advice on how to sustain SQSH's work in the next 2-5 years. Several text messages blossomed into a series of interviews with local grassroots leaders, whose experiences validated my personal burnout and transformed my perspective on organizational sustainability. I began to refocus SQSH's priorities on funding, outreach, and sustainability, addressing volunteer burnout, fundraising, grants, and staff employment as our areas for growth. When we raised \$9,760.59 in our first major fundraiser, I witnessed the power of crowdfunding from small-dollar donors. I realized that hiring paid staff and funding volunteer supports were the most powerful steps we could take if we wanted to keep SQSH going – not just alive, but thriving. I used this experience to design a mixed grants-fundraising financial strategy for 2021 with our Finance Team.

In 2020, we formed many new teams in SQSH for the first time, crystalizing our strategy for non-hierarchical operations. By the end of 2020, we had grown from 4 teams to 16, strengthening SQSH's capacity. I am excited for SQSH to continue growing as a force for queer liberation in the St. Louis area.

Join our movement.



— Luka Cai (they/them) | Co-Founder & Organizational Facilitator

# PROGRAM OUTCOMES

By combining direct service with advocacy to build power for and with the St. Louis queer community, our programs address the root causes of oppression to create systemic change in St. Louis. All our programs aim to improve the holistic health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals working or living in the St. Louis Metro Area.



# HOW TO READ OUR DATA



Survey respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses to (or abstain from answering) each question. Percentages are based on total number of responses collected (not total number of respondents).

Our dataset is compiled from:

## DATASET SIZES

- 72 SQSH volunteer demographic surveys for volunteers active in 2020
- 57 SQSH call logs
- 12 SQSH caller surveys
- 34 complete sets of training feedback surveys
- 31 complete sets of roleplay feedback surveys
- All data was collected between Sept 2019 - Dec 2020



Any missing data is left out of data analysis and visualization. As a result, the data set size is different for each figure.

## EXAMPLE

If someone didn't provide orientation but did provide gender, their responses are counted in gender and their lack of response is omitted in orientation, not replaced with a count for "unknown."



For helpline calls on behalf of someone else, any known data for both the caller and the person they were calling on behalf of was included.

# MISSING DATA & OUTREACH

As a QTPOC-led organization, SQSH has put racial, sexual, and gender diversity at the center of what we do. While we're proud of the representation within our organization and the people we've served over the past year, we also recognize places where we fall short.

Based on our limited Caller Survey data, between 2019-2020, **we've had no callers who report being agender, two-spirit, Arab/Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, Biracial/Multiracial, or Native American/Indigenous. We only started asking about intersex status on our Caller Survey in 2021.** Based on our Volunteer Demographic Survey data, between 2019-2020, none of our volunteers are intersex or Arab/Middle Eastern, and very few are Native American/Indigenous, Pacific Islander, Latinx/Hispanic, or biracial/multiracial. Compared to the St. Louis Metro Area's demographics, **Black/African-American people are underrepresented among both our volunteers and our callers.** Compared to other LGBTQIA+ identities among our caller and volunteer pool, **trans women, trans-feminine folx, and two-spirit, asexual, and aromantic individuals are underrepresented.**

**It doesn't go unnoticed that these are some of the most marginalized populations, both within the LGBTQIA+ community and the world at large.** The effects of systemic oppression—including stigma, lack of resources, unlivable wages, and health disparities widened by the COVID-19 pandemic—often hinder the most marginalized individuals from volunteering with SQSH.

Moving forward, we plan to diversify our volunteer and caller base by increasing our visibility in St. Louis and surrounding areas through **targeted outreach, recruitment, and funding efforts that center the most marginalized and underrepresented populations named above.** Our outreach strategies include our social media, e-newsletter, targeted ads, merchandise, flyering, chalking, billboard ads, relationship-building, partnerships, events, presentations, and word of mouth connections.

# PEER SUPPORT HELPLINE SERVICE

Our Helpline fills a unique niche in the St. Louis region as the only LGBTQIA-specific tele-service using a peer counseling approach. Our Helpline Volunteers provide free, confidential, identity-affirming emotional support and resource referrals between Fridays-Mondays, 1-7pm CT.

## Our Helpline Volunteers are equipped to achieve any of these goals on a call:



Provide active, empathetic listening using a caller-led approach



Hold gentle, non-judgmental space for the caller's experiences and emotions



Diffuse or prevent a crisis situation



Facilitate the caller's exploration of options



Co-develop a realistic action/safety plan with the caller



Provide appropriate, relevant resource information or referrals

## Data Collection Tools:

01

**Call Log**, which our Helpline Volunteers fill out after each call.

02

**Caller Survey**, which our Helpline Volunteers share with the caller at the end of many Helpline calls.

## What led you to call the St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline?

*Disclaimer: These quotes have been edited to remove personally identifiable information and protect our callers' anonymity, while preserving the essence of their stories.*

“

“I’ve been having a really hard time recently. I needed to be able to talk to someone about everything going on without fear of judgment. I felt like I could do that with SQSH.”

“I felt understood and cared for... which I don’t often feel. I didn’t expect to feel this much better, but I’m feeling more hopeful and less alone.”

“As a QTPOC, even when I’m seeking support, I constantly expect to have to educate and challenge people’s assumptions in order for my feelings to make sense to them and for me to feel validated. During this call, I didn’t have to explain the way I usually do.”

“Even though I’m usually uncomfortable with talking on the phone, my peer counselor kept the conversation going and made me feel really comfortable. I had a great first experience and feel more comfortable with calling SQSH in the future.”

“I found it really helpful to hear my peer counselor’s validation from a place of personal experience. To hear them tap into experiences of their own marginalization that parallel my own story.”

“When I shared about everything, I received consistent validation, which was something I really needed to hear today. I really appreciated how my peer counselor remembered the things I said and provided helpful responses that made things feel better.”

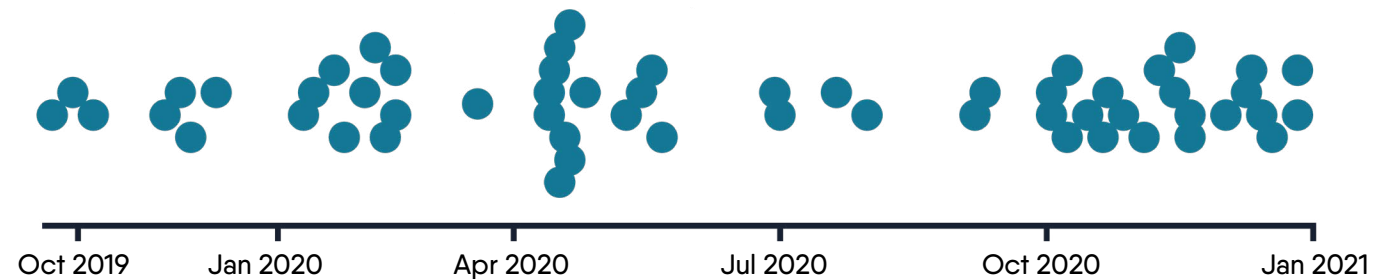
100%

of callers who answered our Caller Survey said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the support they received from SQSH, and that they would call SQSH again.

# OUR CALL DATA

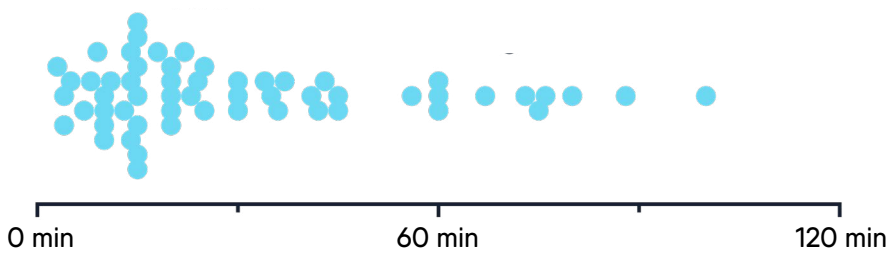
## 57 SQSH Calls From Launch Through 2020

Calls grew more consistent as SQSH became established



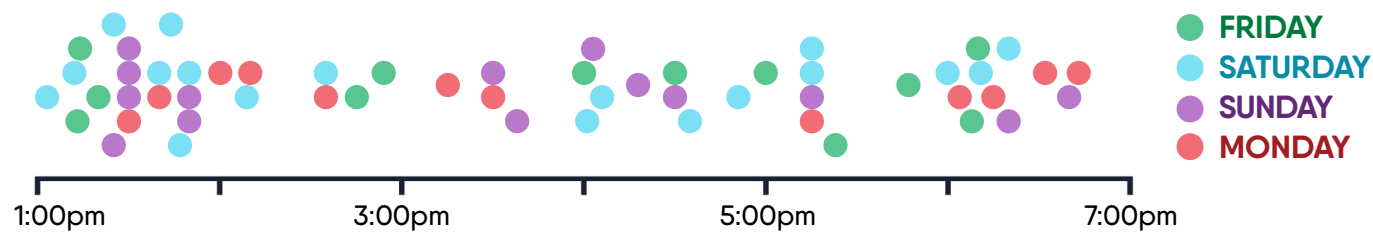
## Our Callers Determine The Call Length

Calls ranged from 3 to 100 minutes



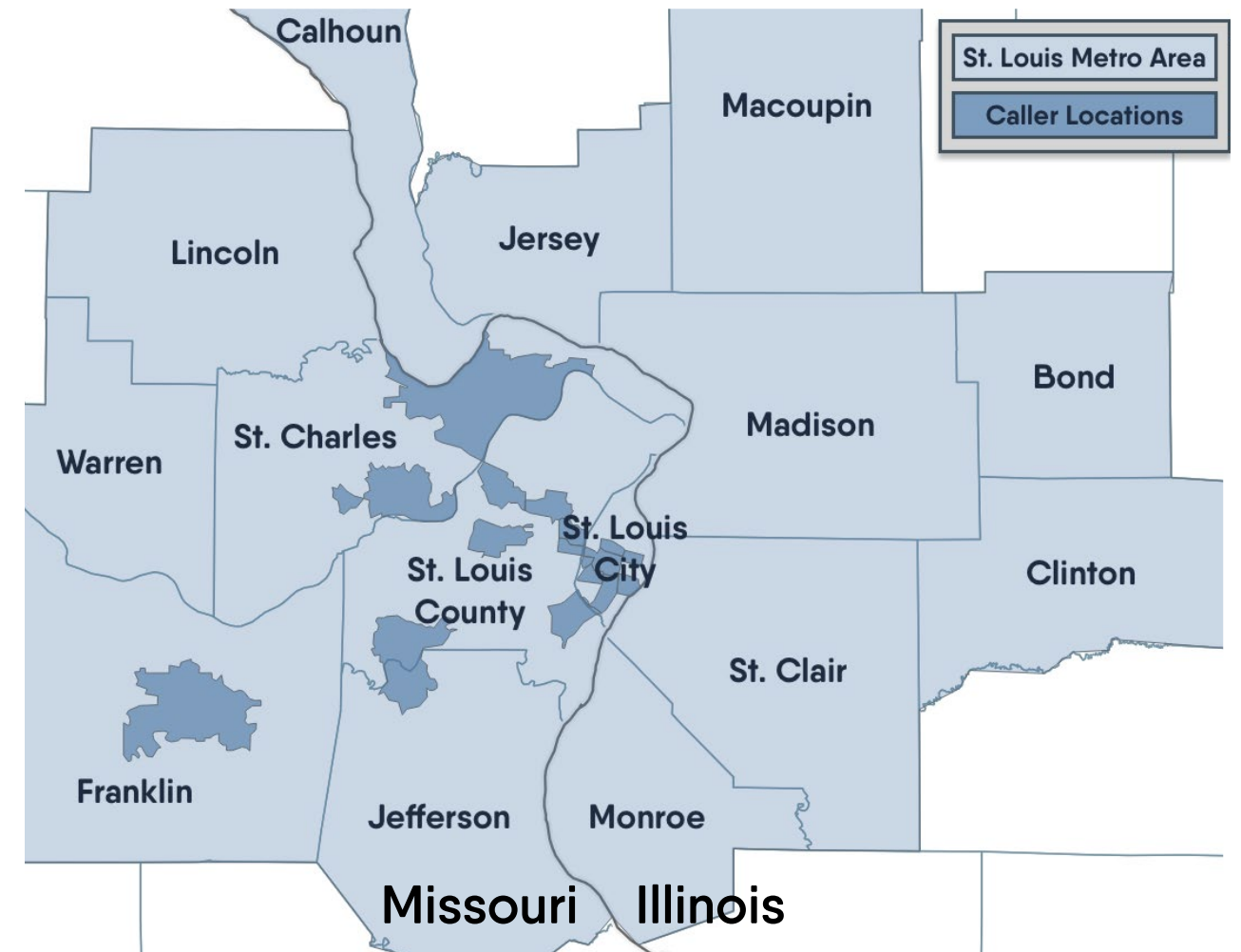
Our call structure, content, and length vary greatly to best serve the caller's needs and preferences. Unlike crisis hotlines, we do not place time limits on the duration of a call; calls evolve organically and are tailored to each party's capacity.

## SQSH Strives to Accommodate Caller Schedules

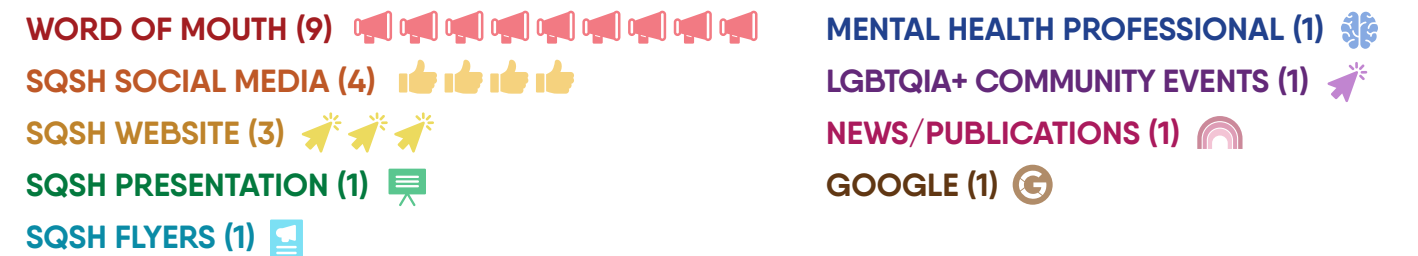


SQSH strives to make our services accessible to as many people as possible within our capacity limits. We chose to distribute our operating hours over both weekends and weekdays, and daytime and evening hours in order to accommodate multiple schedule varieties. Our Helpline fills a niche as a weekend and evening service that is available for support when services that operate during traditional business hours are closed. This strategy appears effective as we receive calls throughout our range of days and hours.

## Where Are Our Callers?



## How Did Callers Learn of SQSH?

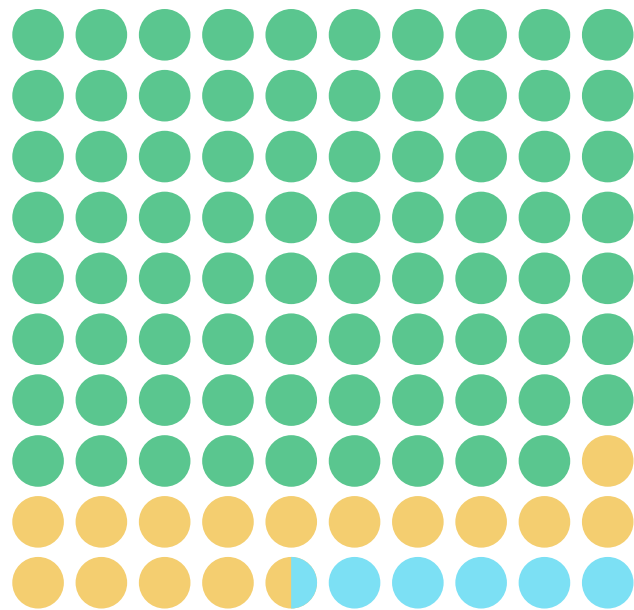


Calls came to us from several regions throughout the city and county, and our callers reported hearing of us mainly via word of mouth. We are encouraged by the reach we attained in our first year. In the coming years, we are working to better reach North St. Louis, East St. Louis, and the broader Metro Area. We are increasing our community outreach and engagement (through social media, email, targeted ads, flyering, chalking, billboards, events, presentations, focus groups, and relationship-building) to reach these goals.

# OUR CALL DATA

Callers reached out to us for a wide variety of resource and emotional support needs, on behalf of both themselves and/or other people in their lives. These data show caller-survey-reported reasons for calling, and common topics that came up on calls. We hope that presenting these data will help potential future callers see their needs reflected here, and feel validated that all of these reasons and more are worthy and appropriate reasons to reach out. As a peer-led warmline (and not a hotline or crisis line) there is no criteria for severity or type of issue that a caller needs to meet, and you are welcome to call for yourself or someone else.

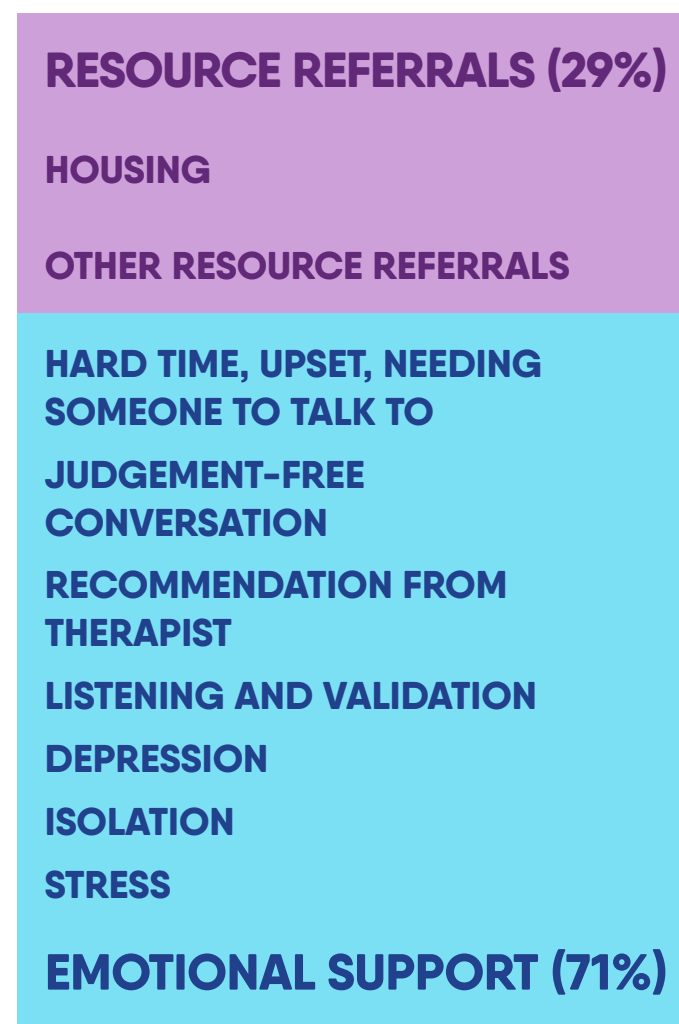
## Callers Called On Behalf Of...



**THEMSELVES (79%)**  
**SOMEONE ELSE (16%)**  
**BOTH OR UNCLEAR (5%)**

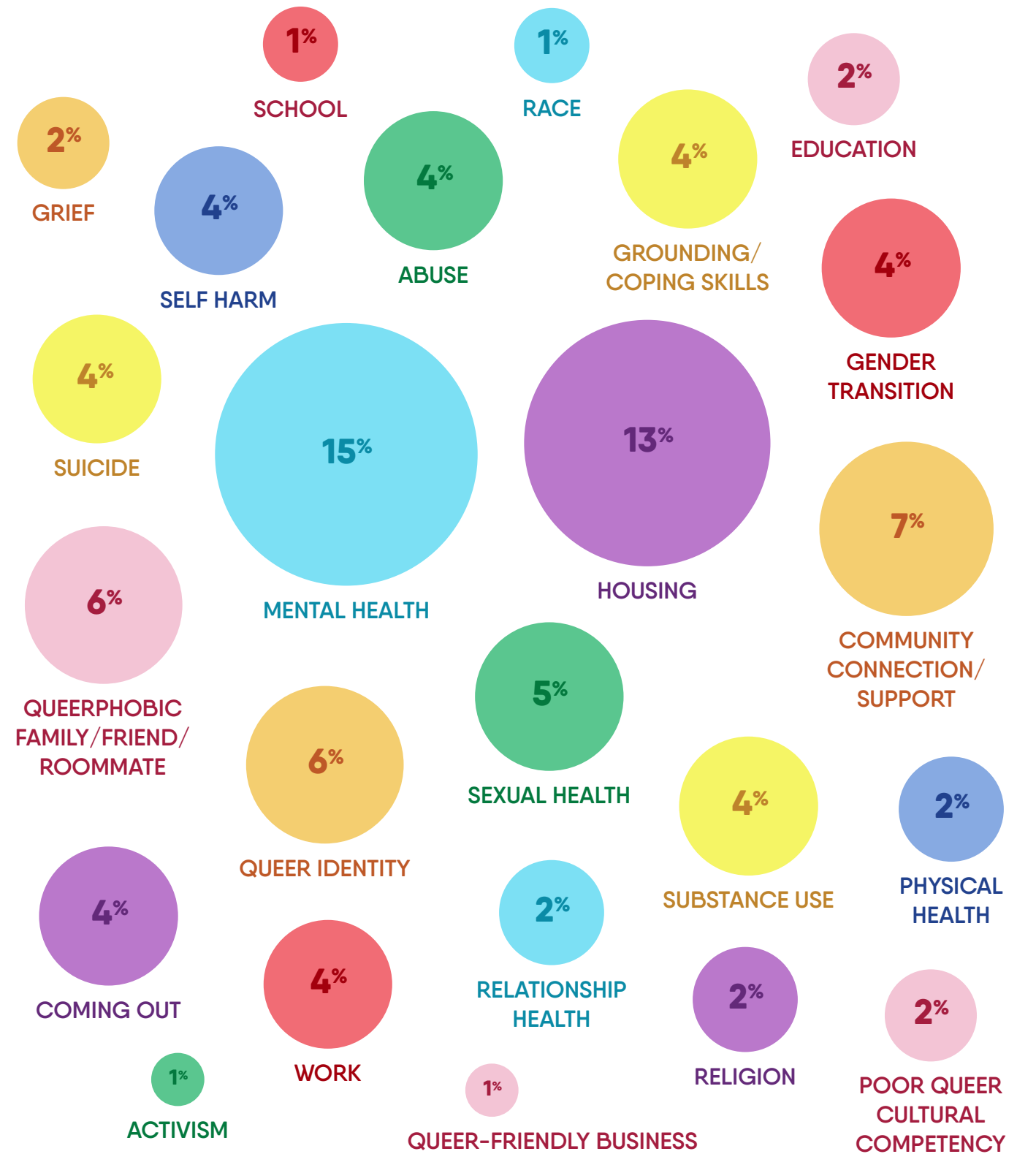
## Reason for Calling

Collected from our caller surveys



## Helpline Call Topics

Collected from our call logs\*

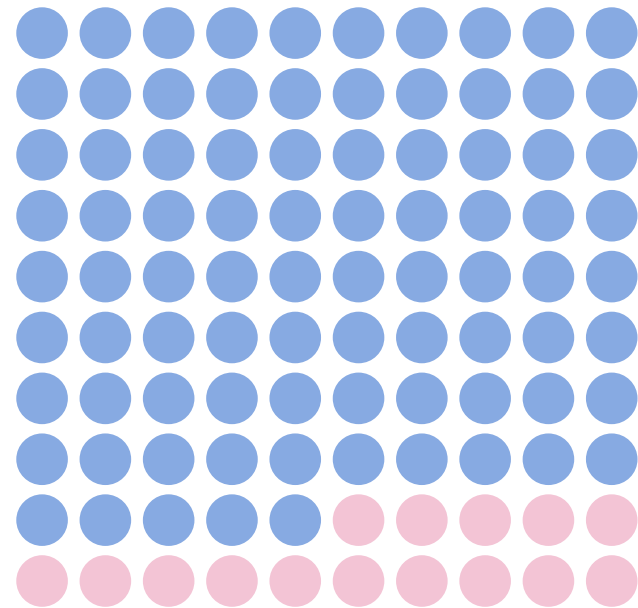


\*Each call can have multiple topics, so these percentages are calculated based on total number of call topics (not calls).

# OUR CALL DATA

Our Helpline provides a high-quality service, especially excelling in emotional support. This can be seen both in the caller-survey-reported answers of what callers felt helped by, and the caller stated mood at the start and end of calls as recorded by volunteers. The fact that several callers have chosen to use our service multiple times demonstrates that we have established trust and provided good experiences to these callers.

## Callers Trust SQSH & Call Again

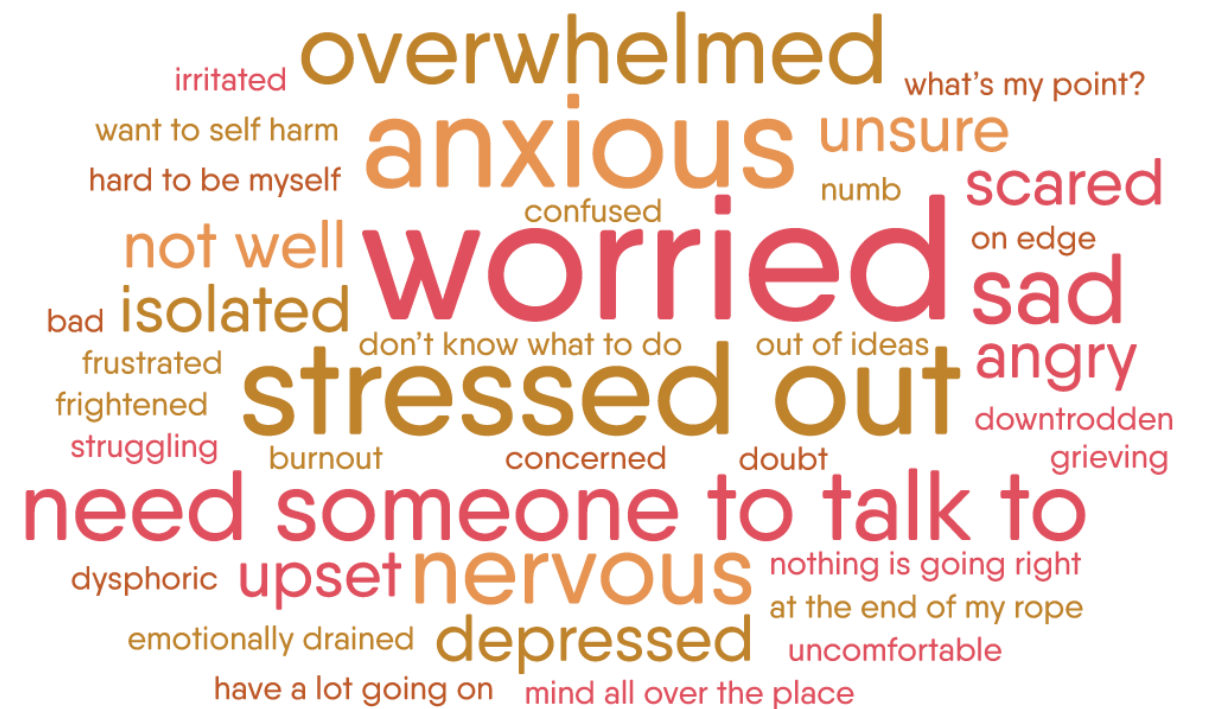


**FIRST TIME CALLERS (85%)**  
**CALLERS WHO CALLED SQSH**  
**MORE THAN ONCE (15%)**

## Callers Felt Most Helped By...

- RESOURCE REFERRALS (15%)**
- RESOURCE REFERRALS AND UNDERSTANDING**
- VALIDATION AND SUPPORT**
- SHARED EXPERIENCES**
- BEING LISTENED TO, VOLUNTEER REMEMBERING WHAT I SAID**
- EMOTIONALLY PRESENT VOLUNTEER**
- BEING PUT AT-EASE**
- FEELING CARED FOR**
- FEELING UNDERSTOOD**
- FEELING MORE HOPEFUL**
- FEELING LESS ALONE**
- CALM VOICE**
- EMOTIONAL SUPPORT (85%)**

## Pre-Call Mood



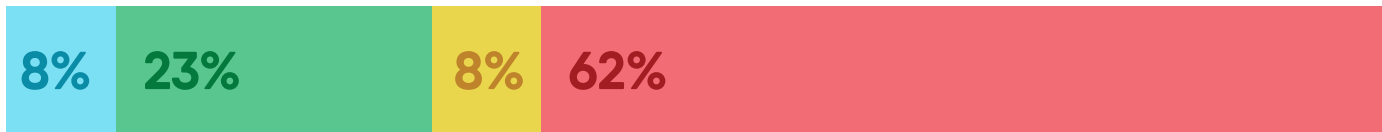
## Post-Call Mood



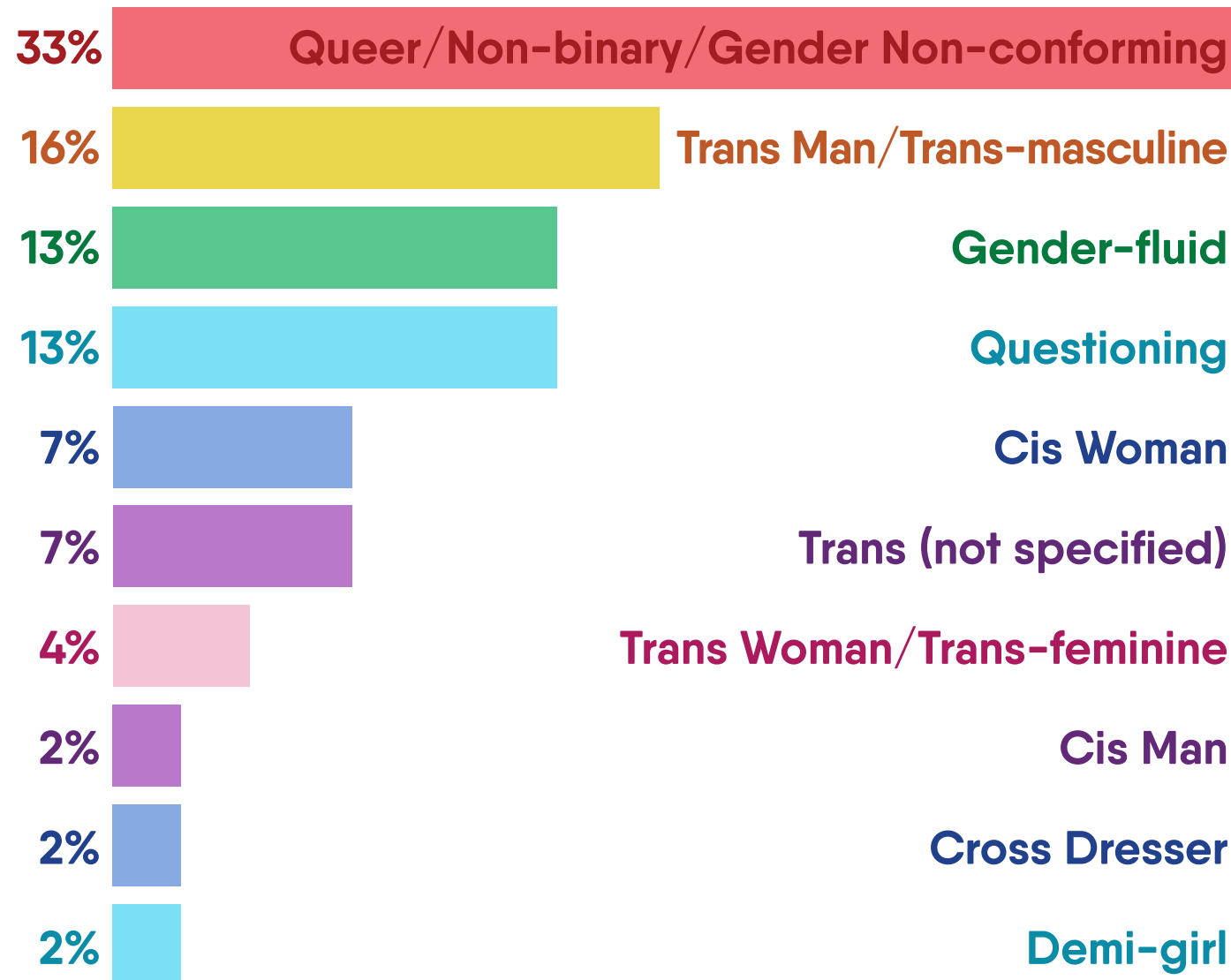
# CALLER DEMOGRAPHICS

## Racial/Ethnic Demographics

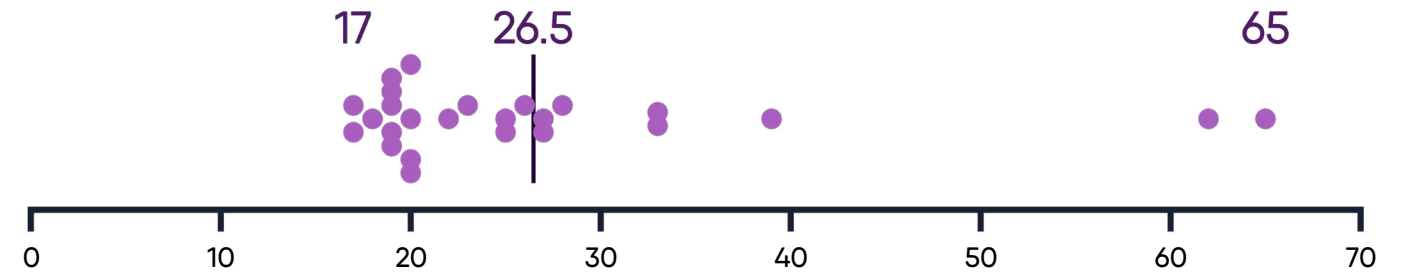
■ ASIAN / ASIAN-AMERICAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER     ■ BLACK / AFRICAN-AMERICAN / AFRICAN DESCENT  
■ LATINX / HISPANIC     ■ WHITE / CAUCASIAN



## Gender Identity

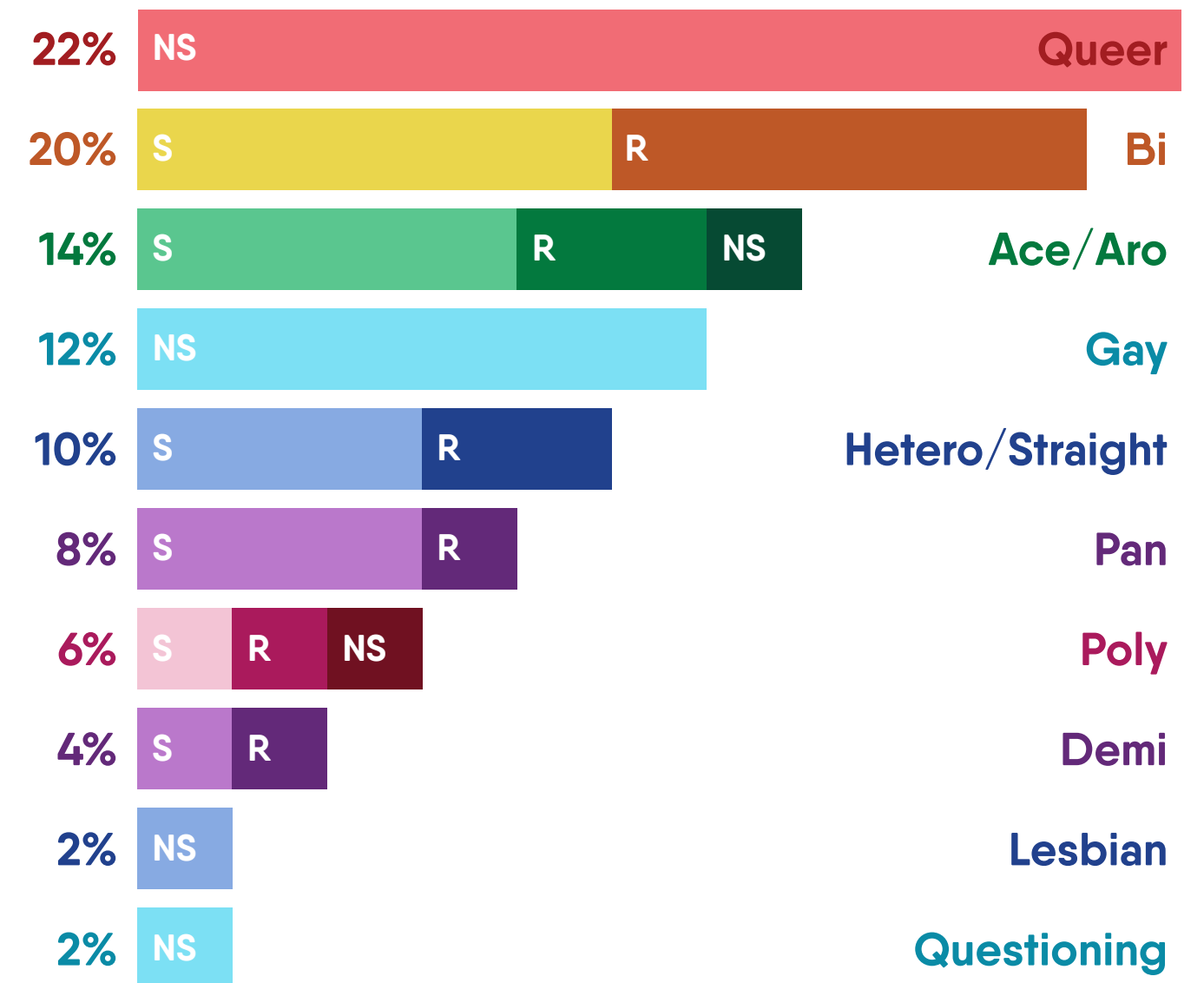


Age Ranged From 17 – 65 (Median at 26.5)



## Sexual & Romantic Orientation

S=SEXUAL ORIENTATION     R=ROMANTIC ORIENTATION     NS=NOT SPECIFIED





SQSH Launch Party on August 15, 2019

# TRAINING & EDUCATION FOR QUEER COMMUNITY

SQSH offers high-quality training in peer counseling, protest support, and related socio-emotional skills from a trauma-informed, LGBTQIA-affirming, and anti-oppressive lens, using best practices from the fields of social work, mental health, and peer support. Before taking calls, all Helpline Volunteers undergo 48+ hours of rigorous training and evaluations, gaining a stronger understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues, St. Louis resources, and mental health interventions.



“The facilitators combined visual and audio learning to teach both the facts-based protocol information and the fluidity of emotional support effectively.”

— ANONYMOUS TRAINEE

“I really liked how interactive the training was. Every activity was extremely helpful, allowing me to open up, practice peer counseling skills, and gain feedback.”

— ANONYMOUS TRAINEE

“All the lessons were facilitated through discussion-based learning and small-group activities, creating a highly collaborative environment where all of the knowledge in the room was fully utilized.”

— ANONYMOUS TRAINEE

“As a summer 2020 SQSH helpline trainee, I learned skills for meaningful listening and support that have made many of my day-to-day conversations feel richer and more openly connected. Being a part of this radically kind community makes me a better human.”

— JET, TRAINEE

“SQSH trainings are a magical place where connection and community-centered learning takes place, all with the intention of building our capacity to care for each other. Helping to facilitate that space is easily one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life.”

— RIOTT, TRAINER

# TRAINING CURRICULUM

## PEER COUNSELING SKILLS (16 hrs)

- 01 Active Listening**  
Paraphrasing & Summarizing, Mirroring Language & Tone, Open-ended Questions, "I" Statements, Non-verbals & Pauses
- 02 Call Structure**  
Check-ins, Being Caller-led, Call Flow, Building Rapport
- 03 Empowerment Skills**  
Validating, Normalizing, Cheerleading, Mythbusting
- 04 Feelings-oriented Calls**  
Exploring Feelings
- 05 Solution-Oriented Calls**  
Safety Planning, Introducing Resources, Risk Assessment, Grounding Exercises

## THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE (11 hrs)

- 01** Self-Care, Compassion Fatigue, & Burnout
- 02** LGBTQIA+ Cultural Humility
- 03** Anti-Oppression: Interrupting Racism
- 04** Substance Use & Overdose Education
- 05** Intimate Partner Violence & Survivor Support
- 06** LGBTQIA+ Policy in Missouri
- 07** Local Trans Services & Support Groups

## HELPLINE PROTOCOLS (11 hrs)

- 01 Confidentiality Policy**
- 02 Volunteer Support**  
Volunteer Boundaries & Triggers, Monthly Call Debriefs
- 03 Standard Call Protocols**  
Being On Call, Intake, Outtake, Basic SQSH Information, Shift Transition, Closing
- 04 Office Protocols**  
Opening & Closing the Office, On-Site Emergencies
- 05 Non-Standard Calls**  
Identity Disconnect, Interruption, Personal Boundaries, Friend Calls, Repeat Caller, Abusive Caller, Homicidal Caller, Perpetrator Call, Blacklisting Policy
- 06 Risk Assessment & Harm Reduction**  
Self-Harm, Suicide, Intoxicated Caller, Substance Use & Overdose
- 07 Contacting Emergency & Reporting Services**  
Contacting 911 or Police Alternatives, Reporting Abuse & Neglect
- 08 Phone System Procedures**  
Making Call-Backs, Adding a Caller to the Line, Technological Difficulties

## ROLEPLAYS (10 hrs)

Roleplays are realistic, diverse call scenarios ranging from 15 min to 1 hr. Our Roleplay writer draws from a mixture of:

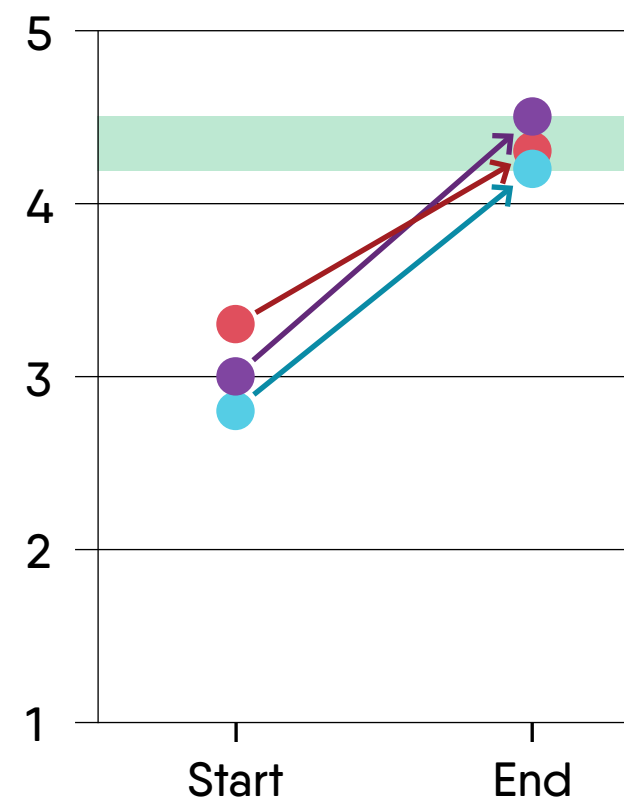
- previous SQSH calls
- personal experiences
- clinical case studies
- published compilations and anthologies
- scenarios shared by our community partners
- interviews with guest speakers and community members.

# TRAINING EVALUATION

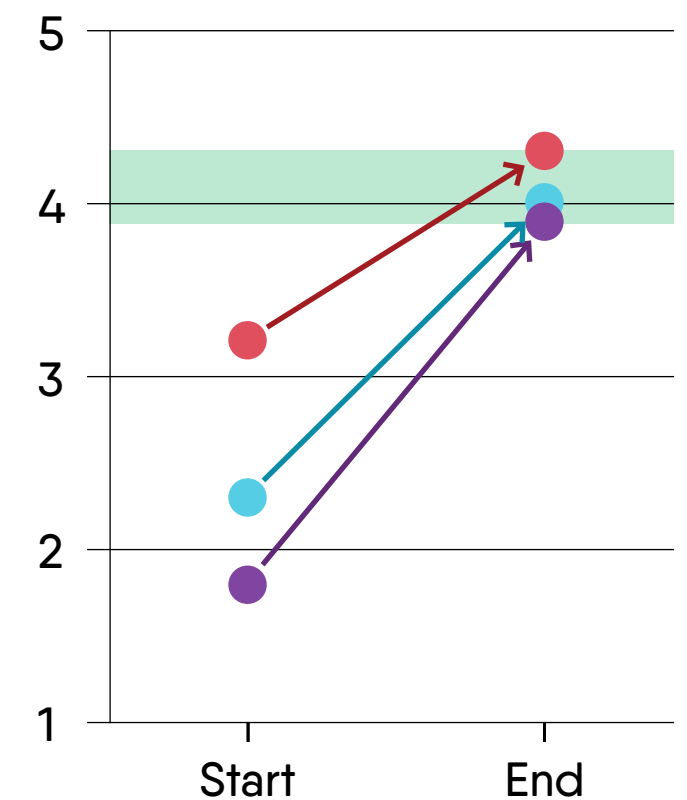
Data Collection Tools:

- 01 Training Feedback Survey**, which our trainees fill out after each training session.
- 02 Roleplay Assessments**, which experienced peer counselors from SQSH's Training Team, Uncle Joe's, and S.A.R.A.H.<sup>5</sup> fill out after each roleplay simulation to assess trainees' call-taking skills.

## Roleplay Confidence



## Helpline Confidence



- SUMMER 2019 COHORT
- FALL 2019 COHORT
- SUMMER 2020 COHORT
- END SCORES

Our helpline training program effectively prepares volunteers to take calls. They feel much more confident in their skills by the end of training.

<sup>5</sup> SQSH is grateful for the capacity-building support from Uncle Joe's and S.A.R.A.H., two peer counseling student groups at Washington University in St. Louis.



# VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Through our volunteer engagement program, we engage a broad range of queer St. Louisans in impactful systems-change work. By practicing consensus-based decision-making around major organizational decisions, we model effective community-decision making and facilitate the development of organizing skills among queer St. Louisans.

Unlike traditional nonprofits where staff relegate the most menial tasks to volunteers, our non-hierarchical organization empowers queer volunteers to engage in substantial program planning and service delivery, strengthening the web of peer support among our volunteer community. Our volunteer program strengthens grassroots networks and foster meaningful connections among queer residents.



“SQSH has given me the opportunity to create and contribute to work that feels like it is effecting change, contributing to the health of our community, and ultimately, I’m doing work that really matters to me. I am a person who has to do work that I feel deeply connected to, and I’ve found an excellent opportunity to grow my definitions of this type of work with SQSH.”

— ZOE, PRACTICUM STUDENT

“SQSH is about developing future LGBTQIA+ leadership and passionate, supportive volunteers who are inclusive of all demographic and identity groups. We are all valid and deserving of love. We all stand stronger as a united community. These are the reasons I enjoy volunteering at SQSH.”

— DAIVA, VOLUNTEER

## 01

### VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

We prioritize LGBTQIA+ St. Louisans holding **multiple marginalized identities** in recruitment, development, and retention, using interviews to assess applicants' **cultural humility**. We recruit community advisors from underrepresented queer communities to guide our Board, and evaluate our demographic makeup annually to measure progress towards our diversity and representation goals.

#### Data Collection Tool:

**01** **Volunteer Demographic Survey**, which our volunteers fill out when onboarding to join SQSH.

## 02

### SUPPORTING OUR MOST MARGINALIZED VOLUNTEERS

To promote a culture of racial equity within SQSH, we hold **in-house trainings** to highlight how racism manifests in the LGBTQIA+ community. We started debriefing these trainings in **racially caucused groups** starting in Summer 2020 to minimize the impact of White fragility on BIPOC members. Our White members plan to hold a **weekly reading group** to disrupt their relationship to White supremacy. We assist BIPOC and poor/working-class members in **career development** to bolster their employment opportunities. In 2021-2025, we plan to offer a **volunteer support program to lower the financial barriers** to joining SQSH and empower poor/working-class SQSH members to take on leadership roles. The program is designed to support the most financially disadvantaged SQSH members on a **sliding scale basis**.

# VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHICS

SQSH consists of 87.7% queer (49.2% trans) members, strongly representing the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community. Our volunteer demographics include substantial LGBTQIA+ diversity and well-mirror our caller demographics. We need to improve our racial and ethnic diversity within SQSH, and our outreach and engagement with BIPOC communities in St. Louis.

## SQSH Racial/Ethnic Demographics

ASIAN / ASIAN-AMERICAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER    BLACK / AFRICAN-AMERICAN / AFRICAN DESCENT  
 NATIVE AMERICAN / INDIGENOUS    MULTIRACIAL/MULTIETHNIC    LATINX / HISPANIC    WHITE / CAUCASIAN

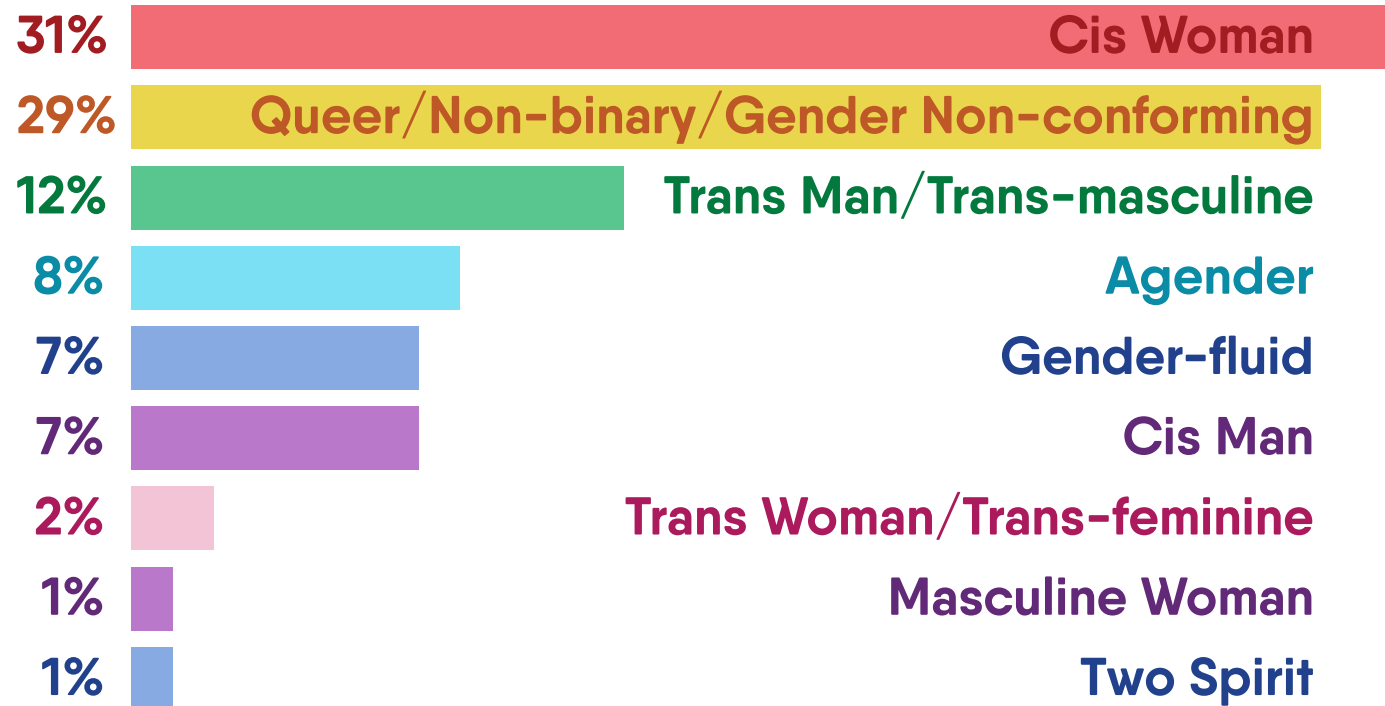


1%

ST. LOUIS METRO AREA RACIAL/ETHNIC CENSUS (2019)<sup>6</sup>

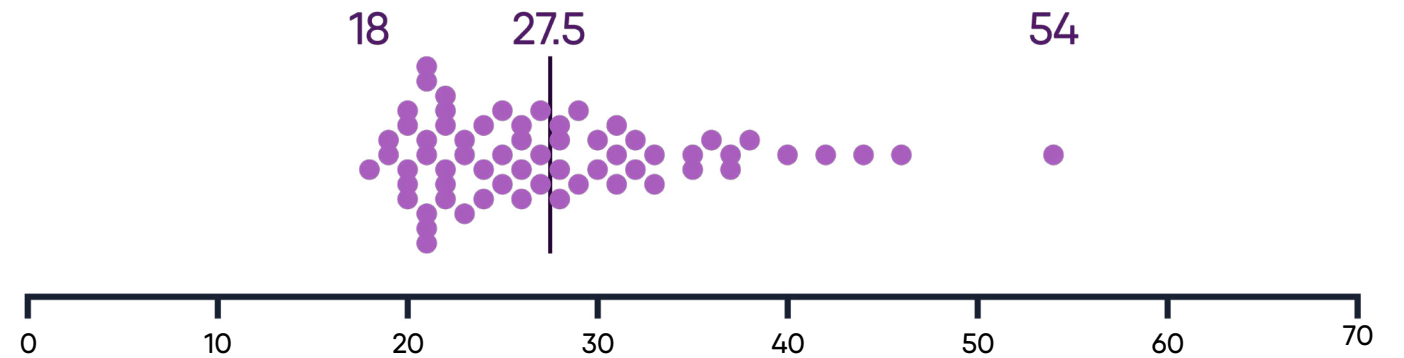


## Gender Identity



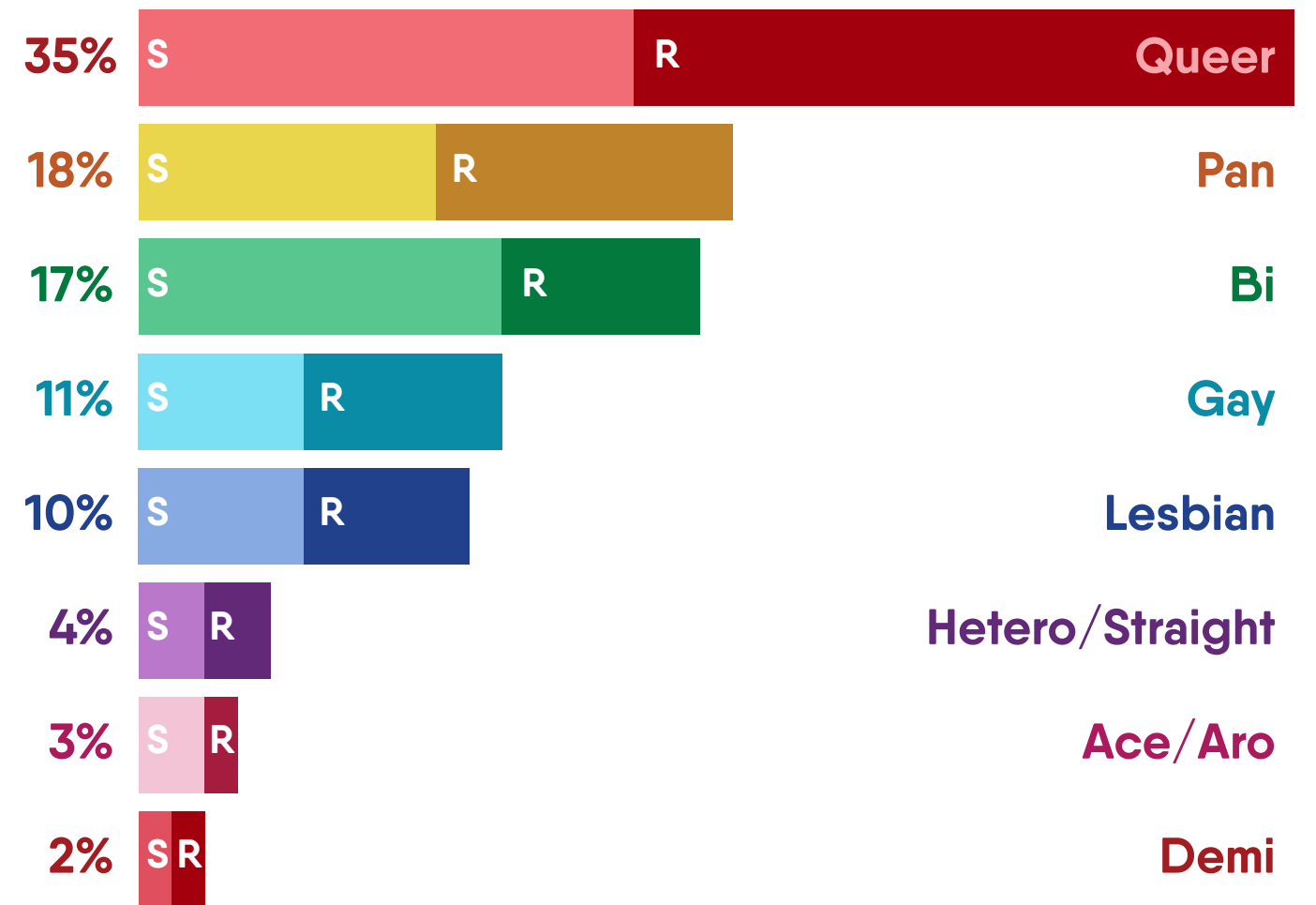
Age Ranged From 18 – 54 (Median At 27.5)

MEDIAN AGE IN ST. LOUIS METRO AREA IS 39.7



## Sexual & Romantic Orientation

S = SEXUAL ORIENTATION    R = ROMANTIC ORIENTATION



<sup>6</sup> Draw from: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US41180-st-louis-mo-il-metro-area/>



SQSH Buttons from tabling at Pride 2019



SQSH Volunteer cleaning up the SQSH office, summer 2019

# SQSHBOOK RESOURCE GUIDE

We boost LGBTQIA+ community access to resources using our SQSHBook resource guide, which catalogs 1200+ St. Louis resources, consolidates vetting information from queer-led organizations, and connects users to LGBTQIA-affirming services. Unlike national organizations, SQSH is able to connect individuals with grassroots community wisdom and culturally competent local resources. Users can consult the SQSHBook to find LGBTQIA-vetted, identity-affirming resources across a range of categories, including housing, food, healthcare, support groups, and more.

## As of December 2020, we have...

Identified and catalogued **1,253 resources** in the SQSHBook resource guide in total.

Researched and parsed out contacts and service information for **1,131 (90.25%)** of all resources.

Checked and verified the contact and service information for **1513 (41.01%)** of all resources.

Once the SQSHBook infrastructure is complete, we will invite “word on the street” comments from LGBTQIA+ community members who’ve had personal experiences with particular resources. By empowering queer community members to submit feedback on service providers, we can create democratic, LGBTQIA-centered narratives around local resources and increase the pressure for them to be LGBTQIA-competent.

# LOOKING TO 2021

Today, SQSH mobilizes over 80 volunteers, has taken over 200 calls, and hopes to expand to Missouri and Illinois in the next 5-10 years. In 2021-2025, we look forward to the following goals in our 6 program areas:

## Peer Support Helpline Service

- + **Continue to offer free, confidential, identity-affirming peer counseling** through our Helpline, maintaining current hours
- + **Offer free peer counseling drop-in sessions** over Zoom outside of regular hours during our community's peak stress seasons
- + **Research and pilot a text & chat pre-call service** that eases phone anxiety and transitions the user to a follow-up support phone call

## SQSHBook Resource Guide

- + **Transfer all vetting notes and accessibility information** to our resource spreadsheet to achieve 100% functionality
- + **Publish a beta version** of our SQSHBook resource spreadsheet for public use
- + **Launch a Community Calendar** that compiles and highlights monthly local queer-led events

## Training & Education for Queer Community

- + **Recruit and train one class** of queer/trans peer counselors per year
- + **Offer trauma-informed community courses** in peer counseling, protest support, and sexual health

## NEW: Training & Education for Partner Organizations

- + **Offer customized training modules** for partner organizations in LGBTQIA-affirming client care

## NEW: Call Data Analysis & Advocacy

- + **Publish annual results** from analysis of all Call Log and Caller Survey data from each year of Helpline operations
- + **Present findings to community partners**, including queer-allied politicians before and during local elections
- + **Use ongoing call data analysis to field information requests and advocate** for the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community's needs
- + **Partner with Metro Trans Umbrella Group and Planned Parenthood** to share our data collection methods and conduct a full needs assessment of the St. Louis queer/trans population

## Volunteer Engagement Program

- + **Complete our internal needs assessment and trainings** on sustainability and anti-bias
- + **Hire our first full time paid staff** into the Executive Director position
- + **Pilot our Volunteer Support Program** to sustain volunteer labor

# THE SQSH



# TEAM

As a non-hierarchical organization, our **16 teams** make decisions in their own realms of expertise and responsibility, while our Board provides strategic planning and mission-based leadership. **Our 100% trans Board** represents a particularly marginalized segment of the LGBTQIA+ community. As a membership-based nonprofit, our Bylaws give all SQSH members a vote in organizational and programmatic decisions.

# KEY PERSONNEL

Our leadership structure continues to evolve as SQSH volunteers gain the experience and confidence to step up to responsibilities. Here's a snapshot of our leadership team at the end of 2020:



**LUKA (they/them)**, a trans-masculine, pansexual, Singaporean immigrant, co-founded SQSH to create a resource they wish they had. As SQSH's Organizational Facilitator, Luka oversees program activities and develops SQSH's annual budget, strategic plans, and project timelines. With 12+ years of background in organizing and 5,000+ hours of experience in organizational management, they effectively provide leadership and facilitation for SQSH.



**RIOTT (they/them)** is a genderqueer social worker and therapist. As SQSH's Co-Founder, Secretary, and Curriculum Developer, Riott uses their 10+ years of curriculum development/facilitation experience and Master's in Social Work to develop SQSH's trauma-informed, LGBTQIA-affirming peer counseling curriculum.



**ESTHER (she/her)** is a pansexual Jewish trans woman pursuing a Master's in Social Work, with 16+ years of experience in advocacy for marginalized groups. As SQSH's Treasurer, she uses her prior experience as Treasurer for the St. Louis Democratic Socialists of America to manage the prudent, efficient use of SQSH's funds.



**ELLE (she/her)** is a pansexual woman passionate about queer mental health. As SQSH's Helpline Team Coordinator, she uses her organizational skills, detail-oriented nature, and experience as one of SQSH's first trainees to keep our Helpline running smoothly and provide a high-quality experience for both callers and volunteers.



**LISA (they/them)** is a non-binary pansexual person passionate about data analysis and creating supportive spaces. As SQSHBook Coordinator, they use their BS in Mathematics and Computer Science to develop and maintain the SQSHBook resource database.



**CLEO (they/them)** is a trans-masculine, non-binary, bi- & asexual, amateur painter. As Training Coordinator, Cleo organizes and teaches SQSH's peer support educational programs for Helpline Volunteers and community members. As a college drop-out with ADHD, they are dedicated to creating learning environments accessible to those neglected by traditional education.



**JET (they/them)** is a non-binary, pansexual person invested in building queer-affirming, grassroots collective care in St. Louis. With 2+ years of nonprofit experience in communications, outreach, and program coordination, a BA in sociocultural anthropology, and an MFA in creative writing, Jet uses their innovative problem-solving skills and experience in artistic/communicative fields to design and manage volunteer recruitment processes as SQSH's Recruitment Team Co-Coordinator.



**MIKKI** is a pansexual, nonbinary student pursuing majors in Women/Gender/ Sexuality Studies and English Literature. As Recruitment Team Co-Coordinator, Mikki works with Jet to manage onboarding/offboarding processes and recruit new volunteers. Having been a member of SQSH since its founding, they completed SQSH's 50+ hour helpline training, facilitated Peer Counseling lessons in 2020, and continues to take calls on the Helpline Team.



**KIMBERLY (she/her)** is a queer data enthusiast currently pursuing a PhD. As SQSH's Program Evaluation Coordinator, Kimberly uses her 10+ years of experience in research and evaluation to measure and evaluate SQSH's program outcomes, oversee data collection and analysis, and fulfill data requests from community partners.



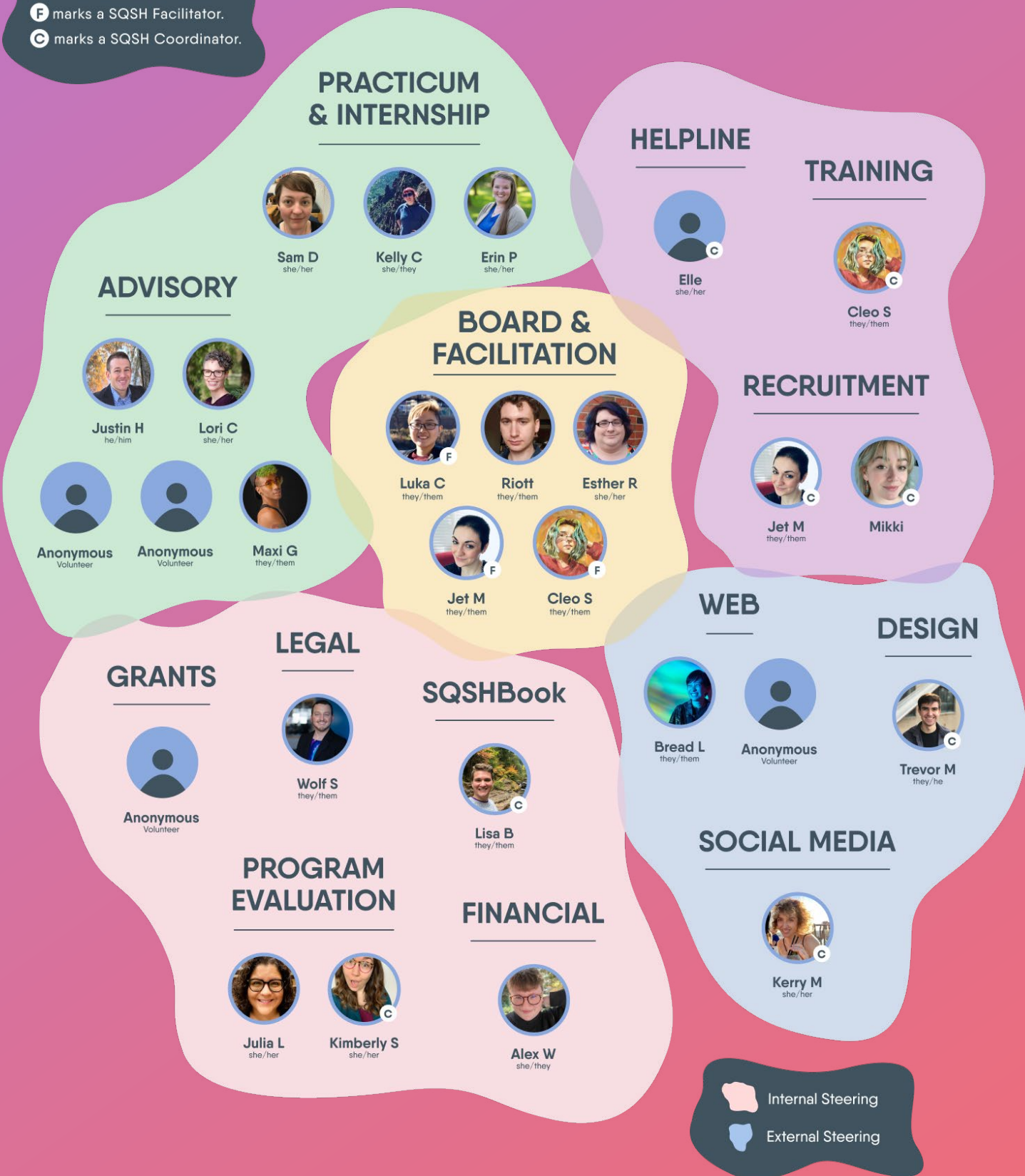
**KERRY (she/her)** is a queer woman pursuing degrees in Media Studies, Communication, and Gender Studies. As SQSH's Social Media Coordinator, Kerry plans and crafts social media posts, creates values-driven content, and uses SQSH's social media platforms to educate and uplift the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community.



**TREVOR (they/he)** is a queer, non-binary person pursuing a BFA in Communication Design, using their graphic design skills to build supportive spaces for queer people. As SQSH's Design Team Coordinator, Trevor manages SQSH's visual portfolio, leads SQSH's designers, and facilitates creative growth by providing artistic critique.

# THE SQSH CHART

**F** marks a SQSH Facilitator.  
**C** marks a SQSH Coordinator.



# OUR PARTNERS

Between 2019-2020, we've worked with:

- STL MUTUAL AID**: to launch the local Mutual Aid Hotline, learning from their mutual aid model while offering our expertise in peer support and helpline operations
- Provident BHR Behavioral Health Response**: to review our helpline protocols
- FORWARD through FERGUSON**, **STLAP**, **safe connections**, **promo**, **TES**, **NCCJ**, **MO-HOPE Project**: to supplement our in-house training
- NCADA**, **MO-HOPE Project**: to provide opioid education for our Helpline Volunteers and offer free Naloxone to callers at risk of overdose
- TRANS PARENT**, **promo**, **GBG Gateway Business Guild**, **PRIDE PAGES**, **METRO TRANS UMBRELLA GROUP**: to crowdsource vetting records for our SQSHBook resource guide
- SOLIDARITY ECONOMY**, **ST. LOUIS**: to design our Volunteer Support Program using economic justice principles
- UMSL**, **Fontbonne UNIVERSITY**, **SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY**, **LINDENWOOD**: to mobilize students, faculty, and staff
- Black Pride**: to reach Black LGBTQIA+ communities
- mhb**, **partnering investing empowering**, **SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY**: to obtain seed funding and project guidance

In 2021-2025, we plan to also work with:

- METRO TRANS UMBRELLA GROUP**: to train their support group facilitators in trans-affirming peer counseling skills
- Planned Parenthood**: to share our data collection methods and conduct a needs assessment of the St. Louis trans population
- sage OF PROMO FUND**: to reach older queer adults across MO and channel call data towards LGBTQIA-inclusive policy and advocacy
- LOT'S WIFE**: to support queer/trans protestors and activists by assisting in safety planning, training queer/trans chaplains, and managing protestors' legal information
- FAITH AND FOR THE SAKE OF ALL**: to train their chaplains in LGBTQIA-affirming peer counseling skills to staff the community chaplain hotline

# OUR FINANCES

In the spirit of transparency and accountability, we commit to releasing our financial statement and projected budget every year.

In our journey to ensure SQSH's continued survival, we have reached a critical point. In SQSH's third fiscal year, we are ready to start implementing and scaling up new programs beyond our Peer Support Helpline—programs that we've been building the foundation for since 2019. We have planned for our Annual Expenses to increase by 314% from 2020 to 2021. Our largest expenses include hiring our first full-time paid staff and funding our Volunteer Support Program to make contributing to SQSH more accessible and feasible for our members. During this vulnerable time, these are crucial steps to ensure that our community's labor is sustainable.



# 2019 & 2020 FINANCES

	2020	2019
<b>Revenue and Support</b>		
Individual Donations	12,128	697
In-Kind Donations	2,500	251
Corporations	-	100
Grants & Awards	-	8,500
Other Donations	2,758	3,236
Other Income	-	-
<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$ 17,386</b>	<b>\$ 12,785</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Support Helpline	4,622	6,759
Awareness and Advocacy	2,653	-
General and Administrative	90	49
Fundraising	79	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 7,444</b>	<b>\$ 6,799</b>
<b>Operating Reserves</b>		
Cash on Hand	\$ 15,928	\$ 1,836
Number of Months Operating Expenses	25.68	2.96

# THANK YOU, DONORS!

Thank you for the trust that you have placed in us over the last year. Amidst a global pandemic and its economic difficulties, so many community members and allies have opened their hearts to us and enabled us to serve hundreds of callers. We cannot thank you enough for contributing to our ongoing stability and success.

As a grassroots organization with minimal connections to wealthy donors and corporations, we rely heavily on small-donor donors and peer-to-peer crowdfunding. In our 2020 Winter Fundraiser, we received **\$9,536.53 from 243 donors**, who each donated \$39 on average. **97.7% of funds we received over the past year went directly to fund SQSH's primary programs.** Whether you donated \$3 or \$635, we sincerely appreciate all the donations we receive, and use all funds to advance our mission of strengthening the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community.

## We would like to recognize our largest donors in 2020:

Abby Keny	Drey Graham	Laura Compton	Oscar Im
Amanda Im	Ebby Offord	Luka Cai	Ranen Miao
Catherine Wright	Emily Rapoza	Marilyn Kuper	Sally Allen Chew
CenterPointe Hospital	Jane Sullivan	Miriam de Jonge	Sarah Hayes
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	Karalyn Skinner	Nana Mun	
	Karis Agnew	Natalie Snyder	

When you give to SQSH, you join a powerful movement of people committed to queer liberation. We are so grateful for your financial commitment to uplifting the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community.

Thank you again to all of our donors and supporters, and we look forward to a successful year in 2021!



Esther Roth-Colson  
Treasurer, on behalf of the Board of Directors and Finance Team

# 2021 PROJECTED BUDGET

PROJECTED INCOME	STATUS	TOTAL \$
<b>Grants &amp; Awards</b>		<b>\$ 19,300</b>
Peace First, Peacemaking Grant	<i>Confirmed</i>	250
CSJ Tabitha Grant	<i>Confirmed</i>	5,000
Trans Justice Funding Project	<i>Confirmed</i>	2,500
Racial Healing & Justice Fund	<i>Pending</i>	5,000
Missouri Foundation for Health, Advocacy Initiative	<i>Pending</i>	6,550
<b>Individual Donations</b>		<b>\$ 12,000</b>
10 SQSH-Organized Trainings (10 PARTICIPANTS PER TRAINING X \$5 PER PARTICIPANT)		500
10 Externally Organized Mini-Fundraisers (\$100 PER FUNDRAISER)		1,000
2 SQSH-Organized Fundraisers (\$5,000 PER FUNDRAISER)		10,000
General Contribution Gifts (\$50/MONTH X 10 NON-FUNDRAISER MONTHS)		500
<b>In-Kind Donations</b>		<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>TOTAL 2021 PROJECTED INCOME</b>		<b>\$ 31,300</b>

PROJECTED EXPENSES	TOTAL \$
<b>Training &amp; Development (Helpline Training)</b>	<b>\$ 575</b>
Training Contracts & Guest Speakers	100
Trainee Tech Needs (USED COMPUTER, DESK LIGHT, MOUSE, SHIPPING)	100
Trainee Stipends (\$25/MONTH X 3 MONTHS FOR 5 TRAINEES WHO OPT IN)	375

PROJECTED EXPENSES <i>cont.</i>	TOTAL \$
<b>Occupancy Costs</b>	<b>\$ 1,646</b>
Office Rent (\$125/MONTH X 12 MONTHS)	1,500
PO Box Premium Service (\$118/13 MONTHS)	146
<b>Information Technology</b>	<b>\$ 600</b>
Nextiva Phone/Voice Bill (\$50/MONTH X 12 MONTHS)	600
<b>Advertising &amp; Public Relations</b>	<b>\$ 420</b>
Social Media Boosts (1 MONTH BOOSTED POST (\$10-20) X 3-6 MONTHS)	60
Etsy Listing for 50 Merchandise Items	10
Namecheap One-Year Website Hosting Renewal	30
SQSH Merchandise	200
Print Copies of Training Binder, Annual Report & Strategic Plan	10
Newspaper & Radio Ads	110
<b>Fundraising Tools &amp; Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 100</b>
Social Media Boosts (5 \$10 BOOSTS PER FUNDRAISER X 2 FUNDRAISERS)	100
<b>Salaries, Taxes &amp; Benefits</b>	<b>\$ 26,212</b>
Full-Time Staff Salary (8 MONTHS) (2080 HOURS X \$15/HOUR X 8/12 MONTHS X 1.08 TAXES)	22,464
Volunteer Support Program (6 MONTHS)	3,200
Volunteer Financial Assistance (\$50/MONTH X 6 MONTHS)	300
Payroll Software Gusto ((\$19/MONTH + \$6/EMPLOYEE/MONTH) X 2 EMPLOYEES X 8 MONTHS)	248
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>\$ 904</b>
Directors & Officers Policy Insurance	307
General & Professional Liability Insurance	597
<b>Other Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 105</b>
Applications & Reports	50
Professional Development	55
<b>TOTAL 2021 PROJECTED EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 30,562</b>

# WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

**Why support SQSH?** Amidst the pandemic, our St. Louis LGBTQIA+ family faces deepening isolation and health disparities. As the only local group focused on LGBTQIA-affirming peer support, SQSH has the potential to grow and power St. Louis's ecosystem of queer-led social justice work. Your support will enable:

- + SQSH to survive and thrive in our third year.
- + Our Peer Support Helpline to continue operating without disruption.
- + Our Executive Director to find a safe haven in St. Louis while earning a living wage.
- + Our Volunteers to do liberating, joyful work for our communities while having their basic needs supported.
- + Our Peer Counselors to undergo the rigorous training needed to provide high-quality support to callers.
- + Our Trainers to hone SQSH's curriculum and teach community members life-saving peer support skills.
- + Our SQSHBook Coordinator to develop and maintain a comprehensive St. Louis resource guide.

# DONATE


The most impactful way you can support SQSH's lifesaving work is by donating. Your donations will invest directly in our programs and services, reinvigorate our peer-led organization, and create a ripple effect on local queer communities. You do not have to be in St. Louis to donate!

Your financial support today will benefit the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community for years to come.

## Donate through any of our platforms:

 **DONATE MONTHLY**  
secure.actblue.com/donate/sqsh-2020


 **VENMO**  
venmo.com/theSQSH

 **CASHAPP**  
cash.app/\$theSQSH

 **PAYPAL**  
paypal.me/theSQSH

 **FACEBOOK**  
facebook.com/theSQSH

 **INSTAGRAM**  
instagram.com/theSQSH

 **WRITE A CHECK**  
email [treasurer@thesqsh.org](mailto:treasurer@thesqsh.org)

## Here's where your donations would go:

**\$40** Funds one month of outreach projects, allowing SQSH to organize community events, publicity materials, and awareness campaigns

**\$50** Funds one month of phone bills, allowing SQSH callers to access free, confidential Helpline service

**\$75** Funds one month of insurance, allowing SQSH volunteers to take calls safely & securely

**\$100** Funds one SQSH volunteer's training stipend, enabling LGBTQIA+ community members to learn peer counseling skills to support others

**\$125** Funds one month of rent, allowing SQSH volunteers to take calls in a private, confidential office space

**\$150** Funds one SQSH volunteer's training stipend, enabling LGBTQIA+ community members to learn peer counseling skills to support others

# VOLUNTEER

We welcome individuals from all backgrounds to join our supportive, empowering community of dedicated LGBTQIA+ persons and allies. Our volunteers' diverse and unique strengths, skills, and personalities make SQSH's work possible. We are committed to creating a non-hierarchical organization that values mutual trust and every member's opinion. When you join our team, you will gain an equal voice in SQSH's operations along with every other member of our organization.

Please note that due to capacity issues, we are only able to accept applications from high-commitment volunteers who are able to do the work reliably and communicate consistently.

For the sustainability of our organization, we require all volunteers to commit to working with SQSH for at least 6 months in order to consider your application.

## STEP 01

First, please view the ["Our Team" page on our website](#) and our [full list of SQSH Volunteer Roles](#) to understand how SQSH operates internally.

## STEP 02

Second, please view the [Volunteer Requirements](#) on our website.

## STEP 03

Finally, after you've identified the roles that you are most interested in and equipped to volunteer for, fill out an application:

Helpline Volunteer App  
[tinyurl.com/SQSHApply21](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHApply21)

Steering/Advisory Team App  
[tinyurl.com/SQSHTeam](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHTeam)

Practicum/Internship App  
[tinyurl.com/SQSHInternPracticum](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHInternPracticum)

As we head into 2021, these are the volunteer roles that we need to fill most urgently:

- + Helpline Volunteer
- + Recruitment Contact
- + Bookkeeper
- + Fundraising Coordinator
- + Grant Writer
- + Program Evaluator
- + IT Support
- + Press & Media Coordinator
- + Graphic Designer

# QUICK LINKS

## LEARN ABOUT SQSH

For General Contact [tinyurl.com/SQSHGeneralContact](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHGeneralContact)  
For Media Inquiries [tinyurl.com/SQSHMediaContact](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHMediaContact)  
Join SQSH's Newsletter [tinyurl.com/SQSHList](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHList)

## CONNECT WITH SQSH

Request a SQSH Presentation [tinyurl.com/SQSHPresentation](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHPresentation)  
Request a SQSH Training [tinyurl.com/SQSHTraining](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHTraining)  
Partner with SQSH [tinyurl.com/SQSHPartner](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHPartner)

## APPLY TO JOIN SQSH

Join SQSH as a Helpline Volunteer [tinyurl.com/SQSHApply21](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHApply21)  
Join SQSH's Steering/Advisory Team [tinyurl.com/SQSHTeam](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHTeam)  
Join SQSH as an Intern/Practicum Student [tinyurl.com/SQSHInternPracticum](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHInternPracticum)

## STRENGTHEN OUR RESOURCE DATABASE

Submit a SQSHBook Resource [tinyurl.com/SQSHSubmitAResource](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHSubmitAResource)  
Edit a SQSHBook Resource [tinyurl.com/SQSHEditAResource](https://tinyurl.com/SQSHEditAResource)

# THANK YOU!

