



## **LGBT YouthLine releases new custom chat/text platform to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth during COVID-19**

Toronto, September 21, 2020 – As the COVID-19 pandemic wears on, LGBT YouthLine has found that 2SLGBTQ+ youth in Ontario are feeling more isolated than ever.

Working in partnership with a dedicated group of technology professionals, LGBT YouthLine has launched a new chat/text interface, designed with youth's current needs in mind. As a youth-led organization, we know how important mobile phone access is to youth. LGBT YouthLine's new chat service takes the current technological climate into consideration, offering youth a user-friendly mobile interface that keeps their privacy in mind.

"Safety and anonymity is so important to 2SLGBTQ+ youth who are looking for supports. In many cases, their phones are the only places where they can safely contact us, and we were feeling the gap with our old chat/text service for a long time," said Minna Frederick, Peer Support Manager. "Without the support of this tech team, we would not have been able to build the custom solution we needed, to improve the user experience for chatters."

Conceived from a "lunch and learn" meeting with tech firm two years ago, our team worked in partnership with a 10-person team that was committed exclusively to this project for multiple weeks. Despite layoffs and funding decreases due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team continued to support the project to its completion on their own time.

"The initial ask was to help modernize the user experience with a new chat platform, which presented us with so much more than just a technical problem to solve: we've always viewed the end goal of our work as keeping 2SLGBTQ+ youth in Ontario connected to essential support. We're so honoured to be part of YouthLine's ongoing history and to help the service remain vital in the future." Jackie Lealess, project team lead.

"When social tech supports non-profits, we can do great and innovative things together - we can't say enough about how responsive and supportive the project team was throughout this process often working on weekends so we had no service interruptions." said Berkha Gupta, Executive Director. "Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth in a way that makes sense to them and meets them where they are is paramount, especially during a stressful and isolated time. With over half of our website users coming from mobile, we felt that it was especially important to push through with this project to its completion."

Attached are screenshots of our platform before and new platform now. Youth are encouraged to chat with us directly and give us feedback [here](#). To set up an interview or to

[www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca)  
[info@youthline.ca](mailto:info@youthline.ca)  
1-888-687-9688 / 416-962-2232

PO Box 73118, Wood Street PO  
Toronto ON M4Y 2W5  
Charity# 89756 4951 RR001



learn more about the work LGBT YouthLine is doing, please contact Berkha Gupta at 416.962.2232 x224 or [berkhag@youthline.ca](mailto:berkhag@youthline.ca).

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**About LGBT YouthLine:** LGBT YouthLine is a Queer, Trans, Two-Spirit youth-led organization that affirms and supports the experiences of youth (29 and under) across Ontario. We do this by:

- Providing anonymous peer support through our HelpLine and referrals;
- Training youth to provide support to other youth; and
- Providing resources so youth can make informed decisions.

At YouthLine, all our volunteers are trained peer supporters ages 16-29 with a diversity of 2SLGBTQ+ identities and lived experiences. We serve all of Ontario. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, we are currently taking texts, chats, and email only from 4pm-9:30pm EST every day except Saturday.



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## Before:



## After:

