

Guiding Principles of Queere Jugend NRW

Text adopted in October 2017, updated in August 2019.

The “Queere Jugend” NRW Network

The Queere Jugend NRW Network is made up of predominantly volunteer-run queer youth services in North Rhine-Westphalia and receives support from the Queere Jugend NRW specialist office.

The office is part of the Queeres Netzwerk NRW e.V.¹ and funded by North Rhine-Westphalia's Children and Youth Promotion Program (Kinder- und Jugendförderplan). An Advisory Board, which is elected in accordance with the election regulations of April 1st 2017, assists the work of the specialist office.

The office's role regarding the Queere Jugend NRW network is to act as a cooperative support structure. It offers help, advice, qualification, and networking for the volunteer-run queer youth groups in NRW. By doing so, the office seeks to ensure a regular exchange between the queer youth groups. Additionally, there are project funds available through the expert office (see point 4) for which projects and groups of the network Queere Jugend NRW can apply.

Queere Jugend NRW offers the possibility to get involved in statewide activities and working groups.

1.) Queere Jugend NRW Membership

Queere Jugend NRW is a network of predominantly volunteer-run queer youth services in NRW. What we understand by “predominantly volunteer-run” is that that even if the coordination of a volunteer team may be carried out by a professional, the volunteers must be the active leaders of the youth group. LGBTIQ+ youth groups with fully employed education specialists won't be considered volunteer-run. Our focus is on volunteer work and on the highest level of autonomy and participation possible. However, possible support by local professional education specialists to strengthen volunteer work is desired.

The services and activities led by volunteer youth groups range from open youth work to projects with a focus on content, such as music, video, creative writing and co-organized education events.

All services and activities are non-commercial.

2.) Target Groups of Queere Jugend NRW

The main target group of Queere Jugend NRW is young LGBTIQ+ people. The broad legal definition of ‘youth’ (from 14 up to and including the age of 27) is applied here.

The aim of queer youth work is to create, with the active participation of young people, spaces that are free from discrimination and violence, in which queer young people can meet, exchange ideas and experiences, and support each other.

¹ 2019 update: In the 2017 version of the Guiding Principles, LAG Lesben NRW was also listed as responsible institution. Since 2019, the Queere Jugend NRW office is exclusively supported by Queeres Netzwerk NRW e.V.

3.) Group Facilitation

All group facilitators have been trained for their voluntary position, at a minimum, within the framework of a youth group leader training program (Juleica, by its German abbreviation). People who are new to voluntary queer youth work take the training course as soon as possible. Additionally, all youth group facilitators regularly receive further training to keep the quality of their work at a high level. Youth group facilitators organize the activities in teams of at least two people. Volunteer-run queer youth work follows a peer-to-peer approach. Youth group leaders, in consequence, are not older than 30 years.

Volunteer-run youth services do not replace professional counseling services, but rather refer people to them in a consequent way. For this reason, the groups are connected with local counseling and information services.

Youth group leaders are required to submit their criminal record. All queer youth groups have a procedure of request and custody of criminal records.

4.) Project funds

The Queere Jugend specialist office receives annual project funds that it can later distribute among the volunteer-run youth groups. When doing so, it seeks to assign the funds among all interested projects in a fair way. Groups must submit (informal) project applications to request funding. Additionally, they must participate in Queere Jugend network meetings and in the regular (about once a year) project visits by the specialist office in order to receive financial support.

5.) Protection against sexual Violence

Group leaders ensure that the personal boundaries of all participants are respected. They intervene immediately if these boundaries are violated. Protection against sexual violence is a default part of the Juleica training and of other advanced training programs.

As a basic principle, group leaders do not have sexual and/or romantic relationships with participants of the youth group. Romantic and/or sexual relationships with a group participant result in the resignation of the group leader position.

If the application of these principles is at risk, the Advisory Board and the specialist office can be consulted to find possible solutions.

In 2018, a protection policy with concrete courses of action will be defined.

All Queere Jugend NRW youth group leaders sign the personal commitment declaration of Queere Jugend NRW.