

## **YOUTH GROUP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### *FOR YOUTH*

**Q: What will my first meeting be like?**

A: At your first meeting, a facilitator will pair you with an youth leader who knows the ropes, and who can introduce you to other youth and can answer any questions you might have. During our meetings everyone introduces themselves to the large group, and then we share stories about how our last week went during small group check-ins. After that, you'll participate in our programming – anything from watching a movie to doing an art project to learning about LGBTQ history! Finally, during the last 30 minutes of group, youth are free to socialize with one another – hang out, eat some snacks, meet new friends, or talk with one of the facilitators about anything going on in your life.

**Q: How can I talk about sensitive issues?**

A: At youth group we know that many of the issues that come up are sensitive and difficult to talk about. Because of that we have several ground rules in place that help keep everyone feeling safe during group discussion. One of the most important of these is “ouch” and “oops.” If someone says something that is accidentally hurtful or inadvertently offensive, anyone who feels hurt or uncomfortable will say “ouch.” The offender will stop what they are saying and instead say “oops,” signifying that they did not mean to say something hurtful. Other ground rules that help with sensitive issues include “assume the best,” and “don’t assume, ask.”

**Q: What do I do if I feel uncomfortable?**

A: At youth group, you are never forced to participate in any discussion or activity that makes you feel uncomfortable. Simply tell one of the facilitators or adult volunteers that you are uncomfortable, and we'll talk with you about why you are uncomfortable and what you would like the facilitators to do to help you. Remember – at youth group all sharing is voluntary.

**Q: What if I have to leave early?**

A: While we prefer youth to stay until the end of session, we know that sometimes youth need to leave early. If that is the case, simply a) sign out on the sign-in paper and b) let a facilitator/volunteer know.

**Q: What if my family is not supportive?**

A: If your family is not supportive of your gender/sexuality, youth group is a great place to share experiences and be yourself in a supportive environment. Youth group participants, facilitators, and volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds, with a variety of personal experiences, many of which might be similar to your own.

*FOR FAMILY MEMBERS/TRUSTED ADULTS:*

**Q: What ages are the participants in youth group?**

A: Youth group participants are generally 11-18 years old.

**Q: When should I drop my youth off/pick my youth up?**

A: Youth should be dropped off between 5:45pm and 6:00pm on Mondays, and picked up at 8:30pm. We know that getting to the UC area by 6pm might be difficult with your work schedule, so the first 30 minutes of group are “ice-breaker” activities. This means that if youth arrive late, they will not miss introductions, check-ins, or educational programming, all of which start at 6:30pm.

**Q: Are parents allowed to be at youth group?**

A: No, parents are not allowed to participate in youth group. We are happy to talk to parents before youth group starts. However, once group has started we keep it a “parent-free zone,” so that youth participants feel safe expressing themselves. Parents are welcome to wait in the parking lot, or to head down the street to the Panera on Calhoun Street during the meeting.

**Q: What adults are involved in youth group?**

A: Each week two of the four facilitators are at group to lead activities and programming. There is also one GLSEN management member and one GLSEN volunteer on hand during each meeting. Finally, there are occasionally members of the community who come and speak to the youth during programming time. These individuals are knowledgeable in a variety of areas (peer mediation, religion, therapy, history, etc).

**Q: What sorts of things are youth learning at youth group?**

A: GLSEN’s mission is about the value of education, and therefore, many of our programs are educational in nature. Youth learn about things such as LGBTQ history, gender and sexuality in other parts of the world, dealing with bullying, and mental health. Of course, some week are “fun” weeks, and youth play board games, bake cookies, and otherwise just have a good time.