Ohio Educator’s Guide to GLBTQ* Resources:
A Guide for Creating Safe Schools for ALL Youth

*Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning
“As a psychologist at Family Achievement Clinic, I have worked with too many tearful children who have been victims of homophobic bullying, whether or not they were homosexual. This tragedy affects all our children and all our children deserve knowledge, respect and support. This resource guide will help educators to provide that for their students.”

– Sylvia Rimm, Ph.D., Director Family Achievement Clinic in Cleveland, Author of Growing Up Too Fast & See Jane Win
“Sexual orientation is not a preference or a choice, but rather a consequence of the organization of one’s brain. Discrimination against GLBTQ individuals is unconscionable, but unfortunately practiced by even some who regard themselves fair and tolerant. The straight population must be properly educated and it is best to start with youngsters in secondary schools. The Ohio Educator’s Guide will provide teachers with the necessary resources to educate our next generation of adults.”

– Robert B. Daroff, M.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Neurology, Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, University Hospitals Case Medical Center, Past President of American Neurological Association

“Suicide Prevention Education Alliance supports the use of the Ohio Educator’s Guide. The Guide provides resources that will assist school personnel as they strive to ensure safe and welcoming hallways for all students.”

– Pat Lyden, M.A., Executive Director, Suicide Prevention Education Alliance

“As a school board member, I see preventing bullying of all students as a prime responsibility. No child can thrive in an atmosphere of intimidation or fear. I support the use of the GLSEN guide: The Ohio Educator’s Guide to GLBTQ Resources as another useful tool to assist administrators, counselors and classroom teachers in making our schools safer, not only for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered students, but for all students. Keeping our schools safe and teaching students respect for each other and acceptance of diversity are important parts of our mission as educators.”

– Linda Beebe, Attorney, Educator, President of Lakewood [Ohio] City Schools School Board of Education
Ohio Educator’s Guide to GLBTQ* Resources:
A Guide for Creating Safe Schools for ALL Youth

*Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning
# Table of Contents

**GLSEN**  
(Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network)  
7

**From Teasing to Torment:**  
A Report on School Climate in Ohio  
9

**Public Schools and Sexual Orientation:**  
A First Amendment Framework for Finding Common Ground  
31

**The Robbie Kirkland Story**  
37

**Legal Information**  
45
- Laws Impacting LGBT Youth in Schools
- Model Harassment and Discrimination Policies
- Frequently Asked Questions on Safe School Policies
- Fifteen Expensive Reasons Why Safe Schools Legislation is in Your State’s Best Interest

**Resources & Ideas for Creating Safe Schools for GLBTQ Youth**  
59
- Tips for Counseling GLBT Youth
- Name Calling in the Classroom
- An Educator’s Guide to Intervening in Anti-Gay Harassment
- Don’t Look and It Will Go Away: YA Books – A Key to Uncovering the Invisible Problem of Bullying

-
Table of Contents, continued

- Addressing Name-Calling: Name It, Claim It, Stop It 74
- Cyberbullying: An Emerging Threat to the “Always On” Generation 75
- Myths and Stereotypes about Gay and Lesbian People 85
- What The Truth is about Sexual Orientation 86
- Transgender 101 87

Sample Lesson Plans
- Lesson #1: Talking the Talk 95
- Lesson #2: Gender Talk 99
- Lesson #3: How Does Homophobia Hurt Us All? 100

Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Handbook 103

Sources of Additional Information and Support for Educators, Parents and Students
- National Resources 109
- Ohio State Resources 117
- GLBTQ Supportive Religious Resources 119
- County Resources 123

Glossary & Acronyms 139
GLSEN
(Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network)
Mission Statement
The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

We believe that such an atmosphere engenders a positive sense of self, which is the basis of educational achievement and personal growth. Since homophobia and heterosexism undermine a healthy school climate, we work to educate teachers, students and the public at large about the damaging effects these forces have on youth and adults alike. We recognize that forces such as racism and sexism have similarly adverse impacts on communities and we support schools in seeking to redress all such inequities.

GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes in creating a more vibrant and diverse community. We welcome as members any and all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or occupation, who are committed to seeing this philosophy realized in K-12 schools.

History
Founded as a local group in 1990, the Gay and Lesbian Independent School Teachers Network (GLSTN) began as a volunteer group of 70 gay and lesbian educators. At that time, there were two Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) in the nation, only one state with policy in place to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) students, and a general lack of awareness of the needs of GLBT students. GLBT youth did not have a voice in the education community or in the GLBT movement. There were few, if any, resources available for teachers to discuss GLBT issues. However, groups of concerned individuals began to establish chapters across the country, advocating locally and regionally for safe schools for students who were, or were perceived to be, GLBT.

In 1995, GLSTN became a national organization and hired its first full time staff person, GLSTN’s founder and Executive Director, Kevin Jennings. In 1997, GLSTN staged its first national conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, to respond to the legislature’s move to ban all student groups in an effort to prevent the formation of GSAs in the state. It was also this year that GLSTN changed its name to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, or GLSEN, in order to attract new members to the struggle for safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Currently, GLSEN has registered more than 3,500 GSAs, has approximately 40 full time staff, a governing board of 20 members and two advisory committees at the national level. At this point, GLSEN has successfully hosted 8 national conferences to bring together student leaders, educators, chapter leaders and activists. GLSEN also sponsors the National Day of Silence, in which millions of students, teachers, and staff at thousands of school campuses across the country have
participated. GLSEN’s newest national project is National No Name Calling Week. In coalition with leading education organizations, including the National Education Association and the National Middle School Association, GLSEN is proud to be a part of an event geared toward educating middle school students about the negative impact of bullying and harassment.

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**

In August 1995, the first meeting of what was to become GLSEN Cleveland was convened by two teachers who were moved to action by their concern for the safety of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) youth in our schools. Over the succeeding eleven years, GLSEN Cleveland engaged in a wide variety of activities to make the schools of Northeast Ohio safe, nurturing and affirming environments for GLBT youth. In the summer of 2005, GLSEN Cleveland became GLSEN Northeast Ohio to more accurately reflect our service area of 23 counties.

The following is an overview of the resources we provide.

- **Assistance to High School Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)**
  We offer support, resources, activity ideas and networking opportunities for advisors and student participants of high school GSAs and allied diversity and/or multicultural groups.

- **Advocacy for Policy Change**
  GLSEN Northeast Ohio, along with allied organizations, works to secure anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies that are clearly inclusive of GLBT youth in Ohio schools.

- **The Robbie Kirkland Memorial Scholarship & Creative Writing Contest**
  In January of 1997, Robbie Kirkland, a fourteen-year old high school freshman, took his own life rather than return to school after winter break. Robbie had struggled with his sexual orientation and the external pressures from school, religion, and society. Since 1998, GLSEN Northeast Ohio has annually awarded a $1,000 Scholarship to an area youth who has demonstrated positive leadership in support of diversity awareness and inclusivity. In 2001, a Creative Writing Award, including a $250 cash prize, was initiated.

- **Assistance to Educators**
  We offer information, support, training and resources to Northeast Ohio educators who are interested in creating safe school climates for all youth. Besides responding to specific requests, we publish a quarterly newsletter, staff information tables at various area festivals/workshops, and maintain an informational website.

- **Membership Activities**
  GLSEN Northeast Ohio provides regular programming and hosts an Annual Awards dinner at which local “Pathfinders” are honored.
From Teasing to Torment:

A Report on School Climate in Ohio
From Teasing to Torment: A Report on School Climate in Ohio

AUTHORS, GLSEN Research Department
Joseph G. Kosciw, PhD, Research Director
Elizabeth M. Diaz, Research Associate
Sean N. Fischer, Research Consultant
Daniela Stojanovic, Research Consultant

SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY HARRIS INTERACTIVE, INC.

©2005 GLSEN Reprinted with permission
From Teasing to Torment
Table of Contents

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .........................13
INTRODUCTION ........................................................................15
RESULTS ..................................................................................15
Biased Language in School ..............................................15
   Biased Language From Students ..........................15
   Biased Language From Teachers
   and Other School Staff ........................................18
   Intervention Regarding Biased Remarks ..........19
Severity of Bullying, Name-Calling
and Harassment in School ..............................................20
Safety in School .................................................................22
Personal Experiences of Bullying,
Name-Calling and Harassment .................................23
   Verbal Harassment ..............................................................23
   Physical Harassment and Assault ..........................24
   Other Forms of Harassment ........................................24
   Reporting Incidents of Harassment ..................25
   Differences in Incidents of Harassment
   and Assault by School Type ..............................26
School Climate and Educational Indicators .................27
LGBT Resources and Supports in School ..................27
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS .........................30
ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY ........................................30
Table 1: Demographics of Survey Participants ................................................................. 16
Table 2: School Characteristics ......................................................................................... 16
Figure 1: Frequency of Biased Remarks from Students ..................................................... 17
Figure 2: Number of Students Making Biased Remarks .................................................... 17
Figure 3: Frequency of Other Types of Homophobic Remarks ........................................ 17
Figure 4: Frequency of Remarks from Teachers or Other School Staff ............................. 18
Figure 5: Relationship Between Teachers’ and Students’ Use of Biased Language .......... 18
Figure 6: Frequency of Intervention by Teachers or Other School Staff ........................... 19
Figure 7: Frequency of Intervention by Students ............................................................... 19
Figure 8: Severity of Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment in School ....................... 20
Figure 9: Frequency of Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment ..................................... 20
Figure 10: Percentage of Students Reporting Frequent Bullying and Harassment (By School Type) ...................................................................................... 21
Figure 11: Reasons Why Students Were Most Often Bullied, Called Names or Harassed in School .............................................................................................. 21
Figure 12: Feelings of Safety in School ............................................................................. 22
Figure 13: Reasons for Feeling Unsafe at School .............................................................. 22
Figure 14: Percentage of Students Verbally Harassed at School in the Past Year ............ 23
Figure 15: Percentage of Students Physically Harassed or Assaulted in the Past Year ...... 23
Figure 16: Frequency of Other Types of Harassment in the Past Year ............................... 24
Figure 17: Frequency of Reporting Harassment/Assault to Teacher, Principal or Other School Staff .............................................................. 25
Figure 18: Reasons for Not Reporting Harassment or Assault .......................................... 25
Figure 19: Percentage of Students Verbally Harassed in the Past (by School Type) .......... 26
Figure 20: Percentage of Students Physically Harassed/Assaulted in the Past Year (by School Type) .................................................................................... 27
Figure 21: Presence of GSAs ......................................................................................... 27
Figure 22: Prevalence and Type of School Anti-Harassment Policies ................................. 28
Figure 23: Students Who Reported that Bullying and Harassment Were Serious Problems in Their Schools (by School Policy) .................................................... 28
Figure 24: Percentage of Students Who Reported Frequent Bullying Based on Personal Characteristics (by School Policy) ........................................................ 29
Figure 25: Percentage of Students Physically Harassed/Assaulted in the Past Year (by School Policy) .................................................................................... 29
Key Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

Bullying, name-calling, and harassment were serious problems in Ohio schools

- Nearly half of Ohio students said that bullying, name-calling, and harassment were serious problems in their schools (43%).

- The percentage of students in Ohio who thought that bullying was a somewhat or serious problem in their schools was higher than in the national sample (43% vs. 36%).

- In addition to looks and body size, students reported that the most common reasons students were bullied were sexual orientation and gender expression.

Biased language was both commonly heard and pervasive in Ohio schools

- Half (49%) of the students reported that homophobic and sexist language were often heard in schools. A smaller number reported racist and negative religious comments being heard often (22% and 7%, respectively).

- Of the Ohio students who reported hearing homophobic remarks in school, over a third (37%) said it was from most or all of their classmates.

- Of the students who reported hearing sexist remarks, nearly half (46%) said it was from most or all of their classmates.

- About a third of Ohio students reported that faculty/staff rarely or never intervened when homophobic, racist, or sexist remarks were made in their presence (37%, 28% and 33%, respectively).

Ohio students often reported feeling unsafe in school. Experiences of verbal and physical harassment and assault in school were not uncommon.

- Only about half (53%) of Ohio students reported that they felt very safe in their schools.

- About a third (34%) of the students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of a personal characteristic, such as their race/ethnicity or sexual orientation.

- Over half (56%) of the students reported that they had been verbally harassed in the previous year.

- About a quarter (23%) of the students reported that they had been physically harassed or assaulted in the previous year.

Most students never reported incidents of harassment and assault to teachers and staff. Among those who did, many students said that their reports were ignored or that they received an ineffective response.

- Nearly two-thirds (66%) of respondents who were harassed never reported the incidents to a teacher, principal or staff person.

- Of those who reported an incident, nearly a third (27%) said that school personnel did not take steps to appropriately address the problem.

- Many of the students who did not report an incident believed that teachers or staff would not care or that reporting the incident would only make the situation worse.
Recommendations

• Ohio lawmakers and school officials must create anti-harassment/assault policies in all schools. These policies must offer explicit protection to students based on personal characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and race and ethnicity. Such inclusive policies have been shown to be more effective than general anti-bullying policies that do not provide enumerated categories.

• School districts must actively train teachers on how to protect students who are the targets of harassment and assault. They must be made particularly aware of incidents in which students are targeted because of personal characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and race and ethnicity.
INTRODUCTION

In 2003 GLSEN conducted its third national survey of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) youth—the 2003 National School Climate Survey (NSCS), the only national survey to document the experiences of LGBT youth in school. Results from this survey revealed that school can be an unsafe and hostile environment for many students, particularly those who are LGBT. Name calling, harassment and bullying, as well as the use of derogatory language by students were common occurrences in our nation’s schools and were often not properly addressed by teachers and other school staff. Given the limited attention paid by federal, state and local policy makers to LGBT youth, and because GLSEN’s work to make all schools safe for LGBT students is on-going, it is important to keep informed about the experiences of LGBT students in their schools. Understanding the experiences of the general school population is key to meeting this challenge. GLSEN hoped to broaden the scope of its research by documenting the attitudes and experiences of all students in secondary school. For this reason, GLSEN commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct a national survey of secondary school students and teachers. Topics covered in the survey included exposure to biased language, the frequency of bullying, name calling and harassment, and students’ personal experiences with harassment and assault at school. The full report from this study, From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, also includes results from a national survey of secondary school teachers, can be found on GLSEN’s website (www.glsen.org). The following is a report of findings based on the responses of youth who were attending schools in Ohio at the time of the survey. Data collection and analysis of the national survey of students and teachers was conducted by Harris Interactive. Analysis of state oversampled data in this report was conducted by GLSEN’s Research Department.

RESULTS

A total of 196 respondents were attending schools in Ohio at the time of the survey. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the majority of the sample was white, about half were male, and most were in high school. Although most respondents were heterosexual, 9% reported being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). The vast majority of respondents attended public schools. Most of the students attending non-public schools were in religious-affiliated schools (see Table 2).

Biased Language in School

Biased Language from Students

Hearing derogatory remarks about oneself or others can create a hostile school environment for all students. Therefore, students were asked to report how often they heard various forms of biased language from other students. The two most commonly cited types of biased language were homophobic language, such as “faggot,” “dyke,” or “queer,” and sexist language, such as calling a girl a bitch, calling a boy a “girl” or statements that girls are not as capable as boys. As shown in Figure 1, approximately three-fourths of the students reported that they heard homophobic (70%) and sexist language (79%) at least some of the time. Homophobic and sexist remarks were heard significantly more often than racist or negative religious remarks.


2 A “high school” represents those schools that only have grades between 9th and 12th. Schools that include lower grades are referred to as “middle schools.”
### Table 1: Demographics of Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/Other racial background</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGBT Status</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-LGBT</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Grade</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Grade</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Grade</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Age = 15.5 years

### Table 2: School Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K through 12 school</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper school (middle and high school grades)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Location</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban area</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small town or rural area</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious-affiliated school</td>
<td>75% of private school youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other independent or private school</td>
<td>25% of private school youth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Teasing to Torment: A Report on School Climate in Ohio
Figure 1: Frequency of Biased Remarks from Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homophobic</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racist</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexist</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Religious</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Number of Students Making Biased Remarks
(percent of those who heard any biased remark in school)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homophobic</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racist</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexist</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Religious</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Frequency of Other Types of Homophobic Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comments such as “That’s so gay” or “You’re so gay”</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative comments about gender expression</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of all students who reported hearing biased language, over a third of the students reported hearing homophobic (37%) and sexist (39%) comments from most or all of their classmates (see Figure 2). These findings were significantly greater than racist or negative religious comments. In addition to homophobic remarks like “fag” and “dyke,” an even larger number of Ohio students reported hearing homophobic comments such as “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” in which the word “gay” is used to mean stupid or worthless. As shown in Figure 3, about 90% of students reported hearing these comments at school at least some of the time. Negative comments about gender expression, such as telling a boy that he is acting too much like a girl or telling a girl that she is acting too masculine, were also heard frequently. Over half (53%) of students reported that they heard these remarks at least some of the time.

### Biased Language from Teachers and Other School Staff

While less frequent than student remarks, study participants also reported hearing homophobic, racist, sexist, and negative religious language from Ohio teachers and staff at their school (see Figure 4). Although not surprising that the frequency of these remarks from teachers and staff is less than from students, one would expect that NO teacher would make these kinds of remarks in front of students. Even the smallest number of biased remarks from teachers, staff, and other authority figures may send a message to students that such language is permissible to use in school. In fact, when the reported frequency of biased remarks by teachers or staff was high, the reported frequency of students’ biased remarks was also high (see Figures 4 and 5).

![Figure 4: Frequency of Remarks from Teachers or Other School Staff](image)

![Figure 5: Relationship Between Teachers' and Students' Use of Biased Language](image)
Similarly, when respondents reported that teachers never made biased remarks, they also reported that students' biased remarks were much less frequent. These findings suggest that students may be learning that prejudiced remarks are appropriate because they hear teachers and staff say them.

**Intervention Regarding Biased Remarks**

Participants were asked how often teachers and other students corrected or criticized biased remarks in school. With regard to teacher intervention, many of the students reported that teachers and staff had not intervened when biased remarks were made in their presence. For example, as shown in Figure 6, 40% of students reported that teachers and staff rarely or never corrected or criticized homophobic or sexist remarks. A somewhat smaller percentage of students reported such inaction by teachers or staff with regard to racist remarks – about a third reported this happened rarely or never. Overall, the findings suggest that many teachers and staff are not intervening when students make offensive and bigoted remarks. The failure to correct prejudiced language may to students that such behavior is permissible, and thereby contributes to a hostile school environment for students.

Although one would expect teachers and school staff to bear the responsibility for addressing problems of biased language in school, students intervening amongst themselves is another indicator of school climate. Approximately half of students in the survey reported that other students rarely or never intervened in response to racist (49%) and sexist (50%) remarks, and over half rarely or never intervened in response to homophobic remarks (56%).
Severity of Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment in School

All students have the right to an education, yet when schools do not provide safe learning environments they impede the opportunity to learn. Respondents were asked how serious bullying, name-calling, and harassment were at their schools. As shown in Figure 8, nearly half (43%) of the students reported that bullying, name-calling, and harassment were at least somewhat serious, and nearly one-fifth (17%) of the students reported that these were very serious problems at their school. These findings indicate that bullying and harassment are commonplace in many Ohio schools. In fact, the percentage of students in Ohio who thought that bullying was a somewhat or serious problem in their schools was higher than in the national sample (43% vs. 36%).

Figure 8: Severity of Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment in School

Figure 9: Frequency of Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment
Participants were asked how frequently students in their schools were bullied for various reasons. Figure 9 shows the frequency with which respondents reported other students are harassed, called names or bullied for certain personal characteristics in Ohio schools. A majority of participants said that bullying occurred at least some of the time because of students’ sexual orientation (60%), gender expression (58%), and looks/body size (69%). Students from Ohio were similar in these reports to students from the rest of the nation with two exceptions. Students from Ohio reported a lower frequency of harassment based on religion but a higher frequency of harassment based on family income.

Seriousness of bullying and harassment also differed between high schools and middle schools. Students from middle schools were more likely to report that bullying was a serious problem in their school. Specifically, over half (56%) of middle school students reported that bullying and harassment were at least somewhat serious, whereas slightly over a third (37%) of high school students felt these issues were serious. These findings indicate that while bullying and harassment are serious problems in many schools, they seem to be more common in middle schools. The frequency of bullying based on sexual orientation and race/ethnicity differed between high school and middle school students. As shown Figure 10, middle school students reported more frequent bullying for both characteristics than high school students.

Students were also asked to indicate the most common reason people were bullied, called names, or harassed in their schools. As shown in Figure 11, most Ohio students (49%) cited looks/body size as the most common reason students are bullied and harassed, followed by sexual orientation (18%) and gender expression (9%). These findings may indicate that sexual orientation, gender expression, and looks are related. Specifically, LGBT students and students who express their gender differently may be teased or ridiculed because their looks and appearance do not conform to traditional
gender stereotypes. Findings suggest that schools need to do more to address bullying based on these reasons.

Safety in School

Students were asked a range of questions regarding their personal safety in school and their own experiences of being the target of bullying, name-calling, and harassment. As shown in Figure 12, only about half (53%) of Ohio students felt very safe in their schools, and more than a tenth (11%) reported feeling not very safe or not at all safe.

Students were asked whether they felt unsafe in school because of one or more personal characteristics. About a third (34%) stated that at least one personal characteristic made them feel unsafe. As shown in Figure 13, the largest number of Ohio students reported feeling unsafe because of their looks/body size (21%). The second more frequent reason for students feeling unsafe in school was their gender expression with nearly a tenth (9%) of the students reporting that they felt unsafe for that reason. Given that the sample was predominately white and predominately non-LGBT identified, it is not surprising that less than 5% of students felt unsafe because of their race or sexual orientation. In contrast, even though the sample was evenly split by gender, the number of students reporting that they felt unsafe because of their gender was quite low.
Personal Experiences of Bullying, Name Calling and Harassment

Verbal Harassment

A high percentage of students reported personally experiencing harassment at school in the previous year. Over half (56%) of Ohio students reported that they were verbally harassed in school in the previous year. As shown in Figure 14, the most common reason for verbal harassment was looks/body size (41%) followed by gender expression (20%) and gender (19%). Perhaps because of the small percentage of LGBT-identified students in the survey, only a tenth (10%) of the students reported that they were verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation. Interestingly, over half (52%) of the students who reported being the target of harassment because of their sexual orientation were not LGBT-identified students and almost three-fourths (71%) of those students who reported being verbally harassed because of their gender expression were also not LGBT-identified. Intolerance directed at students’ sexual orientations and gender expression creates a hostile environment that negatively affects heterosexual students as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.

![Figure 14: Percentage of Students Verbally Harassed at School in the Past Year](image-url)
Physical Harassment and Assault

Figure 15 shows the frequencies of reported physical harassment or assault by students in Ohio schools. As with verbal harassment, physical harassment or assault based on physical appearance was most frequently reported (17%). In addition, over a tenth (11%) of Ohio students reported that they were physically harassed/assaulted because of their gender expression. These findings are particularly disturbing given the severe nature of the experiences, which makes even less commonly cited reasons a cause for alarm.

Other Forms of Harassment

Figure 16 illustrates other forms of bullying and harassment in school. Unlike the previously discussed frequencies of verbal harassment and physical harassment or assault, students were not asked whether these types of harassment were specifically related to a personal characteristic.

For example, students may be the target of mean rumors or lies because of their sexual orientation or religion or for no apparent reason. Of these types of harassment, students most

---

3 Given the low incidence of physical harassment and assault, Figure 15 represents only whether students ever experienced the particular event, i.e., those who reported “rarely,” “sometimes,” “often” or “very often.”
frequently reported being the target of mean rumors or lies with over half of the students reporting that it had happened in the past year. Over a third of students also reported that their personal property had been damaged or stolen in school in the previous year. Whereas 10% of Ohio students had reported being harassed because of their actual sexual orientation in the past year (see Figure 14), nearly 20% reported that they had been harassed because others thought they were gay or lesbian, the majority of whom identified as heterosexual.

Of those who did not report an incident, a tenth (10%) said that they did not think teachers or staff would be concerned about the problem or believe the student (see Figure 18). In addition, nearly a quarter (23%) of students said that reporting the incident would only make the problem worse.

Reporting Incidents of Harassment

Among Ohio students who experienced any form of verbal or physical harassment or assault, two-thirds (66%) said that they never reported the incident(s) to a teacher, principal or other school staff member (see Figure 17). Among students who reported at least one incident, nearly a third (27%) said that school personnel did not take steps to correct the problem or ensure that it would not occur again. For example, a female participant in the 12th grade stated that the teacher or staff person she talked to following an incident did “nothing. They just ignored it like nothing had ever happened.”
For example, one female participant in the 8th grade explained that she did not report an incident of harassment and assault because:

[Teachers and staff] don’t really care, and if they talk to the kid who did it, they just get mad and do something worse.

These findings suggest that schools need to find ways to deal more effectively with harassment and assault issues, especially in high schools. Specifically, teachers and staff must be better trained to respond to incidents of harassment and assault. In addition, school officials must implement anti-harassment policies that specifically protect students based on personal characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender expression and looks/body size. The inclusion of teacher training and protective policies may change negative school climates and help students feel more comfortable reporting incidents of harassment and assault.

**Differences in Incidences of Harassment and Assault by School Type**

Important differences were found between high school and middle school students on feelings of safety and experiences of verbal and physical harassment/assault. Nearly a third (30%) of middle school students reported feeling unsafe in their schools as compared to 3% of high school students. High school students experienced more frequent verbal harassment based on sexual orientation and race/ethnicity than middle school students, though middle school students reported more verbal harassment on looks/body size (see Figure 19). Middle school students reported more physical harassment or assault based on gender expression and looks/body size than high school students. Specifically, as shown in Figure 20, one-fifth of middle school students experienced harassment/assault based on gender expression and over a third (39%) experienced harassment/assault because of looks/body size. In contrast, less than a tenth of high school students experienced harassment/assault because of gender expression (8%) and looks/body size (9%). These findings indicate that middle schools appear to be more physically dangerous for certain students, especially those targeted because of their gender expression and looks/body size.

**Figure 19: Percentage of Students Verbally Harassed in the Past Year (by school type)**

![Figure 19 showing percentage of students verbally harassed by school type and characteristic](image-url)
School Climate and Educational Indicators

As stated previously, students have the right to an education but many students cannot take full advantage of this education if they feel unsafe in their schools. Students were asked if they themselves or their friends had missed a class or an entire day of school in the previous month because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe in the class or on their way to and from school. Nearly a tenth of Ohio students reported that they had friends who had missed a class (9%) or an entire day of school (9%) due to safety concerns. Furthermore, nearly a tenth of the youth reported that they themselves had missed a class (9%) or an entire day of school (7%) because of safety concerns. Not surprisingly, students’ feeling of safety in school was strongly related to missing classes or days of school.

The majority of respondents reported that they liked school (60%) and that they planned to attend college (89% – the remaining 11% were undecided about their college plans at the time of the survey). However, students who did not feel safe in their school were far less likely to report that they like school (6% vs. 67%) and less likely to report that they plan to attend college (60% vs. 92%). In addition, respondents who reported that bullying, name calling or harassment were somewhat or serious problems at their schools were less likely than other students to report liking school (46% vs. 72%) and planning on college (81% vs. 94%).

LGBT Resources and Supports in School

The high frequency of homophobic remarks, bullying, verbal harassment, and physical harassment and assault suggests that it is essential for LGBT students to have resources and supports in schools that they can access. One important type of support is school clubs that address LGBT student issues, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs). Unfortunately, Ohio students were less likely than the national average (22%) to have GSAs. In fact, only 7% of the students reported that their school had this type of supportive organization in place for LGBT students (see Figure 21).

Another potentially important source of support is the existence of anti-harassment policies that protect LGBT students by explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. As shown in Figure 22, more than half of the students in Ohio reported having
some type of safe school policy in their school. It is important to note that almost a third of students were unsure whether or not their school had any protective policy. While it is possible that these students were not aware of a policy because one did not exist, it is also possible that the students were not informed about existing policies and that these Ohio schools need to do a more comprehensive job of informing their students. Only two-thirds of those students who reported having a policy also reported that the policy specifically mentions gender identity/expression. Thus, only about 40% of Ohio students are protected by inclusive protective school policies.

Seriousness of bullying and harassment differed between schools with different anti-harassment policies. As shown in Figure 23, about half (52%) of the students who came from schools without an inclusive anti-harassment policy felt that bullying and harassment were at least somewhat serious, whereas about a quarter (28%) of students from schools with inclusive policies felt these issues were at least somewhat serious. In addition, students from schools that have inclusive anti-harassment policies reported that other students were bullied less often based on sexual orientation, gender expression, race/ethnicity and physical appearance than students in schools without such protective policies (see Figure 24).

Students from schools with inclusive anti-harassment policies were also more likely to report that they themselves felt safer and harassed less in school. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of students in schools without inclusive policies

---

**Figure 22: Prevelance and Type of School Anti-Harassment Policies**

**Percentage of Students Reporting Any Type of Anti-Harassment Policy in their Schools**

- Yes: 63%
- Not Sure: 30%
- No: 7%

**Percentage of Students Reporting That Their School has an Inclusive Policy**

- Yes: 41%
- Others: 37%
- No: 5%
- Not Sure: 17%

---

**Figure 23: Students Who Reported that Bullying and Harassment Were Serious Problems in Their Schools (by School Policy)**

- School has Inclusive Policy: 52%
- School Does Not Have Inclusive Policy: 28%
felt unsafe, whereas only 2% of students who came from policy inclusive schools felt unsafe. As shown in Figure 25, students who came from schools with inclusive anti-harassment policies were less likely to experience physical harassment or assault based on gender expression and looks/body size. Nearly one-fifth (17%) of the students from schools without inclusive policies reported that they were physically harassed or assaulted in the previous year because of their gender expression and over a quarter (26%) because of their physical appearance. In contrast, less than 5% of students from policy-inclusive schools reported similar experiences, highlighting the importance of inclusive policies.

**Figure 24: Percentage of Students Who Reported Frequent Bullying Based on Personal Characteristics (by School Policy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Characteristic</th>
<th>School Has Inclusive Policy</th>
<th>School Does Not Have Inclusive Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Expression</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks/Body Size</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 25: Percentage of Students Physically Harassed/Assaulted in the Past Year (by School Policy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Characteristic</th>
<th>School Has Inclusive Policy</th>
<th>School Does Not Have Inclusive Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Expression</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks/Body Size</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from this study indicate that issues of safety, bullying, name-calling, and harassment are serious for middle and high school students in Ohio. Biased remarks are commonly heard among students and often go uncorrected by teachers and staff. Homophobic and sexist remarks are the most pervasive and frequently heard among students. It is particularly disturbing that over half of Ohio students reported that they had been verbally harassed in the previous year, and a quarter of students reported that they had been physically harassed or assaulted in the previous year. Among those verbally harassed, a tenth were harassed because of their sexual orientation and about one-fifth for their gender expression. Among those students who were harassed for any reason, most do not report the incidents to a teacher, principal or staff, often because they think saying something will only make a situation worse or that teachers and staff will not care. Among those who did report an incident of harassment or assault, nearly a third of respondents said that no steps were taken to correct the situation or prevent it from happening again. Such inaction on the part of school personnel only serves to reinforce students’ beliefs that teachers and staff would not help when needed.

Based on the findings presented in this report, it is imperative that Ohio lawmakers and school officials create anti-harassment/assault policies in all schools. In addition, these policies must offer explicit protection to students who are targets of bullying, harassment and assault based on personal characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and race and ethnicity. General policies that do not explicitly mention protection for these groups will likely fall short of creating needed changes in schools since many students may believe that certain prejudiced behaviors are acceptable and therefore do not count as “real” forms of bullying, harassment, and assault. In addition, specific plans that explain how these protective policies are to be implemented must be created to ensure that the policies are enforced. Without specific implementation guidelines, schools run the risk of having a written policy that does little to protect students.

Given the pervasive inaction reported by students, Ohio school districts must also actively train teachers and staff so that they know how to effectively protect students who are the targets of prejudiced acts because of personal characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and race and ethnicity. Teachers and staff who understand their role in enforcing protective policies are more likely to do so effectively, ultimately improving the safety and quality of the school environment for all students.

ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY

Student interviews for the national survey were conducted online by a nationally representative sample of 3,450 public and private/parochial students ages 13 to 18. Within this sample, an oversample of students was drawn from Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia. Interviews averaged 15 minutes and were conducted from January 13 to January 31, 2005. Sample was drawn from the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) multimillion member online panel of cooperative respondents from over one hundred countries. Invitations for this study were emailed to a selected sample of the database identified as residing in the United States and being a student between the ages of 13 and 18. Data for the national survey were weighted to reflect the national population of children ages 13 to 18 for key demographic variables (gender, age, race and ethnicity, size of place, region, and parent’s education). Demographic weights were based on U.S. Census data obtained via the March 2004 Current Population Survey (CPS). For the national survey, a post weight was applied to the student data to adjust for the twelve state oversampling so that the regional distribution reflects the nation as a whole. State-specific data including that which is presented in this report does not reflect this postweight.
Public Schools & Sexual Orientation:
A First Amendment Framework for Finding Common Ground
Public Schools and Sexual Orientation

A First Amendment framework for finding common ground

The process for dialogue recommended in this guide has been endorsed by:

- American Association of School Administrators
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- BridgeBuilders
- Christian Educators Association International
- First Amendment Center
- Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

First Amendment Center, 2007
Reprinted with permission
Public Schools and Sexual Orientation

A First Amendment framework for finding common ground

In recent years, many public schools have increasingly become a front line in the escalating debates over homosexuality in American society. Conflicts over issues involving sexual orientation in the curriculum, student clubs, speech codes and other areas of school life increasingly divide communities, spark bitter lawsuits, and undermine the educational mission of schools.

These fights are unfortunate, but hardly surprising. Since the earliest days of the common school movement, Americans have viewed the schoolhouse as a microcosm of the public square, an arena where we debate and define who we are as a people. But when these disputes degenerate into personal attacks, ridicule, false characterizations of opposing positions, and similar tactics, they tear communities apart and alienate large numbers of citizens from their local schools. If we cannot find ways to negotiate our differences in public schools with more civility and respect, then schools – and the nation – face a difficult future.

The advice in this guide is built on the conviction that we urgently need to reaffirm our shared commitment, as American citizens, to guiding principles of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The rights and responsibilities of the First Amendment provide the civic framework within which we are able to debate our differences, to understand one another, and to forge public policies that serve the common good in public education.

What divides us

Few issues expose our national divide more starkly than the conflict over how to deal with sexual orientation in public schools. Advocacy groups on both sides are working hard to promote their perspective in the schools – or at least to prevent the other side from promoting theirs.

On one side, many argue that public schools should not deal with homosexuality at all, believing that such discussions should be left entirely to parents. Citing moral and religious convictions, they believe that any state effort to normalize society’s perception of same-sex relationships is harmful to family life and a violation of the deeply held beliefs of many Americans. In their view, public schools should uphold a view of family that affirms sexual abstinence until marriage between one man and one woman.

On the other side, many argue that such convictions about homosexuality are primarily a private and religious matter that should not be used as a basis for public school policy. In their view, families with same-sex parents must be included in the school’s definition of family. They point out that harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation is a pervasive problem in public schools that adversely affects the academic performance of students who experience it – and sometimes leads to violence and even suicide. They contend that the issue for schools is sexual orientation and identity, not sexual behavior. And they advocate school policies and practices that require school officials to deal with discrimination against gay and lesbian students.

These differences are deep – and difficult to negotiate. Current efforts to legalize or ban same-sex unions in the courts, in legislatures and on ballot initiatives have only exacerbated the debate in schools and raised the stakes for public school officials. Every act by one side is seen as a hostile move by the other. A “Day of Silence” to promote awareness of discrimination against gays and lesbians is now followed by a “Day of Truth” to promote conservative religious views of homosexuality. A T-shirt proclaiming “Straight Pride” is worn to counter one professing “Gay Pride.”
Even finding the right terminology to discuss these differences that neither side will see as problematic can prove extremely difficult. One student’s call for toleration is perceived by another student as a challenge to deeply held convictions. And one student’s religious convictions are perceived by another student as hostility toward gays and lesbians. One parent is concerned that the school’s definition of family might exclude his family, while another parent worries that a definition inclusive of same-sex parents will undermine what her children are taught at home and at church.

Even the most well-intentioned efforts by school officials to address these differences can easily trigger angry protests from one side or the other.

The role of public schools

In light of these passionate differences, it is important to reaffirm that public schools belong to all Americans. The role of school officials, therefore, is to be fair, honest brokers of a dialogue that involves all stakeholders and seeks the common good. Policy decisions about issues concerning sexual orientation should be made only after appropriate involvement of those affected by the decision and with due consideration for the rights of those holding dissenting views. Under the First Amendment, all sides have the right to express their points of view.

School officials struggle to reconcile deeply conflicting community views and legal imperatives on these issues. Sometimes difficult choices must be made, and sometimes there is no option that will satisfy all parties. In some cases, however, school officials mistakenly assume that they must choose sides in the debate over homosexuality – and that schools will promote the side they choose. Some are convinced that the only way to address this issue is to insist that one view be imposed on all students and parents. But too often this approach only provokes more conflict and solves nothing.

If schools are going to win the peace, it will not be by choosing a side and coercing others to accept it. When matters of conscience are at stake, this strategy is both unjust and counterproductive. It is possible, however, to find areas of agreement if school officials create a climate of mutual respect and honest dialogue.

It would serve us all to remember that the core mission of public schools is to prepare young people for citizenship in a democratic society. This means, first and foremost, maintaining a school environment that respects the rights of students to free speech and free exercise of religion while simultaneously ensuring that student speech does not degenerate into name-calling, bullying, or attempts to silence other views.

Under the First Amendment, a school is both safe and free when students, parents, educators and all members of the school community commit to addressing their religious and political differences with civility and respect. A safe school is free of bullying and harassment. And a free school is safe for student speech even about issues that divide us.

When Americans disagree deeply about religious or political questions, public schools should try hard to avoid taking sides. School officials should address the controversy fairly and openly by including all of the stakeholders in the effort to develop policies that promote fairness for all and practices that can be widely supported.

First Amendment ground rules

No ideological or religious consensus is possible – or perhaps even desirable – in our diverse society. But a civic agreement across differences is not only possible but absolutely essential for civil dialogue. The place to begin is to agree on the guiding principles of rights, responsibilities and respect that flow from the First Amendment. These “three Rs” provide a shared framework within which Americans are able to negotiate conflicts over public policy in schools:
• **Rights.** Religious liberty and freedom of expression are inalienable rights for all guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The very purpose of the First Amendment is to safeguard individual rights from actions of majorities and governments. Every effort should be made in public schools to protect these rights for all students and parents.

• **Responsibilities.** As American citizens, we have a civic responsibility to respect these rights for others, including those with whom we deeply disagree. Rights are best guarded and responsibilities best exercised when each person and group guards for all others those rights they wish guarded for themselves.

• **Respect.** Conflict and debate are vital to democracy. Yet if controversies about sexual orientation and schools are to advance the best interests of the disputants and the nation, then how we debate, and not only what we debate, is critical. All parties involved in public schools should agree to debate one another with civility and respect, and should strive to be accurate and fair.*

A principled compact that spells out the rights, responsibilities and respect required by our commitment to the First Amendment creates a common ground that serves the interests of our religious and political diversity. Within these ground rules, all sides come to the table prepared to seek a greater common good.

**Finding common ground**

In a growing number of school districts, these First Amendment principles provide a civic framework for constructive dialogue and a basis for cooperation across deep differences. Parents and educators on all sides are reaching across the cultural divide and finding ways to work with people who see the world very differently from themselves. How is this possible? Although individual districts use a variety of strategies, successful school and community leaders adopt the following principles and practices:

1. Create a “common ground task force,” appointed by the school board and consisting of representatives with a wide range of community views. Such a task force can help to advise the district on a range of issues involving sexual orientation such as how to create safe schools, develop balanced curricula, and protect appropriate student expression. By building relationships among people with opposing views, the task force builds trust and mutual respect that can translate into shared agreements on school policy and practice.

2. Agree on the civic ground rules and understand current law. A good first step is to make the First Amendment principles of rights, responsibilities and respect the ground rules for the discussion. Then, come to a shared understanding of what current laws and regulations in your state and district may say about the issue of sexual orientation in general and in public schools specifically. The laws of each state (which vary widely and change frequently) are both the starting point and framework for addressing sexual orientation in local schools.

   Public schools are required to represent and carry out the laws of the land. Within this civic and legal framework, all sides come to the table understanding the parameters of the discussion and prepared to engage the issues with civility and respect.

3. Include all stakeholders. In public schools, there must be room for people who see the issue from a variety of perspectives in an environment that calls for everyone to respect the right of others to hold their views. Democratic citizenship does not require a compromise of our deepest convictions. But at times it will require us to work with others.

* This definition of the First Amendment principles of rights, responsibilities and respect is drawn from the Williamsburg Charter, a reaffirmation of religious liberty drafted by representatives of America’s leading faiths and signed by nearly 200 leaders from every sector of American life in 1988.*
who may hold views we find offensive. It is the civic responsibility of people on all sides to state their views in as respectful a manner as possible. Through constructive dialogue we can often find creative solutions that will treat others the way we want to be treated.

4. **Think outside the box of “us vs. them” politics.** As deeply as we may feel about this issue, we must refrain from using the public schools to impose our views on others. Advocacy groups play an important role in a democracy. But public schools have a very different role. Schools serve the entire community and, in so doing, cultivate a common good that includes us all.

5. **Listen to all sides.** Given the opportunity, the vast majority of parents, students, administrators and school board members will commit to a principled dialogue and will work for solutions that bring the community together. While it may be true that a small number of people on both sides resist any attempt to find common ground, most people will support a process of deliberation that is open and fair.

6. **Work for agreements on civic principles and safe schools.** It is important to start deliberations where agreement is most likely to be achieved. All parents, for example, want schools to be safe learning environments where no student is harassed or bullied for any reason. And most people will support policies that prohibit the mistreatment of any individual or group and provide appropriate avenues for redress of grievances.

7. **Provide educational opportunities for administrators, teachers, parents and students in the First Amendment principles of rights, responsibilities and respect.** When people understand their constitutional rights and civic duties, they are better prepared to engage in civil dialogue — and work together for a learning environment that is safe and free for all students.

This guide is not an attempt to ignore or minimize differences that are important and abiding, but rather a reaffirmation of what we share as Americans across our differences. First Amendment principles can and do work to advance the best interests of education and the nation, but only when they are understood and applied by citizens committed to advancing a common vision of the common good.

### Tips for school officials

1. **Take seriously complaints of name-calling, harassment and discrimination regardless of the reason.** Do not dismiss it as playground teasing or tell the student or staff to “toughen up.” Investigate the complaint and intervene directly when it has merit, making clear that such behavior is unacceptable on the public school campus. The public school environment cannot be a hostile place to study or work.

2. **Assure parents and students that the school district will listen carefully, be fair to all parties, and try hard to avoid choosing sides in the broader national conflict.**

3. **Don’t be afraid to talk openly about these issues.** Some districts may seek to avoid controversy by trying to fly under the radar when dealing with this complicated issue. Whether it is students asking to form a gay-straight alliance, a new textbook introduced into the curriculum, or a new video adopted for family-life education, parents don’t like surprises. When it finally becomes known, as it always does, parents will lose trust with a district that will not be straightforward with them and will respect the one that is.

4. **To the extent practical, strive to keep your community discussion a local one.** This doesn’t mean that outside groups and individuals can’t be helpful facilitators or resources, and some perspectives that are important to the discussion may not be well represented in your community. But neighbor-to-neighbor dialogue works best when a local disagreement doesn’t become a national controversy.
5. While your district will have to respond fairly and equitably to the variety of home environments of your students, it does not have to define family in the broader culture to do so. Family is a term often defined in state law and schools can acknowledge that various groups use it differently.

6. Be careful that you do not discriminate against student clubs or expression simply because the political or religious message is unpopular or potentially offensive to some. Educators can and should require that all viewpoints be expressed in a respectful manner, but they may not exclude some views merely because they don’t agree with them. To do so constitutes viewpoint discrimination in violation of the First Amendment.

Tips for parents and students

1. Don’t jump to conclusions about your school district based on news reports about the national conflict over these issues. Local control and varying state laws make it unlikely that any one approach will be implemented universally across the country without regard to the different perspectives in your community. Start by finding out what is happening in your district. Ask questions and seek information rather than making accusations.

2. If you have concerns about what is happening in your school, start by sharing them with those closest to the problem. If the issue is with your own school, start with teachers or school administrators. If the concern is districtwide, bring it to the attention of district administrators and your local school board. Civil local discussions that lead to solutions are less costly, less divisive, and more effective than lawsuits or shouting matches in the media.

3. Realize your district not only has a responsibility to address the needs and wishes of your family, but it must also provide a fair and safe environment for people who view this issue differently than you do. We all have a vested interest in ensuring that public schools are a safe learning environment for every student and staff member.

4. Remember the civic duty to respect the First Amendment rights of others, including the rights of those with whom you deeply disagree.
The Robbie Kirkland Story
Robbie Kirkland, a 14 year-old high school freshman, committed suicide on January 2, 1997, just prior to his scheduled return to school after the holiday break. GLSEN Northeast Ohio honors Robbie’s memory as a testament to the importance of creating welcoming and affirming school environments for all youth, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification.
Why did Robbie Kirkland have to die?

Gay People’s Chronicle, By Doreen Cudnik, February 21, 1997. Reprinted with permission

Cleveland – During the early morning hours of Thursday, January 2, fourteen-year-old Robbie Kirkland walked through his sister Claudia’s bedroom and climbed the stairs to the attic. He had gone into his father’s room earlier the same day, where he found the key to the lock on his father’s gun. Before walking away with the gun and some ammunition, he put the keys back exactly where he had found them.

Alone with his secret and the loaded gun, Robbie decided once and for all to put an end to the life that caused him so much sadness and confusion. Pulling the trigger, he reasoned, would stop the turmoil he felt inside. He wouldn’t have to keep his secret any more.

Robbie Kirkland had grown weary of being different. He was gay; and in Robbie Kirkland’s mind, death seemed like the easier option.

“Robbie was a very loving, gentle boy,” said his mother Leslie Sadasivan, a registered nurse who lives in the affluent Cleveland suburb of Strongsville with her husband, Dr. Peter Sadasivan, their four-year-old daughter Alexandria, and until his death, Robbie.

She remembered her only son as a very bright boy who was a good writer and an avid reader. “He wrote beautiful poetry . . . he was a very sweet, loving son.”

Taught diversity at home

While she was pregnant with Robbie, Leslie’s marriage to her first husband, FBI agent John Kirkland, was in serious trouble. She had a difficult pregnancy and nearly miscarried. But with her strong faith to sustain her, she persevered, and on February 22, 1982 gave birth to a healthy baby boy by Caesarean section.

“Because my marriage was suffering at the time, I felt like [Robbie] was God’s gift to me. I saw this child as part of the reason I kept going. I had to . . . there was this helpless little baby.”

She was divorced from Kirkland shortly after Robbie was born. When Robbie was two, she married her second husband, Peter Sadasivan. Robbie seemed to accept his step-dad and developed a close relationship with him over the years.

Robbie and his older sisters Danielle and Claudia were raised in a very religious, yet open and accepting home. (Danielle is presently away at college, and Claudia now lives at her father’s Lakewood home, where Robbie was visiting the night he died.)

He learned at a very young age that, unlike his mother, not everyone thought that being different was a good thing.

Because of her deep religious convictions and because her new husband was Indian, Leslie taught her children to respect people of all races and nationalities. This appreciation for diversity included gay and lesbian people.

She remembered a time when she hired a lesbian couple to put up wallpaper in their home. “I remember telling the kids, ‘Now, you might see them give each other a hug or a kiss, and that’s okay.’”

Conflicting messages outside

While Robbie had so many positive messages given to him at home, at the same time he was receiving conflicting messages from outside. He learned at a very young age that, unlike his mother, not everyone thought that being different was a good thing.
Faith played a large role in determining how Leslie Sadasivan raised her children. A devout Catholic, she took her kids with her to St. John Neumann Church, a large suburban parish that was dedicated the same year Robbie was born. She involved them all in youth-related church activities, and considered the tuition that was paid to provide her kids with a Catholic education as an investment in their future.

“I saw it as a way to protect them and give them the best education,” she said. “I also wanted them to be raised Catholic, because I do believe in the church. I don’t believe in everything the church says, but I find my comfort and spirituality in the church. I wanted [my children] to have that foundation.”

When Robbie was in the third grade at St. Joseph’s school in Strongsville, he asked to be transferred to another school. He told his mother that the other kids were teasing him. He started the fourth grade at Incarnate Word Academy, the school that his sister Danielle was already attending. As he neared his last year at Incarnate Word, Robbie seemed to flourish academically as well as socially. He made friends and served on the student council.

But the poetry he wrote reflected a deep despair and sense of isolation that went well beyond the problems of most twelve year olds.

While Leslie does not know if the verbal harassment her son endured ever escalated to physical violence, a poem written by Robbie in 1994 appears to be a very chilling account of an assault:

I try to stand and walk  
I fall to the hard, cold ground.  
The others look and laugh at my plight  
Blood pours from my nose, I am not a pretty sight  
I try to stand again but fall  
To the others I call  
But they don’t care . . .

As Robbie entered the eighth grade at Incarnate Word, he seemed, at least on the surface, to be surviving all the difficulties that accompany adolescence. Below the surface, however, Robbie had begun searching for answers to the nagging questions about his sexuality.

**Exploring the Internet**

On January 29, 1996, Robbie wrote a letter to his friend Jenine, a girl he met at Camp Christopher, a resident camp in Bath, Ohio run by the Diocese of Cleveland. Robbie told Jenine why other kids teased him, and indicated that he was well aware of the price one has to pay for being different.

“I’ll tell you why people made fun of me,” he wrote. “You see, I talk different . . . I have a slight lisp (S’s come out th’s) and I’m kinda well, sucky at sports. So people (only like a few people) have called me gay. They don’t mean it, if they did I’d be beat up by now. You see, everyone in our school is homophobic (including me).”

In the same letter, Robbie tells her about his new pastime, the America Online computer service. “I love AOL. My favorite thing to do is chat.”

The Sadasivans had purchased a computer for Christmas 1995, giving Robbie access to the Internet, a lifeline for many gay and lesbian teens. Like most adolescent boys, regardless of their sexual orientation, Robbie found his way through cyberspace directly to the porn sites.

One day while he was on the computer with his four-year-old daughter, Peter Sadasivan was shocked when images of nude men appeared on the screen. Robbie admitted to downloading the photos, but told his mother an elaborate story about being “blackmailed” as a way to explain.

“At this point, I didn’t suspect that he was gay, because he was saying that this man blackmailed him. He was crying telling me this story,” Leslie said.
First suicide attempt

Whether it was the shame he felt about the discovery of the downloaded images, his ongoing battle with depression, or that he was really in over his head with the Internet, during the next few months, Robbie began to sink deeper and deeper into despair.

On February 24, 1996, two days after his fourteenth birthday, Robbie attempted suicide for the first time. He took thirty Tylenol pain capsules and went to sleep. In a suicide note left at the time, he wrote: “Whatever you find, I’m not gay.”

Only Robbie knows what happened in the month since he wrote the letter saying he loved AOL, and the next letter dated February 26 where he told Jenine that he had tried to commit suicide. But whatever it was, it frightened him.

Robbie wrote, “The reason why I tried to kill myself was because of stuff that happened that would take a novel to fill. I’ll tell you a shortened version: 1. Every day now I fear for my life. 2. I fear on-line. 3. Something weird is going on with me and God – I don’t like church masses [but] I still have faith in God.”

He added, “[Numbers] one and two are connected.”

John Kirkland remembers that the situation definitely got complicated as soon as the Internet came into play.

“I’m involved with investigations of people who entice both boys and girls through the Internet. Unfortunately, it’s very common. I tried to explain to Robbie that people will try to get you to do all kinds of things through the Internet. But you can’t be with a kid 24 hours a day.”

Leslie began what would be an ongoing struggle with her son about his Internet usage, and considered cutting him off completely. “Right from the beginning, he was going on-line more than we allowed. It’s almost like he was addicted to the computer and on-line,” she said. “I know now that he was going into these gay chat rooms.”

On March 29, about a month after the Tylenol incident, Robbie ran away from home.

“He had somebody’s number from on-line,” his mom said. “He took a bus to Chicago, but because he wasn’t street smart, he got scared and turned himself in.” Robbie had been gone less than 24 hours when John Kirkland flew to Chicago to retrieve him.

According to Kirkland, Robbie offered no rational explanations for his actions during the ride home, but instead “gave whatever reason he thought he could get away with.”

“It was very frustrating to us,” Kirkland said. “I think he said what he thought would work so people would get off his butt about the real reasons.”

Slowly, tentatively coming out

Clearly, Robbie’s trip to Chicago alerted both his parents that their son was in serious trouble. His computer privileges were cut off, and shortly thereafter, he began seeing a therapist. Slowly and tentatively, Robbie began taking his first steps out of the closet, and his family began taking their first steps towards understanding.

Leslie describes her first reaction to Robbie’s attempt to come out as denial. “I asked the therapist, ‘What’s going on here? Is he just confused?’ And the therapist said, ‘No, he’s gay.’”

Slowly, Leslie moved towards acceptance and asked the therapist to recommend some resources for her son. “I said to the therapist, ‘I don’t care if my son’s gay – I want him to be what God meant him to be.’”
Robbie’s journey towards understanding and accepting his homosexuality was not an issue for his dad.

“I was not going to lose my son over it,” John Kirkland said. “I told him honestly, Some people are not going to like you because of this, Rob,” and he already knew that. I told him, “If you were out dealing drugs, or hurting people, or robbing people, then you and I would have big problems. But I’m not going to have a problem with you over something like this, Rob. If it’s what you are, it’s what you are.”

His sisters and his parents all tried to let Robbie know that they loved him just the way he was.

“However,” John Kirkland said, “he had a tougher time accepting it himself.”

Leslie recalled a conversation last May in which Robbie’s therapist explained to her that being gay was not something Robbie was happy about. “He said that Robbie knew how hard this life was going to be – especially to survive the teenage years when you have to be so closeted because of what society says.”

“I remember sitting down with him on the floor in his bedroom. I held his hand and said, ‘Robbie, I am so very sorry. I didn’t understand that this was not something you’re happy about.”

Leslie apologized to her son and told him that she loved him. “From then on I had a better understanding of what a struggle this was for him,” she said.

Said no to support groups

Last summer, between eighth and ninth grade, Robbie found a way to get back on-line. He used a password that belonged to the father of his best friend, Christopher Collins, one of the few peers that Robbie told his secret to. Like Robbie’s family, Christopher was open to the news.

“I just accepted it and decided not to stop being friends with him just because of one aspect of his personality,” Christopher said.

Christopher’s father stopped Robbie’s access when he got the bill. Robbie paid him back for the on-line time and apologized for what he had done. Once again cut off from the computer, he began making calls to gay 900-number adult entertainment lines.

When his mother confronted him about the phone bill, again Robbie was apologetic.

“He was always very sorry,” Leslie said. “Everything else in his life had always been honest and decent – I always trusted him. This behavior was uncharacteristic for him. This was the one thing that he felt he had to lie about because it was part of his expression of being gay.”

Leslie suggested having a gay friend come over and talk to Robbie, and offered to take him to PRYSM, a support group for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. Robbie said no to both. “I think he was fearful that his cover would be blown,” Leslie said.

Macho culture in high school

After graduating from the eighth grade, Leslie let Robbie choose which high school he wanted to attend. He tested well enough to be offered a full scholarship to St. Edward High School in Lakewood, not far from his father’s home. Instead, he chose St. Ignatius High School, a Jesuit preparatory school in Cleveland’s near west side known for its academic excellence as well as its championship football program.

“He wanted to be a writer, and he felt that St. Ignatius was the best,” Leslie said.

Choosing Ignatius also meant he would be going to school with Christopher Collins, and
since Robbie had been having problems, Leslie felt that it would be best for him to be around at least one friend. Each day began with getting the boys off to school, and Leslie and Christopher’s mom Sharon took turns making the 40-minute trek into the city.

Robbie’s oldest sister Danielle is a sophomore at Miami University in Oxford. She remembered her women’s studies instructor, Marcie Knopf, coming out to the class on the first day, and asked her about resources for Robbie.

“One of Danielle’s biggest concerns was that she had gone to an all-girls Catholic high school, and she had a sense that for Robbie, entering the ninth grade at a Catholic all-boys high school was a really dangerous and scary thing,” Knopf said.

“I’m familiar with the atmosphere at St. Ignatius,” Danielle said. “They’re very homophobic and driven by masculinity. The few guys that I did know that were gay had to really make a statement about it in order to survive. If a guy’s sexuality was called into question, it was a very big deal. I just didn’t think that it would be good atmosphere for [Robbie].”

Danielle was also concerned that Robbie always “had more girl friends than guy friends, and he wouldn’t have them there.”

Robbie’s other sister Claudia, a senior at Magnificat High School in Rocky River, was also well aware of what her younger brother might be up against. She made the senior St. Ignatius boys that she knew promise not to harass Robbie.

“I told them, He’s nice, he’s sensitive, don’t be mean to him.”

An unfortunate crush

Unfortunately, though, Claudia could not make all Ignatius boys promise to be nice to her brother, and one in particular made his life miserable.

“Robbie had a crush on a boy who was a jock, a football player,” his mother said. “This kid was not gay and this kid teased him.”

According to Claudia, Robbie knew better than to tell this boy about his crush. “He never really said much about it,” she said “He told me he had a crush on [this boy], but said that he knew he couldn’t tell him or do anything about it.” He indicated that knew he was in for a long four years when he said to Claudia, “You know, its hard to be gay at St. Ignatius.”

Besides Christopher, Robbie had told two other Ignatius boys that he was gay. News tends to travel in any high school.

Rejected by the church

The family continued to stay involved in Robbie’s coming out process, reading books that had been recommended by Knopf. They got in touch with Cleveland area resources for gay and lesbian youth and their families, and planned on looking into a church that would accept Robbie just the way he was. Robbie had begun to express his displeasure with the Catholic church. Whether or not he was aware that the catechism of the Catholic church had declared his desires “intrinsically disordered,” and “contrary to natural law,” he clearly understood that he was not accepted the way he was.

“A few months before he died,” his mother recalled, “Robbie said, ‘Do I have to go to church? The Catholic church does not accept me, why should I go to it?’ At that point I said, ‘Robbie, we can find a church that does accept you, that’s fine, we can go to a different church.’ But he still went with me [to Catholic church] with a little bit of protest at the end.”

Last November, Robbie signed on to the Prodigy computer service using his mother’s checking account and driver’s license. Leslie found out about it on the Monday before Christmas. A week later, on December 30, she and Robbie’s therapist discussed getting him into PRYSM again, and for the first time, Robbie was agreeable.
“It was like he said, ‘Okay, Mom’s finally going to force me to go to PRYSM.’”

The therapist also told Leslie that, in the meantime, she should put locks on the computer room door and “treat Robbie like a two year old.”

Earlier in December, Leslie had also taken Robbie to a psychiatrist who was also gay. “I was glad he was gay,” Leslie said of the doctor. “I thought he could be an excellent role model for Robbie.” The doctor prescribed Zoloft, an anti-depressant that takes about four to six weeks before it becomes effective.

Leslie said she grieved that things seemed to happen just a little too late to save her son. Robbie would have attended his first PRYSM meeting at noon on Saturday, January 4, but two days earlier, he was dead. The day Robbie was buried, Leslie had to cancel the locksmith who was to install the lock on the computer room door.

Called to save other boys

Not able to save her son, Leslie felt “called by God” to reach out to other boys like him. Leslie was further grieved when Christopher told her about some rumors that had been circulating around the St. Ignatius campus. One of them was that the boy that Robbie had a crush on was telling other students that Robbie had written “F--- y--” to him in his suicide note.

“But truly,” his mother said, “he was not over this boy.”

The message that Robbie did leave for this boy was, “You caused me a lot of pain, but hell, love hurts. I hope you have a wonderful life.”

Leslie called the boy’s mother to find out if there was any truth to another rumor that Robbie had spoken to her son on the telephone at 3:00 a.m. the day he died.

“The mother was fearful that if it got out that Robbie liked this kid, it would ruin this kid’s reputation – that if the [other] kids knew, then they might think that her kid was gay. Her concern was that her son would be perceived as gay and would be teased and ridiculed. I said to this woman, ‘Please, I just buried my son. Please don’t scream at me.’”
St. Ignatius declined gay talk

Hoping to have some goodness come from Robbie’s death, Leslie spoke with Rory Henessy, who is in charge of discipline at St. Ignatius, and the school’s principal, Richard Clark.

“I told Mr. Henessy the same thing that I told Father Lewis at the funeral home – that there are other Robbies at their school. I told him that Robbie’s therapist offered to talk to the school. I said I would come and read something about Robbie’s life and about his being gay.”

The school has politely declined Leslie’s offers, and principal Clark reiterated that the “message of the school is kindness and tolerance.” He also said that St. Ignatius is planning to do a mass that will focus on the issue of suicide.

“The funny part of all this,” Leslie said, “is that Robbie would have wanted to stay in the closet.”

“I see him laughing at me, saying ‘Oh, mom, this is my mom – always trying to help people.’”

“I’m not a public person, but I would read on a loudspeaker if it would help one boy out there,” she added.

Leslie feels no bitterness toward the school or the church, and wants only good things to come out of this tragedy.

“Me and his sisters and his father, and his other father, we all feel that this is a terrible tragedy that we have to live without him for the rest of our lives. We feel that there are all these other Robbies in the world, and if we can somehow help just one of them. Not just the Robbies, but the people that treat the Robbies badly. If we can help them in any way, then we feel called by God to do it. This is hard for me, I’m not an articulate person. I’m just a mom who loved her son.”

John Kirkland is equally as passionate about telling his son’s story, and in time, plans to become active with PRYSM or P-FLAG.

“I would tell any parent that I can reach that I tried, and I still lost my son, and its something that’s going to hurt every day for the rest of my life. You can lose them in other ways too. It’ll hurt just as much if you lose your son because you alienate him as it hurt me because my son killed himself. You may not think it now, but believe me its going to. And one day you’re going to wake up and realize: That little boy or that little girl I raised, I lost them. I lost them because I couldn’t accept them. Is it worth that?”

Leslie feels no bitterness toward the school or the church, and wants only good things to come out of this tragedy.
Legal Information
Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment

All students have a federal constitutional right to equal protection under the law. This means that schools have a duty to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students from harassment on an equal basis with all other students. If school officials fail to take action against anti-LGBT harassment because they believe that LGBT students should expect to be harassed, or because they believe that LGBT students bring the harassment upon themselves simply by being openly LGBT, or because the school is uneducated about LGBT issues and uncomfortable addressing the situation, then the school has failed to provide equal protection to the student.

Title IX (applies to all schools that receive federal financial assistance)

Title IX of the Education Amendment Acts of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Although Title IX does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, sexual harassment directed at an LGBT student is prohibited by Title IX if it is sufficiently severe and pervasive. Title IX also prohibits gender-based harassment, including harassment on the basis of a student’s failure to conform to stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity.

1st Amendment, Equal Protection & Due Process Clauses

A transgender student’s right to dress in accordance with his or her gender identity may be protected under the First Amendment and the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment limits the right of school officials to censor a student’s speech or expression. Students also have a protected liberty interest (under the Due Process Clause) in their personal appearance. In addition, a transgender student also has a right under the Equal Protection Clause to be treated similarly to other students of the same gender identity. If the school treats the student differently than it would treat other students of the same gender identity (i.e. if it imposes a dress code on a male-to-female transsexual that is different than the dress code that is applied to biological females), then the school is applying rules in a sex discriminatory way (i.e. it is applying the code differently based on the student’s biological sex).

Equal Access Act

The Equal Access Act requires schools that receive federal aid and have a “limited open forum,” or at least one student-led non-curriculum club that meets outside of class time, to allow additional clubs to be organized, and for the said clubs to be given equal access to resources such as meeting space and publications. Schools that meet these conditions must permit LGBT-related such as GSAs to meet on the same basis as other student groups.
Model Harassment and Discrimination Policies

Model Harassment Policy

The ______________ School District is committed to providing all students with a safe and supportive school environment. Members of the school community are expected to treat each other with respect. Teachers and staff are expected to teach and demonstrate by example that all members of the community are entitled to respect as human beings.

Harassment of a member of the school community by another member of the community is a violation of school policy. This includes (but is not limited to) harassment based on race, religion, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. Harassment means conduct (including verbal conduct) which has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a student’s educational performance or creating an intimidating or hostile environment.

Sexual harassment is also against school policy. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances or sexual behavior (including verbal behavior) which is tied to a student’s education, or which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating or hostile environment.

The first response of any staff member to an act of harassment should be to teach; to teach why harassment is wrong, and tolerance and respect are essential to a free society. Serious or repeated violations of school policy may require more intense counseling and/or appropriate discipline.

*Note: Federal Law requires all schools to have a process for handling sexual harassment complaints.*

Model Discrimination Policy

The ______________ School District is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff.

It is District policy that no one shall be treated differently, separately, or have any action directly affecting him or her taken on the basis of race, religion, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability where a person is otherwise qualified or could be with reasonable accommodation.

The immediate remedy for any act of discrimination shall be to end it, treat the individual equally, and, as much as practically possible, to eradicate any effects of discrimination. Discipline should be imposed where appropriate.

*This resource is provided to GLSEN chapters free of charge by the GLSEN Field Department*
Frequently Asked Questions On Safe School Policies

This fact sheet is designed to address many of the frequently asked questions about how schools can best protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students from harassment and discrimination and, at the same time, protect themselves from potential liability.

The questions below will address existing legal obligations under federal law; why having an inclusive anti-harassment policy helps school fulfill their legal obligations; how to draft the most effective policy or law; concerns about liability; and ways to respond to objections to the proposed policy.

Are LGBT students at risk of experiencing harassment and discrimination in schools?

Yes. There is now extensive evidence that LGBT students are disproportionately targeted for harassment and discrimination in schools. Left unchecked, this harassment and discrimination may often escalate to the level of physical violence or violent crime.

Specifically, results from the 2001 National School Climate Survey indicate that:

• Over 80% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation; and
• Nearly 70% of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation.¹

Moreover, studies also indicate that school officials often fail to respond to or, in some cases, even participate in the discrimination and harassment.² One study documented this problem, reporting that:

• 80% of prospective teachers reported negative attitudes towards LGBT people; and
• 66% of guidance counselors maintain negative feelings about and towards LGBT people.³

The climate of fear created may result in increased absenteeism, decreased academic performance and increased risk of suicide. The National School Climate Survey also found that over 30% of LGBT students had missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe.⁴

Do schools have a legal obligation to protect LGBT students from harassment and discrimination?

Yes. All students have a federal constitutional right to equal protection under the law. This means that schools have a duty to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students from harassment on an equal basis with all other students. If school officials failed to take action against
anti-LGBT harassment because they believed that LGBT students should expect to be harassed; or because they believed that LGBT students brought the Harassment upon themselves simply by being openly LGBT; or because the school was uneducated about LGBT issues and was uncomfortable addressing the situation, then the school has failed to provide equal protection to the student.5

In addition, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which applies to all schools that receive federal financial assistance, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Although Title IX does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, it does prohibit sexual harassment directed at an LGBT student.6 Title IX also prohibits gender-based harassment, including harassment on the basis that a student fails to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity.7

Moreover, the First Amendment and the federal Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses protect the right of a transgender student to dress in accordance with his or her gender identity.8

In addition to these federal protections, there are state laws that also require schools to protect LGBT students.

With all these existing Federal laws, why is a local policy necessary?

One critical step that local school districts can take both to ensure they fulfill their legal obligation to protect LGBT students and, at the same time, to respond to the alarming statistics about harassment and discrimination of LGBT students is to pass and implement anti-harassment policies that explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity.9 These policies are the most effective way to protect students from discrimination and to help schools fulfill their legal responsibility to provide safe and effective learning environments for all students.

Schools have a legal obligation to respond to harassment of LGBT students whether or not they have a policy. A comprehensive policy that is publicized and implemented will clarify for all staff that such behavior is unacceptable and must be responded to. Thus, having an effective anti-harassment policy helps schools fulfill their existing legal obligations.

Will the existence of these policies open up schools and teachers to additional legal liability?

No. To the contrary, enacting such legislation will help protect school districts and teachers from potential liability.

This is because school districts are already legally required, under state and federal law, to appropriately respond to harassment of all students, including LGBT students. This duty to protect or take action is not based on the existence or absence of a school policy, but rather is based on already existing federal and state laws and constitutional provisions.

Without a policy that explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories, many school officials are not aware of this legal obligation to appropriately respond to anti-LGBT harassment and discrimination. Or, if they are aware, they often do not feel comfortable and supported in responding to harassment of LGBT students. It is conduct—failing to act or failing to act in a reasonable manner—that opens up school districts to liability, not the adoption of an anti-harassment policy.
Having a policy that explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity will help protect the school district from liability by providing clear direction to teachers, administrators and students about what types of conduct are prohibited and what steps they need to take when they learn of incidents of prohibited conduct. This guidance will help staff and school districts comply with their preexisting legal obligations to respond to harassment of LGBT students. Moreover, such anti-harassment policies also give teachers and staff the backing they need in order to feel confident about responding to LGBT harassment.

**Is a blanket prohibition against discrimination and harassment without enumerated categories sufficient to protect LGBT students?**

No. While harassment of any kind is unacceptable and should be dealt with quickly, firmly and with appropriate consequences and remedies, certain groups of people have suffered systematic institutional prejudice, discrimination and, as a result, are at a disproportionate risk of being the target of harassment and violence. Evidence shows that school officials often do not recognize that anti-LGBT harassment and discrimination are unacceptable behaviors. And even when teachers and staff do recognize that it is unacceptable, they are often reluctant to intervene for fear of becoming targets of harassment themselves.

Without specifically enumerating sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories, many school officials may continue to believe that they do not have a responsibility to respond to anti-LGBT harassment. As the United States Supreme Court has explained: "Enumeration is the essential device used to make the duty not to discriminate concrete and to provide guidance for those who must comply." Inclusion of the enumerated categories will provide clear direction to teachers, administrators, and students about the scope of the law or policy. It is also necessary to give teachers and staff the backing they need in order to feel confident about responding to LGBT harassment.

**Is it necessary to add gender identity in particular?**

Yes. Transgender youth are disproportionately likely to face harassment. In a recent survey, 89.5% of transgender students reported feeling unsafe based on their gender expression. Also, the harassment tends to be particularly violent. A recent survey analyzing reported instances of bias-motivated violence against LGBT people from 1995 through 1998 found that although anti-transgender violence accounted for only a relatively small percentage of all reported cases, those incidents accounted for 20% of all reported murders and approximately 40% of all police-initiated violence. These conditions put transgender youth at great risk of suicidal feelings and behavior. Moreover, harassment on the basis of gender non-conformity—behaving in a manner outside of traditional gender characterizations—perpetuates and reinforces gender-based stereotypes that hurt everyone.

**Will it be difficult to adopt and effectively implement such a policy?**

No. Under existing federal law, as well as the laws in many states, school districts are already legally required to promulgate, annually publicize and implement sexual harassment policies. Thus, all school districts should already have mechanisms in place for annually publicizing and enforcing harassment policies. Thus, the only additional requirement being placed on school districts is to ensure that the categories enumerated in their existing policies include sexual orientation and gender identity.
Should such a policy be limited to high schools?

No. Children notice differences among people at a very early age. And it is well documented that harassment and discrimination begin at a very young age, often as early as kindergarten or elementary school. Biases and negative stereotypes undercut all children's healthy development and ill-equip them to interact effectively in a diverse world. Thus, it is essential that all schools, including middle schools and elementary schools, have anti-harassment policies that are effectively implemented and enforced.

Obviously, discussions about the policies must be age-appropriate and will differ for different-age children, but all children should be taught that harassment and discrimination are wrong, and strong anti-harassment and nondiscrimination policies should be in place for all grades.

Does having anti-harassment policy that includes sexual orientation violate the religious freedom of those teachers, staff, and administrators that believe homosexuality is a sin?

No. Requiring staff to appropriately respond to violence, discrimination and harassment, and ensuring that all students are provided with a safe and effective learning environment, does not violate the religious freedoms of staff and administrators. Teachers and staff are free to hold any beliefs they choose about homosexuality. The policy simply requires that they fulfill their legal obligation to make sure that no student is harassed or discriminated against.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students are disproportionately targeted for harassment and discrimination in schools. School districts can be held legally accountable for failing to protect LGBT students.

The most effective way for school districts to ensure that they fulfill their legal obligations and, at the same time, protect students from harassment and discrimination is to adopt and implement a policy that clearly prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

For More Information, Contact:

GLSEN
1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 1105
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 347-7780

National Center for Lesbian Rights
870 Market Street, Suite 570
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 392-6257
Endnotes


5. See Nabozny v. Podlesny, 92 F.3d 446 (7th Cir. 1996) (holding student could maintain claims alleging discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation under the Equal Protection Clause where school district failed to protect the student to the same extent that other students were protected from harassment and harm by other students due to the student’s gender and sexual orientation). See also Montgomery v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 709, 109 F. Supp. 2d 1081 (D. Minn. 2000) (We are unable to garner any rational basis for permitting one student to assault another based on the victim’s sexual orientation, and the defendants do not offer us one.) (citing Nabozny, 92 F.3d at 458).

6. See Office of Civil Rights, Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance, § III (Jan. 2001) (OCR Revised Guidance) (Although Title IX does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, sexual harassment directed at gay or lesbian students that is sufficiently serious to limit or deny a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the school’s program constitutes sexual harassment prohibited by Title...). See also Montgomery, 109 F. Supp. 2d 1081.

7. See OCR Revised Guidance, § III (Though beyond the scope of this guidance, gender-based harassment, which may include acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping, but not involving conduct of a sexual nature, is also a form of sex discrimination to which a school must respond...) (citing Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins, 490 U.S. 228, 251 (1989) (holding sex-stereotyping is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title VII) (emphasis added). See also Montgomery, 109 F. Supp. 2d 1081; Miles v. New York Univ., 979 F. Supp. 248 (S.D.N.Y. 1997).


9. See, e.g., Hatred in the Hallways.

10. See, e.g., Sears, supra note 3.


12. GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 2001


14. See, e.g., Montgomery, 109 F. Supp. 2d at 1083 (noting that the plaintiff began experiencing frequent and continual harassment beginning in kindergarten).

15. Nabozny v. Podlesny, 92 F.3d 446 (7th Cir. 1996).
Fifteen Expensive Reasons Why Safe Schools Legislation is in Your State’s Best Interest
January 2004

Following are summaries of fifteen cases that have been brought against school districts for failing to protect students from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. These cases illustrate the following:

- School districts can be held liable under existing federal law for failing to protect students from harassment based on sexual orientation and gender nonconformity.
- Without clear directives from their state legislature, many school districts have failed to protect students from harassment and discrimination, putting themselves at risk for potential legal liability.
- In all of the cases brought to date, the student either prevailed after trial or achieved a settlement.

State Legislation Protects States, School Districts and Students

At a time in which fiscal discipline is critical to preserve statewide education priorities, the cost of avoidable lawsuits against a school district for failing to protect their students from anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) harassment and discrimination can hinder both school district and state budgets. Passing and effectively implementing and enforcing state laws that clearly prohibit discrimination and harassment on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity can help school districts avoid these expensive lawsuits, and, at the same time, help districts in fulfilling their general mission – to provide a safe and effective education for all of their students. The daily experience of many LGBT students and the persistence of lawsuits on these matters illustrate that schools and school districts across the country are not currently meeting their obligations.

Schools’ Existing Obligations Under Federal Law

Whether or not a state or a school district has an LGBT-inclusive law or policy, all public schools have obligations under federal law to protect students from anti-LGBT harassment and discrimination. The growing list of cases, some of which are included below, explicitly illustrate this point.

A school district and its employees may be held liable under the Equal Protection Clause of the federal Constitution for failing to protect students from anti-LGBT harassment. If a school official fails to take action when they learn of such harassment because they think that an LGBT student should expect to be harassed, or that the student provokes the harassment by being openly LGBT, then the school has failed to provide equal protection to the student. Likewise, school officials
violate the Equal Protection Clause if they fail to provide the same level of protection against harassment to boys and girls, and to LGBT students and non-LGBT students.

In addition, Title IX, a federal law that applies to all schools that receive federal money, already requires schools to ensure that students are not sexually harassed. While Title IX does not explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, it does prohibit harassment directed at an LGBT student that is sexual in nature. Title IX also prohibits harassment based on perceptions that a student does not conform to stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity.

**For More Information On Crafting Effective State Laws:**

Effective guidance from the state legislature can help to ensure that schools and school districts meet their obligations under federal law, avoid costly and unnecessary lawsuits, and provide educational environments where all students can learn. GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, and NCLR, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, can help. For more information, contact:

NCLR
415.392.6257

Legislative & Policy Analyst

GLSEN
202.347.7780

**Suits Against School Districts For Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation**

Below is a sampling of fifteen cases that have been brought against school districts for failing to protect students from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. These cases illustrate several important points:

- In all of the cases, the student either prevailed after trial, or achieved a settlement.

- School districts have paid anywhere from $40,000 to over $1.1 million in settlements or judgments. These dollar figures do not include the districts’ attorney’s fees. In many cases, the attorney’s fees were far greater than the amount of the settlement itself.

- Many of these lawsuits were brought and successfully won or settled in states that do not have state statutes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, including lawsuits in Kentucky, Missouri, and Nevada.
# Resolved Cases

**CASE:** Flores v. Morgan Hill Unified School District (N.D. Cal.)  
**FACTS:** Suit brought on behalf of 6 former MHUSD districts who were subjected to daily harassment and threats of physical violence and actual physical violence on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender.  
**CLAIMS:** Equal Protection Clause, Title IX, state law claims  
**RESOLUTION:** settlement  
**MONETARY:** over $1,100,000  
**INJUNCTIVE:**  
- Amendment of existing nondiscrimination policy to include sexual orientation and gender  
- Training for all administrators, teachers, counselors, and other employees who monitor student behavior on harassment and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity  
- Mandatory training for seventh and ninth graders on preventing anti-lgbt harassment and discrimination  
- District policies and student handbooks will be revised so that they expressly state that harassment and discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity is expressly prohibited under district policies and state law  
- The district must keep written records of any complaints made concerning anti-lgbt harassment or discrimination.

**CASE:** Massey v. Banning Unified School District (C.D. Cal.)  
**FACTS:** Eighth grade student alleged she was prohibited from attending physical education class on the basis of her sexual orientation.  
**CLAIMS:** Equal Protection Clause; state law claims (including AB 537 and Unruh Act)  
**RESOLUTION:** settlement  
**MONETARY:** $45,000  
**INJUNCTIVE:**  
- Amendment of existing nondiscrimination policy to include sexual orientation and gender  
- Training for all district teachers and other school staff on issues of anti-discrimination and diversity  
- Training for students at all grade levels – K-12 – with respect to diversity

**FACTS:** Constant harassment, discrimination, intimidation based on his sex and sexual orientation, name calling, assaults, punched in face, lassoed around the neck, threatened, transferred from school to school and told to keep silent about his sexual orientation, put into adult education program  
**CLAIMS:** Title IX, Equal Protection Clause, First Amendment, state tort claims  
**RESOLUTION:** settlement  
**MONETARY:** $451,000  
**INJUNCTIVE:**  
- Adoption of new harassment policy including sexual orientation required  
- Staff training required  
- Student training required
FACTS: Verbal harassment and name calling by teachers and students, spit on in hallway, put in independent study program (thereby losing ability to attend any U.C. school), subjected to sexually suggestive touching
CLAIMS: Equal Protection Clause, Due Process Clause, state law claims, including AB 537
RESOLUTION: settlement
MONETARY: $130,000
INJUNCTIVE: • Required training for school staff, including a one-time 3 hour program, and 30 minute annual training
• Required training for students, including a mandatory 50 minute training
• Required to integrate peer-to-peer education and counseling into existing programs
• Required to revise anti-harassment policy to include real or perceived sexual orientation and gender
• Required to have two compliance coordinators at each school, one male and one female (although only one required for elementary schools)
• Required to submit an annual report
• Required to keep and submit incident records

CASE: Dahle v. Titusville (Pa.) (settled 2002)
FACTS: Severely tormented based on sexual orientation, daily verbal and physical assaults over 5-year period. Harassment was so traumatizing that student attempted suicide.
RESOLUTION: settlement
MONETARY: $312,000

FACTS: Two brothers were harassed and subjected to verbal and physical abuse based on perpetrators’ sex based stereotypes of masculinity, including one incident where another student bounced a basketball off P’s head, which required hospital treatment, P also received death threat
CLAIMS: Title IX; state law

CASE: Putman v. Bd. of Educ. of Somerset Ind. Sch. (E.D. Ky.)
FACTS: Death threats, repeated unwanted sexual contact, offensive and hostile verbal abuse, sexual intimidation and humiliation including sexually explicit graffiti on school parking lot depicting 2 male figures engaged in sexual act with plaintiff’s name above picture
CLAIMS: Title IX; Equal Protection Clause
RESOLUTION: Settlement
MONETARY: $135,000
INJUNCTIVE: • amend anti-harassment policy to include actual or perceived sexual orientation.
FACTS: Name calling based on his perceived sexual orientation from K thru 10th grade, physical threats and assaults beginning in 6th grade, mock rapes, unwanted sexual contact from 9th grade
CLAIMS: Title IX; Equal Protection Clause, Due Process Clause, state law claims
RESOLUTION: Settlement
MONETARY: undisclosed financial settlement
INJUNCTIVE: • District required to enforce anti-harassment policy

FACTS: Plaintiff was harassed, threatened, insulted, taunted and abused based on perpetrators perception of his sexual orientation and because P’s mother is transgender, beaten by another student causing concussion, hearing impairment, severe and permanent headache, psychological injury, urine soaked towels thrown on him
CLAIMS: Title IX
RESOLUTION: Undisclosed financial settlement

FACTS: Harassment, intimidation, physical abuse because of perceived sexual orientation, raped 3 times by another student who forced him to leave campus at knife point
CLAIMS: Title IX; Equal Protection Clause; Due Process Clause; state law claims
RESOLUTION: settlement
MONETARY: undisclosed, confidential monetary amount
INJUNCTIVE: no

CASE: Lovins v. Pleasant Hill (W.D. Mo.) (settled 2000)
FACTS: Plaintiff was harassed from 8th grade through 11th grade based on real or perceived sexual orientation. Plaintiff was assaulted, and was eventually forced to leave school because of harassment and discrimination.
CLAIMS: Title IX, Equal Protection Clause
RESOLUTION: settlement
MONETARY: $72,000
INJUNCTIVE: • Required training for school staff
    • Required to include student training in the curriculum
    • Required to revise harassment policy, and to hire expert to implement other appropriate policies
    • Required to have two coordinators at each school, one male and one female
    • Required to submit number of comprehensive reports
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACTS:</td>
<td>Harassed, teased, called “German gay girl,” and “Lezze,” constantly shoved into walls and books and homework taken, unwanted sexual contact + and questioning in class, stabbed in hand with pen, students ripped her shirt off, another threatened to rape her and took his pants off before another intervened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAIMS:</td>
<td>Title IX, and National Origin Discrim. claim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOLUTION:</td>
<td>jury award (affirmed on appeal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONETARY:</td>
<td>$220,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE:</th>
<th>Iverson v. Kent (settled 1998)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACTS:</td>
<td>Plaintiff was pushed into lockers with broom sticks, called names, teacher told him &quot;I already have 20 girls, I don’t need another,&quot; beaten by 8 students in classroom while 30 students watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAIMS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOLUTION:</td>
<td>settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONETARY:</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INJUNCTIVE:</td>
<td>Required training for teachers and administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Required to revise anti-harassment training procedures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE:</th>
<th>Wagner v. Fayetteville (settled 1998)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACTS:</td>
<td>Plaintiff suffered physical and psychological harassment over a period of 2 years. He was beaten, and suffered a broken nose and kidney damage. Sexually explicit drawings of student were circulated in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAIMS:</td>
<td>Title IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOLUTION:</td>
<td>settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONETARY:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INJUNCTIVE:</td>
<td>• Required one-time training for school staff, and additional training required for all staff with responsibility to implement the policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Required to formally notify students that sexual harassment is prohibited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Required to provide training for students on sexual harassment and other student policy issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Agreed to review policy and revise if necessary, and to disseminate policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE:</th>
<th>Nabonzy v. Podlesny, 92 F.3d 446 (7th Cir. 1996)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACTS:</td>
<td>Harassment and physical abuse because of sexual orientation and sex, mock rape in front of 20 students, urinated on, put in special education, beaten by 8 students causing internal bleeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAIMS:</td>
<td>Equal Protection Clause; Due Process Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOLUTION:</td>
<td>settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONETARY:</td>
<td>$962,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Legislative & Policy Analyst
GLSEN
202.347.7780

State Legislative Lawyer
Staff Attorney, HRC
202.572.8953

NCLR
415.392.6257
Resources & Ideas
for Creating Safe Schools for GLBTQ Youth
Tips For Counseling GLBT Youth

(Compiled by Karen Scebbi, M.A., Psy.S.  Reprinted with permission)

1. **Expect sexual minority issues to arise:** Do not be caught off guard or act surprised. You will, no doubt, scare away the student. Practice your response beforehand.

2. **Know your own biases:** If you feel uncomfortable or feel as though you cannot address the issue, refer the student to someone who can address it. You should not share feelings of discomfort with the student.

3. **Support confidentiality:** Discuss confidentiality issues, including limitations, with the student. Do not discuss the case unnecessarily with colleagues or others.

4. **Provide community resources:** Have resources on hand.

5. **Be aware of multicultural differences:** Different cultures have differing values, myths, etc.

6. **Use supportive language:** Take your cue from the student. Use language the student uses. (i.e. many individuals in the African-American community prefer the term “same-gender loving”).

7. **Explore feelings and/or confusion:** Expect that the student is going to be confused and have conflicting feelings.

8. **Explore internalized homophobia:** The student may need to deal with his/her own homophobic feelings.

9. **Dispel myths:** Many students believe the myths and stereotypes that exist.

10. **Reframe behavior as normal:** Make sure students know that their “normal” does not always mean the same as another person’s “normal.”

11. **Discuss coming out issues:** Do not assume it is always best for students to come out to everyone immediately.

12. **Teach appropriate coping strategies:** It is imperative that students learn healthy coping strategies to deal with the homophobia they may face while examining their own sexuality.

13. **Teach social skills:** This may be especially important if the student has been isolated from peers.

14. **Explore relationship/grief issues:** You may be the only person with whom the student can or will discuss relationship issues or breakup issues.

15. **Provide safe sex education that is relevant to their experiences:** Remember, lesbians are not immune from sexually transmitted diseases.

16. **Facilitate insights, further self-definition or refer to school psychologist:** A Student should be treated as a whole person, not just a student struggling with their sexual orientation.

17. **Provide family counseling:** Families may or may not be open to family counseling.

18. **Discuss increased risk factors:** Talk about increased risk of drug use, feelings of depression and/or isolation, suicide, etc. Let the student know these are risk factors.

19. **Determine if suicide ideation is present:** If so, refer to the school psychologist for a full suicide risk assessment.

20. **Thank the student for trusting you:** Continue to honor the trust given to you by the student.
Name Calling in the Classroom
We Can Do Something About It
By Virginia Uribe, Ph.D.  Reprinted with permission

Every day we hear names echo down the corridors of our schools and explode in our classrooms. Maybe it’s happened to us, maybe it hasn’t. But we certainly can sense the pain and humiliation of the children, and sometimes we can see their anger.

Insults take many forms; they all hurt. Racial, ethnic and sexual slurs are particularly abusive because they reflect a history of oppression, and therefore there is more power to inflict damage with such slurs. Do children need to be reminded that they are members of a denigrated class?

Sometimes slurs don’t even get recognized as being hurtful and may be considered socially acceptable. Many young people use terms such as “nigger,” “spic,” “faggot,” “lezzie,” “queer”… because they know the effectiveness of their hurtful nature. The use of slurs attacks another’s self-esteem and teaches young people that hatred of one group is condoned by our society.

As educators, it falls on us to create a cooperative learning environment where students are safe to express themselves in all their diversity. It is also the responsibility of educators to teach children that diversity is something to be celebrated rather than ridiculed.

Exercise for Establishing Classroom Rules
Even without a Code of Discipline, name-calling can be controlled within the classroom using the following exercise:

1. Have students brainstorm names they have heard others called.
2. List all suggestions on the board.
3. Discuss the following categories and categorize names accordingly: racial, ethnic, sexual, or religious bias.
4. Make students aware that all name-calling involves prejudice and is equally bad.
5. State that none of the listed names is acceptable in your classroom.
6. Make it clear that you will not tolerate any form of name-calling.
7. Explain why and discuss consequences for failure to adhere to this rule.
8. You can control behavior in your classroom. If you react immediately to any transgressions, students will feel safe in the classroom.

Establish a Code of Discipline
• Name calling, which has one basis in poor self-esteem, has the spiral effect of further lowering self-esteem, making it difficult for learning to take place.
• A system-wide Code of Discipline will assist in controlling name calling when this behavior is addressed directly.
• A phrase in one school’s Code of Discipline defines the unacceptable behavior: “Willful obscene, abusive or profane language or gestures (including racial, religious ethnic or sexual slurs).”
• This definition is followed by specific consequences for transgressions.

With system-wide support and commitment a discipline code is effective in eliminating name-calling not only in the classroom but also in the hallways where it is most prevalent.

Dr Virginia Uribe, Fairfax High School, Los Angeles Unified School District, is founder and director of PROJECT 10, a dropout prevention program targeted at lesbian and gay teenagers.
An Educator’s Guide to Intervening in Anti-Gay Harassment

First, stop the behavior:

• Cut it out!
• Keep your hands to yourself!
• That’s way out of line!
• Stop it right now!
• Out of the room!
• Whoa, that is not OK!
• Leave him alone!
• Hey, that was uncalled for!
• That is unacceptable!
• (Name of offender), I said knock it off.

Then educate:

• That was a stereotype. Stereotypes are a kind of lie and they hurt people’s feelings.
• That was a putdown. I don’t think it belongs at (name of school).
• You may not have meant to hurt anyone, but that was a really derogatory gesture ... It implied he was gay in a really disrespectful way.
• That’s bullying. It’s against school rules. And besides what business is it of yours if somebody’s gay?
• That’s mean and it’s sexual harassment. It could get you suspended.
• Do you guys know what that word means? It’s a put down for a gay man. That’s like putting down people of a different race from yours or a different religion.
• She may or may not be lesbian, but writing graffiti and spreading rumors is wrong.

Educating is a crucial step.

It is not enough to stop the behavior. Students may interpret a simple, “Stop it right now!” to mean that it is OK to bully Johnny, but not during math. And while stopping to educate may take a moment in the short run, it will save time and energy, not to mention some child’s heart, in the long run. And that child might not be the one who was targeted. It might be the bystander or the bully. You may be preventing a much more serious assault or a suicide down the road. It is worth the extra moment.
Commonly Asked Questions About Intervening in Anti-Gay Harassment

Should I educate on the spot or take the offender aside and educate in private?

Sometimes one is more appropriate; sometimes, the other. On the one hand, the target and the witnesses need to hear what you have to say. It can be a very valuable chance to model standing up for someone. And it can reassure them that your classroom really is a safe space. However, allowing the child who used the slur to save face may lead to sincere regret and changed behavior. And pursuing the issue at length in front of the target may only embarrass him or her. Use your professional judgment. The point is to support and educate all the children.

What if the offender retaliates against me for speaking up, by demanding, “Why do you care? Are you gay??!”

You have lots of choices:

- You can ask, “Why? Do you think only gay people have the courage to stand up against bullying?”
- You can say, “I hope I would speak up about meanness no matter what my orientation was!”
- You can answer the question honestly. For example: “No, but what difference does my sexual orientation make?” or “Yes, I actually am. But the issue here is that you are harassing Chris, Pat. That’s not OK in my class or in any other class in this school!”
- You can decline to respond, falling back on previously established classroom ground rules, “That’s a really personal question. Remember we had a class ground rule that we would all protect our own, and other people’s, privacy here? And anyway, I think my identity is irrelevant.”

Of course, some students will assume that you would not be declining to answer if you were really heterosexual. If you are heterosexual, being ambiguous about it may be difficult for you, while it provides a valuable learning experience for your students. If you are actually a sexual minority, ambiguity may be almost as emotionally and practically risky as coming out.

On the other hand, authenticity is a very important component in developing a climate of community and trust in the classroom. So there is something to be said, if the political climate in your school and district allows it, for a genuine answer to a direct question, even if the question is a defiant, angry one. Young people need sexual minority role models who are not afraid to be open and openly heterosexual role models who object to anti-gay harassment and violence.

Again, your professional judgment must ultimately determine how you respond. The point is to think about it ahead of time and to practice how you will handle this kind of situation, so that your fear won’t get in the way of protecting children.
What if I am not sure I have my administrator’s support?

You still have a moral and legal obligation to protect every student from harassment and violence. So do stand up for targeted children.

But definitely talk with your supervisor about the problem, before you begin to intervene in it. Share a copy of the Safe Schools Report, They Don’t Even Know Me: Understanding Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence in Schools. Discuss examples of harassment and ostracism you have witnessed in your own building, or about which students have told you.

If your supervisor agrees that something must be done, make a proposal. Explain how you would like to address the problem. Try to agree on a strategy.

If your supervisor explicitly forbids you from intervening in peer-on-peer anti-gay harassment, do not become “insubordinate.” Talk with your union representative. If you don’t belong to a union, or if your union is unresponsive, contact the Safe Schools Coalition for assistance.(1-800-5B-PROUD or intervention@safeschools-wa.org). But defying an explicit directive can jeopardize your job.

If, on the other hand, you leave the conversation with your supervisor still unsure of where you stand, and if you happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, we would urge you to find a way to object to bullying that doesn’t require your “coming out.” We know that young people need role models, but without your supervisor’s support it can be professionally risky to be honest … and losing you altogether as their teacher will clearly not help your students.

The bottom line is …

Legally and ethically, you must do whatever is necessary to stop the harassment against children and teens who are perceived to be gay. Seeing you stand up against bullying will make every child, gay and straight alike, feel safer at school. Only when they feel safe, can students learn.

Source: Resource Guide, Safe Schools Coalition, Reprinted with permission www.safeschoolscoalition.org
Don’t Look and It Will Go Away: 
YA Books—A Key to Uncovering the Invisible Problem of Bullying 
C. J. Bott, Nancy Garden, Patrick Jones, Julie Ann Peters

Adapted from a panel presentation given at the 2006 ALAN Workshop in Nashville, Tennessee, November 20, 2006

C. J. Bott opened the session by posing this question to the entire 480 in attendance: How many of you have been bullied at some time in your life? Raise your hand. How many of you have been a bully? Older brothers and sisters must raise their hands here. I am the oldest of four and I admit that I resorted to bullying to keep my sisters under control. How many of you have witnessed a bullying incident at anytime during your life? And finally, how many wish you could had done something differently?

All those hands in the air are the only statistic you need to know this is a problem that we cannot ignore any longer. If we are all carrying the bruises from bullying, what is happening to our students?

At this ALAN conference in Nashville, we have the largest audience ever with 480 people. If two-thirds of you are classroom teachers, and that is a low estimate, that means 322 of you will go back to your classrooms. If you average four classes, that is 1288 classes, and I know many of you teach more than four. If we take an average of 25 students in each of those classes—that means that what is said on this panel today can touch the lives of 32,200 students. Think about it; think about the ripple that will start here today and could change the lives of over 32,000 kids.

Let’s start with the official definition of bullying created by Dan Olweus, the international authority on this problem. “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, REPEATEDLY AND OVER TIME, to the negative actions on the part of one or more other students.” A student can’t call someone a name once and be classified a bully. It has to happen repeatedly—and it can’t be all in one setting; it has to happen over time, day after day. I would also add that there is an imbalance of power, one who has power over one who does not.

You know this, if I give you pairs of stereotypes, you can pick which is more likely to be the harasser. Ninth-grader or fifth-grader? Golfer or football player? Cheerleader or choir member?

Besides not looking and hoping it will go away, another thing we do wrong is we don’t start early enough. We should be starting antibullying programs in elementary school. Another statistic from Olweus: “Bullies identified by age 8 are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 and five times more than non-bullies to end up with serious criminal records by the age of 30.” Age 8, that is third grade. If that child gets locked into bullying behaviors to get his or her power needs met, that child’s potential is lost. Males who are confirmed bullies often turn into abusive partners, and females who are confirmed bullies turn into abusive moms. We have to start early, and we have to work with everyone. Bystanders make up about 75-80 percent of your school’s population. If you were going to sell a product, wouldn’t you want to market it to the largest population? We have to create programs that call upon the witnesses and bystanders to be responsible friends and citizens.

There are different ways to categorize a bully, but

What is said on this panel today can touch the lives of 32,200 students. Think about it; think about the ripple that will start here today and could change the lives of over 32,000 kids.
the most common is direct bullying and indirect bullying. Direct bullying is face to face and the target knows the bully’s identity—e.g., the big kid saying, “Give me your lunch money.” The target knows where the threat is, and if the bully is not around, can enjoy a certain degree of safety. Indirect bullying is not like that. It happens behind the back, and the bully could be anyone. It’s notes written on bathroom walls, lockers, desk tops, slips of paper dropped into book bags—it is a secret and scary attack because the bully could be anyone. Cyberbullying is the fastest growing form of indirect bullying. A kid sitting in the security of his or her own home, gets on line, and finds a message directing him or her to a website. When that child opens the website, it is all about him.

It has to happen repeatedly – and it can’t be all in one setting; it has to happen over time, day after day. I would also add that there is an imbalance of power, one who has power over one who does not.

or her. It contains embarrassing photos taken by cell phone in locker rooms, hallways, classroom—anywhere. There are bulletin board postings from unknown students and sometimes votes for being the dorkiest, ugliest, fattest, whatever-est imaginable. That teen or preteen has no idea who created this and suddenly the whole world becomes enemy territory. He or she cannot tell anyone because the first thing that person will do is look at the site. The target feels afraid and ashamed and very alone. For more information on cyberbullying, check out the website www.cyberbullying.ca.

You are going to hear from three authors in this order, Nancy Garden, Patrick Jones, and Julie Ann Peters. A bibliography is attached to give you a fuller introduction. Knowing we had a very short time to impress you, each author picked the question she or he most wanted to speak to. Trust me, we know this topic. Listen carefully; take notes; there will be an assignment. Each author has one question to answer.

*** *** ***

“How can teachers create and maintain a climate that discourages bullying in the first place?”

Nancy Garden

Some of what I’m about to say will serve as a bit of a review to what C.J. has said.

When Columbine happened, I, like all of you, was shocked and saddened. And as time went on, I was also shocked when I read people’s assessments of what had made Eric and Dylan shoot up their school. That was when I found that the fact that they’d been bullied was usually mentioned only as an afterthought. I found that to be the case, too, in accounts of other school shootings, both before and after Columbine, and that led me to realize that bullying hasn’t really been considered a serious problem in America. That’s why I wrote my novel, Endgame, which is about a boy who’s so badly bullied, so ignored, and so devalued by his school, his peers, and his family that one day he takes a gun to school and shoots a number of his fellow students.

For generations, we’ve considered bullying a natural part of childhood, almost a rite of passage for some kids. We’ve said, “Boys will be boys,” and we’ve told bullies to stop bullying because it isn’t nice and it is hurtful; we’ve given them detention, suspended them—and we’ve also ignored them. We’ve told victims not to react, not to “ask for it,” and to become less like themselves; we’ve told gay and lesbian kids and gender-queer kids to act straight, and we’ve told sensitive, gentle kids to fight back.

But bullying hasn’t gone away.

Are kids bullied in your school?

Have you seen kids systematically tease,
exclude, spread rumors about, or beat up other kids?

Have you heard them call other kids names in a mean way? Have you heard kids use the put-down “It’s so gay!”?

Have you heard about kids who extort money from other kids, steal from them, damage their belongings, threaten them, force them to do things they don’t want to do?

All of these examples, of course, are forms of bullying.

Bullies who are allowed to go on being bullies are at risk of continuing their pattern of escalating cruelty and violence into adulthood, becoming criminals or adult bullies.

Even if you’re well aware that bullying does exist in your school, you may be seeing only the tip of the iceberg. Most bullying goes on in places where teachers and administrators don’t—and often can’t—see it: on the playground, in the lunchroom, in locker rooms, parking lots, on the bus, and—especially—in bathrooms. Increasingly, too, and far easier to hide, a surprising amount of bullying occurs online, as cyberbullying.

Yes, but maybe, since this and the statistics C. J. quoted show that bullying is so common as to be ubiquitous, it might be better to ignore it. Maybe it really IS a necessary rite of passage that kids have to weather.

It’s hard for me to accept that my having been beaten up periodically on my way home from elementary school was a necessary rite of passage, or that it was a necessary rite of passage for a young lesbian to have been raped with a coke bottle by a group of girls in a school in which I was student teaching, or that it was a rite of passage when a boy who my partner and I helped bring up was hung by his feet from an upper story of his high school.

Years later, shortly after Columbine, that boy, then an adult, told me that if he hadn’t had basketball and music and people like us to talk to, he might well have taken a gun to his school and done what Eric and Dylan did at Columbine.

Again, many, perhaps most, school shooters have been victims of bullying. That’s one reason why stopping bullying is so vital. But even when they don’t end up shooting their classmates and teachers or bombing their schools—and most, of course, don’t—bullies who are allowed to go on being bullies are at risk of continuing their pattern of escalating cruelty and violence into adulthood, becoming criminals or adult bullies.

Victims of bullies often skip school because they’re afraid, or can’t concentrate on their lessons. They lie awake at night dreading the next school day because someone has threatened to “get” them. Bullied kids become depressed, insecure, or even suicidal because of being bullied. And, of course, some end up becoming bullies themselves.

Bystanders who witness bullying but don’t report it or otherwise act to help victims frequently feel guilty and are afraid themselves of becoming victims, especially if they do report bullying incidents.

So what are we to do? My research tells me that a good start involves having a firm, specific antibullying policy that is followed consistently by ALL staff members and ALL kids—not a one-size-fits-all zero-tolerance policy that doesn’t allow for special situations, but one that does set up a predictably escalating scale of reprimands, warnings, and punishments for repeated bullying incidents. But it’s equally important to remember that bullies frequently need careful professional counseling, as well as punishment. Remember that many bullies have been bullied themselves. It’s important to treat the cause as well as the result.

Any bullying prevention policy also needs to address the problems of bystanders. It needs to encourage them to report bullying incidents, and—this is vital—it needs to provide reliable protection for them when they do report incidents.
Of course, anti-bullying policies should address the needs of victims in a way that ensures that victims are *NEVER* made to feel that they brought the bully’s actions on themselves.

Just as important as having a consistent anti-bullying policy, it seems to me, is the atmosphere of the school itself. Is your school a happy, friendly place, in which all kinds of people are valued? Or is it one in which some groups—athletes, for example—are valued above all others and given special treatment. Or is it a tense, unfriendly place in which all students are divided by clique and hierarchy?

As an author, I’ve visited happy classrooms in which kids and teachers have been relaxed and eagerly engaged, and grim ones in which everyone has seemed tense and uninvolved. It’s easy to guess which schools or classes might be likely to have a problem with bullying, and which probably would not.

Because bullies so often single out kids who don’t fit in or who are “different,” it’s vital for schools to do everything they can to be welcoming and inclusive, and it’s equally important for schools to have books that are inclusive, as well. Patrick and Julie will be talking about both those vital areas. It’s important, too, for schools to offer a range of clubs and organizations that validate and empower minorities—including sexual minorities.

When I was growing up, my mother often said to me, “Put yourself in the other guy’s shoes.” Encouraging kids to imagine how other people have felt in various situations, both real and in the books they read, can foster empathy—which in turn can contribute to a climate that doesn’t accept bullying.

I think all of us are baffled to some degree about bullying; despite everything I’ve said here, I know I sure am. Luckily, there’s now helpful information both in books and on the Internet. Just Googling “Bullying” can lead you to much of it. One resource that I’ve found especially valuable is a pamphlet developed in Maine by the Maine Governor’s Children’s Cabinet in response to that state’s antibullying law. It’s called “Maine’s Best Practices in Bullying and Harassment Prevention.” Its URL is [www.maine.gov/education/bullyingprevention/index.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/education/bullyingprevention/index.shtml)

I hope you’ll all go home after this conference to examine your school’s climate in general and your school’s bullying situation in particular. And if you find either needing repairs, I hope you’ll be able to talk about it with your fellow teachers and your administrators—and yes, your students and their parents, as well—and begin to work together on making changes. That can be a long, difficult process, but it’s one that, in addition to improving academic performance and fostering student mental health, can also save lives. I don’t think there’s anything more important than that!

*** *** ***

“Hammers and Nails: the Hardware of High School.”

*Patrick Jones*

Let me introduce you to Bret Hendricks, the main character in novel, *Nailed*:

“Freak faggot.”

I outwardly ignore All-American asshole Bob Hitchings’ usual greeting as I take my seat, but the words beat me down inside. It’s first period on the first day of my junior year in English class, the great melting pot that makes big fat fibbers out...
of Our Founding Fathers. All men are not created equal; some are smarter, some are stronger. If Jefferson, Madison, and the rest of their ilk had spent a day at Southwestern, they would have flushed that claptrap right down the toilet. I’m smarter than a lot of people in this room, more talented in the things that matter to me. But guys like Hitchings, who are stronger than most people, and guys like me, who are smarter than most people, are not equals. A born athlete, Hitchings cares about kicking a football, capturing a wrestling pin fall, and catching a baseball. I’m a born artist who cares about books, music, and theater. In my eyes, he isn’t better than me, nor am I better than him; we’re just different, and different is okay with me. (26)

Bret’s a nail: a kid who doesn’t fit in. Hitchings is a hammer: a kid who does. It seems increasingly the hardware of schools consists of hammer and nails.

Not all nails are like Bret: artistic kids, creative kids. Odd kids. Underdogs. Readers. But the kids who get bullied are often those outside the mainstream. Nails that stick out.

Not all hammers are like Hitchings: jocks, popular kids. Water walkers. Non-readers.

These are created characters, but they are also types. The types of kids we find in our schools and libraries.

We need to challenge the hammers and stand up for the nails.

Especially now as standardized testing is so prevalent, it seems we seek conformity as a good thing. Everybody falls in line.

But there’s a problem. You can’t really test creativity. You can’t test for sensitivity. You can test for respecting diversity. You can’t test for empathy. You can’t test for humanity.

Maybe you can’t test for it, but you can teach all these things to your students. Three words: Young adult literature.

But this work isn’t just about giving kids a list of great books, it is about listening to them tell about their lives. It is about relationships.

Listening to real teens, like Johanna in my novel Things Change, trapped in a violent dating relationship; teens like Bret in Nailed, a well-rounded victim of violence trapped in a square box; and teens like Christy in my forthcoming novel Chasing Tail Lights, trapped in a generational poverty and a horrific family life. These are made-up teens, but the stories of real teens need to be heard. But they’re afraid to talk, not fearing retaliation, but afraid to admit their victimization and thus unable to find validation.

Sometimes we provide them a sanctuary, as my friend Cathi Dunn MacRae mentioned earlier. A sanctuary for these kids to be themselves. A place for kids who read, write, paint, create, sing, and dance. A place for kids to read, then talk about books, and thereby talk about their lives.

But sanctuary isn’t enough, because it’s temporary. The problem isn’t going away.

And the problem IS the problem approach. The problem isn’t bullying, the problem is looking at kids as problems to be solved.

Instead, we need to look at the assets of the nails and the assets of the hammers.

A strength-based approach, like that of the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets framework, challenges us to see the strengths that kids have and shines light on the assets they need to develop. (Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota. www.search-institute.org/assets)
The assets are a different kind of test. Not about reading and writing. Not about math and science. The assets are the essence of adolescence. And the key to building assets is building relationships. Relationships we can build through literature.

Helping kids, though literature and through listening, build assets is our test.

It is how we test our humanity in this world of hammers and nails.

*** *** ***

Is there proof that such books need to be available and read by our young people?

Julie Ann Peters

What is the proof that such books need to be available and read? My mail.

I wish you could read one week’s worth of the mail I receive from young people, so you could see what’s going on with them. Wow. It’s brutal in the trenches. For the most part, kids are resilient, but we forget how fragile they are. They break.

Ms. Peters,
Hello. My name is Laili (lay-lee) and I’m an 18 year old who just graduated from high school and I’m queer. I don’t like to label myself as lesbian or bi, just queer. I’ve been having some troubles with my “fellow peers” and I feel very discouraged . . . when I started coming out there were friends who decided not to be friends with me anymore, others who totally shut me down, calling me disgusting and saying I’d lied to them, then sasha my best friend told all her friends, and now its all spiraled out of control. I’ve become so depressed . . . I’ve started cutting myself again (I had stopped for a year) and I am thinking of taking my own life. There is no support here at all. I know you aren’t a counselor Ms Peters but I just needed to tell someone my story. I don’t expect you to have solutions but did you ever have times like this? I don’t think there is any solution anymore other then suicide . . . I’m sorry to burden you but I really needed someone to know me.

For me, for my community, bullying extends to verbal and physical assault. When you have this constant barrage of negative messages about who you are; when you are never celebrated as a person; when you are not even equal in the eyes of the law, you develop so little confidence and self-esteem. You feel diminished.

Bullying is disrespect and dismissal. It’s the total denigration of a person.

Every day is a struggle, people don’t accept me for who I am. Some teachers even treat me differently. But my English teacher, Ms. Wolfe, saw me reading Keeping You a Secret one day, and asked me what it was about. So I told her. She asked if there was anything really inappropriate in it, and I said not really, so she said she’ll read it and see if she can put it on the summer reading list. Wouldn’t it be great if all those people who make fun of us would read this, and understand? Understand what they’re doing? Understand who we really are? Understand who THEY really are? It would be amazing.

—Catherine

Discrimination infests my school. To admit that you’re lesbian, gay, or bisexual is like writing “attack me” on your forehead. I cried twice while reading KYAS [Keeping You A Secret] because it reminds me so much of how it is here. Luckily, I’m not alone because my two best friends in all the world are bi and gay. We stick together when it comes to fighting the disease of prejudice.

—Rose

I was wondering two things.
1) Do you get a lot of annoying emails like this, from crazy fans, that aren’t actually fanmail?
2) I’m trapped in a stereotypical Middle School. Meaning: Everyone is always saying, “I don’t like this assignment. Its gay.” And “you’re stupid. You did something stupid. You’re a fag. Haha, wasn’t that funny?” I am lesbian, not that these people know. It really hurts me and I want to stand up for everyone who doesn’t stand up for themselves. Do you know what I should say?

—Cheez

My friend David is on the newspaper staff. He wrote this LONG article on gay relationships, and the
marriage amendment here in VA . . . It was an AMAZING article. It became our front page story . . . David got 6 death threats and 137 hate emails in response to the article.

—Ang

For what I have in intelligence I lack in size and strength. I’m one of the shortest and tiniest kids at my school, so an easy target. There would be days when there would be large groups of guys. GUYS. And they would grab me and push me up against the walls. They would just hit me and hit me over again. And nobody would stop them.

—Quinn

Stephanie, a 13-year-old, was asked to choose her favorite book and do an oral report in school. She chose Keeping You a Secret. I wrote and told her how brave I thought she was. Because that takes courage. I wished her luck and told her I’d be there in spirit. She wrote to say that after school, she was ambushed and beaten. Her arm and three ribs were broken. I told Stephanie to please report this as a hate crime. Please tell people at school; they’ll know what to do. Stephanie, I said, they’ll take care of you. Her reply:

One of my friends went to the counselors and principals at our school asking about it and how we could report that sort of thing. The most of an answer we got to that question was the guidance counselor telling us that she would ‘see what she could do.’ So we just had to let go of the problem, because nobody was willing to help us figure out what we could do about it.

—Stephanie

What you can do is step up. Stand up. Give young people role models. Give them tools and trust in you.

What you can do is step up. Stand up. Give young people role models. Give them tools and trust in you. It saddens me to hear how few trusted adults young people seem to feel they have in their lives.

The other day I was at work when a gay couple walked in and a co-worker of mine was making fun of them and I ended up arguing with him about how wrong I felt that it was for him to be saying what he was saying and I realized it was because of YOU that I spoke up. I began to cry and to myself asked why do people had to make it so hard for other people to be happy with themselves? Thank you because with this one book you gave me and so many others a voice and a place in our hearts for what others go threw day to day.

—Gabi, 18

Recently, Ms. D came out at school. A girl at school was being harassed, and there was a board meeting. Ms. D spoke up for the girl, and basically said, ‘look, I know what it is to be harassed. But our school doesn’t do enough to stop it, even for teachers like myself. We hide who we are everyday.’

—Ang quotes, “I believe we are given the gift of a poetic platform so we can use it to speak for all the millions who are silenced.”

Books can provide comfort and solace, strength and solutions. Books can be friends when you don’t feel you have a friend in the world.

It’s amazing how cruel people are. I would think, “maybe I’m going through so many things that no one else goes through” but when I read your book and so many things are exactly like things in my life, it was interesting and calming for my mind. The spray painted locker, to the harassment by big groups of people, it all matched my life and things that I knew my friends had gone through too. Keeping You a Secret was like my reassurance that I wasn’t alone. So I really want to thank you. You’ve put a smile on my face, that had been missing for a long time.

—Jessy

People listen to books in a way they listen to nothing else, partly, I think, because they identify and get lost in the story world (you can really start to see things from another point of view, put yourself in someone else’s place), and partly because when people read a story they let their guard down. People don’t think of a story as something that will change their minds, so they fully open them—and look what happens. I never gave thought to TG people before I read Luna and now I’m astounded and sympathetic to what they go through.
Bullying is a pervasive problem, and it’s not limited to peer interactions.

Hey my name is Angelle . . . I decided to try out for the basketball team and I did. I thought I did good and so did everyone else but I didn’t make it . . . and I asked around and EVERY one I asked said the coach hates lesbians. I look just like most girls, pretty, smart, lots of friends . . . love sports . . . but ever since I came out it all went down the drain. How do I handle this how do I react to the basketball situation when I absolutely love the sport. I can’t handle this I love being gay but sometimes I wish I could have a break on it.

Me too. Why should we care? We dedicate our lives to growing good people, to making a difference in the world. We should care out of love.

Hey dude,
I went to my very first anime con and made friends with what seems like every hot gay guy alive. I even held up a sign that said “Hug me, I’m gay” and like 390,674,530,956 people hugged me.
I love being alive.

—Miles, age 12

C.J. Bott: Did you hear it? Did you hear your assignment? I am very proud of my profession, but I am also embarrassed because for too long we have supported the Don’t Look philosophy, and the problem has NOT GONE AWAY.

Your assignment is simple—Do Something. YOU. MUST. DO. SOMETHING.

Yesterday someone asked my why I do this work, and I thought about it all night. The answer is simple. How could I not? And now, how could you not? The lives of over 32,000 students depends on it.

(And if every teacher who reads this article decides to do something—think of how many more lives could be touched.)

Books can be friends when you don’t feel you have a friend in the world.

Additional resources


**Websites**

www.authors4teens.com

www.connectingya.com

www.JulieAnnePeters.com

www.NancyGarden.com

Reprinted by permission of the ALAN Review
Kevin Berrill, former Director of the Anti-Violence Project of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and Daryl Cummings-Wilson devised a three-phase model to empower people in the face of homophobic remarks. Their method can be used in stopping the whole range of name-calling in certain school situations. It is used not necessarily as an educational opportunity (i.e. teaching another person) as much as it is a way of maintaining your own integrity in standing up against harassment. The three phases can be summarized as follows:

**NAME IT** - In Phase I, you name the behavior you observe (That is harassment).

“That is homophobic harassment (or an age-appropriate alternative).”

**CLAIM IT** - In Phase 2, state how it makes you and others feel (I don’t like that. The other members of this class [people in this hallway, other people on this bus, in this restaurant, on this street] don’t like that).

“I don’t like that and it is not permitted in this classroom (or school) because it is disrespectful.”

**STOP IT** - In Phase 3, tell what you want to happen (So stop it!). State the consequences if applicable. Following this sequence, you need not get involved in a dialogue or argument. You stated your concern, and can leave the situation with your integrity intact.

“It will never happen again. If it does (state the consequences).”
April 20, 1999 was a day that changed my life. It began like many other days, but somewhere along the way, an emotional tsunami flooded my consciousness as news emerged of a school shooting at Columbine High School in Middleton, Colorado. Eight days later, a copycat shooting took place at a high school in rural Alberta. This was clearly not a “Big-city” problem or an “American” problem; it was everyone’s problem, as a Canadian parent and educator, it was also MY problem.

It became apparent soon afterwards that the young people who committed these heinous acts were relentlessly bullied and teased throughout their young lives.

In response to these deeply disturbing tragedies, I created a Web site, www.bullying.org. I decided that the Web site would have three goals; first, to help people, especially young people, learn that they are NOT alone in dealing with bullying in their lives, to help them realize that being bullied is NOT their fault and that they CAN do something positive about it.

www.bullying.org allows people to connect in a safe, moderated online community where they can share their stories, poetry, drawings, music, animations and videos. A team of volunteer reviewers moderates replies and the original submissions. Visitor’s to the Web site can also use the worlds’ largest online database of helpful resources on www.bullying.org to find information about bullying.

www.bullying.org started to quickly create quite a buzz online through “word-of-mouth” referrals, as it was successfully filling a tremendous need for information and support. Then, on May 21,2001, I was fortunate enough to do an interview with CBC National Television News anchor Peter Mansbridge during which Mr.
Mansbridge was generous enough to refer to www.bullying.org as “One of the best Web sites in the world for young people.” That night, www.bullying.org was propelled to another level.

The national non-profit educational organization, Bullying.org Canada was created shortly thereafter to help support and expand our national vision.

www.bullying.org has since received as many as three quarter of a million visitors and contributors from across Canada and around the world in one month and is listed as one of the top “bullying” referenced Web sites in the world by www.google.com and many other Internet search engines, www.bullying.org has since been chosen for the ChildNet International Award which goes to projects that make the Internet a better place for youth, as well as being a finalist in the Stockholm Challenge Award which has been called the Nobel Prize of the IT (information Technology) world.

Shortly after www.bullying.org’s launch, I realized that something new was being experienced and reported by young people around the world. In response, I created www.cyberbullying.ca, the world’s first Web site specifically dedicated to the emerging issue of cyberbullying. www.cyberbullying.ca has often been cited as the first to use this word and define this emerging behaviour.

**FIRST SOME CONTEXT**

Young Canadians are more connected than ever:

- Access is almost universal. Ninety-four percent of young people say they go online from home, compared with 79 percent in 2001. Sixty-one percent report having high-speed access.*

- Many students report that they have their own Internet connection. In total, 37 percent have their own Internet-connected computer.

- Twenty percent of grade 4 students access the Internet through their own personal computer. That number climbs to 51 percent by grade 11.*

- Points of access include more than computers. Twenty-three percent of students report having their own cell phone, 44 percent of which have Internet capability. Fifty-six percent of students’ cell phones have text messaging and 17 percent have cameras.*

- Twenty-two percent of students have their own Webcam. In grade 11 that number is 31 percent*

- A 2002 British survey found that one in four youth, aged 11 to 19 has been threatened via their computers or cell phones, including death threats. –NCH –National Children’s Home (UK)

*Young Canadians in a Wired World – Phase II Conducted by ERIN Research for the Media Awareness Network and funded by the Government of Canada.

Adults see the Internet as a resource or a “place that they can go to” to serve their needs. Young people don’t think of it as being separate from their Sires, increasingly it is a normal and “natural” part of their world. But for the “Always On” generation, being connected to one’s peer group means being online often. Increasingly it means being online synchronously, in “real time” or at the very same time as your peers. Most of the time these connections are made via “I-M” or Instant Messaging. I-M is facilitated through programs such as ICQ, AOL, MSN, or Yahoo! Messenger systems as it is instantaneous, and e-mail is now considered “too slow” for many young people today.

Adults tend to relate to the use of various Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in quite functional ways. We do our work, send our e-mails and the like and then we are done for the most part. But for the “Always On” generation, the use of ICTs has become a digital umbilical chord to their peer group.

Among the A-O generation, responses are not only expected, they are expected promptly, to do so otherwise is considered a real social faux-pas.
If you are thinking that I-M-ing is some “Tween or teen-fad” that will eventually go away, to illustrate how mainstream this has become, it might interest you to learn that I-M is growing at a rate 30% faster than email did at its inception.

The mobile phone is to today’s kids what the Nike “Air Jordan” sneaker was to previous generations to young people. The mobile has become the new prototypical Teen social status item. It is personalized with coloured faceplates, personalized ringtones, still and video cameras and more.

It used to be that school and home were the places where kids went online and adults had some control over when and where they went online, but no more. Young people can now chat via I-M, send text and multimedia messages with still and video images, surf the Web and chat online, all from the palm of their hand from almost anywhere, because today’s mobile phones are really powerful, very portable multimedia computers.

The ubiquitous nature of Internet connectivity poses real problems for young people today, and for we adults who care about our kids. One of the very real threats to our kids in this fluid, mobile communications environment is cyberbullying.

What Forms Does Cyberbullying Take?

Cyberbullying can happen through the use of e-mail, cell phone text (SMS) and multimedia messages (MMS), instant messaging (IM), defamatory Web logs (Blogs), personal Web sites, and online personal polling sites.*

How is cyberbullying different from other forms of bullying?

Cyberbullying, like other forms of bullying, is about human relationships, power and control. Those who bully others are trying to establish power and control over others that they perceive to be “weaker” than them. Those who bully want to make victims feel that there is something wrong with them, but victims should know that there is NOTHING wrong with THEM. It is THE BULLIES who have the real problems.

Cyberbullying is different from other forms of bullying in a number of ways. While bullying is something that is often under the radar screen of adults, cyberbullying is even more so as today’s youth, a group that I have dubbed the “Always On” generation, feel it most often and most intensely. This generation is increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown by adults and away from their supervision.

Cyberbullying is also different in that it is a particularly cowardly form of bullying. Cyberbullies can more easily hide behind the anonymity that the Internet can provide.

Cyberbullies can communicate their hurtful messages to a very wide audience with remarkable speed.

Cyberbullying does not provide any tangible feedback about the consequences of using information technologies to cyberbully others. Cyberbullies do not have to own their actions, as it is usually very difficult to identify cyberbullies, so they do not fear being punished for their actions.

Cyberbullying is often outside of the legal reach of schools and school boards as this behaviour...
often happens outside of school on home computers or via mobile phones.

Victims of bullying are often fearful of telling others about being bullied because they fear that the bullying may actually become worse if they tell. Victims of cyberbullying are often also afraid to report to adults about being cyberbullied, as they also fear that adults will over-react and take away their mobile phone, computer and/or Internet access. This is something that is increasingly unthinkable for the “Always On” generation as not being online means not being able to socialize or communicate with their peers, and this fear of exclusion is paramount in the lives of most adolescents and teens.

In most cases, cyberbullies know their victims, but their victims may not know their cyberbullies; the aggressors may or may not bully their victims through physical, verbal, emotional or psychological means that are more easily identified.

With the advent of mobile, wireless Internet access, communications have become more ubiquitous. As a result, Cyberbullying can happen any time and any place and for many children, home is no longer a refuge from negative peer pressure such as bullying.

CYBERBULLYING AND THE LAW

Some forms of cyberbullying are considered criminal acts. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with someone if your communication causes them to fear for their own safety or the safety of others.

It is also a crime to publish a “defamatory libel,” writing something that is designed to insult a person or likely to hurt a person’s reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.

A cyberbully may also be violating the Canadian Human Rights Act, if he or she spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT CYBERBULLYING?

Awareness and education are the keys to the prevention of cyberbullying! Spend some time on the www.cyberbullying.ca Web site learning what you can do about cyberbullying. It is often a very hurtful, difficult and time-consuming challenge to deal with the effects of cyberbullying after it has occurred. It can take a lot of time and effort to get Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Mobile Telecommunications Service Providers (the phone companies who sell you your cell phone and pagers) to respond and deal with your complaints about being cyberbullied.

An ounce of prevention, a word of advice for “Netizens” (citizens of the Internet, advice for youth AND adults) . . .

Students should be reminded regularly to never give out or share personal information numbers (PIN), etc. Personal information includes their names, the names of friends or family, their address, phone number, school name (or team name if students play sports). Personal info also includes pictures of themselves and their e-mail addresses. They should ask permission before sharing any information with a website, a “chat buddy” and even when

WHAT IS A WEBLOG?

“A personal Web site that provides updated headlines and news articles of other sites that are of interest to the user, also may include journal entries, commentaries and recommendations compiled by the user; also written web log, Weblog; also called blog.”

– Dictionary.com
registering a product purchased for their computer (like a game). Passwords are secret. They should never tell anyone their password except their teachers, or perhaps their parents or guardians.

Don't believe everything you read. Just because someone online tells young people that they are 15 doesn't mean they are telling the truth. Even adults can't tell when a male pretends to be a female or a 50 year old pretends to be a 15 year old.

Use Netiquette (Internet etiquette). Students should be reminded to be polite to others online just as they would offline. If someone treats them rudely or meanly — do not respond. Online bullies are just like offline ones — they WANT others to answer (don't give them the satisfaction). DON'T WRITE ALL IN CAPITALS!!! This is considered “yelling” on the Internet and is very rude. It may encourage others to “FLAME” them. Flaming is the sending of repeated, aggressive messages to others.

Students should never send a message to others when they are angry. Wait until you have had time to calm down and think. Do your best to make sure that your messages are calmly and factually written. You will usually regret sending a “Flame” (angry message) to someone else. Once you've sent a message, it is VERY hard to undo the damage that such "flames" can do.

Students should never open a message from someone you don't know. If in doubt about it, they should ask their teachers, parents, guardians or another adult.

If students encounter something online that doesn't look or "feel right," it probably isn't. Students need to learn to trust their instincts.

While surfing the Internet, if they find something that they don't like, makes them feel uncomfortable or scares them, they should turn off the computer and tell an adult Internet filters can only go so far. After working with students, teachers and technology for many years, I truly believe that the only truly effective filter we should spend time and energy on is the one between the ears of our young people. For every filter that schools in school boards put in place, there are many ways around each and every one of them. In fact, there are many Web sites that have been created to show people (read kids) how to get around them.

Young people don't have to be “Always on.” They should be encouraged to turn off, disconnect, and unplug, at least for a while. They should be encouraged to give themselves a break. Encourage young people not to stay online or connected too long. Families need to work at spending time with their family and friends offline. Why not try a little less virtual reality and a lot more actual reality!

Sign on the dotted line. Parents and guardians should be strongly encouraged to create an Internet Acceptable Use Agreement with their children. Bullying.org Canada has examples of such contracts for families to consider using. It should be made clear the Internet access and use is a privilege to be earned and honoured, not assumed right.

Update your AUPs . . . ASAP! Schools and school boards should update their computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) to include harassment done with mobile and wireless Internet information technologies. Schools and school boards should work with their local parent councils to include the idea that members of the school community are responsible their online behaviour and actions away from the school every bit as much as they need to be responsible and accountable for their actions and behaviours. There should be clear and serious consequences for anyone who doesn’t follow the AUP that should be signed by both students and parents. The updated AUP should specifically prohibit the use of ICTs for cyberbullying.
Become further informed. Schools and school boards should contact Bullying.org Canada and have us present information sessions for students, staff and parents about cyberbullying. Parents, teachers and students should be encouraged to read the information on the www.cyberbullying.ca website, so they will be informed about cyberbullying and related online behaviour issues.

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF A CYBERBULLY, WHAT CAN YOU AND YOUR PARENTS DO?

Do not keep this to yourself! You are NOT alone! Tell an adult you know and trust! It is very hard to solve such problems on your own.

Inform your Internet, Instant Messaging or mobile phone service provider such as MSN for instant messaging: ca.supportsympatico.msn.com/contactus.aspx?productkey-messenger

Inform your local police.

Do not reply to messages from cyberbullies! Even though you may really want to, this is exactly what cyberbullies want. They want to know that they’ve got you worried and upset. They are trying to mess with your mind and control you, to put fear into you. Do not give them that pleasure.

Do not erase or delete messages from cyberbullies. You don’t have to read it, but keep it, it is your evidence. Unfortunately you may get similar messages again, perhaps from other accounts. The police and your ISP, and/or your telephone company can use these messages to help you. You might notice certain words or phrases that are also used by people you know. These messages may reveal certain clues as to who is doing this to you, but don’t try and solve this on your own. Tell an adult you know and trust. GET HELP!

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION SHOULD BE SAVED?

To report cyberbullying, it’s really important to save as much info as you can. The more you have saved, the easier it will be to track down the people bothering you.

Save the following from E-mail:
• E-mail address
• Date and time received
• Copies of any relevant e-mails with full email headers

Save the following from Groups or communities:
• URL of offending MSN Group site
• Nickname of offending person
• E-mail address of offending person
• Date you saw it happen

Save the following from Profiles you see on the web:
• URL of Profile
• Nickname of offending person
• E-mail address of offending person
• Date you viewed this Profile

Save the following from Chatrooms:
• Date and time of chat
• Name and URL of chat room you were in
• Nickname of offending person
• E-mail address of offending person
• Screenshot of chatroom

REPORT CYBERBULLYING E-MAIL

If you receive e-mail from cyberbullies, you can report it to your ISP with the full headers displayed. The full header shows every stage of an e-mail’s journey. Forwarding e-mail with the full header displayed will let the support team track down where it came from.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS STOLEN YOUR ACCOUNT

If somebody has stolen or hacked your account and changed all the login details, you will need to get in touch with a support team to get it back.
HOW DO I REPORT CHATROOM CYBERBULLYING?

You don’t have to put up with abuse in chat, and the companies that run chatrooms don’t want abusive people using their service.

- Highlight the chatter’s name
- Use the ignore button to stop all conversation with that person
- Take a screenshot of the abuse
- Note the time, date and chatroom name
- Report to the chatroom moderator and service operator
- Speak to a parent or a teacher

Students should know that it isn’t their fault that there are some very strange people in the world. Students should not be ashamed to tell somebody about any disturbing, threatening, weird or frightening behaviour you encounter in chat.

People aren’t anonymous online, and with the right info saved, they can be traced by the Police and dealt with.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Never arrange to meet with someone you have met online unless your parents go with you. If you are meeting them make sure it is in a public place. Young people may need to delete your current e-mail account, cell phone/pager account and set up new ones. If they have persistent cyberbullying problems, it is recommend that they do this as soon as possible, unless they are working with the police and their Telecommunications Provider to keep the account(s) active to try and catch the cyberbully. Bullying.org Canada is in discussions with various Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Mobile Service Providers (MSPs) to address these issues.

CYBERBULLYING SOLUTIONS

Youth Solutions – if being cyberbullied:

1. Do not respond/engage to the abuse.

2. Tale to someone about it. Ignoring bullying often leads to it becoming worse.

3. Keep record/print off messages if possible, to help identify bully.

4. If necessary, get a new number, account, give it out one person at a time and keep a diary to record any abuse. Your tormenter may be closer than you think.

5. Take a break – unplug.

Parent Solutions – If your child is being cyberbullied:

1. Make a more “talkable” subject.

2. Place and keep the computer in an open, common area.

3. Inform Internet Service Provider (ISP) or cell phone service provider of abuse.

4. Do not erase messages; keep for evidence.

5. Software help – McAfee Parental Controls filter both IM and Chat Rooms. Tracker programs.

SCHOOL SOLUTIONS

1. Amend anti-bullying policies to include text messaging, cell phone use and online bullying.

2. Make a commitment to educate teachers, students and parents about cyberbullying.

3. Make sure parents know whom to contact at the school if there is a problem.

4. Never allow a known incident of bullying to pass unchallenged and not deal with it.

5. We need to “walk the walk” of positive, respectful online communication and behaviour in our schools and not simply “talk the talk.” We need to strongly encourage teachers and students to become engaged in collaborative, international projects where there is a well-established, mutually respectful online
Ohio Educator's Guide to GLBTQ Resources

community with a solid track record in education. One outstanding example of this is iEARN, the International Education and Resource Network, us.iearn.org. iEARN has over one million k-12 student and teacher members in over 110 countries around the world, all of whom share iEARN’s vision of “Connecting youth and making a difference!” Schools participate in students and teacher created projects that not only relate to curriculum, they also serve iEARN’s vision of helping to make our world a better place in which to live. Schools in Canada can visit www.iearn-canada.org for more information. Educators can join by registering online at amity.iearn.org/peopleadd.lasso. There is no fee for Canadian educators to join.

USEFUL TIPS

How do I take a screenshot of offensive content?

A screenshot is a like a photograph of your screen. It captures everything that you can see on your screen at the press of a key and is useful for recording details you might want to report.

- Have the information you wish to record open on your screen and press the Print-Scn/SysRq key on your keyboard. The image is now saved in a temporary memory.

- Open a new Word document, right click your mouse and select Paste to insert the screenshot.*

- Make a note of the date, location, e-mail address, name (nickname or real name) and any other information that you think might be useful and then Save the file. *The screenshot can be inserted into any program that accepts images.

How do I save an address in Groups?

If someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable it is important to tell someone you trust who can help you to report your experience to the right people. If you encounter potentially illegal or offensive content in MSN Groups or have seen a Group that you believe should be placed behind an adult advisory notice, save the URL and contact the service provider immediately.

How do I report cyberbullying from a Hotmail account?

You can report cyberbullying messages direct from your e-mail inbox and every report you make will actually improve the intelligent filters that protect your account.

- Sign in to Hotmail and click on the Mail tab to open the inbox.

- Select an e-mail you suspect to be an abusive message. Tip – a question mark is placed on all e-mail from unknown senders.

- Click the Junk option and select from either Report or Report and Block sender, and then simply follow the directions given.

How do I report Hotmail with full headers included?

If you need to report an e-mail to an authority or organization, then include the full header so that action can be taken.

- Sign in to Hotmail, click Options (next to help) and select Mail from the left-hand panel, followed by Junk E-Mail Protection.

- On the following screen select Mail Display settings.

- Under Message Headers select Full and then click OK. You will now be able to forward mail with full headers displayed.

ABOUT BULLYING.ORG CANADA

www.bullying.org, where you are not alone, is a multiple award-winning Web site that was created to help people address the issues of bullying within a safe, positive, moderated international community.

www.cyberbullying.org, always on and always aware, is the world’s first Web site specifically dedicated to the emerging issue of cyberbullying.
Bullying.org Canada is the creator and facilitator of Canada’s annual National Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. Check the web site for dates and details each year.

For more information, or to have Bullying.org Canada present to your school community about the issues of bullying and/or cyberbullying to your organization, please contact:

Bill Belsey, President,
Bullying.org Canada
E-mail: help@bullying.org
Phone: 1.403.932.1748
Myths and Stereotypes about Gay and Lesbian People

Judy Maruszan, SSAFE Program Coordinator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth/Prejudice</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flaunt their sexuality</td>
<td>Straight people talk about their dates or family activities, hold hands and kiss, dress scantily &amp; “party” in public. When doing the same or similar activities gay people are accused of “flaunting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molest children</td>
<td>In the U.S. heterosexual men commit ninety percent of all sexual child abuse. The molesters are almost always family members, close family friends or the mother’s boyfriend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shouldn’t be parents</td>
<td>According to the APA, “there is no evidence to suggest that lesbians and gay men are unfit to be parents or that psychosocial development among children of gay men or lesbians is compromised in any respect relative to that offspring of heterosexual parents. Not a single study has found children of gay or lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents. Indeed, the evidence to date suggests that home environments provided by gay and lesbian parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to support and enable children’s psychosocial growth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit / Make others gay</td>
<td>Like heterosexuals, gays and lesbians discover their sexuality as a process of maturing, they are not recruited, seduced or taught to be homosexual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a choice</td>
<td>Again, from the APA: “Human beings cannot choose to be either gay or straight. Sexual orientation emerges for most people in early adolescence without any prior sexual experience. Although we can choose whether to act on our feelings, psychologists do not consider sexual orientation to be a conscious choice that can be voluntarily changed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obsessed with sex</td>
<td>Contrary to popular belief, gay men and lesbians are no more inclined to be consumed with sexual thoughts or feelings than their heterosexual counterparts nor are they attracted to everyone of the same sex they meet. American Psychological Association: “There is no evidence that any treatment can change a homosexual person’s deep seated sexual feelings for others of the same sex.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reparative / “Conversion” therapy (to change sexual orientation)</td>
<td>American Academy of Pediatrics: “Therapy directed specifically at changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in sexual orientation.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


©2001 The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center of Greater Cleveland. Reprinted with permission.
What The Truth is about Sexual Orientation

An adaptation by GLSEN Northeast Ohio

1. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people cannot be identified by certain mannerisms or physical characteristics. People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual come in as many different shapes, colors and sizes as do people who are heterosexual.

2. Earlier sexual attractions and experiences are not necessarily indicative of one’s sexual orientation as an adult. Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people have early heterosexual experiences, but are still lesbian, gay or bisexual; many avowed heterosexuals have had sexual contact with members of their own sex, but are still heterosexual.

3. No one knows what causes sexual orientation. Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people know that they are attracted to members of their own sex at an early age, sometimes as young as 6 or 7 years old. Others learn much later in life, in their 30’s, 40’s or 50’s. Some research indicates that sexual orientation is determined between birth and age 3, but no one is sure what causes particular orientations.

4. Many people accuse lesbian, gay and bisexual people of “flaunting” their sexuality when they talk about their partner, hold hands or kiss one another in public. These are activities that heterosexual couples do all the time. Due to homophobic reactions, some lesbian, gay and bisexual people are actually forced to hide their sexuality in public, not flaunt it.

5. People who are lesbian, gay and bisexual work in all types of jobs and they live in all types of situations. They belong to all ethnic and racial groups. They are members of all religious communities. They exhibit a range of mental and physical capabilities. They are young, middle aged, and old.

6. Sometimes oppression based on sexual orientation escalates into acts of physical violence. In surveys of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, 52-87% have been verbally harassed, 21-27% have been pelted with objects, 13-38% have been chased or followed and 9-24% have been physically assaulted.

7. Most lesbian, gay and bisexual people are comfortable with their own biological sex; they don’t regard themselves as members of the opposite sex. Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not the same as being transgender.

8. The majority of child molesters are heterosexual men, not lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Almost all studies show that over 90% of child molestation is committed by heterosexual men.

9. Homosexuality is not a type of mental illness and cannot be “cured” by psychotherapy. Although homosexuality was once thought to be a mental illness, the American Psychiatric and Psychological Associations no longer consider it to be one. Psychiatric and psychological attempts to “cure” lesbians and gay men have failed to change the sexual orientation of the patient. These “treatments” may help change sexual behavior temporarily but also can create emotional trauma.

10. There is no definable gay “lifestyle.” Similarly, there is no standard heterosexual lifestyle. Some people might like to think that a “normal” adult lifestyle is a heterosexual marriage with two children. Less than 7% of all family units in the US consist of a mother, a father and two children living together. The most accurate generalization might be this: lesbian, gay and bisexual people are different from one another in the same ways that heterosexual people are different from one another.

Adapted, with permission, from The Truth about Sexual Orientation ©2007 by Youth Pride, Inc., RI with the help of The Campaign to End Homophobia
Transgender 101
Who are Transgender People? - The Basics

Transgender is an “umbrella” term that has come into being in the past fifteen years and is used to describe a wide range of people whose appearance, behavior or characteristics are perceived to be gender atypical. These include transsexual people, cross-dressers or transvestites, androgynous people, “genderqueers” and gender non-conforming people. In its broadest sense, the term “transgender” encompasses anyone whose identity or behavior falls outside stereotypical gender expectations.

- Gender Identity refers to a person’s internal, intrinsic understanding of their gender as male or female. Sex refers to their biological status as male or female. All people have a gender identity. For most people, one’s gender identity matches the sex one was assigned at birth. For transgender people, there may not be a match.

- Gender Expression refers to all of the ways that people express their gender identity to the outside world through dress, appearance, and behavior. All people also all have a gender expression. For many transgender people, their gender expression doesn’t match what society thinks it should be.

- Common Definitions
  - Transsexuals and Others Who Transition Sex identify as a gender different than their sex at birth. Transsexuals may modify their bodies through hormones and/or sexual reassignment surgery in order to bring their physical appearance into line with their gender identity. The process of changing gender is called “transition.” “Transgender women” refers to transgender people who were born male but now live as women. “Transgender men” refers to people who were born female but now live as men.
  - Cross-Dressers dress in clothing considered appropriate to the opposite sex but have no wish to change their gender. Typically, cross-dressers cross-dress on a part-time or limited basis. Cross-dressers may have increased needs for safety because of their gender identity and/or expression.
  - Androgynous People and “GenderQueers” typically have gender expressions and identities that are somewhere between what is stereotypically considered to be male and female. They may be born as male or as female but identify as neither or as both. Many feel that pronouns such as “he,” “she,” “him,” and “her” are wrong for them.
  - Gender Non-Conforming refers to people whose gender expressions do not match stereotypes of masculine and feminine appearance and behavior. In reality, most non-transgender people don’t meet all gender expectations and stereotypes either; almost nobody is perfectly masculine or perfectly
feminine. Gender non-conforming people identify as transgender but are not transitioning gender and do not consider themselves cross-dressers, androgynous, or “genderqueer.”

- **Intersex People** – People with intersex conditions are born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system not considered “standard” for either male or female. There are at least 15 different medical causes of intersexuality and only a small percentage of these cases result in ambiguous genitalia at birth. Other intersex conditions manifest at the time of puberty, while still others manifest later in life. People with intersex conditions may be among your students and have an increased need for privacy and safety, just as transgender people do.

- Gender is an individual experience. These descriptions of transgender people are by no means complete. People differ from one another and no two people experience gender, gender identity, or gender expression the same way. Gender issues and the language used to describe people’s self-identity and expression are constantly evolving.

- Different cultures have different ideas about gender. It is also important to realize that class, race, and religious differences may mean that the transgender people you encounter have different classifications and different terminology for themselves. For example, some cultures do not draw a distinction between transgender people and gay people. Nevertheless, the basics on how to treat transgender people respectfully and how to ensure their safety remain essentially the same.

**Youth Issues**

There is a large and growing population of youth that are challenging gender norms and expectations. They are coming out as transgender at earlier and earlier ages. In response to this, some schools are responding by rethinking gendered dress codes and how to apply them. In order to create safe space in which young people can learn and grow, schools must adjust policies to conform to the changing world.

Many youth are adopting the self-identity of “genderqueer” and other labels for themselves. While many youth may wish to transition from one gender to the other, others are deciding that they would not like to be forced into the narrow categories of “male” or “female.” Youth who are transitioning or transitioned should be treated and classified within the sex-segregated system just as transitioning and transitioned adults.

However, when youth identify as genderqueer or as a gender other than male or female, it is important to respect their self-identification. Many youth simply may not have figured out exactly who they want to be. Many of these youth need a situation where they can feel accepted for being themselves. As these youth develop their own identities, adults may have a difficult time understanding how to interact with them. If adults make assumptions or negative judgments about youths’ gender identities, a communication and trust barrier will form. This communication and trust barrier will prevent youth from having emotionally and physically safe school as well. The best way to ensure that safety is by talking with the young person about how best the school can be made safe for them.

The Guiding Principle: People should be treated according to the gender by which they identify themselves.
The Guiding Principle

The guiding principle of how to treat transgender people is quite simple and should become intuitive once the reasons behind it are understood. The principle should guide every interaction with transgender people.

The Guiding Principle: People should be treated according to the gender by which they identify themselves.

Gender identity is fundamental to one’s core perception of oneself. While most of us have never questioned our gender identity, transgendered people have spent a great deal of time struggling over their own gender identity: trying to understand how they feel inside, how they desire to look outside, whether they can change their gender, and how to tell friends and family that those changes are going to occur. To identify publicly as a gender different than you were assigned at birth is not undertaken lightly. We should honor people’s self-identifications whenever possible. When we do not, we create an unwelcoming and unsafe environment for that individual.

We all seek acceptance and respect from our fellow human beings for our gender identity and expression, yet this acceptance and respect is seldom given to transgender individuals. In schools, respect for transgender individuals comes into play in many different ways. Below are our recommendations for policies that will guarantee that your school is respecting the gender identity and expression of all of your students in these specific situations.

- **Language – Names and Pronouns**
  We honor or dishonor an individual in the way that we speak about them and to them. Language is one of the most powerful tools we have, and it remains one of the most potentially harmful as well. Transgender people force us to reconsider our use of pronouns (“he” and “she,” “him” and “her”), and to recognize that the categories of “man” and “woman” can be much broader and fluid than what we were initially taught.

  What if you are not sure how to address the student? The best way is to ask – politely and courteously. Do you prefer that we refer to you as “he” or “she?” and what name would you like us to use for you? One can even preface the question: At our school we value people and want to treat everyone with respect; do you prefer us to use “he” or “she” to refer to you? While mistakes are bound to occur, the important aspect is that the school makes a real attempt to use the student’s preferred name and pronouns. When a mistake is made, staff should correct themselves, acknowledging that the mistake was made.

  There is a small but growing trend to use non-gendered pronouns. These pronouns replace the typical he/she and his/her and create neutral words that apply to anyone: ze (pronounced zee) and hir (pronounced here) or “zir.” We include them here so that you have exposure to them and are not surprised by their usage should you encounter them.

- **Harassment**
  The staff must take proactive steps to stamp out harassment of transgender students. When harassment is uncovered in the school, the staff has the obligation to intervene and see that it stops immediately.
It is important to mandate that verbal harassment will not be tolerated. While it may seem like only verbal harassment to school staff and other students, transgender students can tell you that verbal harassment always comes with the very real threat of escalating into physical harassment and assault.

A school can take harassment seriously by asking and answering the following questions and conducting appropriate follow through:

- Has the incident been reported using standard reporting procedure? Is there education that can be done to prevent future incidents?
- Does there need to be staff action or response to the incident?
- How will this type of incident be avoided in the future?
- What can we learn from the incident?

Harassment may come from a variety of different sources and take a variety of forms. Harassment may be the use of anti-gay language like “fag,” “sissy” or “dyke.” It may be inappropriate stories or jokes—for example, a joke where the punch-line is something about a “a chick with a cock.” Harassment may take the form of sexually inappropriate gestures or come-ons. Regardless of the form, your transgender students need school staff to take affirmative steps to protect their safety and dignity.

- Gender Classification
  The transgendered person forces us to reconsider our cultural beliefs that genitals are the sole or primary determinant of a person’s gender. There is a general perception that a transgender person’s new gender should be recognized only after they have had sex reassignment surgery. While that may seem like a fair rule, it can be both hurtful and disrespectful from a transgender person’s perspective.

  Medical professionals that treat transgendered persons subscribe to a set of treatment guidelines called “The Standards of Care.” These guidelines, which are managed by the Harry Benjamin Institute, govern the diagnosis of “Gender Identity Disorder,” or G.I.D., and outlines the therapeutic steps one may take to undergo sex reassignment as a means of alleviating one’s “Gender Dysphoria,” or discomfort with one’s biological gender. One requirement is that the patient must be 18 years of age or older before the administration of hormone therapy. Another is that the patient live in the role of the desired gender for at least a year before being approved for surgery. Many adult transgendered people are unable or unwilling to undergo surgery for a variety of reasons – cost, health considerations, lack of family or social support, and so on. Virtually all transgendered children of school age, however, are unable to follow the necessary treatment regimen due to their minority status and the difficulty in living in their new gender in an institutional environment that may be ignorant of the particular needs and challenges posed by transgendered students.

  The most important policy decision that makes a school safe or unsafe for a transgender individual is whether or not a person is grouped according to their self-identified gender. Whether or not a person has had surgery is a private matter – so private that whether or not a person has had surgery is almost always irrelevant.

Wherever and whenever possible, the transgender student’s freedom to define their gender expression should be honored.
Wherever and whenever possible, the transgender student’s freedom to define their gender expression should be honored. Knowing how important it is for the emotional and physical safety of a person to have their gender identity respected, the guiding principle is the only humane option.

**Dress Codes**

One serious problem that transgender and genderqueer youth face in schools is sex-based dress codes. When transgender youth express their gender identities, they are often in violation of sex-based dress codes and face discipline. It is emotionally damaging for youth to have their burgeoning self-identity crushed. Attempts to suppress a youth’s gender identity will be ultimately unsuccessful because gender identities are at the core of our being. If a school believes dress codes are necessary, we recommend that they be gender-neutral.

**Bathrooms**

What bathroom a transgender person uses is a question that sometimes confuses well-meaning administrators. The answer to this question comes from applying the guiding principle: transgender people should be welcome to use bathrooms that correspond to their self-identified gender.

Some alterations in bathroom setup may be necessary to increase privacy and safety for everyone. Transgender people have a special need for restroom privacy because there are valid safety concerns around being forced to use a bathroom without a door. Having one’s body exposed because a bathroom does not have a stall door could precipitate a violent assault. Transgender people sometimes feel discomfort around having others view their bodies. Here are some very simple solutions to increase privacy and safety in bathrooms:

- Try to have at least one single-stall restroom with a door that locks. Mark the restroom as a “family restroom,” Handicapped restroom” or simply “restroom.”
- Make sure that the individual stalls have doors and that the doors may be locked in multi-stall restrooms. If providing doors on all of the stalls is not feasible, at least one of the stalls should be given a door.
- Consider installing a lock on the entry door to the restroom area. This would allow transgender students the ability to use the restroom, locking the door from the inside while they use the facilities.

**Showers**

Like bathrooms, showers are often one of the first issues that non-transgender identified people want to know about. There are many solutions that can work to eliminate all or most of the worries for everyone involved. Transgender people may be concerned for their safety if people learn they are transgender after observing them in the shower; and they may prefer not to make others uncomfortable. Additionally, transgender students who may not have safety concerns, may still desire privacy while they shower for other reasons, such as their being shy about their bodies even if they have had surgeries. Providing a safe and secure environment for showering can help relax many fears and reduce any chance of violence against the transgender student.

Security concerns are especially heightened in male facilities, where anyone transgender may be vulnerable to attack. A transgender male (born female but now a man) may be in serious danger if the other students know he is transgender. Similarly, any student who has...
a gender expression that others consider atypical could be attacked in the men’s showering facility. For these reasons, security and other issues of physical safety for the transgender person must be addressed.

How your facility is able to accommodate transgender people’s showering needs for privacy will, of course, be dictated by practical considerations such as space and budget. Options for increasing security include providing locks on the stalls or doors, putting a lock on the showering room, or providing a monitor outside to control entrance and exiting while the transgender person is inside showering. Fortunately, there are solutions that can be accomplished with little space or expense.

› Create total privacy. If your facility already has private showering/bathing and dressing areas where people may undress and shower without anyone else observing them, then you do not need to make further adjustments. If this is not your current situation, you may want to add walls within your showering facility to create this total privacy. If walls are cost-prohibitive, creative use of curtains can create private showering spaces.

› Providing a special shower or ensure that at least one shower facility has total privacy. A school could provide one shower facility that is single-use and therefore completely private. By having this shower available for use by anyone who needs or desires privacy while showering, the school is able to meet privacy and safety needs of more than just their transgender students. A similar option is to create two zones - with curtains or walls - within the existing group shower facility. One zone would contain group showers and the other zone would have a single private shower - and both would be private from the rest of the room. By asking the transgender person to use the private shower, all students will have their privacy concerns met.

› Allowing a student to shower alone in the group shower. There are two ways to implement this option. First, the school could have the transgender student shower when others are not using the facility by setting aside different showering times. Another way is to put a lock on the facility door, so that at a convenient time, the shower facility may be locked while the transgender student showers. This solution has the same problem as requiring the transgender person to use a special shower above; it isolates them and might draw attention to the student, raising suspicion that the person is transgender.

• Health Issues
There is specific knowledge about transgender-specific health issues that school staff needs to know. Below, we have highlighted some of the health concerns that might be important to your transgender clients. However, this is just an overview, and your medical staff will need to take advantage of other resources to learn more in order to provide proper medical care.

› Hormones
Hormone therapy is an important step in the process of changing the gender characteristics of one’s body. Those who are transitioning gender often seek hormone therapy to alter various aspects of their body. Those who are transitioning from female to male often take testosterone, which increases hair growth, lowers the pitch of one’s voice, changes fat distribution patterns on the body to a male pattern, and has other effects. Those who are transitioning from male to female take estrogen along with testosterone-blockers; this causes some breast development, redistribution of fat on the body in a female pattern, as well as other effects. Ideally, hormones are prescribed by medical professionals. The effects are monitored at regular check ups and...
the dosages are adjusted for optimum health. However, since youth under the age of 18 cannot usually get hormone therapy through the medical system, they may purchase hormones through an underground market. From a school perspective, knowledge about the use of hormones can be important for many reasons.

- School students may be acquiring and using hormones without medical supervision.
- Hormone treatment may have mental and physical effects and your students may need assistance or a referral to appropriate sources in order to maintain hormonal treatment.
- Transgender students may possess syringes for their hormone injections rather than for illegal drug use.
- Hormonal therapy purchased on the street comes with the added risk that if needles are shared there is a risk for HIV or other disease transmission.

- **Silicone Injections** – Some transgender women use silicone injections to enhance their appearance. These injections can cause serious complications and may even lead to death. It is important that you provide students with information about medically safer alternatives such as hormone therapy.

- **HIV/AIDS** – Many studies have reported that the HIV/AIDS infection rate among transgender individuals, with most studies reporting that transgender individuals often have a higher rate of infection. This results from a variety of factors, including sharing needles for hormones or silicone, drug use, unprotected sex, sex work, and lack of access to health resources and services. There is no need to treat transgender clients differently regarding their HIV/AIDS status. HIV/AIDS issues should be covered by the school through universal policies and procedures that help clients receive necessary services. The HIV treatment services should be transgender-inclusive and transgender-sensitive. Please note that it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of HIV status under the American’s with Disabilities Act.

- **Transgender Men’s Health Issues** – For transgender men, it is important to recognize that some will still need to receive gynecological services or other health services because parts of their bodies are still subject to female diseases such as ovarian and breast cancer. Transgender men may need assistance in locating a transgender-sensitive medical provider to acquire these services.
Sample Lesson Plans

For Additional Lesson Plans, Visit www.glsen.org
Lesson #1

Talking the Talk

Copy the cards below on to card stock to play “Terminology Match-Up.” Distribute a card to each student and have them find their match. Use the definitions that follow as you discuss these terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biological Sex</th>
<th>Bisexual</th>
<th>Coming Out (of the Closet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Gender Expression</td>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Role</td>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
<td>Homophobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Identity</td>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Straight Ally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>Transphobia</td>
<td>Transsexual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Lesson #1 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our “packaging” determined by our chromosomes, hormones, and internal and external genitalia.</th>
<th>A term given to people who are attracted sexually and emotionally to some males and females.</th>
<th>To disclose one’s identity as an LGBT person to others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A term given to males who are attracted sexually and emotionally to some other males.</td>
<td>The ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hair cut, etc.</td>
<td>Our innermost feeling of ourselves as “male,” “female,” or somewhere in-between.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society’s expectations about our behavior and appearance based on our sex (female or male).</td>
<td>A bias against homosexuality rooted in the belief that heterosexuality is superior or the norm.</td>
<td>A fear or hatred of homosexuality, especially in others, but also in oneself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A term given to females who are attracted sexually and emotionally to some other females.</td>
<td>Once a negative term to describe lesbian and gay people, some have reclaimed this word and use it as a positive way to describe their “differentness.”</td>
<td>People who are in the process of figuring out their sexual orientation or gender identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is what we call ourselves in terms of our sexuality (gay, lesbian, straight, bi, etc.)</td>
<td>This is determined by the sex of the person one is attracted to and encompasses our sexual drives, desires and fantasies.</td>
<td>Any non-GLBT person who supports and stands up for the rights of GLBT people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A broad term for all people who do not match society’s expectations regarding gender, including transsexuals and crossdressers.</td>
<td>A fear or hatred of transgender people.</td>
<td>People whose sense of themselves as male or female is different from their birth biological sex. Sometimes they hormonally and/or surgically change their bodies to more fully match their gender identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Talking the Talk

The following definitions will help you to understand and properly use some of the terms associated with sexual orientation and gender identity.

- **Biological Sex:** This can be considered our “packaging” and is determined by our chromosomes (XX for females; XY for males); our hormones (estrogen/progesterone for females, testosterone for males); and our internal and external genitalia (vulva, clitoris, vagina for females, penis and testicles for males). About 1.7% of the population can be defined as intersexual—born with biological aspects of both sexes to varying degrees. So, in actuality, there are more than two sexes.

- **Gender Identity:** Our innermost concept of self as “male” or “female”—what we perceive and call ourselves. Individuals are conscious of this between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. Most people develop a gender identity that matches their biological sex. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their biological sex. We sometimes call these people transsexuals, some of whom hormonally and/or surgically change their sex to more fully match their gender identity.

- **Gender Role:** This is the set of roles and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Our culture recognizes two basic gender roles: masculine (having the qualities attributed to males) and feminine (having the qualities attributed to females). People who step out of their socially assigned gender roles are sometimes referred to as transgender. Though transgender has increasingly become an umbrella term referring to people who cross gender/sex barriers, many people find any umbrella term problematic because it reduces different identities into one oversimplified category.

- **Transgender:** Refers to those whose gender expression at least sometimes runs contrary to what others in the same culture would normally expect. Transgender is a broad term that includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag queens/kings, and people who do not identify as either of the two sexes as currently defined. When referring to transgender people, use the pronoun they have designated as appropriate, or the one that is consistent with their presentation of themselves.

- **Sexual Orientation:** This is determined by our sexual and emotional attractions. Categories of sexual orientation include homosexuals—gay, lesbian—attracted to some members of the same sex; bisexuals, attracted to some members of more than one sex; and heterosexuals, attracted to some members of another sex. Orientation is influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics and hormones, as well as unknown environmental factors. Though the origins of sexuality are not completely understood, it is generally believed to be established before the age of five.
Lesson #1 - continued

- **Sexual Identity:** This is how we perceive and what we call ourselves. Such labels include “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “bi,” “queer,” “questioning,” “heterosexual,” “straight,” and others. Sexual Identity evolves through a developmental process that varies depending on the individual. Our sexual behavior and how we define ourselves (identity) can be chosen. Though some people claim their sexual orientation is also a choice, for others this does not seem to be the case.

- **Coming Out (of the closet):** To be “in the closet” means to hide one’s identity. Many GLBT people are “out” in some situations and “closeted” in others. To “come out” is to publicly declare one’s identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes to a group or in a public setting. Coming Out is a life-long process—in each new situation a person must decide whether or not to come out. Coming out can be difficult for some because reactions vary from complete acceptance and support to disapproval, rejection and violence.

- **Queer:** Historically a negative term used against people perceived to be GLBT, “queer” has more recently been reclaimed by some people as a positive term describing all those who do not conform to rigid notions of gender and sexuality. Queer is often used in a political context and in academic settings to challenge traditional ideas about identity (“queer theory”).

- **Questioning:** Refers to people who are uncertain as to their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are often seeking information and support during this stage of their identity development.

- **Straight Ally:** Any non-GLBT person who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people.

- **Homophobia:** Refers to a fear or hatred of homosexuality, especially in others, but also in oneself (internalized homophobia).

- **Heterosexism:** Bias against non-heterosexuals based on a belief in the superiority of heterosexuality. Heterosexism does not imply the same fear and hatred as homophobia. It can describe seemingly innocent statements, such as “She’d drive any man wild” based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm.

- **Transphobia:** Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Some definitions adapted from: Warren J. Blumenfeld, co-author Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life and ed. of Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price
Lesson #2

Gender Talk

What messages do we receive every day about what it means to be male/masculine and female/feminine? Collect a bunch of common magazines and thumb through them. Mark or cut out all headlines, images, etc. that tell you something about how men and women are “supposed to” look, behave, love and form families. Post these images and make notes below based on your observations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act Like a Man</th>
<th>Gender-Neutral</th>
<th>Be Ladylike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss the following with a partner or in small groups:

- What patterns or themes did you observe about the messages men and women receive regarding their gender and sexuality?
- In what ways do these messages limit us?
- What happens to people who don’t conform to society’s expectations with regard to gender and sexuality? (What are they called? How are they treated?)
- How does all this connect to society’s ideas about the “rightness” or “normalcy” of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people?
- How do sexism and ideas about gender relate to homophobia and heterosexism?
- What can we all do to break down stereotypes about what it means to be a man or woman?
Lesson #3

How Does Homophobia Hurt Us All?

For each scenario below, consider how homophobia hurts not just lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, but all people. After reading each scenario, write at least one statement explaining how “homophobia hurts us all.”

• **Scenario #1:** During his junior year of high school, Marcus became increasingly involved in the drama club and appeared in several school and community productions throughout the year. After seeing him on stage in his first leading role, Marcus’ father proclaimed that when he was seventeen, he was out playing football and dating girls. In his senior year, Marcus’ drama teacher encouraged him to apply to a local college reputed to have an excellent drama program, noting that Marcus had real talent and a bright future ahead of him. At the dinner table that night, Marcus’ father made it clear that he would not contribute his “hard earned money” so that Marcus could “prance around on stage” for four years. Unless Marcus chose a more serious career path, his father indicated, he would be financially on his own after high school.

  **How Homophobia Hurts Us All:**

• **Scenario #2:** As the new semester began, Maria and her friends grew more excited about the upcoming senior prom and talked constantly about the boys they hoped would invite them. At lunch one day, Maria admitted she had a crush on Marc and fantasized about the two of them going to the prom together. “Are you crazy?,” commented one of her friends, “He’s never gonna ask you. You’re too…” “Brainy,” another girl chimed in. “It’s all those classes you take—AP Chemistry and AP Calculus and all the others—it’s like you want to be a man or something.” “Yeah,” agreed the first girl. “Marc even told me that he thinks you’re a dyke.” The next day Maria transferred out of advanced placement calculus, a class that she and Marc were in together. When Maria’s advisor inquired about the switch, Maria explained that the higher level math was getting too confusing and thought she’d be more comfortable in a regular class.

  **How Homophobia Hurts Us All:**
Lesson #3 - continued

- **Scenario #3:** Throughout high school, Hector was the victim of verbal and physical assault because of his choice to wear nail polish and make-up to school. It was common for teachers to look the other way as yells of “queer,” “freak,” and “faggot” were hurled at Hector throughout the school corridors. In the bathroom one day, a group of boys cornered Hector and pushed him to the ground. Alex, one of the boys, watched as his peers repeatedly kicked Hector and screamed obscenities at him. Noticing that Alex wasn’t joining in, one of the boys moved over to make room and motioned for Alex to participate in the beating. When Alex hesitated, the boy commented, “What’s the matter? You feel sorry for the faggot?” Alex reluctantly walked over and began kicking Hector.

**How Homophobia Hurts Us All:**

- **Scenario #4:** Jill is a 16-year-old junior who plays the flute in her high school band. Though things with her boyfriend, Troy, had been great for the first few months, a growing conflict began to concern Jill. Troy accused her one night of caring more about her flute than she did about him, and exerted pressure on Jill to have sex. Jill assured Troy that she cared for him, but said she needed more time. Later that week, Jill’s friend, Althea, confided that Troy told her boyfriend how “frigid” Jill was and that he wasn’t even sure if she liked boys. Althea advised Jill to do something before she lost Troy for good. That night Jill went to the drugstore and bought a pack of condoms.

**How Homophobia Hurts Us All:**
Lesson #3 - continued

• Scenario #5: Rob and Jose had been best friends as far back as either one could remember. Rob, an only child, had always considered Jose to be like a brother. Throughout middle school, however, things began to change. While Rob took an interest in team sports, Jose gravitated more toward the drama and dance clubs. Rob became increasingly uncomfortable with what he viewed as a growing “flamboyance” on Jose’s part. In high school, some of the students began referring to Jose as “the Spanish flame” or the “gay blade.” Rob felt embarrassed being seen with Jose, and awkward being alone with him—especially when Jose touched him or sat too close. The two boys socialized less and less, until their relationship dwindled to an occasional wave or nod in the school corridors.

How Homophobia Hurts Us All:

• Scenario #6: Kim had always been somewhat of a loner. Shy and plain looking, Kim was often ignored by her classmates, and tended to retreat into the solitary world of books. As a teenager, Kim grew increasingly self-conscious about the way in which her peers viewed her. She was aware that other kids referred to her as a “dog” and a “lesbo.” Kim even once overheard a boy say that all she needed was “a good man for just one night.” Kim became more and more confused as to her own self-identity, and fantasized about a world in which she was popular and sure of herself. When one of the more popular boys in school asked Kim out, she readily agreed. Kim knew that it was probably a joke or bet of some kind, or a test to see if she really was a “leszie.” Despite this, Kim saw it as an opportunity to make a connection and fit in. Though they only went out a few times, Kim soon found herself pregnant. Because of strict religious beliefs, both families insisted that Kim have the baby.

How Homophobia Hurts Us All:
Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Handbook
Gay-Straight Alliance Handbook

I. Introduction
Welcome! This handbook has been put together through many resources and experiences, including other established Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA), to help you in forming a GSA at your own school. It will guide you step-by-step through the process – from approaching your school administration to organizing your GSA and planning your meetings. It will help you think of issues you may address as you approach your GSA formation. The handbook includes a list of resources available, many with web links for direct access. By registering your group at www.studentorganizing.org, you can network with hundreds of other youth across the country for support or ideas in your GSA work. The current version of this handbook is called The Jump-Start Guide. This longer document is available to download for free from GLSEN’s website at www.glsen.org.

©2000 GLSEN. Reprinted with permission.
GSA Handbook
II. What is a GSA?

A GSA is a student-led and organized, non-curricular school club that aims to create a safe, welcoming and accepting school environment for all youth, regardless of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. A GSA brings together GLBTQ and Straight students to address issues that affect us all, including harassment, discrimination and bias. A GSA allows these youth to build coalitions and community that can work towards making safer school environments for all people. Most importantly, GSAs provide support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (GLBTQ) identified students.

III. Why Start a GSA?

You probably already know why your GSA is important to you, but you should also know why a GSA is important for your school. You should be able to state the mission and goals clearly and write them so that everyone understands the GSA’s role in your school. Some reasons other students started GSAs have been to:

• provide a safe environment for students to address issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender roles,

• focus on core school values for GLBTQ students to learn and grow,

• build a partnership between GLBTQ and straight identified students,

• encompass the broadest range of students including “real or perceived” sexual orientation and gender identity,

*Note: Adding “real or perceived” is important because it includes not only GLBTQ students but also those who “appear” to be GLBTQ, by some, but may be straight. It also includes students who aren’t sure or don’t want to define their sexual orientation or gender in conventional “boxes.”*

• recognize outstanding contributions in the school environment,

• help the school establish effective antiharassment and discrimination policies,

• educate the school and local community on GLBTQ issues, and

• promote safe schools where diversity is accepted and harassment is condemned.

IV. Finding and Building Support for a GSA?

Many GSAs have found their success depends greatly on building good alliances with others. A good first approach would be to find supportive students, teachers, administrators, and staff within your school. Some steps you might take include:

• Contact other GLBTQ students if you know them,

• Find straight students who may be GLBTQ-supportive,

• Ask school guidance counselors for help; they may be able to put other students facing similar issues in contact with you,

• Talk to teachers and staff who are not judgmental and appear understanding of diversity,

• Find school leaders who have supported other human rights initiatives, and

• Build alliances with people who may face other biases or prejudices.

One of the most unique values of a GSA is that it includes people of different sexual orientations and gender identities – it is not a “gay club.” Straight identified students, teachers and administrators can be just as supportive as anyone else, and offer their own insights and ideas into the problems they’ve seen within the school.

You can also find support outside of school in the local community, though no other group should ever control your GSA. Groups to look at include:

• GLBTQ-owned or friendly businesses,

• GLSEN and PFLAG chapters, and

• GLBTQ-friendly alumni.

You should also know who might oppose the GSA – from both inside and outside school. While many GSAs start with no, or little, opposition, some communities may have organizations...
that will want to prevent you from having yours. Erik Stegman, 18 of Seattle, WA tells us, “Sometimes starting up a GSA turns into a debate much more powerful than anything you’ve had in forensics, but the strategy remains the same—researching the opposing view is essential.”

Finally, network with students from other GSAs. They may have already faced many of the same issues and can provide a wealth of valuable information. Here are just a few ways you can connect to other GSAs:

• Register your group at www.studentorganizing.org. Your registration connects you to more than 3000 Alliances around the country. By registering with Student Organizing, you can connect with the Jump-Start National Student Leadership Team for support from trained student organizers. You can also subscribe to state and national email listservs, keeping you informed on events, activities, and important news.

• Check schools in your area to find other GSAs which may not have registered yet, and

• Search the Web for GSAs and for GLBTQ students who might lead you to GSAs.

V. School Administration and School Boards

Before meeting with a school administrator or board, be prepared to answer commonly asked questions. Below are some things you might consider doing before such a meeting:

• Examine school policies on the formation of student groups, and prepare any documents (application, constitution, mission statement, goals, etc.) that are needed.

Note: Depending on your school’s system for reviewing and accepting applications for a school club, you may need to see the principal or school board. However, if your school is covered under the Equal Access Act, the school must treat your application & acceptance the same as it would any other club (see section XI: Legal Protections for GSAs, for more information).

• Review school policies on issues like school safety, diversity, harassment and discrimination and examine their impact GLBTQ issues. Are people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities protected?

• Write your proposed club goals and mission clearly.

• Answer possible questions concisely and objectively.

• Determine if there are any GLBTQ friendly members on the school administration or school board who will support your GSA.

• Gather any stories of harassment, discrimination or bias that you or others have experienced, if possible.

• Obtain local, regional or national statistics on GLBTQ youth harassment and violence in schools like yours.

• Show how homophobia affects everyone, regardless of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

VI. Organizing your GSA

As previously stated, many schools have policies on how to establish and organize school clubs. Follow it. Organizing your GSA should be a group effort, with all the members participating as equals. Naturally you may have some ideas you’ll bring, but the group will grow in strength as it determines collectively its structure, by-laws, and rules. Your first few meetings will probably be devoted to organizing your GSA. In general there are several steps GSAs commonly take (some of these often depend on school club guidelines):

• Find an advisor, probably from the faculty or staff.

• Examine other club structures.

• Draft club by-laws and rules for review by the members.

• Finalize club by-laws and rules, possibly by vote or consensus.

• Establish policies to assure the safety and confidentiality of each member.
Most GSAs prefer to keep their organizational structure fairly simple. A common form includes club officers (president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary) or an executive board, chair or co-chairs and members. Other clubs at your school may provide examples. Keep your by-laws rather general and let your club rules and policies address day-to-day issues. The by-laws typically include your:

- Mission statement.
- Process to select officers.
- Rules to modify your by-laws or to make club policies, and
- Guidelines for appropriate actions by members (e.g. respect and confidentiality)

VII. GSA Meeting Logistics

Meeting logistics can vary as much as the cities in which GSAs exist across the nation. Here are some of the more common things GSA youth leaders have found helpful in achieving their club’s success:

- Find a safe place for meetings, preferably away from high-traffic areas. This helps for students who may be hesitant to attend, as well as avoiding distractions or noise during your meetings.
- Avoid time conflicts with other clubs and sports so that students are able to attend. Also consider transportation and bus schedules so that you’re able to get home after the meetings.
- Advertise the meetings with diverse fliers to attract diverse people. Many GSAs have noted that advertisements, such as flyers and posters, have been torn down or defaced. Mikhail Abraham Lewis (18) from Helena, MT suggests you “just keep putting new ones up. Eventually people will stop reacting to them through vandalism.”
- Place notices and articles in the school paper.
- Consider hosting a bulletin board with announcements, meeting schedules and displays.

To encourage people to actively attend meetings, make the meetings meaningful, fun, and short. You may want to follow a prescribed format such as this one from a GSA in Boston, MA.

- Start and end meetings on time; keep meetings short (less than an hour),
- Assure the faculty advisor attends all meetings,
- Let the faculty advisor participate as an equal in the meetings but not control or dominate the meetings,
- Participate in opening or closing “activity exercises” that are fun to play and teach a meaningful lesson
- Document meeting discussion topics, activities and attendance, and
- Provide snacks, if possible, a small but effective way to encourage attendance.

VIII. Financial support?

In many schools, clubs can raise money and use it for specific activities, such as to buy educational books or fund staff trainings. Before raising funds, however, check with your school guidelines for rules and regulations on how you are allowed to raise money, where it can be held and how it can be spent. Here are some common ways to ensure successful fundraising.

1) Examine the school policies and make sure you follow them carefully
2) Set fundraising goals that your group will aspire to achieve
3) Plan how you will raise this money (e.g., raffles, bake sales, “direct ask”)
   
   Note: It is often easier for a business to provide goods or services rather than money, so you might ask the local pizza parlor for snacks or the local movie theater for tickets.
4) Raise the money
5) Send prompt thank you notes to all donors
6) Allocate the funds to projects, programs or activities (e.g., library, trainings)
7) Document all funds collected and spent

IX. Assuring Continuity of Your GSA?

We’re sure the last thing you want isn’t that all of your work building your GSA simply ends after you leave or graduate. Instead, you probably want your GSA to continue successfully, long after the initial leaders. Therefore, you have to build longevity into the GSA by nurturing the younger members and developing their leadership. To help assure a GSA’s continuity, many youth organizers have done the following:

- Designate some leadership positions for sophomores and juniors (e.g., the club VP) so they have a chance to learn as they take on responsibilities.
- Work with new members to find out what their interests are and what they’re interested in doing.
- Include new members in all aspects of your GSA meetings, from leading activities or sessions, to projects or trainings.
- Send your members to trainings and conferences.

“I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers.”

– Ralph Nader (b. 1934)

X. Confronting Homophobia and Resistance?

Unfortunately, most every town and school will have people who might be confrontational or who might harass students. Recent statistics show that the average student hears anti-gay epithets over 25 times a day. If anti-gay violence or harassment occurs, report it immediately. Document what occurred. Expect action. If nothing satisfactory happens, ask the school superintendent in writing for a response and course of action. Dealing with harassment, discrimination and bias can be very difficult, but schools can, and should, be held responsible for the safety and well being of all students while at school and en route to or from school.

If harassment, violence, discrimination or bias occurs, follow these actions:

1) Report It! The more people, the better.
2) Send written statements and requests for action to the school principal and the school superintendent.
3) Send copies of your letter to your assistant principal, guidance counselor, teachers (if involved), community GLBTQ organization(s) and your city, county or state’s Human Relations Commission.

XI. Legal Protections for GSAs?

In community organizing, litigation is a last resort. While there are situations and circumstances that may be cause for immediate legal action, most situations can be solved by organizing your school or community. Simply put, if a principal allows a GSA to form because of a threatened lawsuit, the administration will not be supportive and will be reluctant to understand why the GSA is needed and important. However, if the school community organizes and convinces the principal to allow the group there is much greater chance the principal will learn to value the group’s presence, leading to easier working relationships in the future. Additionally, legal
cases usually drag on for a long time, cost a lot of money and stir even more controversy.

While suing a school may be the last resort in many cases, seeking legal support is not. If necessary for legal support, seek help in researching the legal issues from groups such as GLSEN. Legal advisors may also be able to provide a letter of support, a basic document informing school administrators that a GSA does have a legal right to meet.

You should first determine whether your school is public, private, or religiously affiliated. In most cases, legal protection of association only applies to public schools and does not apply to religiously affiliated schools. A parochial school opposed to homosexuality can probably deny formation of a GSA, because they are a private organization. For those schools, you can only try to change the prevailing culture by educating the leaders on GLBTQ issues.

For federally funded public schools, The Federal Equal Access Act of 1984 protects any GSA wishing to start if the school already has, or allows, other noncurricular clubs. This Act further states that all non-curricular clubs must be treated equally and may not be denied due to their moral or political values.

There are many resources to research legal issues. Lambda (Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund) and ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) have websites with much useful information. (see: Resources)

You can also use www.FindLaw.com to search state laws. Select your state and do a keyword searches on “sexual orientation” or “discrimination.” As of January, 2000, only seven states appeared to have laws protecting students from discrimination based on sexual orientation (California, Wisconsin, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Massachusetts). However, every school in every state is required and expected to provide a safe learning environment at school and en route to/from school.

Note: According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) website, the following states have discrimination protections based on sexual orientation: California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

Five states have safe school laws that address gender expression: California, Maine, Minnesota, and New Jersey.
Sources of Additional Information & Support
for Educators, Parents, & Students
Sources of Additional Information & Support for Educators, Parents, & Students

NATIONAL RESOURCES

ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union
The American Civil Liberties Union is the nation’s foremost advocate of individual rights – litigating, legislating, and educating the public on a broad array of issues affecting individual freedom in the United States.

125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004-2400
(212) 549-2627
FAX: (212) 549-2650
lgbthiv@aclu.org
www.ACLU.org/safeschools

Advocates for Youth
Advocates for Youth is dedicated to creating programs and advocating for policies that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.

2000 M Street NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 419-3420
info@advocatesforyouth.org
www.advocatesforyouth.org/glbtq.htm

Youth Resource.com – support, community, resources, and peer-to-peer education for LGBT youth 13-24
www.Youthresource.com

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016-3007
(202) 966-7300
www.aacap.org
Enter search term “sexual orientation”
The American Psychological Association

Call for free brochure about “...Sexual Orientation...” Other available publications: “Healthy Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students Project”; “Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators & School Personnel.”

750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 336-5700
www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/publications/
justthefacts.html

American School Counselor Association

1101 King Street, Suite 625
Alexandria, VA 22314
www.schoolcounselor.org/
content.asp?contentid=217

Children’s National Medical Center

Call for free brochure “If You Are Concerned About Your Child’s Gender Behaviors – Parent Guide”

111 Michigan Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20010
(202) 884-2504
www.dcchildrens.com/gendervariance

COLAGE (Children of Lesbian and Gays Everywhere)

Engages, connects, and empowers people to make the world a better place for children of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents and families.

3543 18th ST #1
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 861-5437
colage@colage.org
www.colage.org

Gay-Straight Alliance Network

Empowering Youth Activists to Fight Homophobia

www.gsanetwork.org

Gender Youth (a project of GenderPAC)

A national network of youth combating bullying and discrimination caused by gender stereotypes through peer to peer mentoring, grassroots organizing and community education.

1743 Connecticut Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20009-1108
(202) 462-6610
www.gpac.org/youth
Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)
The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

248 West 35th St. 8th floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 629-3322
www.glaad.org/talkline/index.html

GLBT National Youth Talkline
The GLBT National Youth Talkline provides telephone and email peer-counseling, as well as factual information and local resources for cities and towns across the United States. All services are free and confidential. Telephone volunteers are in their teens and early twenties, and speak with teens and young adults up to age 25 about coming-out issues, relationship concerns, parent issues, school problems, and safer-sex information.

1-800-246-PRIDE (7743)
Hours: (Mon. - Fri. 8pm to Midnight, EST)
youth@GLBTNationalHelpCenter.org
www.glnh.org

GLSEN – Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
National educational organization working to make schools safe for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Offers a multitude of resources, including Respect Magazine.

90 Broad St. 2nd floor
New York, NY 10004
(212) 727-0135
FAX: (212) 727-0254
glsen@glsen.org
www.glsen.org

Heartstrong
HeartStrong is a non-sectarian organization reaching out to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students from religious educational institutions (grade school through graduate school).

PO Box 2051
Seattle WA 98111
(206) 388-3894
heartstrong@heartstrong.org
www.heartstrong.org
Sources of Additional Information & Support

Human Rights Campaign

HRC is a bipartisan organization that works to advance equality based on sexual orientation and gender expression and identity, to ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

1640 Rhode Island Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036-3278
Front Desk: (202) 628-4160
TTY: (202) 216-1572
Toll-Free: 800-777-4723
www.hrc.org

LAMBDA Legal Defense Fund

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, and people with HIV/AIDS through impact litigation, education, and public policy work.

120 Wall Street, Suite 1500
New York, NY 10005-3904
(212) 809-8585
FAX: (212) 809-0055
lambdalegal@lambdalegal.org
www.lambdalegal.org

Midwest Regional Office
11 East Adams, Suite 1008
Chicago, IL 60603-6303
(312) 663-4413

National Association of School Psychologists

4340 Eat West Highway, Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 657-0270
www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/nasp_smy.pdf

“Making School Safe for Sexual Minority Students”
www.naspcenter.org/principals/nassp_glbqt.html

National Education Association

Report of the NEA Task Force on Sexual Orientation
www.nea.org/nr/02taskforce.html#1

School Employee’s Guide to GLBT Issues
www.nea.org/takenote/glbtguide06.html
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
Works to build the grassroots political power of the LGBT community to secure equality.

1325 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 393-5177
TTY 202-393-2284
www.thetaskforce.org

National Gay and Lesbian Youth Hotline
1-800-347-TEEN (8336)

National Mental Health Association
2000 N. Beauregard Street, 6th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22311
(703) 684-7722
www.nmha.org  Search: “Bullying and Gay Youth”

National Runaway Switchboard
The mission of the National Runaway Switchboard is to help keep America’s runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. The organization serves as the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth.

800-621-4000 (24 hours)
www.nrs crisisline.org

The National School Boards Association
Nationwide organization representing public school governance. They offer the following publication that can be downloaded free:

Dealing with Legal Matters Surrounding Students’ Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – to download document go to: www.nsba.org/site/docs/34600/34527.pdf

National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC)
A national organization focused solely on improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (GLBTQ) youth through advocacy, education, and information.

1638 R Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC, 20009
(202) 319-7596
Toll-Free 800-541-6922
FAX: (202) 319-7365
nyac@nyacyouth.org
www.nyacyouth.org
The **P.E.R.S.O.N. Project** –
*Public Education Regarding Sexual Orientation Nationally*

An informal, national network of organizations and individuals working to ensure that fair, accurate, and unbiased information regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and about the nature and diversity of sexual orientation is presented to America’s youth as part of public school education.

[www.personproject.org](http://www.personproject.org)

**PFLAG – Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays**

National organization supporting the parents, friends and families members of GLBTQ persons

PFLAG National  
1726 M St. NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 467-8180  
info@pflag.org  
[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

**PFLAG: Transgender Network (TNET)**

A support group for transgender people and their parents, families, and friends; education on transgender facts and issues; and advocacy for equal rights for the transgender community at local and national levels.

[www.pflag.org/TNET.tnet.O.html](http://www.pflag.org/TNET.tnet.O.html)

**The Point Foundation**

The Point Foundation provides financial support, mentoring and hope to meritorious students who are marginalized due to sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity.

P.O. Box 11210  
Chicago, IL 60611  
866-33-POINT (866-337-6468)  
info@thepointfoundation.org  
[www.thepointfoundation.org](http://www.thepointfoundation.org)

**Safe Schools Coalition**

Help with anti-gay harassment or violence at school

2124 Fourth Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98121  
intervention@safeschoolscoalition.org  
[www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)
Student Global AIDS Campaign
A national movement with more than 85 chapters at high schools, colleges, and universities across the United States committed to bringing an end to HIV and AIDS in the U.S. and around the world through education, informed advocacy, media work, and direct action.

www.fightglobalaids.org

Teaching Tolerance
A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, offers project grants to educators.

400 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104
(334) 956-8374
www.teachingtolerance.org

Third Wave Foundation
A feminist, activist foundation working nationally to support young women and transgender youth ages 15 to 30. Through financial resources, public education and relationship building, Third Wave helps support and strengthen young women, transgender youth and their allies working for gender, racial, social, and economic justice.

www.thirdwavefoundation.org

TransFamily
A support group for transgendered and transsexual people, their parents, partners, children, other family members, friends, and supportive others. They provide referrals, literature, and over-the-phone information on all transgender issues. Although TransFamily’s meetings are held in Cleveland, Ohio, the Internet has enabled them to extend helping hands to transgendered individuals and their families across the globe.

www.transfamily.org

TransProud
A website for transgender youth. They offer a wide range of resources available for youth and educators on their website.

www.transproud.com

The Trevor Project
The Trevor Helpline is the only national 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention hot line aimed at gay and questioning youth. It is geared toward helping those in crisis, or those wanting information on how to help someone in crisis. Calls are handled by highly trained counselors and are free and confidential.

24-hour National Teen Crisis Hotline
1-866-488-7386
(310) 271-8845
www.thetrevorproject.org
Youth Pride, Inc. (YPI)

A non-profit organization serving youth and young adults affected by issues of sexual orientation and gender. YPI published a guide for school staff: Creating Safe Schools for Lesbian and Gay Students: a resource guide for school staff  www.members.tripod.com/~twood/guide.html

171 Chestnut Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 421-5626
youth_pride@yahoo.com
www.youthpride-ri.org/youth/default.asp
OHIO STATE RESOURCES

AIDS-HIV-STD Hotline Ohio
800-332-AIDS (800-332-2437)
TDD: 800-DEAF-TTY (800-332-3889)
Spanish AIDS Hotline 800-344-7432
ohioaidshotline@catf.net

AIDS Resource Center Ohio (ARC Ohio)
ARC Ohio is the leading provider of HIV/AIDS prevention and support services in western, northwestern and north central Ohio
15 W. 4th St. #200
Dayton, OH 45402
(937) 461-2437
info@arcohio.org
www.arcohio.org

American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio
4506 Chester Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44103
(216) 472-2200
contact@acluohio.org
www.acluohio.org

Anti-Defamation League
Handles discrimination complaints; works to ensure that civil rights and discrimination laws are enforced, and to secure fair treatment for all people throughout Ohio.
50 Public Square, Suite 505
Cleveland, OH 44113
(216) 579-9600 or 1-800-821-4058
cleveland@adl.org
www.adl.org/regional/cleveland/default.asp

Ohio Center for Social Justice
PO Box 10814
Columbus OH 43201
Mr. Perry Slone, Director
(614) 214-4175
OhioCSJ@yahoo.com
www.hometown.aol.com/ohiocsj

Equality Ohio
Equality Ohio envisions an Ohio where everyone feels at home; living in families and communities where equality, diversity and inclusiveness are universally valued; and where government protects all people and responds to their needs, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
50 West Broad St.
Suite 1970
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 202-8869
contactus@equalityohio.org
www.equalityohio.org

Scholarships for GLBT Youth at Ohio State University
PFLAG Columbus and The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Alumni Society of Ohio State University team up to provide several endowed scholarships for GLBT undergraduate students at OSU.

GLBT Scholarship Committee
C/O University Registrar
1800 Cannon Drive, Suite 700
Columbus, OH 43210
Contact Erica Claman at claman.3@osu.edu or (614) 457-5413
www.osuglbt.org/scholarship.html
GLBTQ Supportive Religious Resources

**Baptist**
Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists  
P.O. Box 2596  
Attleboro Falls, MA 02763-0894  
(508) 226-1945  
www.wabaptists.org

**Christian Church/Disciples of Christ**
GLAD Alliance, Inc.  
P.O. Box 44400  
Indianapolis, IN 46244-0400  
Dignity/USA  
P.O. Box 15373  
Washington, DC 20003-0373  
1-800-877-8797  
info@dignityusa.org  
www.dignityusa.org

**Christian Scientist**
Emergence International  
P.O. Box 16554  
Phoenix, AZ 85011-6554  
www.emergence-international.org

**Episcopal**
Serving lesbian and gay Episcopalians and their friends, Integrity works for education and change within the church, and for outreach within the GLBT community.

**Integrity USA**  
620 Park Avenue, #311  
Rochester, NY 14607-2943  
1-800-462-9498  
info@integrityusa.org  
www.integrityusa.org

**Integrity of Greater Cincinnati**  
65 E. Hollister  
Cincinnati, OH 45219-1703  
(513) 662-1781  
integritygc@yahoo.com  
www.geocities.com/integritygc

**Evangelical**
Evangelicals Concerned  
P.O. Box 19734  
Seattle, WA 98109-6734  
1-866-979-3297

**Hindu**
The Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association  
www.galva108.org

**Jewish**
Chevrei Tikva  
Part of Fairmount Temple  
23737 Fairmount Blvd.  
Beachwood, OH 44122-2203  
(216) 464-1330  
Cindy Lipton (ext. 126, voicemail ext. 149)

**Fortunate Families** (Catholic Parents of GLBT Children)  
(585) 244-4427  
info@fortunatefamilies.com  
www.fortunatefamilies.com

**Sources of Additional Information & Support**
Jewish Family Service
Provides programs and counseling services to GLBT persons of the Jewish Faith.
11223 Cornell Park Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45242
(513) 469-1188
www.jfscinti.org

National Union of Jewish Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Questioning Students
4100 Massachusetts Ave. NW #UT16
Washington, DC 20016
info@NUJLSonline.org
www.nujlsonline.org

JQYouth
www.jqyouth.org

Lutheran
Lutherans Concerned/ North America
P.O. Box 1022
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1922
www.lcna.org

Mennonite
Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Interests
Serving LGBT people, allies, families, and friends in both the Mennonite Church (USA and Canada) and the Church of the Brethren.
P.O. Box 6300
Minneapolis, MN 55406
(612) 343-2060
www.bmc-lgbt.org

Mormon
Affirmation
P.O. Box 46022
Los Angeles, CA 90046-0022
(323) 255-7251
www.umaffirm.org

GLBT Mormons, Their Allies, Families and Friends
www.affirmation.org

Muslim
Al-Fatiha
P.O. Box 33532
Washington, DC 20033
(202) 452-5534
www.al-fatiha.org

Pentecostal
Freedom 2 B[e]
P.O. Box 901
Surry Hills NSW 2010, Australia
anthony.venn-brown@psalifecoaching.com
www.freedom2b.org

Reconciling Pentecostals International
34522 N. Scottsdale Rd. D-8, Suite 238
Scottsdale, AZ 85262
(480) 595-5517
www.rpmfellowship.org

Presbyterian
More Light Presbyterians
369 Montezuma Ave., #447
Santa Fe, NM 87501-2626
(505) 820-7082
www.mlp.org

Seventh-Day Adventist
Seventh-Day Adventist Kinship International
P.O. Box 49375
Sarasota, FL 34230-6375
1-866-732-5677
office@sdakinship.org
www.sdakinship.org

Unitarian Universalist
Interweave
www.interweavecontinental.org

United Church of Christ
The UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns
2592 West 14th St.
Cleveland, OH 44113
1-800-653-0799
office@ucccoalition.org
www.ucccoalition.org

United Methodist
Affirmation
P.O. Box 1021
Evanston, IL 60204
(847) 733-9590

General
Covenant Network
Broad-based, national group of clergy and lay leaders working for a fully inclusive church
www.covenantnetwork.org

Operation Rebirth
Maintains a list of predominantly African-American Christian churches that are GLBT welcoming and affirming.
www.operationrebirth.com

Metropolitan Community Churches
P.O. Box 691728
West Hollywood, CA 90069
(310) 360-8640
www.mccchurch.org
Ohio University Open Doors
Lesbian Gay Bisexual
Transgender Intersex Queer
Questioning Ally Student
Union
United Campus Ministry (UCM)
18 North College Street
Athens, OH 45701
(740) 594-2385
opendoor@ohio.edu
www.ohiou.edu/~opendoor

The Institute for Welcoming
Resources
Resources supporting the
unconditional welcome of people
of all sexual orientations, gender
identities & their families in the
church home of their choice.
[Sponsored by the National Gay
and Lesbian Taskforce]
www.welcomingresources.org

Soulforce
An interfaith movement
committed to ending spiritual
violence perpetuated by religious
policies and teachings against
GLBT people.
P.O. Box 3195
Lynchburg, VA 24503-0195
1-877-705-6393
info@soulforce.org
www.soulforce.org

Unified Listing of Local
Churches
Congregations that are
welcoming and affirming
www.gaychristians.org/
churches.htm
COUNTY RESOURCES

ADAMS COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

ALLEN COUNTY

Lima OSU Bi·Global
4240 Campus Dr
066 Galvin
Lima, OH 45804
(419) 221-1641 ext. 415

PFLAG Lima
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
P.O. Box 5571
Lima, OH 45802
(419) 222-4954
donnet@watchtv.net
www.geocities.com/pflag_lima

(See Also the Adjacent Hardin County)

*ASHLAND COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Lorain, Wayne, and Richland)

*ASHTABULA COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

Kent State Ashtabula Lesbian Gay Bisexual Union
3325 West 13th St.
Ashtabula, OH 44004
(440) 964-4289

PFLAG Ashtabula
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
1710 Walnut Boulevard
Ashtabula, OH 44004
(201) 992-7500
(440) 964-3350

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Lake, and Trumbull)

ATHENS COUNTY

Athens AIDS Task Force
P.O. Box 466
Athens, OH 45701-0466
(740) 592-4397
home.frognet.net/~aatf

Ohio University Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Programs Center
314 Baker University Center
Athens, OH 45701
(740) 593-0239
www ohio.edu/lgbt

PFLAG Athens
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
(740) 689-2120
toadhall@frognet.net

Safe Community Schools Coalition
Provides outreach and education services to Athens County area schools on a wide range of diversity topics.
8 N. Court St.
Athens, OH 45701
(740) 592-7233 (592-SAFE)
scsc@frognet.net

UCM: Center for Spiritual Growth & Social Justice
Long time advocate for LGBT students
18 N. College Street
Athens, OH
(740) 593-7301
csmjan@frognet.net
www.ucmathens.org

(Athens County)

AUGLAIZE COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Allen and Hardin)
BELMONT COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Harrison and Stark.)

BROWN COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(Carlton County)

BUTLER COUNTY

Butler County AIDS Task Force
(513) 570-0256

Miami University of Ohio
Spectrum GLBTQS Alliance
35 Macmillan Hall
Oxford, OH 45056
(513) 529-3823
www.orgs.muohio.edu/spectrum

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Hamilton and Montgomery)

*CARROLL COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Harrison and Stark.)

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(CLARK COUNTY)

CLERMONT COUNTY

Clermont College Resource Center and Diversity Task Force
4200 Clermont College Dr.
Batavia, OH 45103-1748
(513) 732-5291

(See Also The Adjacent Hamilton County)

CLINTON COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(C see Also The Adjacent Counties of Mahoning, and Stark)

*COLUMBIANA COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (Serving Columbiana County)
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

*COSHOCTON COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

*COSHOCTON COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh
Sources of Additional Information & Support

**CRAWFORD COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Richland County)

**CUYAHOGA COUNTY**

CUYAHOGA COUNTY AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland
3210 Euclid Avenue #400
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 621-0766
www.aidstaskforce.org

Baldwin-Wallace Allies
Baldwin-Wallace College
Student Life Office
275 Eastland Rd.
Berea, OH 44017
(440) 826-2111
allies@bw.edu

Baldwin-Wallace Lambda
275 Eastland Rd.
Berea, OH 44017-2005
(440) 826-2356
lambda@bw.edu

Beyond Identities Community Center (BICC)
Cleveland OH 44113
A social center open to anyone between 13 and 22 years of age, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or race.
216-361-2428
www.aidstaskforce.org

Case Western Reserve LGBT Resources and Info web site, Provost’s office
(216) 368-4344
www.case.edu/provost/lgbt

Case Western Reserve Spectrum
c/o Thwing Student Office
11111 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44106
(216) 421-2935
queer@po.cwru.edu
www.spectrum.case.edu

Cleveland LGBT Hotline
Evenings (216) 651-5428
(651-LGBT)
24-hour automated info line
(216) 651-6452
Toll free 1-888-429-8761

Cleveland Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Trans Pride
Organizes annual Pride parade, festival & related activities
PO Box 91031
Cleveland, OH 44101
(216) 621-5280
www.clevelandpride.org

State GLASA (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Alliance)
Student organization at CSU
CSU Box 34
2121 Euclid
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 887-2277
glasa@csuohio.edu
www.csuohio.edu/glasa

Cuyahoga Community College West Campus Lambda Gay-Straight Alliance
Student Life Office A-101
11000 Pleasant Valley Road
Parma, OH 44130
(216) 987-5000
or (216) 987-5379
cccstudentally@yahoo.com
www.tri-c.edu/lambda

The Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio
3645 Warrensville Center Road
Suite 320
Cleveland, OH 44122
(216) 752-3000
www.diversitycenterneo.org

Gay People’s Chronicle
A weekly newspaper dedicated to providing a space in the Ohio lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community for all its members to communicate and be involved with each other.
PO Box 5426
Cleveland, OH 44101
(216) 621-5280
www.gaypeopleschronicle.com

Global Issues Resource Center
The Center’s special focus is on sources and management of conflict; the ongoing threats to global security; environmental dilemmas; and issues of diversity and multicultural understanding.
Tri-C East-1
4250 Richmond Rd.
Cleveland, OH 44122
(216) 987-2224
www.tri-c.cc.oh.us/community/girc.htm

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh
John Carroll Allies

John Carroll Allies seeks to offer support to students that are interested in issues that concern gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Our mission is to plan speakers, trips, and activities that will promote a better understanding of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population within the teachings and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

20700 N. Park, Box 9999
University Heights, OH 44118
(216) 397-2489

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center of Greater Cleveland

Youth programs
6600 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44102
(216) 651-5428
1-888-429-8761
(216) 651-6452 – 24-hour automatic information line
info@lgcsc.org
www.lgcsc.org

People of All Colors Together (PACT) – Cleveland

PACT is committed to fostering supportive environments where racial and cultural barriers against the acceptance of diversity can be overcome and the goal of human equality realized. They engage in social, educational, cultural and political activities as a means of dealing with the homophobia, racism, sexism and other inequities.

P.O. Box 5144
Cleveland, OH 44101
1-877-233-9479
info@pactcleveland.com
www.pactcleveland.com

PFLAG Hillcrest/Cleveland East

(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
2121 So. Green #2
Cleveland, OH 44121-3318
(440) 646-9103
or (216) 691-4357
imatmom@aol.com
www.transfamily.org

PFLAG Cleveland

(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
615 Prospect Street
Berea, OH 44017-2743
Information Line: 440-915-3235
mail@pflagcleveland.org
www.pflagcleveland.org

TransFamily of Cleveland

(Transgender Support)
Transgender, family, allies
2121 South Green Road, #2
South Euclid, OH 44121-3300
(216) 691-4357
Helpline: (216) 691-HELP
imatmom@aol.com
www.transfamily.org

Westhaven Youth Shelter

Westhaven Youth Shelter is the only emergency shelter in Greater Cleveland with support services for both boys and girls ages 11-17.

3020 West 104 St.
(at Western Ave.)
Cleveland Ohio 44111
(216) 941-0062 (24-hour hotline)
www.charityadvantage.com/lutheranmetro/westhaven.asp

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Lake, Lorain, Portage and Summit.)

DEFIANCE COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glseonnortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

DELAWARE COUNTY

Ohio Wesleyan GLBT Resource Center
Hamilton-Williams Campus Center
Delaware, OH 43015
(740) 368-3196
glbtrc@owu.edu
www.glbtrc.owu.edu

Ohio Wesleyan University Pride
People Regarding Individual Diversity Everywhere, supports students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender.

118 Rowland Ave
Delaware, OH 43015
(740) 368-3621
or (740) 368-3196
prideweb@owu.edu
www.pride.owu.edu

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Knox, Licking, and Franklin)

DRAKE COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
Sources of Additional Information & Support

**FAYETTE COUNTY**

**Refer to State and National Resources**

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

**Huckleberry House**
Youth crisis shelter and hotline
(614) 294-8097
Crisis Hotline: (614) 294-5553
www.huckhouse.org

**Kaleidoscope Youth Center**
A youth service agency solely dedicated to meeting the needs of youth aged 12-20 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, as well as those questioning.
(614) 294-7886
www.kaleidoscope.org

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**

**Columbus AIDS Taskforce**
1751 E. Long Street
Columbus, OH 43203
(614) 299-2437
1-800-332-2437
www.catf.net

**Columbus Gay-Lesbian Info Line**
(614) 299-7764

**Columbus State outLOUD**
Nester 116, 550 E. Spring
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 287-5306

**Fusion of Ohio State University**
FUSION is a LGBT interest group with a mission of promoting social awareness, education and activism through a variety of mediums that include but are not limited to discussions, movies and service work.
1739 N High St
Ohio Union #315
Columbus, OH 43210
(614) 688-8449 (GLBT Student Services)
fusionOSU@osu.edu
www.fusion.org.ohio-state.edu

**Ohio State University GLBT Student Services**
Support, advocacy & programming for GLBT students, faculty & staff.
464 Ohio Union, 1739 N. High
Columbus, OH 43210-1307
(614) 688-8449
glbts@osu.edu
www.multiculturalcenter.osu.edu/glbts

**Otterbein College Freezone**
P.O. Box 13004
Westerville, OH 43081
(614) 823-1250
freezone@otterbein.edu
www.geocities.com/ocfreezone

**People of All Colors Together (PACT) – Columbus**
Non-profit gay/lesbian, multi-racial and multicultural organization hosting educational, political, cultural & social activities to help eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices in our community.
Columbuspact@yahoo.com
www.geocities.com/westhollywood/chelsea/8643/

---

**ERIE COUNTY**

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

**PFLAG Sandusky/Firelands**
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
P.O. Box 143
Sandusky, OH 44870
(419) 433-6755
info@sanduskypflag.org
www.sanduskypflag.org

**Sandusky/Firelands Gay Pride**
www.firelandspride.org/ssstudents.htm

(See Also The Adjacent Lorain County)

**FAIRFIELD COUNTY**

**PFLAG Lancaster/Fairfield**
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
1185 Pleasantville Road
Lancaster, OH 43130
(740) 654-0565
graceucc@greenapple.com

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Franklin and Licking)
Sources of Additional Information & Support

**PFLAG Columbus**
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
P.O. Box 340101
Columbus, OH 43234
(614) 227-9355
www.pflagcolumbus.org

**Phoenix Pride Support Group**
A Phoenix Pride is a program of Southeast, Inc. Support Group for GLBTQ youth ages 21 and younger
P.O. Box 8104
Columbus, OH 43201
(614) 444-0800 Ext. 2224

**Stonewall Columbus**
Provides a community center & offers programming & services that enhance the well-being & visibility of the GLBT community.
1160 N. High Street
P.O. Box 10814
Columbus, Ohio 43201-2411
(614) 299-7764
www.stonewallcolumbus.org/stonewall_center

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Fairfield, Licking, and Delaware)

**FULTON COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

**GALLIA COUNTY**

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

**GEAUGA COUNTY**

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lake, Portage, Summit, and Trumbull.)

**GREENE COUNTY**

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Clark and Montgomery)

**GUERNSEY COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Muskingum County)

**HAMILTON COUNTY**

**AIDS Volunteers of Cincinnati (AVOC)**
AVOC provides case management / care /resources to HIV infected individuals / families, HIV Testing and Prevention Education to stop the spread of HIV.
2183 Central Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45214-2201
(513) 421-2437
avoc@avoc.org
www.avoc.org

**Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Cincinnati**
4119 Hamilton Ave.
P.O. Box 141061
Cincinnati, OH 45250
24 hour Hotline: (513) 591-0222
www.glbtcentercincinnati.com

**Cincinnati Youth Group**
The Cincinnati Youth Group (CYG) is a program of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Greater Cincinnati. The program provides social opportunities and group support to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) and straight youth 13 to 21.
Sources of Additional Information & Support

(513) 684-8405
or (513) 591-0200
www.glbtcentercincinnati.com/
programs/youthsupport.html

Bridges for a Just Community
Helps fight bias, bigotry and racism in all its forms in Cincinnati.
106 E. 8th Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202
(513) 381-4660
www.bridgescincinnati.org

GLSEN Cincinnati
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
P.O. Box 19856
Cincinnati, OH 45219
(859) 628-2732
info@glesencincinnati.org
www.glesncincinnati.org

People of All Colors Together (PACT) – Cincinnati
Non-profit gay/lesbian, multi-racial and multicultural organization hosting educational, political, cultural & social activities to help eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices in our community.
People of All Colors Together PO Box 2526
Cincinnati, OH 45201-2526
(513) 395-PACT

PFLAG Greater Cincinnati
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
A support group for parents, families, and friends of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals.
P.O. Box 19634
Cincinnati, OH 45219-0634
(513) 721-7900
pflagcinci@yahoo.com
www.pflagcinci.org

University of Cincinnati
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning Alliance
UC LGBTQ Alliance
University of Cincinnati
455 Steger Student Life Center
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0136
(513) 207-0493
uclgbtalliance@yahoo.com
www.uc.edu/groups/gbqta

Xavier Alliance
Organization of GLBT supportive students at Xavier University.
(513) 871-4960
www.xaver.edu/alliance

Your Forefront
Your Forefront's mission is to help GLBTQ youth between the ages of 14 and 24 develop positive self-esteem and self-concept, promote leadership through community engagement, debunk stereotypes and decrease discrimination through educational programs and activities.
www.yfnow.org

HARDIN COUNTY
Ohio Northern University
Open Doors
525 S. Main St.
Ada, Ohio 45810
(419) 772-2000
open-doors@onu.edu
www.onuopendoors.org

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glesnnortheastohio.org
www.glesn.org/northeastoh

Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Pittsburgh
Youth Pages, Library, Phoneline
412-422-0114
www.glccpgh.org

HENRY COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glesnnortheastohio.org
www.glesn.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Clermont and Butler)
Sources of Additional Information & Support

HIGHLAND COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Erie, Lorain and Richland.)

HOCKING COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Fairfield County)

HOLMES COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Stark and Wayne.)

HURON COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Delaware, Licking and Richland)

LAKE COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

Lakeland Community College – Gay/Straight Alliance
Lakeland Community College
7700 Clocktower
Kirtland, OH 44094
(440) 525-7817
fkitchen@lakelandcc.edu
www.lakelandcc.edu/STUSER
Vi/studactv/clubs/gsa/gsa.htm

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Ashtabula and Cuyahoga)

LAWRENCE COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

LICKING COUNTY

Denison University Outlook
Student educational and support organization
Granville, OH
(614) 587-6394
outlook@denison.edu
www.denison.edu/student-orgs/outlook
OSU Newark Directions
Student Gay-Straight Alliance
1179 University Dr.
Newark, OH 43055
(740) 366-9358
www.newarkcampus.org/studentlife/studentorganizations/Directions.asp

Shawnee State University
Gay Straight Student Alliance
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662-4344
(740) 351-4SSU
cookep@shawnee.edu
mckaina@shawnee.edu

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox and Muskingum)

LOGAN COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Hardin County)

*LORAIN COUNTY
GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

Lorain County Community College Gay and Lesbian Alliance
College Center
Lorain, OH 44052
(216) 233-7244, x7103

Oberlin College Multicultural Resource Center
135 West Lorain St, Wilder 105
Oberlin, OH 44074
(440) 775-5354
www.oberlin.edu/mrc

PFLAG Elyria/Lorain County
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
730 Park Avenue
Amherst, OH 44001-2242
(440) 988-8215

Queers and Allies of Faith
Wilder Box 10
Oberlin College
Oberlin, OH 44074
www.oberlin.edu/stuorg/quaf

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Cuyahoga and Erie)

LUCAS COUNTY

EqualityToledo
P.O. Box 2659
Toledo, Ohio 43606
(419) 344-0045
info@equalitytoledo.org
www.equalitytoledo.org/contact.htm

PFLAG Toledo
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
5322 Bennett Rd.
Toledo, OH 43612
(419) 476-8299

Rainbow Area Youth (RAY)
RAY is a peer support group for self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning teens (ages 13 to 19) living in the Toledo area.
P.O. Box 12415
Toledo, OH 43606
(419) 255-7510
www.toledoray.org

Toledo Area Pride Center
450 West Delaware Ave. #4
P.O. Box 4619
Toledo, OH 43610
(419) 241-4827
TAPtoledo@aol.com
www.tapcenter.org

Spectrum
University of Toledo Student Union 3018
University of Toledo’s GLBTQ allies group
www.spectrum.utoledo.edu

(See Also The Adjacent Wood County)

MADISON COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssenortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Clark and Franklin)
**MAHONING COUNTY**

GLSEN Northeast Ohio  
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network  
M.P.O. Box 0472  
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472  
(216) 556-0960  
info@glsennortheastohio.org  
www.glsen.org/northeastohio

People of All Colors Together (PACT) – Youngstown  
Non-profit gay/lesbian, multi-racial and multicultural organization hosting educational, political, cultural & social activities to help eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices in our community.  
P. O. Box 1311  
Youngstown, OH 44501-1311  
pactyoungstown@hotmail.com  
www.angelfire.com/oh4/PACTYoungstown

PFLAG Alliance  
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)  
800 South 15th Street #1624  
Alliance, Ohio 44672  
1-800-956-6630  
cwilson10764@mycidco.com

PFLAG Youngstown  
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)  
2201 Goleta Avenue  
Youngstown, OH 44504  
(330) 747-2696 (24 hr)  
YoungstownPFLAG@aol.com  
www.angelfire.com/oh4/pflagyoungstown

Pride Center of Greater Youngstown  
First Unitarian Church  
1105 Elm St. at Illinois  
Youngstown, OH 44505-2847  
(330) 747-7433  
youngstownpride@hotmail.com  
www.youngstownpride.org

Youngstown State University YSUnity  
Gay Straight Alliance at YSU  
Student Activities Office, Kilcawley Center  
Youngstown, OH 44555  
(330) 692-1099  
campf1@yahoo.com  
www.ysu.edu/stu_org/ysunity

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Portage, Stark and Trumbull.)

**MARION COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**MEIGS COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**MERCER COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**MIAMI COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**MEDINA COUNTY**

GLSEN Northeast Ohio  
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network  
M.P.O. Box 0472  
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472  
(216) 556-0960  
info@glsennortheastohio.org  
www.glsen.org/northeastohio

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Clark and Montgomery)
MONROE COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Washington County)

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
Dayton Gay-Lesbian Hotline
7 to 11 pm (937) 274-1776

Dayton Lesbian & Gay Community Center
P.O. Box 1203
Dayton, OH 45401
Hotline: (937) 274-1776
info@daytonlgbtcenter.com
www.daytonlgbtcenter.com

Daybreak Runaway Shelter
A safe haven for runaways
50 Theobald Ct.
Dayton, OH 45410
(937) 461-1000

National Conference for Community and Justice
Dayton Region
32 North Main Street #813
KeyBank Building
Dayton, OH 45402
(937) 222-NCCJ (6225)
ssibbing@nccj.org
www.daytonregionnccj.org

People of All Colors Together (PACT) – Dayton
Non-profit gay/lesbian, multi-racial and multicultural organization hosting educational, political, cultural & social activities to help eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices in our community.
P.O. Box 3713
Dayton, OH 45401
(937) 275-7629

PFLAG Dayton
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
P.O. Box 3721
Dayton, OH 45401
(937) 640-3333
daytonpflag@yahoo.com
www.pflagdayton.org

University of Dayton Student Allies
GLBT Student Support & Advocacy Group
(937) 629-2229, x92229
www.studentallies.com

Wright State University Lambda Union
GLBTQQ & Allied Student Organization
W047 Student Union
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy
Dayton, OH 45435-0001
(937) 775-5565
lambdauion@yahoo.com
www.inmff.net/school/wsu/lambdauion/

Youth Quest
Provides a support system, education in risk behavior reduction, and a safe and comfortable environment for sexual minority youth.
Box 3721
Dayton, OH 45401
(937) 640-3333
youthquest@dayton.com
www.pflagdayton.org/youthquest.html

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Butler, Clark and Greene)

MORGAN COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Athens, Muskingum, and Washington)

MORROW COUNTY
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Delaware, Knox, and Richland)
Sources of Additional Information & Support

**MUSKINGUM COUNTY**

Muskingum College GLASS
Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Student Group
New Concord, OH
(740) 826-8091

(See Also The Adjacent Licking County)

**NOBLE COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Muskingum and Washington)

**OTTAWA COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Lucas and Wood)

**PAULDING COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Lucas and Wood)

**PIKE COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Fairfield and Franklin)

**PERRY COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**GLSEN Northeast Ohio**
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glssennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Athens, Fairfield, Licking and Muskingum)

**PORTAGE COUNTY**

Refer to State and National Resources

**Hiram College Presence and Respect for Youth Sexual Minorities (PRYSM)**
P.O. Box 67
Hiram, OH 44234
(330) 569-5498
www.hiram.edu/current/offices/oci/orgs/student.html

**Portage County AIDS Task Force**
HIV/AIDS Services
6847 North Chestnut
Ravenna, OH 44266
(330) 678-4357 or
(330) 296-2255

**Pride! Kent**
Kent State University
Box 75, Office of Campus Life
Kent, Ohio 44242-0001
(330) 672-2068
pride@kent.edu
pridekent@yahoo.com
www.pridekent.tk
**PREBLE COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Montgomery and Butler)

**PUTNAM COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Allen County)

**RICHLAND COUNTY**

*Center For Pastoral Care*
(Youth Group)
223 West 1st Street
Mansfield, OH 44902
(419) 522-3288

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

OSU Mansfield OutLoud
GLBT Student Support & Advocacy group
(419) 755-4314
www.mansfield.ohio-state.edu/studentactivities/studentorganizations.cfm#outloud

**ROSS COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

**SANDUSKY COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Erie and Wood)

**SCIOTO COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

**SENECA COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

**SHELBY COUNTY**
Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh
Sources of Additional Information & Support

**STARK COUNTY**

City of Canton – Health Dept. AIDS Task Force (HIV/AIDS Services)
420 North Market Avenue
Canton, OH 44702-1544
(330) 489-3231
Helpline: (330) 489-3243

Diversity Alliance
(GLBT-Straight)
Canton, Ohio
(330) 305-9696 ext 209

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

PFLAG Alliance
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
800 S. 15th Street #1624
Sebring, OH 44672
1-800-956-6630
cwilson10764@mycidco.com

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Mahoning, Portage, Summit, and Wayne.)

**SUMMIT COUNTY**

Akron Pride Center
Akron Area Pride Collective
1501 Aster Ave.
P.O. Box 22254
Akron, OH 44302
(330) 253-2220
info@akronpridecenter.org
www.akronpridecenter.org

Akron University Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual Union
Gardner Center #14
Akron, OH 44325
(330) 972-6851
www.uakron.edu/groups/lgbtu

Community AIDS Network
1950 McTaggart Drive, Suite 105
Akron, OH 44320
(330) 375-2000
24-Hour Hotline 330-375-AIDS
info@communityaidsnetwork.org
www.communityaidsnetwork.org

Glamour Pride: Gay and Lesbian
Adolescents Modeling Our Pride
Seeks to help all youth develop a positive self-image, and enhance their well-being through social activities, educational opportunities and community involvement
Akron, OH
(330) 253-2220
glamour@glay.org
www.angelfire.com/ultra/glamourpride

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

PFLAG Akron
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
PO Box 5471
Akron, OH 44334
(330) 467-9078 or
(330) 342-5825
brukriete@aol.com
www.pflagakron.org

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Cuyahoga, Portage, Stark and Wayne.)

**TRUMBULL COUNTY**

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

PFLAG – Warren
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
1792 Cranberry Lane NE #176
Warren, OH 44483
(330) 307-3314
warrenpflag@aol.com

Trumbull County Area AIDS Task Force
(HIV/AIDS Services)
PO Box 1638
Warren, OH 44482-1638
(330) 399-2437 or
(330) 538-2864
info@trumbullcountyaids.org
www.trumbullcountyaids.org

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Ashtabula, Mahoning and Portage.)
TUSCARAWAS COUNTY

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Harrison and Stark.)

UNION COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Athens County)

VAN WERT COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Delaware, Franklin and Hardin)

VINNITON COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Counties of Butler, Clermont, Greene, Hamilton, and Montgomery)

WAYNE COUNTY

Allies and Queers
The College of Wooster
www.wooster.edu/aandq

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

PFLAG Wooster
(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
1048 North Bever St
Wooster, Ohio 44691
(330) 264-7396
m2hawk@aol.com

(See The Adjacent Counties of Stark and Summit.)

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Marietta College Rainbow Alliance
Marietta College Box 1329
Marietta, Ohio 45750
(740) 376-3000, ext 6005
rainbow@marietta.edu
www.marietta.edu/~rainbow

(See Also The Adjacent Athens County)

WOOD COUNTY

Bowling Green Gay-Lesbian Info. Line
(419) 352-5242

Sources of Additional Information & Support
Sources of Additional Information & Support

Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Vision
422 Bowen-Thompson Student Union
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
(419) 378-0555
vision@bgnet.bgsu.edu
www.bgsu.edu/studentlife/organizations/vision/home.html

LGBTQ Resource Center at Bowling Green State University
433 Saddlemire Student Services at Conklin
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
(419) 372-3244
rainbow@bgsu.edu
www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/cmai/lgbtaq_resource_center/index.html

The Phoenix Project of Northwest Ohio, Inc.
Provides social events, community involvement projects, personal & leadership development and effective activism training opportunities for gay, bisexual, trans*, questioning and supportive straight teens age 13-17.
126A West South Boundary St.
Perrysburg, Ohio 43551
phoenix@phoenixnwo.org

University of Toledo Spectrum (GLBTS Alliance)
Student Union Room 3018
2801 W. Bancroft
Toledo, OH 43606
(419) 530-7975
utspectrum@yahoo.com
www.spectrum.utoledo.edu

(See The Adjacent Counties of Butler, Clermont, Hamilton and Montgomery)

WYANDOT COUNTY

Refer to State and National Resources

GLSEN Northeast Ohio
Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network
M.P.O. Box 0472
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0472
(216) 556-0960
info@glsennortheastohio.org
www.glsen.org/northeastoh

(See Also The Adjacent Hardin County)
Glossary & Acronym List
GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

A

ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union.

Androgen – A steroid hormone, such as testosterone or androsterone, that controls the development and maintenance of masculine characteristics.

Androgyne – A person who is androgynous, claiming the gender identity of both a man and a woman.

APA – American Psychological Association.

Asexual – A designation or self-designation for people who lack feelings of sexual attraction and/or sexual desire.

B

Biological Sex – The sex one is designated at birth.

Bisexual – People who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to both males and females; “Bi” is the shortened form of bisexual.

Boi – A deliberate misspelling of boy, referring to a feminine male homosexual or a masculine lesbian; also used by some transgender people; Plural, bois.

Butch – Slang for a lesbian or gay man exhibiting stereotypically or exaggeratedly masculine traits or appearance.

C

Civil Union – Legal recognition of committed same-sex relationships with most rights accorded to marriage by the states of Vermont, New Jersey and Connecticut. Note: Legal in New Hampshire effective January 1, 2008.

See also: Marriage, Domestic Partnership

Closeted – Describes a person who is not open about his or her sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Coming Out – Also, “coming out of the closet” or “being out,” this term refers to the process in which a person acknowledges, accepts, and in many cases appreciates her or his lesbian, gay or bisexual identity or transgender. This often involves the sharing of this information with others. The process of coming out to oneself and to others occurs for different young people (and adults) in a variety of places and ways.

Crossdressing
See Transvestitism

D

Domestic Partnership – Civil or legal recognition of a relationship between two people (domestic partners) that sometimes extends legal rights and limited protections to them – currently legal in California, District of Columbia, Maine, Washington, Oregon.

See also: Civil Union, Marriage

Down Low (or DL) – A term, primarily used in African-American communities, that refers to men who have sexual relations with men, while publicly identifying as heterosexuals.

Drag King – female-bodied or female-identified persons who either temporarily attempt to pass as men, usually off-stage, or perform male characters in often ostentatious men’s clothes on stage.

Drag Queen – Drag queens are performers – usually gay men, sometimes transgendered women – who dress in “drag,” clothing associated with the female gender, usually highly exaggerated versions thereof.
Dyke – Traditionally a pejorative term used to indicate a butch or masculine lesbian, but now it has been appropriated by some lesbians to describe themselves.

E

Estrogen – A group of steroid compounds functioning as the primary female sex hormone that controls the development and maintenance of feminine characteristics.

F

Fag (or Faggot) – A pejorative term for a homosexual man in the United States, which has spread to some other English-speaking countries.

Femme – Slang for exhibiting stereotypical or exaggerated feminine traits; used especially by lesbians and gay men.

Female To Male (FTM) – Transgender person who was born female but transitioned to male.

G

Gay – The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attractions are to people of the same sex.

Gay Baiting – The action of accusing someone of being openly gay, including lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and intersexed, mainly with the intention of discrediting his/her position on GLBTQ issues.

Gay Bashing – Verbal confrontation with, denigration of, or physical violence against allegedly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) – A student organization, found primarily in American high schools and universities, that is intended to provide a safe and supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth and their straight allies.

Gender – The masculinity or femininity of words, persons, organisms, or characteristics.

Gender Dysphoria – Literally, being unhappy with the gender you are.

Gender Expression – External manifestation of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through “masculine” or “feminine” behavior, clothing, haircut, voice or body characteristics.

Gender Identity – One’s internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or a boy or girl); for transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity often do not match.

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) – A controversial DSM-IV diagnosis given to transgender and other gender-variant people. Because it labels people as “disordered,” GID is often considered offensive. The diagnosis is frequently given to children who don’t conform to expected gender norms in terms of dress, play or behavior. Such children are often subjected to intense psychotherapy, behavior modification and/or institutionalization. Replaces the outdated term “gender dysphoria.”

Gender Role – The pattern of masculine or feminine behavior of an individual that is defined by a particular culture and that is largely determined by a child’s upbringing.

Gender Transitioning – The process of ceasing to live in one gender role and starting to live in another; undertaken by transgender and transsexual people.

GLBT

See GLBTQ

GLBTQ – Acronym for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning; the “Q” is frequently used to be inclusive of individuals who are questioning their orientation; LGBT and GLBT are often used interchangeably. Note that the Q can also be used to represent “queer.”
GLSEN – Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network.

GSA – Gay Straight Alliance

H

Heterosexism – The attitude that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation; often takes the form of ignoring lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. For example: news stories about numerous Valentine’s Day couples that omit same-sex couples.

Heterosexual – A person whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction is to people of the opposite sex.

Homophobia – Fear and/or hatred of lesbians and gay men.

Homosexual – An outdated clinical term for an individual who is attracted to members of the same sex; Many gay men and lesbians consider this term inappropriate and prefer “gay” and/or “lesbians.”

I

Internalized Homophobia/Biphobia – The fear and/or self-hatred of one’s own homosexuality or bisexuality, which occurs for many gay and lesbian individuals who have received negative messages about homosexuality throughout childhood.

Intersex – A person whose biological sex is ambiguous; people whose reproductive and/or sexual anatomy does not conform to standard medical conceptions of male or female. There are many variations of intersex conditions, some of which are not recognizable by sight. Parents and medical professionals usually assign intersex infants a sex and perform surgical operations to conform the infant’s body to that assignment. This practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults are speaking out against the practice, accusing doctors of genital mutilation.

Invisibility – The ongoing assumption of heterosexuality and gender conformity that renders LGBT people invisible and seemingly nonexistent. LGBT people are frequently underrepresented in society, especially in the arena of schools and classrooms.

L

Lesbian – A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction is to other women.

LGBT
See GLBTQ

LGBTQ
See GLBTQ

Lifestyle – A term often used to denigrate the lives of lesbians and gay men. As there is no one heterosexual “lifestyle,” there is no one lesbian or gay “lifestyle.” Use is discouraged.

M

Marriage – Massachusetts is the only state that currently has legalized marriage for gays and lesbians with all rights and privileges. See also: Civil Unions, Domestic Partnership

Male To Female (MTF) – Transgender person who was born male but transitioned to female.

Multisexual – A new term that young people are using to define themselves, so that their sexual identity options are not limited.

O

Omnisexual – All or “omni” gender attraction, used mainly by those who wish to express acceptance of all gender possibilities, including transgender and intersex people, not just two.
Openly Gay – Describes people who self-identify as lesbian or gay in their public and/or professional lives; Also “openly lesbian,” “openly bisexual,” “openly transgender.”

Out – Being “out of the closet.”
   See “Coming Out”

Outing – The act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumor and/or speculation) or revealing another person’s sexual orientation without his or her consent. Considered inappropriate by the majority of the GLBTQ community.

P

Pansexual – An individual attracted to people of multiple genders.

Passing – When a LGBT person is perceived to be heterosexual and/or gender normative.

PFLAG – Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbian & Gays.

Pride – Used to refer to affirming feelings LGBT people have in their identities and/or communities. LGBT pride celebrations are held in cities throughout the country during the month of June, commemorating the 1965 Stonewall riots in New York City, which marked the start of the modern LGBT movement.

Q

Queer – Traditionally a pejorative term, “queer” has been appropriated by some GLBT people to describe themselves. Some value the term for its defiance and because it can be inclusive of the entire GLBT community. Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted (even within the GLBT community) and should be avoided unless quoting someone who self-identifies that way.

Questioning – Unsure of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, but open to exploring.

R

Rainbow Flag – A symbol of GLBT unity and diversity, recognized worldwide.

S

Same Gender Loving (SGL) – A term describing individuals who are attracted to people of the same gender; primarily used in communities of color.

Same Sex – Refers to romantic and/or sexual relationships between two males or between two females.

Sex – The classification of people as male or female; At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitals.

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) – Refers to genital modification procedures that some transgender people go through. Not all transgender people choose to or can afford to have SRS.

Sexual Behavior – Refers to sexual activity; Persons may or may not express their sexual orientation through their behavior.

Sexual Identity – The gender or sex with which a person identifies, or is identified as.

Sexual Minority – A broad term used to refer to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people; those who differ from the heterosexual majority because of a different sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Sexual Orientation – The correct term for referring to an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to members of the same and/or different gender, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual orientations.

Sexual Preference – An generally offensive term, used to suggest that being gay or lesbian is a choice, and therefore “curable.”
**Sodomy Laws** – Historically used to selectively persecute gays and lesbians, the state laws often referred to as “sodomy laws” were ruled unconstitutional in June 2003 by the U.S. Supreme Court in Lawrence v. Texas. “Sodomy” should never be used to describe gay and lesbian relationships, sex or sexuality.

**SSAFE** – Safe Schools Are For Everyone.

**Straight** – Heterosexual.

**T**

**Tranny** – Slang for a transgender or transsexual person; many feel that it is offensive and that only trans people themselves can reclaim it and use it, which some trans-people have, in fact, so done.

**Transgender** – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to: transsexuals, intersex people, cross-dressers, and other gender variant people. Transgender people can be female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF). Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

**Transition** – Altering one’s birth sex is not a one-step procedure, but rather a complex process that takes place over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following cultural, legal, and medical adjustments: telling one’s family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and some form of chest and/or genital alteration.

**Transphobia** – Fear and/or hatred of people who are transgender.

**Transquestioning** – An individual who is unsure about and/or exploring his/her gender identity.

**Transsexual** – An older term which originated in the medical and psychological communities. Just as gay people prefer “gay” to the outdated clinical term “homosexual,” many transgender people prefer “transgender” to “transsexual.”

**Transvestitism** – The act of wearing clothing typically associated with another gender. The term transvestite, is generally considered to be offensive today. The term cross-dresser has replaced it as a popular identity.

**Trisexual** – Either an extension of, or a pun on bisexual. In its more serious usage, it refers to an individual with interest in transgender persons, as well as men and women.

**Two-Spirit** (also two spirit or twospirit) is an umbrella term used to describe people who inhabited the third and fourth genders recognized by many traditional Native American and Canadian First Nation cultures. It usually implies a masculine and feminine spirit living in the same body. It is also used by many contemporary Native Americans, who engage in same-gender loving relationships, and gender nonconformity.
GLSEN Northeast Ohio RESPONSE Form

MAY WE BE OF SERVICE?

GLSEN Northeast Ohio stands ready to assist you in your efforts to ensure a safe and supportive school for your GLBTQ youth. Please indicate how we may be of assistance. Any schools outside Northeast Ohio will be referred to an organization in their area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northeast Ohio Schools</th>
<th>Outside Northeast Ohio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Student Diversity Club (GSA) Support</td>
<td>□ Student Diversity Club (GSA) Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Contact for possible staff training</td>
<td>□ Contact for possible staff training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ GLSEN NEO Monthly Newsletter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Email Listserv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments &/or Requests

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Contact Information:

Name __________________________________________

Position ________________________________________

School _________________________________________

School Address __________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Phone _________________________________________

Email Address __________________________________
we envision an Ohio where everyone feels at home; living in families and communities where equality, diversity, and inclusiveness are universally valued; and where government protects all people and responds to their needs, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

equalityohio.org
contactus@equalityohio.org
614 224 0400

mission: to achieve our vision, Equality Ohio will serve as an advocate and champion for fair treatment and equal opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens; facilitate a greater understanding of our common humanity through education and outreach efforts; engage and empower individuals, families, organizations, businesses and institutions in Ohio’s urban, suburban, and rural areas; and collaborate with local, regional, statewide, and national organizations and government agencies.

Schools: Safe schools are high performing schools. All students deserve a learning environment that is free from harassment and bullying. Students learn best when they are in a place that supports and respects them, no matter who they are.

Children & Families: Parents who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender can better care for their children if their relationships are equally recognized by state law.

Adoption & Foster Care: Local adoption and foster care decisions should be made with the needs of the child foremost. No child placement should be denied based solely upon the sexual orientation or gender identity of the prospective parent(s).

Jobs: What should matter is how you perform on the job, period. No Ohioan should fear losing their job because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. In Ohio, it should be illegal to be fired if you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or straight.