

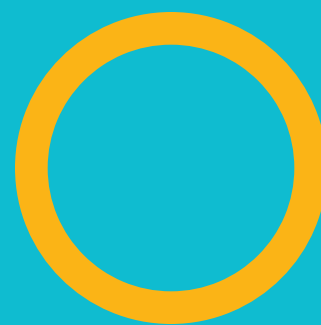


# CHANGING

THE

GAME

GLSEN®



Game Plan for  
**Administrators and  
Athletic Directors**

# Table of Contents

## Game Plan for Administrators and Athletic Directors

- Introduction** .....2
- Implement LGBTQ+ Affirming Policies** .....3
  - Know Your State and Local Policies.....3
- Provide Inclusive Physical Education** .....3
  - Best Practices for Inclusive Physical Education .....4
- Create LGBTQ+ Inclusive Athletics**.....5
  - Best Practices for Inclusive Sports.....5
- Provide Inclusive Facilities**.....6
- Create a Plan for School and Sport-Related Overnight Trips**.....7
  - Best Practices for School and Sport-Related Overnight Trips.....7
  - Safety Plan .....8
- Engage Parents, Caregivers, and Families** .....8
- Be a Game Changer** .....9
- Key Terminology** .....9



# Introduction

All students have a right to feel a sense of inclusion and safety at school. Whether in physical education class or in competitive sports, all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity should be able to play and feel like they belong.

Participating in sports has overwhelmingly positive benefits for LGBTQ+ youth. When LGBTQ+ students are able to play sports, and be accepted as teammates and competitors, they access the same physical, social, and emotional benefits extended to all who participate in sports.<sup>1</sup>

Participation in sports positively impacts students' overall school experience and academic success. For LGBTQ+ students, participation in school sports supports their overall well-being and increases their feeling of connection to their school.

## LGBTQ+ Youth Benefit from Sport

### ↑GPA<sup>2</sup>

**On a 4.0 scale, LGBTQ+ student athletes have a GPA that is 0.2 points higher than students who did not participate in athletics. LGBTQ+ team leaders have a GPA that is 0.4 points higher than their peers who did not participate in athletics.**

### ↑Sense of Belonging<sup>3</sup>

**Sixty-six percent of LGBTQ student team leader athletes and 55.8% of LGBTQ student team member athletes competing in high school sports report a positive sense of belonging at school, compared to 43.9% of LGBTQ student non-athletes who report a positive sense of school belonging.**

Despite the overwhelming benefits physical education and sports provide for students, many LGBTQ+ students continue to experience discrimination because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. The GLSEN 2019 School Climate Survey provides clear evidence of the barriers LGBTQ students face: 10.2% of LGBTQ students say they have been prevented or discouraged from school sports because they identify as LGBTQ, 27.2% of students said they have been prevented from using the locker room that aligns with their gender identity, and 28.4% have been prevented from using the bathroom that aligns with their gender identity.<sup>4</sup>

The statistics for transgender and nonbinary students are even more concerning. More than half of transgender students said they were prevented from using bathrooms (58.1%) or locker rooms (55.5%) that align with their gender identity, and less than half of transgender and nonbinary students (41.7%) reported that they had a school policy that allowed transgender and nonbinary students to participate in sports that align with their gender identity.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/reports/2021/02/08/495502/fair-play/>

<sup>2</sup> GLSEN (2013). *The Experiences of LGBT Students in School Athletics* (Research Brief). New York: GLSEN

<sup>3</sup> GLSEN (2013). *The Experiences of LGBT Students in School Athletics* (Research Brief). New York: GLSEN

<sup>4</sup> Kosciw, J.G., Clark, C.M., Truong, N.L., & Zongrone, A.D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

<sup>5</sup> Kosciw, J.G., Clark, C.M., Truong, N.L., & Zongrone, A.D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

As administrators and athletic directors, you can make a significant impact on the experience of LGBTQ+ students and athletes in your schools. By advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and practices, you can ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in school athletics and physical education classes. This resource provides information and guidance on how you can enact LGBTQ+ affirming policies, provide support for LGBTQ+ students and athletes, and ensure that your school's physical education and athletic programs are inclusive and comply with federal and state requirements.

# Implement LGBTQ+ Affirming Policies

LGBTQ+ students have **rights**. Discrimination against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity has been, and is still, prohibited under federal civil rights laws that ban sex discrimination.

## Know Your State and Local Policies

LGBTQ affirming athletic policies can make a difference in students' lives. Research has shown that protective policies impact LGBTQ+ students in a positive way. LGBTQ+ students in schools with comprehensive bullying and harassment-prevention policies were more likely to report that staff intervened when hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks and experienced less anti-LGBTQ victimization, compared to those with a generic policy or no policy.<sup>6</sup>

- Find out what states already have policies protecting LGBTQ+ students by checking **GLSEN Policy Maps**.
- School districts and individual schools can create and implement the majority of policies that directly impact students every day. If your school doesn't already have such policies you can reach out to your local **GLSEN Chapter** for support.
- Keep up-to-date with your state's athletic association for guidance around supporting transgender and nonbinary athletes. Participation in athletics at the interscholastic level is usually governed by state athletic associations. To ensure that all athletes have the same chance to compete, state athletic associations should develop guidance for local education agencies and schools that affirms and supports the right of transgender and nonbinary students to participate in interscholastic and intramural sports.

# Provide Inclusive Physical Education

**40.2% LGBTQ students**

**59.4% trans students**

**41.2% nonbinary students**

**Avoid gym classes because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>6</sup> Kosciw, J.G., Clark, C.M., Truong, N.L., & Zongrone, A.D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

<sup>7</sup> Kosciw, J.G., Clark, C.M., Truong, N.L., & Zongrone, A.D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

A large proportion of LGBTQ, transgender, and nonbinary students are missing out on a critical aspect of their education because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their physical education or gym classes. And among school staff and personnel, LGBTQ+ youth feel the least comfortable talking to their athletics coach or physical education teacher about LGBTQ+ issues.<sup>8</sup>

These findings suggest that there is a real opportunity for P.E. teachers to play a critical role in supporting and advocating for LGBTQ+ students in their classes.

Administrators can provide training and resources for their athletics and physical education staff members to help them create safe, inclusive, and LGBTQ+ affirming classrooms.

## Best Practices for Inclusive Physical Education

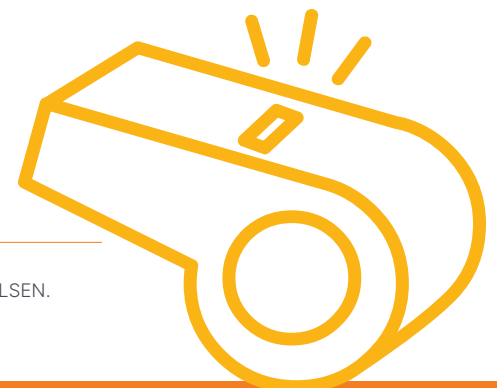
### LGBTQ+ Inclusive Training

- Create a culture of growth and provide professional development for P.E. teachers. Many teachers simply lack the training and knowledge to be advocates and allies for LGBTQ+ students. By providing them with ongoing training and resources, P.E. Teachers will be empowered to create safe and inclusive classrooms for all their students.
- Provide P.E. teachers with anti-bullying and intervention and training. One of the most effective ways teachers can show solidarity is to respond to anti-LGBTQ+ behavior. By taking action and intervening against anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and harassment P.E. Teachers can set an example for their students that this behavior will not be tolerated.

### Inclusive Curriculum

- Review your physical education curriculum and course syllabi to ensure that educators are incorporating LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Suggest inclusive activities and opportunities for educators to teach about LGBTQ+ athletes or influences throughout the history of sport.
- GLSEN's **Inclusive Curriculum Guide** can help teachers reflect on their current curriculum and find ways to incorporate LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Encourage P.E. teachers to avoid segregating students by gender. There are many other ways that students can be separated into teams that do not require students to be divided by gender.

For more information about how to implement inclusive physical education in your school, see the **Game Plan for Physical Education Teachers**.



<sup>8</sup> Kosciw, J.G., Clark, C.M., Truong, N.L., & Zongrone, A.D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

# Create LGBTQ+ Inclusive Athletics

**One in 10 students report that school staff or coaches had either prevented or discouraged them from playing sports because they were LGBTQ.<sup>9</sup>**

Every student should feel empowered to join in different aspects of school community-building. Being a part of a team builds social and emotional skills along with a number of other benefits for students. LGBTQ+ students who participate in school athletics have overall higher GPAs and a greater desire to continue on to postsecondary education. Participation in sports is also linked to improved well-being and school belonging to LGBTQ+ youth.

Administrators and athletic directors provide direction and support for coaches, coaching staff, and volunteers on best practices for LGBTQ+ student inclusion in sports.

## Best Practices for Inclusive Sports

### LGBTQ+ Training for Coaching Staff and Volunteers

- Provide LGBTQ+ inclusive training for all coaching staff and volunteers throughout the year to ensure they have the tools and resources to create safe, inclusive, respectful teams and athletic programs.

### Build an Inclusive Team Culture

- LGBTQ+ students should experience a welcoming team culture. This means there is no place for anti-LGBTQ+ language, bullying, or harassment.
- Encourage coaches and volunteers to create an inclusive code of conduct. All team members including coaching staff and athletes should uphold the code.

### Provide Inclusive Uniform Options

- Provide students with uniform options that make them feel safe and comfortable. Team uniforms should be made to accommodate the comfort of all team members while still following the rules of the local or state athletic association to avoid disqualification.

### Create a Travel and Overnight Policy

- Ensure all coaches and volunteers understand and adhere to the school's gender-inclusive travel and overnight policy.

For more detailed information about inclusive sports, see the [\*\*Game Plan for Coaches: Making Your Team Safe for LGBTQ+ Athletes.\*\*](#)

<sup>9</sup>Kosciw, J.G., Clark, C.M., Truong, N.L., & Zongrone, A.D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.



# Provide Inclusive Facilities

Ensuring your school has gender-inclusive facilities provides physical and emotional safety for students and demonstrates your school's commitment to equity and inclusion for all students.

Too many transgender and nonbinary youth still feel unsafe at school — especially in locker rooms and bathrooms. According to the 2019 National School Climate Survey, nearly 60% of transgender students say that they avoided gym or physical education class. Almost 70% of transgender students said they avoided school locker rooms, and a staggering 82.1% said they avoid bathrooms at school due to safety concerns.<sup>10</sup>

**“My classmates knew I was gay and I was harrassed in the locker room because of it without any adult intervening or protecting me. I ended up changing in the bathroom stalls and I always faced the corners or walls when entering so no one would think I was trying to look at them, and made sure to get in and out as quickly as I could because I was terrified. I was just trying to change for P.E. class.”**

— Eric (he, him, his) Senior, Alabama

All staff and personnel, including maintenance and operations, should be involved in creating your school's inclusive facility plan. Also consider reaching out to a local or state LGBTQ+ organization when making your plans to create these spaces for students. [The Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#) also provides a model policy and notes for the implementation of inclusive facilities.

## There are several ways to make sure your school and facilities are inclusive for LGBTQ+ students:

- Ensure all students have access to facilities, including restrooms, locker rooms, or changing facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Your school can maintain separate restrooms, locker rooms, or changing facilities for male and female students as long as you allow all students equal access to facilities that are consistent with their gender identities.
- Allow transgender and nonbinary students to determine which facilities they feel safest and most comfortable using.
- Provide any student who is uncomfortable using a facility — regardless of the reason — with a safe and non-stigmatizing alternative.
  - For example: Add a privacy partition or curtain to changing areas or if the student prefers, allow the student to use a nearby private restroom, office, or provide an adjusted changing schedule.
- Create a map or list of possible accessible restrooms at school.
  - Indicate which restrooms are single-use and lockable.
  - Indicate which restrooms are multi-occupant with stalls
- Install trash cans in all bathroom stalls.
  - People with menstrual cycles should have safe, sanitary, and destigmatizing access to trash cans privately.
- Install inclusive signage

<sup>10</sup> Kosciw, J.G., Clark, C.M., Truong, N.L., & Zongrone, A.D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

- Consider using signs that indicate what is in the space, e.g., toilet, sink, showerhead, rather than posting a male or female sign.
- Install zero sightline doors and overlapping closures to ensure privacy.
- Ensure all shower stalls have partitions that can either be used for showering or extra private changing areas.
- Include LGBTQ+ affirming messaging throughout the school.

## Create a Plan for School and Sport-Related Overnight Trips

Overnight trips can be awkward and difficult for many youth, not just those who are transgender and nonbinary. Schools should be prepared to offer reasonable accommodations for all youth with privacy concerns. Educators and/or staff should have open conversations with youth about overnight accommodations well in advance of the trip, and provide all students with the opportunity to make reasonable requests. Preparation should include upfront communication about rooming, facilities, and expectations for the event.

LGBTQ+ students should be afforded the same opportunities to participate in overnight trips and other opportunities as their peers. It is important to have a policy in place at your school for overnight trips to ensure that LGBTQ+ students have the chance to participate in school and sport-related overnight trips. Moreover, such a policy can be a powerful tool to ensure the safety and wellness of all students so they are able to participate and share in the same experiences as their peers.

### Best Practices for School and Sport-Related Overnight Trips

- If the rooms or cabins are segregated by gender, transgender and nonbinary students should choose the room or cabin they feel the safest using. Each student will have different preferences when it comes to gendered room assignments. It is important that you do not force transgender and nonbinary students to room with the same gender they were assigned at birth.
- Ask the student to identify other students they would feel safe rooming or bunking with.
- If the student is comfortable, ask for a quick check-in with both the student and their parent or guardian (if they are out to them). This is a good time to walk through the trip schedule and ask where concerns might arise.
- If the student is not “out” to anyone, it is important to ensure the student’s safety and privacy. Sharing a student’s identity without their permission can put them at risk for bullying, harassment, and/or abuse.
- Build safety and communication plans between designated staff and the student throughout the trip and stay informed on what the student’s needs are and how you can support them.





## Safety Plan

**Creating a safety plan can help ensure a successful trip. Here are some tips to prepare for and during a trip:**

- Identify staff for the student to reach out to if they need anything throughout the trip.
- Identify peers the student can go to for support.
- Set up 1:1 check-ins if needed.
- If the student needs time to shower alone, offer times that the student can shower before or after the other students if there are group showers.
- Identify secure and private changing areas that any student can access should they request it.
- Identify what space the student will be rooming in. Keep in mind some students feel safer rooming with a student of a different gender than their own. This is not uncommon for any student no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Make sure the student has emergency contact numbers for all staff on the trip.

# Engage Parents, Caregivers, and Families

Parents, caregivers, and families can be some of the fiercest advocates for their loved ones who identify as LGBTQ+. GLSEN recommends enlisting the support of affirming parents, caregivers, and families by having a PTA-style focus group of supportive adults who would like to work with the athletics department. Coaches can also ask supportive parents and caregivers to volunteer for the team by helping out at practices or attending overnight trips. Parents, caregivers, and families can also help build an inclusive sporting environment by bringing in advocacy groups to do LGBTQ+ training, inviting in LGBTQ+ guest speakers to share their stories, organizing LGBTQ+ Pride-related activities, and advocating for inclusive policies in areas where LGBTQ+ students experience discrimination.

- **Parents, caregivers, and families can also create a support system** for athletes who are exploring their identities and the families of those students. Supportive adults closely connected to the athletes also tend to know some of the issues happening off the field and might have strategies on how the student athletes could best use support. GLSEN's partner, PFLAG, offers resources and guidance for family support: <https://pflag.org/family>.
- **Peer support:** Supportive adults can also be great resources to provide peer education for parents or guardians who are less supportive.

For more information, see **Game Plan: Building Parent, Caregiver, and Family Support**.



# Be a Game Changer

## Join the team and become a Changing the Game ambassador!

**Game changers are committed to speaking out about anti-LGBTQ+ behavior, celebrating LGBTQ+ student athletes, and promoting inclusive policies and practices.** Your advocacy is powerful and necessary to ensure inclusive sports for LGBTQ+ students and athletes. Receive the Changing the Game quarterly newsletter, training and webinars, swag giveaways, and more! You can make an impact at your school by bringing GLSEN's Changing the Game program and resources to your school by sharing it with students, physical education teachers, administrators, coaches, and families.

## Key Terminology

Transgender and nonbinary students may use different terms to describe their lives and experiences of gender. Terminology and language differ and evolve based on region, language, race or ethnicity, age, culture, and many other factors. Some examples of terms used by some youth include: trans, trans girl, trans boy, nonbinary, genderqueer, gender fluid, demi girl, demi boy, Two Spirit (amongst Native American, American Indian/Alaska Native, First Nation, or Indigenous communities), and many more. Some trans youth prefer simply to be referred to as boys or girls except when their trans status is specifically relevant. These terms often mean different things or refer to different experiences of gender. Staff and educators should reflect and use the terms that students use to describe themselves, and avoid terms that make these students uncomfortable.

These definitions are provided not for the purpose of imposing labels, but rather to assist in understanding this guide and LGBTQ+ identities. Students may or may not use these terms to describe themselves or their experiences.

**GENDER IDENTITY:** A person's deeply held knowledge of their own gender, which can include being a man, woman, another gender, or no gender. Gender identity is an innate part of a person's identity. One's gender identity may or may not align with society's expectations with the sex they were assigned at birth (male, female, or intersex).

**GENDER EXPRESSION:** Expression of gender, whether through hair styles, makeup, or personal fashion, changes over the course of a person's lifetime.

**TRANSGENDER/TRANS:** An adjective describing a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. A trans woman is a woman whose sex was assigned male when she was born. A trans man is a man whose sex was assigned female when he was born. Some transgender people are not male or female, and may use terms like nonbinary to describe their gender (see below).

**GENDER NONCONFORMING:** A term sometimes used to describe people whose gender expression differs from social expectations, such as "feminine boys," "masculine girls," and people who are perceived as androgynous in some way. Being gender nonconforming is distinct from being transgender, though some trans people may consider themselves to be gender nonconforming. For example, a cisgender woman who has short hair and likes sports might consider herself gender nonconforming, but may not identify as transgender.

**NONBINARY:** A term used to refer to people whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female, including those who identify with a different gender, a combination of genders, or no gender. Nonbinary may be considered a subset of transgender or a distinct identity. Other similar or more specific terms may include genderqueer, gender fluid, agender, or Two-Spirit (for Native American students).

**CISGENDER:** An adjective describing a person whose gender identity corresponds with the gender society typically associates with the sex they were assigned at birth. The majority of people are cisgender, while a minority are transgender. For example, a cisgender woman was assigned female at birth and identifies as female her gender as a woman.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** A person's romantic and/or sexual attraction to other people. This includes being straight, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, or many other terms used to describe sexual orientation. This is different and distinct from gender identity. Transgender and nonbinary people may be straight, gay, lesbian, asexual, or any other sexual orientation.

**TRANSITION:** The process in which a person begins to live according to their gender identity. Transition is a process that is different for everyone, and it may or may not involve specific medical treatments or changes to official documents. There is no one step or set of steps that an individual must undergo in order to have their gender identity affirmed and respected.

**QTBIPOC:** This is an acronym for Queer/Trans, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

**GLSEN**<sup>®</sup>  
glsen.org