

Is Your School LGBTQ-Affirming?

Your school should have policies and practices that....

- Specifically **prohibit bullying and harassment** on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Enforce **Title IX**, protect LGBTQ young people from discrimination, and ensure **equal access** to school facilities, sports teams, or student organizations, and all other extracurricular activities.
- Follow the **[Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention](#)**, including **protocols for intervention and postvention**, and specialized services for marginalized groups of students like LGBTQ young people who are placed at elevated risk for suicide.
- Promote LGBTQ-inclusive **lesson plans and curriculums**, especially for classes involving health and wellness, social studies, history, literature, and culture.
- Standardize respecting **correct names and pronouns** across students and school staff, and allow for this information to be updated within school systems **without** legal documentation.
- Encourage LGBTQ student organizations and clubs, such as **Gender & Sexuality Alliances (GSAs)**, to be active on campus.
- Encourage **visual cues** of allyship across the school campus, such as 'safe space' stickers or rainbow flags.
- Provide **resources** to families about how to support and affirm their LGBTQ children.
- Provide **physical and mental health care services** that are affirming and responsive to the unique needs of LGBTQ students.
- Provide teachers with **regular training** on LGBTQ competencies and how to create a safe and affirming learning environment for LGBTQ students.

Supporting Research

Suicide Risk Disparities Faced by LGBTQ Young People

- Suicide is the **second leading cause of death** among young people aged 10-24 (Hedegaard, Curtin, & Warner, 2018) – and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are at **significantly increased risk**.
- LGBTQ young people are **more than four times** as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).
- The Trevor Project estimates that more than **1.8 million** LGBTQ young people (13-24) seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S. – and **at least one** attempts suicide **every 45 seconds**.
- The Trevor Project’s **2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People** found that **41%** of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including **half** of transgender and nonbinary youth.

LGBTQ-Affirming Schools Help Save Lives

- The Trevor Project’s research consistently finds that LGBTQ young people who report that their school is **LGBTQ-affirming** also report **lower rates** of attempting suicide.
- **LGBTQ-inclusive Curriculums:** Learning about LGBTQ people or issues in schools was associated with significantly lower odds (23%) of a past-year suicide attempt among LGBTQ students.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Schools also offer young people the ability to participate in extracurricular activities and clubs, which have been found to **promote positive youth development** (Eccles et al., 2003). The presence of Gender and Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) has been found to **significantly reduce the risk** for depression and increase well-being among LGBTQ youth and young adults (Toomey et al., 2011).
- **Suicide Prevention:** Students who learned about suicide prevention in school had **28% higher odds** of feeling somewhat or very prepared to help a friend who was struggling with thoughts of suicide.

Supporting Research

Teachers and Supportive Adults are Vital for Suicide Prevention

- LGBTQ young people who report the **presence of trusted adults** in their school have **higher levels of self-esteem** (Dessel et al., 2017) and **access to supportive peers** is protective against anxiety and depression, including among those who lack support from their family (Parra et al., 2018).
- Feeling that their teachers cared a lot or very much about them was associated with **34% lower odds** of attempting suicide in the past year for LGBTQ young people.
- Transgender and nonbinary young people who reported **high gender identity acceptance from school professionals** had significantly lower odds of attempting suicide in the past year.

Transgender-Inclusive Policies Promote Better Mental Health

- Transgender and nonbinary young people reported **attempting suicide less** when their **pronouns are respected**, when they are allowed to officially change the gender marker on their legal documents, and when they have access to spaces (online, at school, and home) that **affirm their gender identity**.
- Transgender and nonbinary young people who said that **all the people they live with** respect their pronouns reported **attempting suicide less** than those who lived people who did not respect their pronouns.

The Harms of Bullying and Discrimination

- The Trevor Project's **research** has also found that **52%** of LGBTQ young people who were enrolled in middle or high school reported being bullied either in person or electronically in the past year, and those who did had **three times greater odds** of attempting suicide in the past year.
- **60% of LGBTQ young people** reported that they felt discriminated against in the past year, and those who did attempted suicide at **more than double the rate** of those who did not.

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