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.
References


References


- The Trevor Project. (2023). 2023 national survey on LGBTQ youth mental health. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1neQHnZCaRJ1y1Y8Xc7LdGXBjojfAImk6Pw3AcGxk/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1neQHnZCaRJ1y1Y8Xc7LdGXBjojfAImk6Pw3AcGxk/edit)