



Out, Safe & Respected

Your rights at school

Stand Up for **YOUR RIGHT TO BE SAFE**

IF YOU'VE BEEN A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE OR HARASSED AT SCHOOL, OR IF YOU FEAR FOR YOUR SAFETY, HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF:

TALK TO SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST

Ask for help.

HAVE A SAFETY PLAN

This might mean, for example, finding a different way to walk home from school, arranging for a ride home, or carrying a cell phone or money to make an emergency phone call.

KEEP A WRITTEN RECORD ABOUT THE PROBLEMS YOU ARE FACING AT SCHOOL

Be sure to include details about what happened, the people who were involved, where and when the incident took place and whether there were any witnesses.

REPORT ALL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

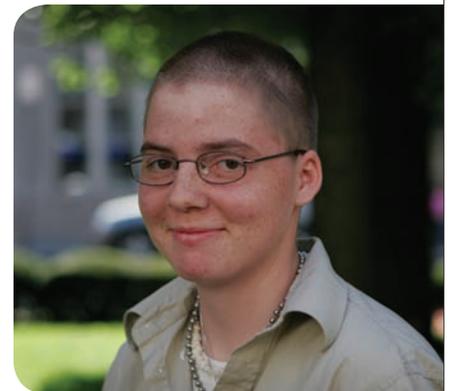
Counselors and teachers can be helpful, too, but they are not always legally required to take action to the same extent as the principal. Reporting to the school principal is the key. Put your reports and complaints in writing, and keep a file with copies of all documents you send and receive.

FILE A COMPLAINT

Follow school complaint procedures. Schools that receive federal financial assistance are required by federal law to have complaint procedures. If you experience serious threats or physical assault, you may make reports to local police, as well.

REPORT "UP THE LADDER"

Give the school principal a reasonable amount of time to address your complaint, but if no helpful action is taken, then take your complaint to the superintendent or school board.



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Nancy Wadington Took Action

TAKING ACTION:

Nancy Wadington

Nancy Wadington endured antigay abuse at her high school in southern New Jersey until the middle of 11th grade, when she had to leave school to protect her safety. In a lawsuit Lambda Legal filed on her behalf against school officials, Nancy asserted that she suffered verbal and physical attacks from other students over a two and a half year period. And in an effort to avoid the attacks, she stayed out of the hallways, walked around the outside of the school building to get to her next class, and stopped using the school bathrooms, which led to abdominal pain during class. Under New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination, school officials that know or should know about discriminatory abuse must take effective remedial action. After a mediation, school officials agreed to mandatory training for administrators, faculty, and staff, and to pay Nancy an amount as long as she kept it confidential.

IF NECESSARY, CONSIDER ANONYMOUS REPORTS

Generally, it is important to identify yourself when you make a complaint, because you are more likely to receive protection and because the school is more likely to have a legal obligation to protect you if administrators know you have been mistreated. But if you feel strongly that you can't identify yourself, send an anonymous report of harassment to the principal. The report could identify particular harassers at your school or describe your school's harassment problem more generally. You might also ask a trusted adult, like a counselor, to tell the principal without using your name that harassment is a problem at the school. Many schools have procedures for anonymous reporting. Always keep copies of your reports or reports filed on your behalf.

REPORT HARASSMENT EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO THE HARASSERS ARE

It is important to make the principal aware that harassment is taking place, even if you are unable to identify the harassers. As always, report incidents in writing, and keep a copy of the report for yourself.

SPEAK UP IF THE HELP ISN'T ACTUALLY HELPFUL

If your school attempts to stop the harassment but fails, don't give up. Talk to the principal and other adults at school about other ways the school could respond. At a minimum, report to the principal that the school's efforts are not working.

BE READY WITH SOLUTIONS, IF YOU CAN

Talk with Lambda Legal or other supportive organizations for resources and ideas. Then share these ideas each time you make a complaint.

CONTACT ORGANIZATIONS THAT TRAIN STAFF, FACULTY AND STUDENTS ABOUT HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

These organizations may have information and materials that can help you make a complaint or advocate for training around these issues at your school.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

See our "Protections Against Discrimination and Harassment" insert for general information about students' rights. For more detailed information, visit Lambda Legal's website or call Lambda Legal's Help Desk. If your school does not respond in a helpful way to your reports of harassment, contact Lambda Legal's Help Desk at 1-866-542-8336 or email legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org.

So you wanna **START A GSA**

A GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE, OR GSA, IS A CLUB FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUESTIONING STUDENTS AND STRAIGHT ALLIES.

There are lots of different kinds of GSAs. GSAs can be social clubs (some GSAs host dances and movie nights), support groups (some GSAs provide a safe place for LGBTQ students and their allies to talk about problems), educational outposts (some GSAs organize guest speakers or create displays for National Coming Out Day) or advocacy groups (some GSAs participate in GLSEN's National Day of Silence or push for sexual orientation and gender identity to be added to their school's nondiscrimination policy).

Talk with your friends, reach out to other students and decide what you'd like your GSA to focus on. There are more than 3,000 GSAs in schools nationwide, and there is lots of information available about forming a GSA. No matter what its focus is, your GSA can play an important role in addressing homophobia and anti-transgender discrimination and can help create a safe space for LGBTQ students. Read on to learn about the basics of forming a GSA.

YOUR LEGAL RIGHT TO FORM A GSA

In public secondary schools, GSAs can't be discriminated against or held to different standards than other student clubs — it's the law. Under a federal law called the Equal Access Act, secondary schools that receive federal money and allow meetings of other noncurricular student clubs (which means clubs that don't directly relate to classes at your school) are prohibited from discriminating against any student group based on its viewpoint. The Constitution's free speech clause also provides protection to student organizations, including GSAs. Lambda Legal and other civil rights organizations have successfully



SO YOU WANNA START A GSA

gone to court on behalf of students against a number of school districts — in California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota and Utah — that have broken the law by refusing to allow GSAs to meet on the same terms as other groups. These successful lawsuits make it more likely that schools will live up to their legal obligations.

Public secondary schools are covered by the Equal Access Act if they allow even one noncurricular club to meet at the school. If your school is covered (most public secondary schools are), then you have a legal right to form a GSA and a legal right to have that GSA be treated just like other student clubs at your school. So, if other clubs at your school are allowed to post displays on the bulletin boards, make announcements and use classrooms for meetings, your GSA can too.

Some schools have tried to prevent GSAs from forming by requiring students to get their parents' permission to join a club. But even if these parental consent rules are supported by the local school board or by state law, the Equal Access Act requires that the rules be evenhandedly applied to all student groups. In other words, schools can't single out GSAs for stricter membership rules.

GETTING STARTED

FIND OUT HOW TO START A CLUB IN YOUR SCHOOL

Different schools have different rules for clubs. Always follow the rules — if you don't, it can be used as an excuse to discriminate against your group. Look in your student handbook, talk to a student government rep or ask a school administrator to guide you on your school's regulations and policies. Be sure to find out if you'll need written permission to start the club or whether you'll need to get a teacher or school advisor to come to the meetings. You may also need to register with the school administration or write a constitution or mission statement.

DO SOME RESEARCH

Find out if other schools in your area have GSAs, and call or email their advisors or leaders. (For an up-to-date list of GSAs across the country, visit the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network at www.glsen.org.) Also try to determine how safe it is for students to be out at your school. This will help you arrange an appropriate meeting place and determine the safest ways to let people know about the group.

FIND A PLACE TO MEET

In general, you'll want to find a place that is private and relatively quiet. Some students might feel a little afraid or uncomfortable about attending a meeting. They may worry that others will harass them if they join the group. As you know, homophobia and transphobia are still a reality in many schools, and that should be taken into account when selecting a meeting space. Whether you decide to meet in a classroom or away from the school entirely, the meeting space must make GSA members feel safe.

SPREAD THE WORD

At first you may want to advertise the GSA by word of mouth only, so you won't be bothered by people who might not be supportive of the group. Tell LGBT-friendly teachers, guidance counselors, school social workers and the school nurse. They may know other students who are interested in attending the meeting and may be in a position to encourage them to go. They might also want to come to a meeting as a guest speaker or serve as the club's advisor. Tell anyone else you think will be helpful or who can let other students know about the GSA. Try to identify at least a couple of students who you know will attend the first meeting.

TAKING ACTION:

Anthony Colín

When Anthony Colín founded the gay-straight alliance in his Southern California high school, he had no idea that he'd have to battle to keep it. First the school board denied the GSA's application to become a recognized student club. This meant that the GSA couldn't have meetings at the school like other student clubs could. Then the school board told the students involved in the GSA that it would only reconsider the group's application if the group changed its name. With Lambda Legal's help, Anthony and his friends sued the school district. The GSA won the right to meet while the lawsuit proceeded and ultimately won the right to meet at the school, use the school's public address system to make announcements and be featured in the school yearbook, just like other student clubs.

HOLD THE FIRST MEETING

Have snacks. Food can help break the ice and may encourage students who were "just stopping by" to stay. Once people have settled in, begin with introductions and a discussion of why you organized the meeting. Share any information you've learned about GSAs in your area. Before deciding on your goals, give everyone a chance to talk about why they came and what they would like the GSA to do. Many groups establish ground rules over their first few meetings. At a minimum, everyone at the meeting should agree to confidentiality and respect.

Don't be too discouraged if the first meeting is not well attended or if it doesn't go exactly as you planned. Getting even a few people in the room is a victory! It may take a few meetings for more people to feel comfortable attending and for the group to really get established. Anyone who does come can help spread the word for the next meeting.

STAY IN TOUCH

Find a way to keep in touch with everyone. Be sure to collect email addresses or phone numbers and to set the next meeting date.

ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS

Keeping a club going can be a lot of work. One way to address this challenge is to get others involved in sharing responsibilities right from the start. You may want to select co-chairs or form committees, so more people can be responsible for keeping the group going.

For help forming a GSA at your school, contact the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) at 212-727-0135 or studentorganizing@glSEN.org.

If your school isn't allowing your GSA to meet, or if you have other questions about your legal rights, contact Lambda Legal's Help Desk at 1-866-542-8336 or email legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org.

Are you an ALLY?

AN ALLY IS SOMEONE WHO ACTIVELY SUPPORTS LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) PEOPLE AND WORKS SIDE BY SIDE WITH THEM TO ACHIEVE EQUALITY.

Allies can be anyone: a straight student who sticks by a friend who is questioning his gender identity, a teacher who serves as an advisor for a gay-straight alliance (GSA), parents who find ways to promote respect for diversity in their child's school or a counselor who is committed to making sure that LGBTQ issues are heard. By taking steps to be visibly supportive of LGBTQ students and their rights, allies can play a critical role in stopping and even preventing harassment and discrimination against LGBTQ students in school, ensuring that schools are safe for everybody. The 2005 National School Climate survey, conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), found that students at schools with higher numbers of supportive faculty and staff members were less likely to report that they felt unsafe and were less likely to miss school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. Students in schools with a GSA were also likelier to feel safe, to feel that they belonged, and thus had higher attendance rates than students in schools with no such clubs.



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Cheryl Bachmann Botsolas
Took Action

STUDENTS

Student allies are especially important because they often have an influence on the behavior of their peers. By befriending someone who is lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning, being active in an LGBTQ-friendly club, objecting to antigay jokes and slurs or advocating for fair policies in schools, straight student allies can set a positive tone of acceptance and may encourage other students to be allies. Some LGBTQ students might be hesitant to come out for fear of facing antigay harassment, or as a member of a minority, might want support in numbers when addressing administrators and teachers. As a straight ally, you can help your LGBTQ peers by adding your vocal and visible support, and sometimes by speaking up for those who may not yet be able to act on their own.

FACULTY AND STAFF

Adult allies who work in schools can be especially helpful, as they often have power to take action on behalf of students. Teachers and counselors can take the lead by posting or announcing rules on behavior in the classroom that include a no-tolerance policy for antigay language and harassment. In addition, when allies reference the work of LGBT people in lessons where appropriate, LGBTQ students are likelier to feel respected and understood, and all students gain the benefits of an inclusive curriculum.

Lambda Legal represented two teachers in Michigan — one in a middle school and the other in a high school — who insisted on including LGBT people in educational messages of diversity and respect, even though some school administrators objected. Both teachers had created displays for LGBT History Month that commemorated the historical role of lesbians and gay men and addressed antigay harassment. At first, the school's interim superintendent ordered them to take down the displays, but Lambda Legal helped these teachers fight the school district and won the right to make this important information available to students. The Michigan case supports all teachers who seek to create a safer learning environment by including LGBT people in educational messages.

LGBT-RELATED CLASS LESSONS

Schools can do great work to support students of all sexual orientations and gender identities through high-quality, accurate curricula and classroom teaching. In general, schools have the legal right to choose, create and teach accurate curricula. You can speak to officials at your school and school board about the importance of LGBT-inclusive curricula.

Sometimes, though, opponents target strong health curricula or lessons on tolerance that teach the facts about being LGBT.

If your school offers good lessons in the classroom that come under attack, you can contact Lambda Legal to find out more about promoting and protecting curricula that address LGBT issues.

PARENTS

Parents can make a huge difference by providing support to individual LGBTQ students and advocating for just policies and practices in schools. In a world where many, if not most, LGBTQ students experience harassment and discrimination, knowing they have their own or another parent on their side can make all the difference. Whether or not their own child is LGBTQ, parents can often be the strongest and most effective advocates for LGBTQ students. Often, school administrators hear from parents who want to limit the rights of LGBT students, so it's even more important for all parents who support LGBTQ youth to make sure their voices are also heard.

There are many things adults and young people can do as allies to help LGBTQ students feel safe, included and respected at schools across the country. Lambda Legal has been working with social workers around the country to make sure materials like this toolkit are made available to students. The first step is to commit to fighting discrimination against LGBTQ students and to making your school a safe place for everyone. The next step is to get involved.

While it is sometimes safer for straight allies to take a stand for LGBT rights, being an ally does not come without its own challenges. Allies too can experience harassment or discrimination because they stand up for LGBT rights or because they are perceived to be LGBTQ. As you make decisions about how you can best be effective as an ally, be aware that taking action against homophobia and discrimination may involve some level of risk, especially if you are addressing an ongoing problem at your school. If you have concerns about your safety or security, taking action along with others might provide you with more safety. If you encounter discrimination, please contact Lambda Legal's Help Desk at 1-866-542-8336 or email legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org for more information and assistance.

TAKING ACTION:

Cheryl Bachmann Botsolas

Cheryl Bachmann Botsolas is a high school teacher in New Jersey. She taught history for three years and received terrific reviews from her students and supervisors, and the school administration recommended her for tenure. Soon after the tenure recommendation, Botsolas disciplined two of her students for using antigay slurs in the classroom. One of the students lashed out at the teacher, threatening her life. As a responsible teacher and ally, Botsolas was promoting a "zero-tolerance" policy against harassment in her classroom. Nonetheless, Botsolas' tenure recommendation was revoked — with the effect that she was fired. But Botsolas didn't back down, and with representation from Lambda Legal, challenged the decision at a school board hearing, supported by fellow teachers and students who spoke on her behalf. At the conclusion of the hearing, the school board voted to overturn the superintendent's decision to fire her — and restored Botsolas' tenure. Botsolas' commitment to maintaining a respectful classroom environment is a model for other educators and allies in ensuring the safety and well-being of LGBTQ students.

ARE YOU AN ALLY?

CHECK ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS YOU CAN BE AN ALLY THIS YEAR

EVERYONE

- I will not make assumptions about people's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- I will publicly take a stand against homophobia, transphobia and anti-LGBT harassment and discrimination.
- I will speak out against the use of antigay slurs.
- I will be supportive of anyone who chooses to come out.
- I will attend LGBTQ events.
- I will educate myself about LGBTQ issues and the rights of LGBTQ students.
- I will wear or display LGBTQ-friendly buttons, stickers or posters.

STUDENTS

- I will help form a GSA.
- I will support friends in their decision to bring a same-sex date to the prom or other social events.
- If I witness anti-LGBT harassment or discrimination, I will report it in writing to the school principal.
- I will help advocate for my school to adopt and enforce a nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity.
- I will request books by LGBT authors and about LGBT people and issues for the school library.

FACULTY AND STAFF

- I will request books by LGBT authors and about LGBT people and issues for the school library.
- I will help advocate for my school to adopt and enforce a nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity.
- I will consider being an advisor for a GSA.
- I will make sure school events include everyone.
- I will make my classroom a safe space where antigay language is not tolerated.
- I will create an inclusive curriculum that highlights the contributions of LGBT individuals.
- I will create displays and/or lesson plans about LGBT History Month.

PARENTS

- I will support my children and their friends who question their sexuality or identify as LGBT.
- I will be available to meet with school faculty and staff about these issues.
- I will help my children or their friends file complaints about discrimination or harassment.
- I will help organize events like celebrations for LGBT History Month.
- I will hold my child's school accountable for violating the school district's nondiscrimination policy or state laws.

If you've done any of these things, then you're already an ally — keep up the good work! If you haven't, now is a great time to start.

Take Action at YOUR SCHOOL

YOU CAN DO MANY THINGS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) STUDENTS AND ISSUES AT YOUR SCHOOL.

Don't feel overwhelmed if you don't have a gay-straight alliance or an organized LGBTQ group to work with. You can easily start small (for example, give your English teacher a list of LGBT-themed books, or put up a display for LGBT History Month). Be creative. And remember — you have legal rights, but you should use them and insist that they are respected. Here are some ideas on how you can take action:

COMMEMORATE DAYS IN LGBT HISTORY

Make wallet-sized calendars with holidays on one side and famous people or events in LGBT history on the other (for example, the Stonewall riots, Harvey Milk's election or assassination or major civil rights court rulings like Lambda Legal's victory in *Lawrence v. Texas*, a sweeping decision on gay people's equal rights to liberty that marked a new era of legal respect for the LGBT community).



INVITE SPEAKERS

Invite local activists or representatives from LGBT organizations to speak at your school.

HAVE AN EVENT

Host a movie night with one or two of your favorite films about LGBT issues or featuring LGBT characters.

WRITE ABOUT LGBT ISSUES

Write an article or column for your school newspaper on LGBT issues at your school. Or make a zine collective and self-publish your own writing and drawings about being LGBTQ.

READ AND LEARN ABOUT LGBT ISSUES

Organize a book club and plan to meet once a month after school to discuss a book by a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender author. Or just share one of your favorites with friends.

If you encounter discrimination, or have questions about your legal rights, please contact Lambda Legal's Help Desk at 1-866-542-8336 or email legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org for more information and assistance.

TAKING ACTION:
Alison Shea

When she joined Time Out Youth, an LGBTQ youth organization in Charlotte, North Carolina, Alison Shea was looking for a place where she could be herself without being judged or rejected. She found that place and then made sure that other LGBTQ young people would also find it when she signed up for Time Out Youth's billboard project. The idea was to place five billboards around Charlotte with the slogan "We are your gay youth." Realizing that the message would be far more powerful if it included photos of real LGBTQ young people, Alison and three other Time Out Youth members boldly appeared on the larger-than-life signs. For five weeks, the billboards stopped traffic throughout the city, promoting the visibility of LGBTQ youth and connecting them with a safe haven where they would find help, information and a welcoming community.

SAVE THE DATE

BE SURE TO KEEP TRACK OF THESE DAYS IN YOUR CALENDAR — THEY'RE GREAT TIMES TO SHOWCASE SOME OF THE IDEAS LISTED ABOVE.

FEB
12

NATIONAL FREEDOM TO MARRY DAY

Falling on Abraham Lincoln's birthday and just before Valentine's Day, Freedom to Marry Day combines the themes of equality and love, and builds support for marriage for same-sex couples and for LGBT civil rights in general. Visit www.freedomtomarry.org for more information.

in
APRIL

NATIONAL DAY OF SILENCE

A student-led day of action where those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a daylong vow of silence to recognize and protest discrimination and harassment against LGBTQ students and their allies. Visit www.dayofsilence.org for more information.

in
JUNE

PRIDE

Events (usually in June but vary in some places) include parades, marches, rallies, festivals and other activities celebrating LGBT people and culture and often commemorating notable events in LGBT history.

OCT
11

NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY

The day commemorates the first march on Washington by LGBT people in 1987 and is dedicated to promoting honesty and openness about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

in
OCT

LGBT HISTORY MONTH

Modeled after Black History Month and Women's History Month, LGBT History Month is designed to promote the teaching of LGBT history in schools, as well as in LGBT communities and mainstream society.

in
NOV

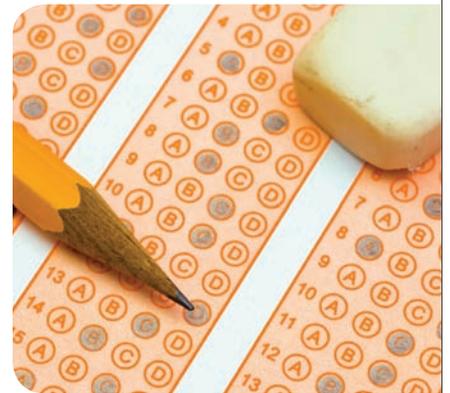
TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Transgender Day of Remembrance memorializes those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice.

How to NEGOTIATE WITH ADULTS

THERE ARE MANY REASONS TO MEET WITH TEACHERS, YOUR PRINCIPAL AND OTHER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ABOUT LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) STUDENTS AND RELATED ISSUES.

You may want to start a GSA, participate in the Day of Silence or organize a “lunch and learn” program for other students and teachers who want to learn more about LGBTQ youth. You are the best judge of the climate at your school. You may want to start by talking with supportive teachers and building from there. Whenever possible, try to get another student or an adult ally to go with you to the meeting. Many schools have procedures for hearing complaints, and some have designated hours set aside for students to voice their issues or concerns. Find out what the policies are at your school before you attempt to arrange a meeting.



HOW TO NEGOTIATE WITH ADULTS

Most schools also have guidelines for handling student requests to organize clubs, activities or events. If you are planning to host an event like the Day of Silence (a daylong vow of silence to recognize and protest discrimination against LGBTQ students) or a Diversity Day (a day devoted to educational activities around issues like race, class, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity), chances are you will have to get approval from your principal or other administrators. When considering a student's request, a school must accommodate students' constitutional rights. At the same time, the First Amendment allows schools to restrict speech that is lewd, vulgar, indecent, or that substantially disrupts the work of the school or the rights of others students. In advocating for a Day of Silence or Diversity Day, be sure to stress that these events are expressive activities, protected by the Constitution, and that they will not disrupt the learning process or interfere with other students' constitutional rights.

The same principles apply when you are advocating for most LGBT rights and issues. Here are some other topics that might require a meeting with teachers and administrators:

- Forming a gay-straight alliance at your school
- Including sexual orientation or gender identity in your school's nondiscrimination policy
- Having a training on homophobia or LGBT issues

If you encounter discrimination, or have questions about your legal rights, please contact Lambda Legal's Help Desk at 1-866-542-8336 or email legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org for more information and assistance.

TAKING ACTION:

Aaron Fricke

Aaron Fricke asked Paul Guilbert to the prom — and Paul said yes. But Aaron's principal said no. Aaron knew he should be able to go to the prom like everyone else, and he filed a lawsuit. Not only did Aaron win the right to take Paul to the prom, but his school also had to provide enough security so that he and Paul would be safe. Aaron helped show that unless a school has reason to believe someone's date will cause a "substantial disruption," students must be allowed to go to the prom with the date of their choice. That was Rhode Island in 1980. Today the law still has power, thanks to Aaron.

HOW TO STRUCTURE THE MEETING

INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND THOSE WHO HAVE COME WITH YOU

Begin by stating who you are or what group you represent (for example, a gay-straight alliance).

BRIEFLY STATE THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

It may help to keep each meeting focused on a specific event, activity or problem rather than putting a wide range of issues on the table.

PROVIDE THE NECESSARY BACKGROUND

Explain how the event, activity or problem has been handled at other schools and anything in your school's history that might support the event (for instance, if your school celebrates Women's History Month, that's a good precedent for celebrating LGBT History Month).

PRESENT A CLEAR AND CONCISE ARGUMENT

Remember that your comments will be taken more seriously if you keep your tone professional and respectful and show that you've done your homework.

LISTEN TO ANY FEEDBACK AND/OR INITIAL RESPONSES

It's important to understand your school's position, whether administrators and teachers are eager to help you or not.

SUGGEST NEXT STEPS

Try to schedule another meeting while you have everyone there, and try to create a timeline for the school to make a decision.

DON'T FORGET TO SAY THANK YOU

Behaving with courtesy and respect will leave teachers and administrators thinking well of you, and more likely to help you.

Protections Against Discrimination and Harassment: THE LAW IS ON YOUR SIDE

SHARE THIS FACT SHEET WITH PARENTS, EDUCATORS AND OTHER STUDENTS TO INFORM THEM ABOUT THE RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM ANTI-LGBTQ DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT AT SCHOOL.

This toolkit provides important information about general legal principles, but it is not legal advice. If you need information about how the laws described here apply to your particular situation, contact Lambda Legal.

THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution guarantees all people, including LGBTQ people, "equal protection of the laws." State constitutions contain similar protections. This means that public schools can't single out LGBTQ students for negative treatment just because school officials disapprove of being gay or feel uncomfortable around people whose gender expression falls outside the norm. When it comes to peer conflicts and abuse, courts have made clear that the federal Constitution prohibits public schools from taking bullying and harassment any less seriously just because the targets are LGBTQ.

You don't have to be out to be protected under the Constitution from anti-LGBTQ discrimination. You don't even have to be LGBTQ. Discrimination based on *perceived* sexual orientation or gender identity violates your constitutional rights, as may discrimination based on your friendship, family relationship or other association with LGBTQ people.



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Derek Henkle Took Action

PROTECTIONS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT: THE LAW IS ON YOUR SIDE

TITLE IX

A federal law called Title IX, which bans discrimination based on sex, protects students at schools that receive federal funds. Courts have agreed that the sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX not only includes discrimination for being a girl or boy, but also includes sexual harassment and discrimination for failing to conform to gender stereotypes. LGBTQ targets of sex discrimination and harassment have successfully relied on Title IX's protections in several court cases involving schools.

STATE LAWS

A growing number of states are taking additional steps to protect LGBTQ youth by explicitly including sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in laws that protect against discrimination and harassment in schools. States can vary widely in how they structure, apply and enforce these laws, and you should consult Lambda Legal or a local attorney if you are facing discrimination and need more specific information about laws in your area.

Some of the strongest and most detailed safeguards exist in **California, Iowa, Maryland, New Jersey, and Vermont**. Laws in all of these states require local school boards to enact antiharassment policies that specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. The policies must allow for complaints and investigations, impose consequences for violations and protect students who report harassment from retaliation. Schools must also make sure students learn about these policies.

While laws in other states may not take the same form or go into the same detail, they may still protect against abuse and discrimination at school. For example, in addition to the states listed above, **Colorado, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island and Washington State** have laws barring discrimination against students based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. In **Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Wisconsin**, state laws prohibit discrimination against students based on sexual orientation. At press time, the student protections in these last four states did not yet specifically reference gender identity or gender expression, but some courts have interpreted laws addressing sex discrimination to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity/expression.

Many other states have enacted antibullying laws without specifically mentioning (that is, without "enumerating") sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. But this doesn't mean that schools can ignore anti-LGBTQ bullying. Remember, Title IX covers all schools that receive federal funds (nearly all schools in the country), and the federal Constitution requires states to apply antibullying protections equally to all public school students.

TAKING ACTION:

Derek Henkle

From the age of 14, when Derek Henkle came out on public-access television, his life in the Nevada school system was a nightmare. "I would be spit on, punched and kicked," he remembers. "I was humiliated every day." School administrators and teachers stood by while other students harassed, threatened and physically assaulted Derek. One assistant principal actually laughed after students tried to tie Derek to a truck and drag him down the street. Rather than addressing the antigay harassment and violence, school administrators transferred Derek to other schools — as if he were the problem. At 16, Derek, who had been in a program for gifted and talented students since the fourth grade, was forced to resort to adult-education classes, where it was impossible to obtain a high school diploma. Derek fought back. He contacted Lambda Legal and with our help secured a precedent-setting court ruling recognizing the rights of gay students. After the ruling, the school district agreed to sweeping policy changes to protect students from harassment, a \$450,000 settlement payment, and put a letter in his academic file explaining why his education was cut short.

LOCAL LAWS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

Even if your state legislature hasn't specifically banned anti-LGBTQ discrimination and harassment in school, city ordinances and local school districts within your state may have done so. More and more communities — from small rural towns to large urban areas like Dallas, Miami-Dade, Nashville and Philadelphia — have enacted rules protecting students from discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Consult with a friendly school official, a local attorney or Lambda Legal to learn more.

PROTECT YOURSELF EVEN IF THE LAW IS SUPPOSED TO PROTECT YOU

Remember that school officials and employees sometimes don't know about, don't understand or simply refuse to comply with their legal responsibilities to address anti-LGBTQ discrimination and harassment. Even authorities in an area with strong protections written into the law might not respond in a helpful way to anti-LGBTQ

mistreatment at school. Take steps to protect yourself and to document and report bad treatment, no matter where you live. For more information, check out our "Stand Up for Your Right to Be Safe" insert.

And if you live in a state or city without specific protections against anti-LGBTQ discrimination and harassment, consider joining efforts to get a law or policy approved. For organizing tips, check out resources on GLSEN's website, www.glsen.org.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Private schools are often governed by a very different set of legal rules from those described above. If you have questions about what sorts of protections exist for private school students in your state, contact Lambda Legal's Help Desk at 1-866-542-8336 or email legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org.

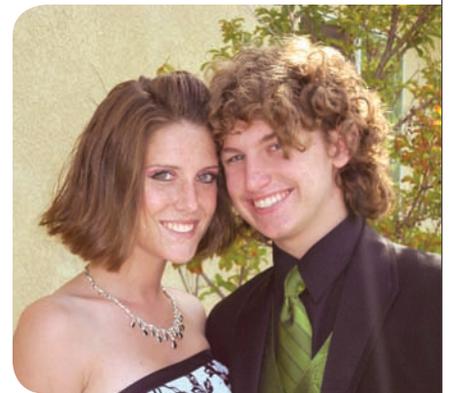
Your SPEECH RIGHTS

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT:

- to voice your support for LGBTQ equality at school
- to wear T-shirts or distribute leaflets expressing LGBTQ-positive statements without censorship based on your opinion or viewpoint
- to hang posters, make announcements and hold meetings for LGBTQ-related groups on the same terms as other student organizations
- to write a column or article in a personal or student-led publication addressing LGBTQ issues without discrimination based on your LGBTQ-supportive ideas

Knowing your speech rights is important for everyone, but especially so for minority communities. LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ family and friends may fear repercussions for speaking out against discrimination, face roadblocks in forming support groups or clubs, or worry about censorship when distributing written information to other students or putting up posters at school.

Sometimes we rely on our speech rights when we choose *not* to speak. Each year, on the student-led National Day of Silence, a project of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), thousands of students around the country remain silent for all or part of the school day to call attention to harassment and discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Here are some facts about your rights to free speech in school. While we've used the Day of Silence as an example, the ideas here apply to a range of student expression.



Lisa Brandt and Tommy Ward
Took Action

GLSEN'S DAY OF SILENCE: THE FREEDOM TO SPEAK (OR NOT)

YOUR SPEECH RIGHTS

DO STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN AND ADVOCATE FOR THE DAY OF SILENCE?

In most circumstances, yes. Under the Constitution, public schools must respect students' right to free speech. The right to speak normally includes the right not to speak, as well as the right to wear buttons or T-shirts expressing support for a cause. Public school officials may not censor a student just because they disapprove of the student's ideas, because the student's speech makes them uncomfortable or because they want to avoid controversy.

There are some limits on free speech rights at school. For example, schools have some control over students' speech in the classroom or during other supervised, school-sponsored activities. If a teacher tells a student to answer a question during class, the student generally doesn't have a constitutional right to refuse to answer. Students who want to remain silent during class on the Day of Silence are less likely to encounter problems if they seek permission from their teachers beforehand. Outside of the classroom, in areas like hallways and cafeterias, students have a much broader right to free speech. Schools can't censor students unless they use lewd or foul language, promote illegal drug use, harass other students or substantially disrupt the school environment.

DO STUDENTS HAVE A RIGHT TO DISPLAY POSTERS AND MAKE ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT THE DAY OF SILENCE?

In many circumstances, yes. If a public school opens up an opportunity for student speech — for example, by allowing students or student organizations to display posters or make announcements on the public address system — the school may not create restrictions based on the message or viewpoint that students want to express. So if students are generally allowed to announce events and put up posters on school property, Day of Silence participants must be allowed to announce events and put up posters, too.

CAN A SCHOOL JUSTIFY BANNING SPEECH BY CLAIMING IT WILL BE DISRUPTIVE?

If a public school wants to restrict student expression because it fears disruption, school officials have to show facts that reasonably lead them to believe that the speech will cause a substantial disruption to the school. A school can't just assume that the Day of Silence or speech related to it will disrupt the school.

And schools can't censor students just because other students might respond in a disruptive way. If students who disagree with a speaker's ideas create a disruption, the school can punish the disruptive students but can't punish the speaker. So, for example, if a Day of Silence participant puts up a poster and another student responds with name-calling and harassment, the solution must be to discipline the harasser and to protect, not censor, the Day of Silence participant.

WHAT IF A SCHOOL SAYS IT HAS TO RESTRICT DAY OF SILENCE ACTIVITIES SO COMMUNITY MEMBERS WON'T THINK THE SCHOOL IS ENDORSING THE EVENT?

Schools have more control over student speech if other students or community members would reasonably believe the speech represents the school's own speech or viewpoint. For example, if a student helps write an official school publication, like a school newsletter, the school has some control over what the student says, because people reading the publication may think the school endorsed the student's expression. But this doesn't give the school the right to control what students express on their own, or what they express through means generally open for independent student expression at school, like posters and announcements when student groups are allowed to speak. Schools cannot discriminate against students based on their ideas in those contexts, because nobody could reasonably think that the student speech represents the school's speech. In the words of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, "The proposition that schools do not endorse everything they fail to censor is not complicated."

TAKING ACTION:

Amber King, Tommy Ward and Lisa Brandt

Amber King, a middle school student in Central Florida, stood up to LGBTQ oppression by wearing a sign with “Join thousands,” “Talk to teachers only!” “Have love!” and similar messages printed on it to support the Day of Silence. Amber’s principal removed her from school that day, claiming her sign was “disruptive.” In Southern California, Tommy Ward and Lisa Brandt, student leaders of their gay-straight alliance, were prohibited from putting up posters or making announcements to support the Day of Silence at their high school. Lambda Legal wrote letters to both school districts, demanding respect for the students’ freedom of expression. In response, Tommy and Lisa’s school lifted the restrictions in time for them to participate fully in the Day of Silence. Amber’s school, which had sent her home on the Day of Silence, confirmed that she would be allowed to support the event in the future, without censorship based on her LGBT-supportive expression.

CAN A SCHOOL RESTRICT STUDENT SPEECH BECAUSE IT OFFENDS OTHER STUDENTS OR PARENTS?

No. So long as student expression isn’t lewd or profane, and doesn’t harass others, schools can’t restrict it just because some students or parents find it offensive. As Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. wrote, “If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.”

MORE QUESTIONS?

Check out www.lambdalegal.org/out-safe-respected for updated FAQ sheets about your free speech rights. For questions about legal issues related to the Day of Silence, you can also write to Lambda Legal’s Help Desk at legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org, or call 1-866-542-8336 and ask for the Day of Silence Help Desk. For more information about the Day of Silence, including tips on how to organize your own Day of Silence at your school, visit www.dayofsilence.org.

(This document gives information on general legal principles only and is not intended as legal advice. For legal assistance, contact Lambda Legal’s Help Desk, using the toll-free line or our other telephone numbers at the end of this guide.)

Your PROM

DURING PROM SEASON, MILLIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE BUSY FINDING THE RIGHT TUX, THE RIGHT DRESS, THE RIGHT DATE. IT'S THE BIGGEST PARTY OF THE YEAR FOR MANY STUDENTS, AND IF YOU DECIDE YOU WANT TO BE A PART OF IT, YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY SHOULD NOT BE A BARRIER.

In the 21st century, society has become significantly more exposed to, and oftentimes more accepting of, LGBT people. Years of activism have led to more positive portrayals of LGBT people in TV, film and other media outlets, which can sometimes help LGBTQ students feel comfortable being themselves and coming out. All of those factors have contributed to this generation of students being the most accepting and understanding of LGBTQ concerns yet.

That being said, many students still experience discrimination and roadblocks around prom time. You may worry that bringing a same-sex date or wearing an outfit that expresses your gender identity but doesn't fit within gender norms will make you a target for harassment by students or will be unwelcomed by your school administrators. Administrators or teachers may misguidedly try to bar you from these forms of expression "for your own good," anticipating that you will not be accepted. But in most cases, you have rights.



© Timmy Samuel

K.K. Logan Took Action

IF YOU ARE IN PUBLIC SCHOOL AND CONSIDERING YOUR RIGHTS WHEN PLANNING FOR PROM, HERE ARE SOME ISSUES TO CONSIDER.

AM I ALLOWED TO TAKE A SAME-SEX DATE TO THE PROM?

Yes. You are allowed to bring your same-sex date to the prom.

You have the right to equal treatment from your school. Some state education laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual orientation; some state antidiscrimination laws apply to schools; and Title IX, a federal law, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Equal protection guarantees of the state and federal constitutions also prohibit irrational discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation.

Your attendance with your same-sex date is considered an “expressive activity” — you are expressing your identity and communicating that you and your date have the same right as any other couple to attend and enjoy the event. More than 20 years ago, a federal court recognized that the First Amendment protects this expression, when it ruled that high school senior Aaron Fricke had the right to bring his male date to the prom. The school’s concern that other students might react negatively to Aaron and his date did not justify banning Aaron. The school was required to take appropriate security measures to ensure the safety of all students at the event.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY SCHOOL TELLS ME I CAN’T TAKE A SAME-SEX DATE TO THE PROM AND WON’T SELL ME TICKETS?

First, try to get the support of your parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Ask them to contact the school principal on your behalf and ask that the school provide the reasons for its denial to you in writing. If the school continues to object, call Lambda Legal’s Help Desk at 1-866-542-8336 or email legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org.

WHAT IF THE PRINCIPAL SAYS THE SCHOOL WILL LET ME BRING MY DATE BUT REQUIRES US TO GET OUR PARENTS’ PERMISSION?

Schools should not single out same-sex couples for different treatment. There is no legal justification for demanding permission for some couples because of their sex or sexual orientation. Unless a school requires parental permission for all couples, it should not demand that from you.

HOW CAN WE BE SURE THAT WE’LL BE SAFE AT THE PROM?

Schools cannot refuse to provide you with the same protection that they provide to all other couples. If you are concerned about your safety, you need to talk with your school principal or district superintendent before the prom. Provide them with as much detail as you can about what’s happened or who’s been threatened. In Aaron Fricke’s case, the court found that “meaningful security measures are possible, and the First Amendment requires that such steps be taken to protect rather than to stifle free expression.” You cannot be heckled or harassed out of attending your prom.

WHAT IF I WANT TO WEAR CLOTHING THAT ISN’T TRADITIONAL FOR MY GENDER OR BIOLOGICAL SEX? CAN THE SCHOOL SET ANY DRESS CODE BASED ON GENDER STEREOTYPES?

While schools can set general dress standards for prom — like requiring formal attire — they shouldn’t force you to wear clothes based on your gender. Barring a female student from wearing a tuxedo because only male students wear tuxes, or barring a male student from wearing a dress, is sex stereotyping and may subject the school to a sex-discrimination claim under state education laws, antidiscrimination laws, Title IX or the U.S. Constitution. The same goes for trans or “gender-queer” students who want to dress in a way that reflects their gender identity or expression. The right to express your gender identity through appropriate clothing should also be also protected by the First Amendment or a similar state law. But despite these arguments, courts sometimes have

found that a school's concern about safety or substantial disruption is valid and have upheld sex-specific dress codes. So you should advocate for the right to wear the clothes that you want — the clothes that make you feel most comfortable and express your identity — but you also should consider alternatives.

EVEN IF THE SCHOOL DOES TAKE MEASURES TO ENSURE OUR SAFETY, WHAT CAN WE DO IF WE'RE HARASSED BY OTHER STUDENTS (OR ANYONE) AT THE PROM?

You need to report any incidents to officials, security personnel or other monitors/chaperones at the dance. If you think there might be problems, enlist friends and allies who will get on the dance floor with you during the first dance to break the ice. This can set a fun, enjoyable, supportive and safe environment for the evening. After the event, report any incidents of harassment to the principal in writing.

IF WE GET TO THE PROM AND THE SCHOOL OFFICIALS OR MONITORS DON'T LET US IN, WHAT CAN WE DO?

Ask to speak with the person in charge of the event and advocate with them. Let them know that you have a right to attend, that you will not cause any disruption and will

abide by the same conduct rules (no fighting, no drinking) as all other couples. If you know before the actual night of prom that there might be problems, you can take steps that might prevent you from being turned away at the door. You could tell your school principal in advance that you're bringing a same-sex date. If the principal objects, then you can advocate for your right to be there and address any issues the school may have beforehand. Once the principal is on your side, ask for a short note stating that you are allowed to attend with your date. Bring it with you with the hope that you'll never need to use it.

ONCE INSIDE, WHAT IF SOMEONE TRIES TO STOP US FROM DANCING TOGETHER?

You have the right to participate in prom the same way that any other couple does. While the school can have rules of conduct that apply to everyone, it cannot create a special "no dancing" rule for you and your date. The same legal principles that allow you to attend with your date also allow you to participate fully and equally in the evening's activities and fun. If someone tries to stop you, ask to speak with the person in charge and inform them of your rights. If you can, take along a copy of this Q&A for backup.

TAKING ACTION:

K.K. Logan

Throughout K.K. Logan's high school career, he expressed a deeply rooted femininity in his appearance and demeanor. K.K. wore clothing typically associated with girls his age. K.K.'s classmates and teachers were supportive of his dress and gender expression. However, when K.K. wore a dress to his prom, K.K.'s principal physically blocked him from the entrance. Despite K.K.'s classmates and various community members rallying to his defense, he was never let inside for his prom. Administrators cited school policy against "advertising" one's sexual orientation through dress. Lambda Legal filed a lawsuit on K.K.'s behalf. Barring K.K. from his prom for wearing a dress is a violation of his First Amendment right to freedom of speech, symbolic action and expressive conduct. While it is important for schools to have policies that regulate student behavior, these policies must also respect students' rights. LGBTQ students have the right to express themselves in and out of the classroom, and silencing their right to self-expression is an unlawful violation of the First Amendment.

National RESOURCES

LAMBDA LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

www.lambdalegal.org
legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org
Help Desk 1-866-542-8336

National Headquarters

120 Wall Street, Suite 1500
New York, NY 10005-3904
T 212-809-8585
F 212-809-0055

Western Regional Office

3325 Wilshire Boulevard
Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90010-1729
T 213-382-7600
F 213-351-6050

Midwest Regional Office

11 East Adams
Suite 1008
Chicago, IL 60603-6303
T 312-7663-4413
F 312-663-4307

Southern Regional Office

730 Peachtree Street, NE
Suite 1070
Atlanta, GA 3030-1210
T 404-897-1880
F 404-897-1884

South Central Regional Office

3500 Oak Lawn Avenue
Suite 500
Dallas, TX 75219-6722
T 214-219-8585
F 214-219-4455

Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work. The organization provides legal assistance and representation to students and school professionals facing discrimination, harassment and censorship based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH

2000 M Street, NW
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20036
T 202-419-3420
F 202-419-1448
www.advocatesforyouth.org
www.youthresource.com
information@advocatesforyouth.org

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. Advocates provides information, training and strategic assistance to youth-serving organizations, policy makers, youth activists and the media in the United States and the developing world.

YouthResource, a project of Advocates for Youth, is a website created by and for LGBT youth 13 to 24 years old, which offers support, community, resources and peer-to-peer education about issues of concern.

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION LGBT AND AIDS PROJECTS

125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004
T 212-549-2627
www.aclu.org/getequal
getequal@aclu.org

Founded in 1986, the Lesbian & Gay Rights and AIDS Projects are a special division of the American Civil Liberties Union. The "Get Equal" website provides, among other things, a step-by-step guide showing how to get an anti-harassment policy in your school district and tools for a gay-straight alliance at your school.

BISEXUAL RESOURCE CENTER

P.O. Box 1026
Boston, MA 02117-1026
T 617-424-9595
www.biresource.org
brc@biresource.org

The Center educates the public and organizations about bisexuality and provides an information and support network.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

CHILDREN OF LESBIANS AND GAYS EVERYWHERE (COLAGE)

1550 Bryant Street, Suite 830
San Francisco, CA 94110
T 415-861-5437
F 415-255-8345
www.colage.org
colage@colage.org

COLAGE is a national and international organization that supports young people with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender parents through education and community building.

FAMILY EQUALITY COUNCIL

P.O. Box 206
Boston, MA 02133
info@familyequality.org
www.familyequality.org

The Family Equality Council works to ensure equality for LGBT families by building community, changing hearts and minds, and advancing social justice for all families.

THE GAY AND LESBIAN NATIONAL HOTLINE (GLNH)

2261 Market Street PMB 296
San Francisco, CA 94114
GLBT National Hotline:
1-888-843-4564
GLBT National Youth Talkline:
1-800-246-7743
www.glnh.org
questions@
GLBTTNationalHelpCenter.org

GLNH provides nationwide toll-free peer counseling, information and referrals to the LGBT community. Peer counselors are available Monday–Friday, 4:00 p.m. to midnight, and Saturday, noon to 5:00 p.m. EST.

THE GAY, LESBIAN AND STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK (GLSEN)

90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10004
T 212-727-0135
F 212-727-0254
www.glsen.org
glsen@glsen.org

GLSEN strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. It provides safe school tools and guides and is an official sponsor of the Day of Silence (www.dayofsilence.org), an annual event to raise schools' awareness of and protest discrimination against LGBT students.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE NETWORK

1550 Bryant St., Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94103
T 415-552-4229
F 415-552-4729
www.gsanetwork.org
info@gsanetwork.org
info@gsanetwork.org

GSA Network is a youth leadership organization that connects school-based GSAs to each other and community resources.

GENDER PUBLIC ADVOCACY COALITION (GENDERPAC)

1743 Conn. Avenue, NW
Fourth Floor
Washington, DC 20009-1108
T 202-462-6610
F 202-462-6744
www.gpac.org
gpac@gpac.org

GenderPAC works to end discrimination and violence caused by gender stereotypes by changing public attitudes, educating elected officials and expanding legal rights. The GenderYOUTH program organizes campus activists to serve as role models and empower high school students.

GENDER SPECTRUM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1122 E Pike St #796
Seattle WA 98122
T 877-809-4159
www.genderspectrum.org
info@genderspectrum.org

An organization that provides education, resources and training to help create a more gender sensitive and supportive environment for all people, including gender variant and transgender youth.

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

1640 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036-3278
T 202-628-4160
F 202-347-5323
TTY 202-216-1572
www.hrc.org

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

NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS (NCLR)

870 Market Street, Suite 370
San Francisco, CA 94102
Legal Help Line:
800-528-6257
T 415-392-6257
F 415-392-8442
www.nclrights.org
info@nclrights.org

NCLR staffs a toll-free youth legal information line and provides resources on building safe school environments, with a special focus on LGBT youth in sports.

NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE (NGLTF)

1325 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
T 202-393-5177
F 202-393-2241
TTY 202-393-2284
www.thetaskforce.org
info@thetaskforce.org

The Task Force is a national progressive organization working for the civil rights of LGBT people. Its website provides reports and guides

NATIONAL RESOURCES

for activists, including a report on making schools safe. At its annual conference—"Creating Change"—it offers a number of LGBT youth-related sessions and panels.

NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD

3080 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657
Hotline: 1-800-RUNAWAY
Agency and Information Line:
800-344-2785
T 773-880-9860
F 773-929-5150
www.1800runaway.org
info@nrscrisisline.org

The National Runaway Switchboard provides crisis intervention and local and national referrals to youth and their families, training materials and resources for communities and schools and is the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY

1325 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
T 202-903-0112
F 202-393-2241
www.nctequality.org
ncte@nctequality.org

NCTE is a social justice organization dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people through advocacy, collaboration and empowerment.

NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY COALITION (NYAC)

1638 R Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20009
Toll free: 800-541-6922
T 202-319-7596
F 877-492-8916
TTY 202-319-9513
www.nyacyouth.org
Email: nyac@nyacyouth.org

In collaboration with national and community organizations, NYAC addresses public policy issues

related to LGBT youth and distributes resources and information about local LGBT youth agencies.

OUTPROUD: THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH

369 Third Street, Suite B-362
San Rafael, CA 94901-3581
www.outproud.org
info@outproud.org

OutProud provides advocacy, information, resources and support to LGBT youth.

PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS (PFLAG)

1726 M Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
T 202-467-8180
F 202-467-8194
www.pflag.org
info@pflag.org

PFLAG is a national nonprofit organization with over 200,000 members and supporters and almost 500 affiliates in the United States. As part of its "Our House to the Schoolhouse" campaign, PFLAG provides resources and plans for making schools safe for LGBT youth.

THE SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION

2124 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121
24-Hour Crisis Line:
1-877-723-3723
T 206-957-1621
www.safeschoolscoalition.org

The Safe Schools Coalition offers a variety of resources to help youth, educators, administrators, parents and guardians end bullying and create safe school environments for LGBT youth. Resources include hotlines for LGBT youth experiencing harassment.

TRANSGENDER LAW CENTER

870 Market Street, Room 823
San Francisco, CA 94102
T 415-865-0176
F 877-847-1278
www.transgenderlawcenter.org
info@transgenderlawcenter.org

A civil rights organization advocating for transgender communities.

TRANSYOUTH FAMILY ALLIES

PO Box 1471
Holland, MI 49422-1471
www.imatyfa.org
info@imatyfa.org

Partners with educators, service providers and communities to develop supportive environments in which gender may be expressed and respected.

THE TREVOR PROJECT

9056 Santa Monica Blvd.,
Suite. 208
West Hollywood, CA 90069
Toll-free hotline:
866-4U-TREVOR
T 310-271-8845
F 310-271-8846
www.thetrevorproject.org
Support@thetrevorproject.org

The Trevor Project provides a national 24-hour toll-free suicide prevention hotline aimed at LGBT and questioning youth and offers an educational package and other resources to raise tolerance for LGBT youth in school and institutional settings.

YOUTH GUARDIAN SERVICES

101 E. State Street, #299
Ithaca, NY 14850
T 877-270-5152
F 703-783-0525
www.youth-guard.org

Youth Guardian Services is a youth-run, nonprofit organization that provides support and services on the Internet to LGBT and straight, supportive youth.

Contact Lambda Legal

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

120 Wall Street
Suite 1500
New York, NY 10005-3904
tel 212-809-8585
fax 212-809-0055

WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE

3325 Wilshire Boulevard
Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90010-1729
tel 213-382-7600
fax 213-351-6050

MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE

11 East Adams
Suite 1008
Chicago, IL 60603-6303
tel 312-663-4413
fax 312-663-4307

SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE

730 Peachtree Street, NE
Suite 1070
Atlanta, GA 30308-1210
tel 404-897-1880
fax 404-897-1884

SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE

3500 Oak Lawn Avenue
Suite 500
Dallas, TX 75219-6722
tel 214-219-8585
fax 214-219-4455

www.lambdalegal.org
legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org
Help Desk 1-866-542-8336

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