Supporting LGBTQ Students and Families

Alabama School Counseling Association Conference

Friday, September 14, 2018

Birmingham-Southern College

1:15 – 2:15

1:15 – 1:25 Welcome, Introductions
Framing and Purpose

1:25 – 1:35 Identities and terminology
  • Knowing the differences between the four core identities (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex assigned at birth); and
  • Knowing how to ask for and use transgender youths’ preferred name and pronoun

1:35 – 1:45 Risk Factors/Statistics

1:45 – 2:00 Ethical obligation: ASCA Statement
Legal obligations: Southern Poverty Law Center Resource

2:00 – 2:05 What you can do and ways to advocate

2:05 – 2:10 Resources
  1. Family Acceptance Center
  2. Top Resources for Educators
  3. 7 Things Administrators Can Do

2:10 – 2:15 Questions/Wrap up
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: STUDENTS & LGBTQ RIGHTS AT SCHOOL
https://www.splcenter.org/know-your-rights-students-lgbtq-rights-school
Southern Poverty Law Center

Rights of Transgender, Genderqueer, & Gender-Nonconforming Students
You have the right to express your gender, and it is unlawful for your peers or teachers to harass or treat you differently because of your gender. No matter what sex you were assigned at birth, you have the right to cut your hair and wear your clothes in a way that matches your gender identity. If you have to wear a drape or tuxedo for your senior portrait, you have the right to wear whichever matches your gender identity. You have the right to be called by the gender pronouns that you specify. You also have the right to play on the sports team that matches your gender identity. You have the right to use the restroom and locker room that match your gender identity.

Right To Be Free from Religious-based Discrimination
You have the right to be free from discrimination and harassment regardless of the religious views of your peers, teachers, or community. No student or teacher has the right to harass you on the basis of your sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression just because they hold certain religious views.

“Don’t Say Gay” or “No Promo Homo” Laws Are Invalid
Laws that prohibit teachers from discussing sexual orientations other than heterosexual may be susceptible to legal challenge. Laws or policies portraying LGBTQ people negatively, such as in a health class, may also be subject to challenge.

Bullying, Harassment, & Discrimination Are Unlawful
If anyone, even a teacher, is harassing you at school, the most important thing you can do is tell someone in charge—like your principal, vice principal, or superintendent. Keep a journal that includes details of what happened, when it happened, who said what to whom, whether you told anyone, and whether the school did anything to make it stop. If you tell someone in charge, but they don’t do anything, contact us.

Know Your Rights Regarding School Dress Codes
The First Amendment allows students to express themselves at school. School officials can restrict your freedom of expression only in certain circumstances. For example, you can wear a T-shirt or accessory expressing your pride or support for LGBTQ people, but you may not be allowed to wear something with a curse word on it. If your school’s dress code allows students to wear T-shirts with slogans, it is unlawful for your school to ask you to take off your shirt just because it endorses gay pride. You also have the right to wear clothes that match your gender identity.

You Have the Right To Form Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or Gender & Sexuality Alliances
These organizations are student-led groups that provide a safe, supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth and their allies. If your public school permits other student clubs, then it should allow you to form and publicize a GSA.

Remember: You have to comply with the rules that your school sets up for clubs as long as the rules apply equally to all groups.

You Have the Right To Attend Proms, Field Trips, & Dances
You have the right to take a same-gender date to prom or school dances as long as your date satisfies all the same rules that apply to different-gender dates.
**Conversion “Therapy” Is Harmful & Discredited by Mental Health Professionals**
Conversion therapists say they can change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. This is a lie. Conversion therapy does not work and can cause serious, lasting harm. If a counselor or other staff member at your school recommends conversion therapy to you or another student, please contact us.

**Your Rights in Foster Care**
In foster care, you have the right to safety, expression, and freedom. You have the right to be safe from discrimination, harassment, name-calling, violence, and abuse no matter who you are. You have the right to express your gender even if it is different from how boys and girls usually dress or act. You have the right to be free from conversion therapy or church services that say negative things about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

If you experience a violation of these rights, tell someone with authority. Social workers, foster parents, teachers, and administrators are all required to protect you from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse whether it occurs in your foster home, at school, or somewhere else.

**Trans Rights at School**
**You have the right...**

To be who you are, whether you identify as binary, nonbinary, genderfluid, agender, bigender, or another gender.
To use the restroom or locker room that matches your gender identity as opposed to a gender-neutral restroom in the nurse’s office or staff area.
To play on a sports team that matches your gender identity.
To express your gender with your clothing, hair, jewelry, voice, and mannerisms, even if some or all of those things don’t match the sex you were assigned at birth.
Your school has the duty...

To respect your identity and refrain from discriminating against you because you’re trans.
To reasonably respond to harassment, including when peers or teachers misgender you or intentionally use your deadname to bother you.
To refer to you by your chosen name and gender pronouns.
If your rights are being violated...

Tell a teacher, guidance counselor, or principal, even if it doesn’t seem like a big deal to you.
Write down the following and save it:
Detailed description of the incident, including the date it happened, who was involved, and where it took place;
Date you reported every incident;
Name of the adult you told; and
Action that the adult said would be taken.
Key Resources for Educators

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN): GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

www.GLSEN.org

Welcoming Schools: A project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, Welcoming Schools offers tools, lessons and resources on embracing family diversity, avoiding gender stereotyping and ending bullying and name-calling in elementary schools. It offers an LGBT inclusive approach that is also inclusive of the many types of diversity found in our communities.

www.welcomingschools.org

Southern Poverty Law Center: The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society. Their publication, Students: Know Your Rights, highlights the legal issues regarding schools, such as bullying, proms and other school events, coming out and confidentiality, clothing/dress codes, censorship, gay straight alliance clubs, LGBT conversion therapy.

http://www.splcenter.org/what-we-do/lgbt-rights

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is a national non-profit organization with over 200,000 members and supporters and over 350 affiliates in the United States. This vast grassroots network is cultivated, resourced and serviced by the PFLAG National Office, the national Board of Directors and 13 Regional Directors.

www.pflag.org

The Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Issues in Counseling of Alabama (ALGBTICAL): An official state branch of the national organization, the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC). ALGBTICAL seeks to promote greater awareness and understanding of sexual minority issues among members of the counseling profession, related helping occupations, their clients, and the community.

www.algbtical.org

The Family Acceptance Project: The Family Acceptance Project™ is a research, intervention, education and policy initiative that works to decrease health and mental health risks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children and youth, including suicide, homelessness and HIV – in the context of their families.

http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/

Teaching Tolerance: A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, this website is “A place for educators to find thought-provoking news, conversation and support for those who care about diversity, equal opportunity and respect for differences in schools.” In addition to lesson plans that are age-appropriate, they also have a weekly newsletter and a quarterly magazine available for free for educators.

7 Things Administrators Can Do
Towards a Safer School Environment for LGBTQ Students

1. Lead the way and adopt enumerated policies for bullying and harassment
   - Be inclusive about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression

2. Know the law and the rights of LGBTQ students and families
   - This is a minimum – case law has established clear responsibilities of schools
   - Case law continues to evolve, particularly regarding trans students

3. Get training and provide training to your schools, faculty and staff
   - Ensure that you have had comprehensive training for working with LGBTQ students and ensuring safe spaces in your schools for these students and their families
   - Know and understand the definitions of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pronouns, preferred names, gender transition

4. Build in support and accountability for yourself and your system
   - Identify individuals who are allies and champions for LGBTQ students and families
   - Have them resource schools, we recommend forming a Task Force
   - Use them as sounding boards
   - They can help keep the system informed and in front of concerns, rather than being reactive

5. Create and support Safe Space Networks in your schools and in your system of publicly identified faculty and staff who are inclusive, supportive and affirming of LGBTQ students and their families

6. SAY SOMETHING – Ensure that faculty, staff, students and parents hear you vocally and concretely supporting LGBTQ students. Be clear about your no tolerance policy for anything that is less than supportive and protective of students full safety at school

7. Know the top factors influencing students’ safety and perception of safety regarding LGBTQ concerns:
   - Enumerated policy stating a commitment to protecting LGBTQ students
   - Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender and Sexuality Alliance (student organization)
   - Training for all faculty, staff and administrators
   - Safe Space Network of faculty and staff who are publicly and visibly supportive
   - Infusion of LGBTQ content and topics into the general curriculum into all subjects
Alabama Safe Schools Coalition  
Being an Ally and an Advocate in your School  
Based on the ACA Advocacy Model (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010)

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<th>Client/Student Level</th>
<th>School/Community Level</th>
<th>Public Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide core conditions of</td>
<td>Support Gay/Straight Alliance (GSAs)</td>
<td>Take part in community events such as Gay Pride Parade, Film Festivals, Day of Silence, National Coming Out Day</td>
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<td>• Respect</td>
<td>Listen/observe closely school culture re: LGBT</td>
<td>Provide sessions at workshops/conferences</td>
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<td>• Unconditional Positive Regard</td>
<td>Send relevant/pertinent articles and news stories to principal, superintendent, etc.</td>
<td>Serve as a leader in a professional org. that advocates for LGBT youth</td>
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<td>• Empathy</td>
<td>Display LGBT supportive items in your office such as stickers, books, posters</td>
<td>Tell people what you are doing and why!!</td>
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<td>Maintain strict confidentiality, unless duty to warn applies</td>
<td>Conduct a campus climate survey</td>
<td>List involvement on your resume/website</td>
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<td>Use pronouns and preferred names</td>
<td>Teach colleagues to support LGBT students</td>
<td>Advocate for public policy change</td>
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<td>Help students identify resources and barriers</td>
<td>Have Courageous Conversations:</td>
<td>• Enumerated anti-bullying policies</td>
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<td>Be knowledgeable</td>
<td>• Let your principal know where you stand</td>
<td>• Inclusive EEOC statements</td>
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<td>• Know the law</td>
<td>• Build a network of allies with faculty and staff – step out</td>
<td>Develop and share educational materials</td>
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<td>• Know students’ rights</td>
<td>• Talk to students, ask them their thoughts</td>
<td>Actively participate in and support professional &amp; community organizations</td>
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<td>• Know the school’s responsibilities</td>
<td>• ASK QUESTIONS</td>
<td>• ALGBTICAL (Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling in Alabama)</td>
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<td>Build your competence</td>
<td>Integrate LGBT info into training sessions for student leaders (SGA, Peer Helpers, Heritage Panel)</td>
<td>• Alabama Safe Schools Coalition</td>
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<td>• Attend workshops and trainings</td>
<td>Start a Safe Zone: LGBT supportive staff</td>
<td>• BAGSLY (Birmingham Alliance of Gay, Straight, Lesbian Youth)</td>
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<td>• READ research, relevant publications (including ASCA journal and magazine)</td>
<td>Do an LGBT-themed program for your faculty in your school</td>
<td>• PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)</td>
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<td>Stay informed</td>
<td>Share your knowledge and resources with colleagues</td>
<td>• Human Rights Campaign</td>
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<td>• Southern Poverty Law Center</td>
<td>Intervene when you hear derogatory comments</td>
<td>• Equality Alabama</td>
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<td>• Teaching Tolerance (free)</td>
<td>Bring up school policy issue and provide information to administrators</td>
<td>Be an active voice in ALSCA and ASCA</td>
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<td>• What are other schools doing?</td>
<td>Build a network of other school counselors in the area (know what other schools are doing)</td>
<td>Raise awareness in the profession and community</td>
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<td>• GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network)</td>
<td>Use inclusive language</td>
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<td>Build leadership of students who are stepping out (and starting a GSA, for ex)</td>
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<td>Know your ethical responsibility to students (ACA and ASCA)</td>
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<td>Do your own work on your dissonance</td>
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