



Children's Mental Health Matters!

Facts for Educators

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth

Definitions

GLBT/LGBT is a collective term to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people.

A **lesbian** is a female who is exclusively emotionally, sexually, romantically and/or aesthetically attracted to other females.

The term **gay** is used to refer to same-sex sexual orientation (both male and female).

The term **bisexual** is the human sexual orientation that refers to the aesthetic, romantic or sexual desire for people of either gender or of either sex.

Transgender is an overarching term applied to a variety of individuals, behaviors and groups involving tendencies that diverge from the normative gender role (women or men) commonly, but not always, assigned at birth, as well as the role traditionally held by society.

The process of "**coming out**" describes the voluntary public announcement of one's (often homosexual or bisexual) sexual orientation, sexual attractions, or gender identity.

👏 "**Being out**" is when an individual does not try to hide these characteristics.

👏 "**Being outed**" occurs when these characteristics are made public against one's wishes or against one's consent.

If an individual is said to be "**questioning**," it most often means that they are going through a phase of exploration and possible transition regarding his/her sexual orientation. Another definition is that the "**questioning**" period is the initial phase prior to "coming out."

Homophobia is the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals. It can also mean hatred or disapproval of homosexual people, their lifestyles, sexual behaviors or cultures, and is generally used to assert bigotry.

Why do we care?

GLBT students:

- 👏 Are far more likely to skip classes and drop out of school.
- 👏 Are at a higher risk for substance abuse.
- 👏 Are subjected to harassment, violent threats, physical/sexual assault, slurs, insults, and jokes (the average high school student hears 25 anti-gay slurs daily).
- 👏 Are more prone to depression and loneliness.
- 👏 Attempt suicide 2 to 3 times more frequently than their heterosexual peers.

What can you do about it?

- 👏 **Serve as a model for other students.** Be sensitive to the language you use and put an end to any discriminatory jokes or language that you hear.
- 👏 **Be an ally.** Educate yourself as to the needs and experiences of GLBT youth and their families. Make yourself available to listen to problems that GLBT kids may be having both in school and at home. Indicate that you are an ally by placing a rainbow sticker or something similar on your classroom door.
- 👏 **Help make schools safer.** Urge your school to develop anti-discrimination policies protecting GLBT students from bullying, harassment, violence and discrimination. The APA has created their own policies related to GLBT youth in the schools which can be found at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbc/policy/youths.html>.
- 👏 **Speak with colleagues** about the importance of protecting GLBT youth.
- 👏 **Start a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA).** Recruit other allies from the faculty and student body to begin a student run club that serves as a safe place for anyone to come and discuss GLBT issues.
- 👏 If resistance is encountered by parents:
 - Create a broad support network. Ensure that each person knows that the real issue is safety for students.

Facts for Educators

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Continued

- Explain to parents that a GSA is not about “sex” or promoting homosexuality. Use evidence-based facts that support what you hope to accomplish.
 - Some may feel that it is not part of the school's role. However, protecting students is part of a school's role.
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Resources/Links

<http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/start.html> — For information on starting a GSA at your school.

It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School (Women's Educational Media, <http://groundspark.org/our-films-and-campaigns/elementary>) is a documentary that focuses on teachers challenging common stereotypes and mistreatment of gays within their own schools. The film shows children (some as young as first grade) reacting to information about the gay community and questions that are discussed in the classroom.

<http://members.tripod.com/~twood/guide.html> is a resource guide for different strategies to keep schools safe for GLBT students.

<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html> is the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. Includes many resources from current research to education on putting policies into action.

<http://www.aclu.org/lgbt/youth/24003pub20060131.html> gives access to a downloadable version of the Making Schools Safe Training Manual from the ACLU.

<http://www.lambda.org/youth.htm> is a website designed specifically for GLBT youth. It includes information about how to handle bullying and discrimination as well as safe places and activities for GLBT youth.

**Adapted from Resources found on:
www.schoolmentalhealth.org March 2009**