

YOUR RIGHTS AS AN LGBTQ STUDENT

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Whether you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary, gender nonconforming, or any other sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQ), you have the right to be yourself at school, and your school has an obligation to protect you from discrimination, harassment, and bullying. New York State law requires that every public school have a trained staff member whom you can go to if you are being bullied, harassed, or discriminated against. This person is often referred to as a 'Respect for All Coordinator' in New York City or as a 'Dignity Act Coordinator' in the rest of the state.

Your school's coordinator must investigate and respond to your complaint. The law also requires that the school make its anti-bullying, harassment, and discrimination policies accessible to parents and students, including on the school's website. You shouldn't have to fear going to school, using a locker room or restroom, or standing up for your rights at school. Knowing your rights is the first step to building an inclusive school climate.



AT SCHOOL, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

1. Be safe and free from harassment and bullying.
2. Be treated equally and be free from discrimination because of your sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
3. Be out or not be out about your sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.
4. Be yourself, including dressing and acting in ways that do not conform to stereotypes associated with your gender.
5. Start a gender-sexuality alliance, queer-straight alliance, or similar club or affinity group.
6. Wear LGBTQ-positive or political t-shirts, stickers, or bracelets.
7. Speak out about LGBTQ issues.
8. Access pro-LGBTQ websites or information about LGBTQ issues on your school's computers.
9. Bring a date to the prom regardless of their gender identity or expression.
10. Use the sex-separated restroom or locker room that most closely aligns with your gender identity. You may also use a single-occupancy restroom if you feel more comfortable, but no one can force you to use a single-occupancy restroom.

YOUR SCHOOL HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO...

1. Not discriminate against you.
2. Investigate and act promptly to end any harassment or bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
3. Create an environment free from gender stereotypes in which you are allowed to be yourself.

4. Respect your privacy. Your school should not reveal your sexual orientation or gender identity to other people (like your parents) without your permission, even if you are out at school.
5. Respect your gender identity by calling you by your name and pronouns (e.g. 'he,' 'she,' 'they,' or 'ze'), ensure that you have access to the restrooms, locker rooms, and sex-separated activities that most closely align with your gender identity, and model a respectful and inclusive school environment.

IF YOU ARE BEING HARASSED OR DISCRIMINATED AGAINST...

1. Don't be silent. Report the problem immediately.
2. Write down a who/what/where/when/why description of every incident.
3. Write down the dates you reported every incident, who you reported them to, what action that person said they would take, and what action that person did take.
4. If your school is not fixing the problem, contact the NYCLU.

To learn more about how to make a complaint, go to www.nyclu.org or email us at schools@nyclu.org.

USEFUL TERMS

gender expression

Behavior, clothing, hair, and other characteristics that are relatively observable and strongly associated with gender in our culture. A person's gender expression might conform to norms associated with the person's gender or it might not.

gender identity

A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For example, gender identity can refer to, but is not limited to, the identities of "male," "female," "androgynous," "non-binary" "genderqueer" and many others. Gender identity can also be a combination thereof.



gender non-conforming

Typically used to describe someone whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender. Many transgender people have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine, and many cisgender people do not.

non-binary

A term used to refer to genders that are not solely male or female: someone who is non-binary may have more than one gender, no gender, or their gender may not be in relation to the gender binary. Non-binary is also sometimes used as an umbrella term for all people who do not identify as consistently or exclusively male or female, whether they identify as non-binary or whether they use another term such as genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, or something else. Non-binary genders are just as real and valid as other genders.

transgender or trans

People with a gender identity that differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. Some transgender people undergo social transition (e.g. change their name, pronouns, clothing, hair), or medical treatment (e.g. hormones, surgical procedures) to bring their bodies into alignment with their identity and needs. However, not all transgender people want to or can take those steps. Transgender identity is not dependent on appearance or medical procedures. Like all people, transgender people have a gender irrespective of medical intervention, or have no gender.

RESOURCES

GLSEN

GLSEN is the leading education organization working to create safe and LGBTQ-inclusive K-12 schools through organizing, public policy and curriculum development.

www.glsen.org
info@glSEN.org
212-727-0135

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is a national 24-hour, toll free confidential suicide hotline for LGBTQ youth.

www.thetrevorproject.org
1-866-488-7386

True Colors United

True Colors United is an American non-profit organization addressing the issue of youth homelessness in the United States.

www.truecolorsunited.org
212-461-4401

List of LGBTQ Centers in New York

For a list of LGBTQ-related centers and organizations, visit: <https://www.lgbtcenters.org/LGBTCenters/State/65/New-York>

CONTACT THE NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

If you or your friends are being harassed, bullied, or discriminated against at school based on your sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, and your school is not doing something to stop the harassment, bullying, or discrimination, you can reach out to the NYCLU for help.

Call 212-607-3300
Email us at schools@nyclu.org
Visit www.nyclu.org
Mail us a letter at 125 Broad Street, 19th Floor,
New York, NY 10004

To find a list of NYCLU chapter offices in your region, visit www.nyclu.org/chapters.

NYCLU

ACLU of New York

www.nyclu.org

