



Supporting LGBTQ Students in Schools



In today's diverse and evolving world, understanding and addressing the needs of all students, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ), is essential. Despite strides toward equality and acceptance, many LGBTQ youth face unique challenges in school settings. These challenges can include stigmatization, peer rejection, and violence. The 2019 National School Climate Survey by GLSEN found that nearly 70% of LGBTQ students experienced verbal harassment at school because of their sexual orientation and over half because of their gender expression.

Educators, parents, and advocates have the opportunity to create a supportive, inclusive, and affirming environment for these students to support their well-being, confidence, and academic success. Because of the many challenges faced by LGBTQ youth, many rely on their schools to be safe and affirming places. **LGBTQ students who are supported at home or at school, and those whose gender identities are affirmed and respected, have significantly lower rates of mental health symptoms and suicide.** Inclusive policies and practices designed to support our LGBTQ students enrich our school culture, and foster empathy, understanding, and respect among all our students.

LGBTQ IDENTITY

20% of Youth

More than 20% or 3.2 million youth between ages 8 and 18 identify as LGBTQ, and 53% of those are youth of color (CDC, 2022).

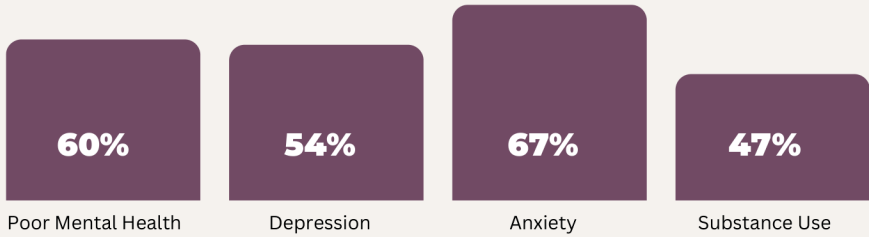
PANDEMIC EFFECTS

94%

Pandemic-related stressors, and anti-LGBTQ sentiments compounded the rise in the poor mental health of 94% of LGBTQ youth (GLSN, 2023).

Studies have shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning LGBTQ youth experience higher mental health problems than their heterosexual peers. LGBTQ youth are at higher risk for victimization and rejection at school and home. The same report from The Trevor Project found that while 81% of LGBTQ youth wanted to receive mental health care, 56% of all LGBTQ were not able to get mental health care.

% of LGBTQ+ Youth Experiencing Mental Health Concerns

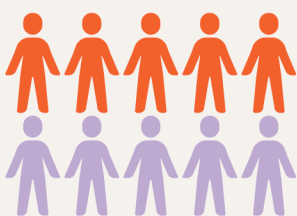


SOURCE: The Trevor Project, 2022



Amit Paley (he/him)
CEO & Executive Director
The Trevor Project

The fact that very simple things — like support from family and friends, seeing LGBTQ representation in media, and having your gender expression and pronouns respected — can have such a positive impact on the mental health of an LGBTQ young person is inspiring, and it should command more attention in conversations around suicide prevention and public debates around LGBTQ inclusion."



SOURCE: National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, The Trevor Project, 2022

50% of LGBTQ+ youth reported seriously considering suicide in the past year, with 65% of trans youth and 47% of cisgender youth considering suicide. 14% had attempted suicide. Children identifying as Native/Indigenous had the highest rate of either considering or attempting suicide. However, LGBTQ youth who found their school to be affirming reported lower rates of suicide attempts.

LGBTQ youth who felt high social support from their family reported attempting suicide at less than half the rate of those who felt low or moderate social support.



Mental Health Matters: Awareness to Action Tips

The New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center develops training and technical assistance resources to address the multiple levels of cultural responsiveness needed for optimal behavioral health treatment, recovery, and care.

Use our "Awareness to Action" tips to engage and support LGBTQ students in consistent and practical ways that ensure equity and advance compassion and inclusion of all students.

Get Informed

Public schools can provide training to staff and students on issues related to gender identity and expression.

1

This can help create a supportive and informed school community.

When possible, use gender-neutral language to avoid assuming someone's gender identity.

2

Use Inclusive Language

Schools can use the preferred names and pronouns of transgender students, and update their name and gender markers in school records.

Provide Gender-Neutral Spaces

Public schools can provide gender-neutral restrooms and changing areas to accommodate the needs of transgender students.

3

This can also benefit other students who may feel uncomfortable using traditional gender-segregated facilities.

Operationalize the plan to include policies that prohibit bullying and hate speech, and support LGBTQ staff and students.

4

Review Policies

Develop and enforce policies that protect transgender students from discrimination and harassment.

Respect Confidentiality

Schools should respect the confidentiality of transgender students and their families, and only disclose when necessary and with their permission.

5

Respect the privacy of LGBTQ students and avoid asking invasive or inappropriate questions.

Consider representation in curricula, visual displays, and school events.

6

Implement Inclusive Curricula

Incorporate LGBTQ history, culture, and experiences into the curriculum to create a more inclusive learning environment for all students.

7

Avoid Stereotypes

Avoid stereotypes and assumptions about LGBTQ students based on their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Each student is an individual and should be treated as such.

Partner with diverse agencies and organizations. Consider entities that have existing relationships with populations with which you want to connect.

8

Collaborate

Collaborate with other healthcare providers, schools, and community organizations to ensure a holistic approach to supporting LGBTQ mental health.

9

Uphold Affirming Community

Create a supportive school community by promoting diversity and inclusivity, celebrating different cultures, and providing opportunities for students to connect with each other.

Create a culture of inclusivity that benefits all students, as well as their family members and caregivers.

Develop a deliberate, defined process to ensure activities are responsive to community needs and improving mental health and well-being in LGBTQ youth populations.

10

Evaluate and Improve

Evaluate what you're doing and seek feedback from LGBTQ students, families, and staff. Make necessary adjustments to ensure continuous improvement.



STAY CONNECTED

New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center is funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and is part of the broader Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) Network.

mhttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-mhttc

To learn more about our intentional efforts to support the multitude of mental health experiences within underserved communities, contact us.

