



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER YOUTH IN SCHOOL

Every student deserves to learn in a safe and supportive setting, free from discrimination. As the Department of Education has reaffirmed, discrimination based on sex—including sexual orientation and gender identity—isn't just wrong, it's *prohibited* in America's schools. Yet many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students experience bullying, harassment, and other discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

For transgender students in particular, this discrimination can threaten students' well-being and ability to thrive or even participate in school—one national [survey](#) found that transgender students were **three times** more likely to miss school than other students. Additional research cited in a [report](#) from the Department's Office for Civil Rights found transgender youth were more likely to report feeling unsafe at school and being bullied, and that the COVID-19 pandemic harmed their mental health. Some transgender students experience multiple forms of discrimination at once, including race, gender or disability discrimination, which amplify the challenges they face.

### HOW CAN SCHOOLS SUPPORT TRANSGENDER STUDENTS?

There are many ways for schools to ensure that all students, including transgender students, are safe and supported in school and have equal access to educational opportunities. Here are examples of policies and practices schools can consider developing in partnership with students, families, and advocates to support transgender students:

- Using **welcoming and inclusive language** in school, district, college, and university mission statements, such as a commitment to ensuring a safe and supportive campus that is free from discrimination and harassment for LGBTQ+ students.
- Ensuring that **school policies** clearly affirm students' right to be free from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in all aspects of school, including the nondiscriminatory use of discipline and equal access to school programs and activities.
- Adopting **policies that respect all students' gender identities**—such as the use the name a student goes by, which may be different from their legal name, and pronouns that reflect a student's gender identity—and implementing policies to **safeguard students' privacy**—such as maintaining the confidentiality of a student's birth name or sex assigned at birth if the student wishes to keep this information private, unless the disclosure is legally required.
- Adopting **policies or model plans to guide school staff on how to support students and communicate with families**, such as developmentally appropriate protocols to support students in any transition process, and a checklist of issues to discuss with the student or their family.
  - **Did you know?** Some schools and districts develop gender support plans to ensure a supportive environment for transgender students and create gender communication plans tailored to specific students' needs.



- Facilitating **opportunities for students to find support with peers, teachers, faculty, and staff**, such as student-led organizations, and **identifying safe spaces** on campus.
  - **Did you know?** According to one [survey](#), students who identified as LGBTQ+ at schools with a gay-straight alliance or gender and sexuality alliance reported that they heard anti-LGBTQ+ slurs, harassing language, and negative remarks at school less often; were less likely to report feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation and gender expression; were less likely to report missing school due to safety concerns; and reported feeling a greater sense of belonging to their school community, among other benefits.
- Providing **professional development opportunities for educators** on equitable and supportive treatment of historically underserved students, including LGBTQ+ youth, and taking steps to promote **increased diversity among educators**.

### HOW DOES THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUPPORT TRANSGENDER STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION?

The Department of Education, through its Office for Civil Rights (OCR), helps protect the rights of all students to learn in school settings free from sex discrimination—including discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. We do this by providing assistance and resources, and by enforcing Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

Title IX protects all students at institutions that receive federal funding, including all public K-12 schools and almost all colleges and universities. To learn more about how Title IX protects LGBTQ+ students from discrimination, check out OCR’s [resources for LGBTQ+ students](#). Anyone who believes that a school receiving federal funding has discriminated against someone because they identify as LGBTQ+ or because they do not conform with sex stereotypes, or for another reason, can file a complaint with OCR within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. For more details, please visit [www.ed.gov/ocr/complaintintro.html](http://www.ed.gov/ocr/complaintintro.html).

Public schools and school districts can also contact the Department funded regional [Equity Assistance Centers](#) to request technical assistance, including teacher training, in equity matters related to serving LGBTQ+ students in their schools. If you have questions or would like additional information or technical assistance, please visit us at [www.ed.gov/ocr](http://www.ed.gov/ocr) or contact OCR at 800-421-3481 (TDD: 800-877-8339) or at [ocr@ed.gov](mailto:ocr@ed.gov).

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