



Safer Schools: Supporting Trans and Non-binary Youth



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Who are We?

Equality Virginia

Non-profit that serves the whole state to help create supportive environments.

Focuses on legislation and programming to ensure all LGBTQ people and their families can live safely in Virginia.

Side by Side

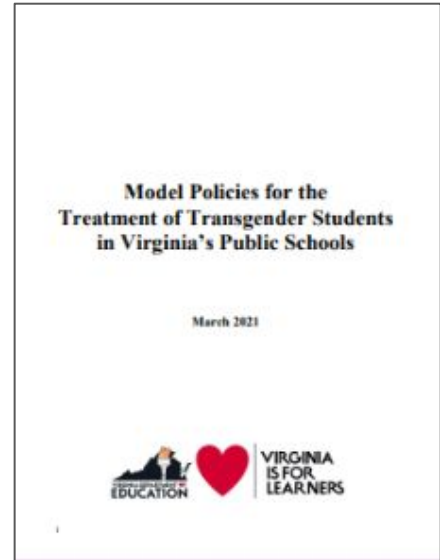
Non-profit that serves LGBTQ youth across whole state.

Works with youth 11 to 25 to provide support, housing, and work in schools to help youth thrive.

What does the guidance cover?

- Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination
- Student Privacy/Confidentiality
- Identification of Students
- Maintenance of School Records
- Dress Code
- Access to Activities and Facilities
- Professional Development and Training

Does not cover athletics!



Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

- **Lived experiences**

- Intentional misgendering from peers and/or school staff
- Verbal harassment like being called “It” or “f-word” by peers
- Being physically assaulted by peers on school property
- Student misgendered by peers throughout class but does not know who to go to

- **What does this look like in school?**

- Interrupt using 3 R's: Recognize. Respond. Report.
- Have school assemblies normalizing diversity and celebrating it
- Develop clear system to report
 - Private email students can contact
 - Path for students to request immediate meetings
- Create point person and/or team for student to report
 - Use stickers, symbols, public announcement to make clear

Student Privacy/Confidentiality

- **Lived Experiences**
 - Trans student being outed to teachers by a staff person he came out to
 - Teacher asks a student their “dead name” out of curiosity due to learning their trans identity
 - Peer sees sex assignment marker (M or F) and tells other students they are trans
- **What does this look like in school?**
 - Be youth centered - let them lead their journey
 - Make a plan with the youth to ensure you respect FERPA and their journey
 - Gender Support Plan
 - Remove gender markers from platforms like homepages, rosters, or ids
 - Take the M/F off student ids or Blackboard home pages
 - Have any documentation disclosing trans status under lock and key

Identification and Maintenance of Records

- **Lived Experiences**
 - Student misgendered by substitute after coming out to teacher due to incorrect roster
 - Student is continuously misgendered by teacher after being told student's chosen name
 - Student wants to communicate chosen name/pronoun but is unsure how to
- **What does this look like in schools?**
 - Create plan to ask students their pronouns
 - Send out survey prior to class starting, share yours, ask at the start of every class
 - Have clear procedures around staff intentionally misgendering
 - Provide practice, resources, and have appropriate consequences
 - Hold conversation with full staff so all know procedures and policies
 - Centralize updating systems if possible. If not, manually alter rosters with notes to affirm students
 - Have all documentation secure and locked to protect student privacy

Dress Code

- **Lived Experiences**

- Cisgender boy harassed by peers and staff for wearing dress homecoming week
- Being called “it” by elementary teachers for dressing androgynously
- Student receiving detention for dressing in manner teachers felt “inappropriate”
- Avoided events like prom due to not feeling safe dressing in affirming way

- **What does this look like in school?**

- Take gender out of policy
 - Straps thicker than 2 fingers
 - Skirts and shorts no higher than fingertips above knee
- Let students dress in affirming way - do not assume how they “should” dress
 - Continue this with special events like prom or homecoming
 - Graduation gowns gender neutral or youth choose

Access to Activities and Facilities

- **Lived Experiences**

- GSA has to hide meeting and location due to safety
- GSA information flyers sprayed with homophobic language around school by peers
- Student avoids using restroom for 8 hours during school day

- **What does this look like in schools?**

- Embrace, celebrate, and support GSAs in your school at all levels
- Know the laws around GSAs and treat them equally
- Allow student to use facilities aligning with their gender and they feel safe using
 - Create a plan, take it case by case, interrupt harassment

Professional Development and Training

- **Lived Experiences**

- Staff misgendering students and not understanding students
- Staff wanting to help but not knowing how
- Staff scared to intervene because they do not want to lose job

- **What does this look like in your school?**

- Look at outside communities to provide training
 - Equality VA, Side by Side, HSZE, Shenandoah LGBTQ, etc.
- Do not avoid the conversation - provide accurate information to staff
- Communicate all policies and procedures clearly to whole staff
 - Do not only communicate to counselors, social workers, or psychologists

Data around interventions and their outcomes

- **Schools with GSAs and Supportive Adults**
 - Less likely to hear “gay” in negative way (70.5% vs. 83.5%)
 - Less likely to feel unsafe due to gender identity (33.6% vs. 51.3%)
 - Had higher GPAs (3.34 vs. 3.14)
- **Using name and pronouns**
 - 71% fewer symptoms of severe depression
 - 34% decrease in reported thoughts of suicide
 - 65% decrease in suicidal attempts
- **Positive Representation**
 - Only 19.4% of LGBTQ students were taught positive representation in school
 - 17% of LGBTQ students were taught negative representation in school
 - Shown to increase depression, anxiety, and harmful language among others
 - Positive representation show to help increase self-esteem, self love, and community

Summary

1. ***Policies and Procedures*** - clear and communicated
2. ***Follow the Youth*** - listen, affirm, and let them lead
3. ***Let them Be*** - through dress, facilities, or interests let the youth be true to themselves
4. ***Training*** - use resources to provide accurate training to all staff
5. ***Embrace*** - lean into the diversity and celebrate your youth!

Contact Information

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