

How to Support LGBTQ+ Youth

Youth who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning) often experience prejudice based on their sexual and/or gender identity. This can be further amplified if they are experiencing physical or emotional difficulties. Although not all members of the LGBTQ community have the same experiences, we know that discrimination, prejudice, denial of civil and human rights, harassment and family rejection are common. These experiences place LGBTQ+ individuals at increased risk for psychological challenges, particularly if they are silenced, isolated, or lack stable relationships with affirming and trusted adults.

When considering the need for mental health and social supports for LGBTQ+ students, it is important to recognize both their strengths and vulnerabilities. High school students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are almost [five times as likely](#) to attempt suicide compared to their heterosexual peers, and transgender teens are similarly at elevated risk for self-harm.

We know that marginalized communities are most in need of emotional support. This may be particularly true for LGBTQ+ youth who are living in unwelcoming, hostile or abusive environments. We recommend that school staff contact designated mental health personnel in their district immediately if concerns arise about the physical and emotional health of any student, and that school counselors and other designated mental health and crisis personnel assist students using a [3 Tier model](#) of support. This may include connecting LGBTQ+ students with supportive peers and school staff. Please see [Mental Health Guidance for School Counselors, Other Mental Health Professionals and Administrators](#) for further information.

LGBTQ+ students can also be affirmed and supported by providing opportunities for continuity, care, and connection. Student groups such as [Gender & Sexuality Alliances \(GSA\)](#) are vital resources for building community, belonging, and connectedness for Oregon's LGBTQ+ students. We encourage communities to consider alternate ways to connect LGBTQ+ students with GSAs and other supportive student groups. Health educators should also prioritize LGBTQ+ inclusive [sexuality education](#) to promote positive identity development and safe learning environments, as well as to prevent cyberbullying, sexual abuse and violence, and unhealthy relationships for all K-12 students.

ODE has created a collection of resources to assist students, staff, mental health professionals and their families including: How to prevent suicide ([youth](#) and [adult](#) versions), [What to do if you suspect abuse](#), [What to do if you are experiencing domestic abuse or violence](#), and [How to support children and teens through loss and trauma](#).

Mental Health and Social Supports



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For youth or adults in crisis

We recommend contacting one or more of the following resources:

- **If you or someone you know are being threatened, are in immediate danger or are having thoughts of suicide, call 9-1-1.**
- **LGBTQ National Hotline**: 1-888-843-4564
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (24/7 hotline), 1-888-628-9454 (Spanish), 1-800-799-4889 (TTY)
- **The Trevor Project** is a support network for LGBTQ youth providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention, including a 24-hour text line (Text “START” to 678678)
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline** women, men, LGBTQIA+: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or online hotline at <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>
- **National Domestic Violence 24-Hour Hotline**: (988), [live chat service](#) (English 24/7; Spanish 12-6pm), deaf services (TTY1-855-787-3224, by phone video 1-855-812-1001, nationaldeafhotline@adwas.org), [website](#) also provides guidance for friends and family, legal help, pet assistance and more.
- **la Violencia Doméstica** marcando el número de teléfono 1-800-799-7233 o el número TTY (línea telefónica de texto para personas con problemas de la audición y del habla) 1-800-787-3224
- **1in6 Online Helpline** for male survivors of childhood sexual abuse and adult sexual assault.

Non-emergency resources for LGBTQ+ youth and adults

We recommend the following resources for your use in non-emergency situations:

- **LGBTQ Resources (RAINN)**: Provides assistance, resources and education for those experiencing physical or sexual violence.
- **The LGBT National Help Center**: Offers confidential peer support connections for LGBT youth, adults and seniors including phone, text and online chat.
- **The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association's Provider Directory**: A search tool that can locate a LGBTQ-inclusive health care provider.
- **The National Center for Transgender Equality**: Offers resources for transgender individuals, including information on the right to access health care.

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Resources for Educators and Students

- [Oregon Department of Education \(ODE\) Sexuality Education Resources](#): Provides information regarding sexual violence prevention and response, comprehensive sexuality education, and sexual health promotion. To learn more contact [Sasha Grenier](#).
- [GLSEN](#): A national leader in K-12 safe and affirming education, this site features a wide variety of school climate research, programs, resources, and tips for educators as well as students.
- [Welcoming Schools](#): Includes lessons, book lists, tip sheets, and webinars to create supportive environments for LGBTQ+ students K-12.
- [Gender Spectrum](#): In addition to the wealth of gender-inclusive resources for students, families, and educators, Gender Spectrum hosts [virtual support groups](#)
- [Q-Chat Space](#): A safe place for LGBTQ teens to connect and seek support with peers.