

Supporting LGBTQ+ Children

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning children (LGBTQ+) consistently face rejection, discrimination, bullying and/or a lack of understanding. This can be very difficult and can erode a child's self-esteem and confidence.¹ Statistics show that children and youth who faced family rejection were 3 times more likely to engage in illegal drugs and 8 times more at risk to attempt suicide.²

What can we do to support LGBTQ+ children?

1. Communicate and be supportive.

Create a positive environment where your child feels safe to tell you about their sexual orientation or that they are gender nonconforming. By saying positive things about LGBTQ+ people when they're on TV or when listening to the radio, it lets your child know that it is safe to talk with you when they are ready. Statistically, LGBTQ+ children who are supported by their parents adjust better into adulthood.



2. Educate yourself and find support.

PFLAG (pflag.org) was started in 1973 after a mother supported her gay son. The organization supports families of LGBTQ+ children and has local groups throughout the world. There also are many organizations online that support families: lgbtcenter.org, thetrevorproject.org, mykidisgay.com, genderspectrum.org, familyproject.sfsu.edu and glsen.org to name a few.

3. Be an ally.

Use inclusive language and stand up for LGBTQ+ students. Many schools have GSA clubs (gender sexuality alliance club, formally called gay-straight alliance clubs). Students with 11 or more teachers who were allies felt more supported at their schools.

1. *In School—The Trevor Project*. (n.d.). Retrieved from thetrevorproject.org/

2. *Family Education Booklet*. (n.d.). Retrieved from familyproject.sfsu.edu/family-education-booklet

4. Identify LGBTQ+ resources.

Whether you find resources from your school or online, it is important to support your child. Remember, that although this information may be challenging and new for you, it can be scary and lonely for your child as well. By finding appropriate LGBTQ+ groups or a counselor that your child can trust, you are letting them know that you support and love them.



Students with greater numbers of supportive staff had a greater sense of being a part of their school community than other students.³

Key Terms

- **Ally:** A member of the majority or dominant group who works to end oppression and discrimination by supporting and advocating for the minority group. glsen.org/allyweek
- **Asexual:** An individual who does not experience sexual attraction or have desire for sex.
- **Cisgender:** A person who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **LGBTQ+:** Lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. The “+” indicates that many additional letters can be added to the acronym to reference other identities.
- **Queer:** A term that includes people who are not straight and/or cisgender. In the past, this term was discriminatory; however, today some people have “reclaimed” this word in a positive way.
- **Gender Expression:** How we express our gender identity on the outside.
- **Gender Nonconforming:** Describes a person whose gender expression is different from what societal norms expect.
- **Sexual Orientation:** A person’s physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to another person (one does not have to be sexually active).
- **Transgender:** People whose true gender identity does not “match” the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Nonbinary:** Anything that falls outside of the two-part or binary system. Some examples of nonbinary identities are genderqueer and bisexual.

3. GLSEN 2017 National School Climate Survey. (n.d.). Retrieved from glsen.org/research/2017-national-school-climate-survey