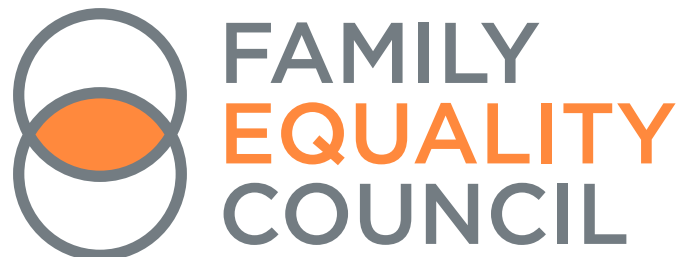


# OPENING DOORS

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender  
and Queer (LGBTQ) Parents and School



**The Family Equality Council works to ensure equality for LGBTQ families by building community, changing hearts and minds, and advancing social justice for all families.**

Thank you to Margie Brickley, Aimee Gelnaw, Hilary Marsh and Daniel Ryan for their pioneering work in creating the original Opening Doors.

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[www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org)

Dear Reader,

Thank you for opening the door to a safer, more inclusive world for all families in our schools. Your willingness to understand the needs of all people invested in schools—parents, educators, children and youth—will take us to a place where we can all stand comfortably and confidently in the same supportive room.

**“I’m just a kid  
with parents.”**

**Zack, 11 years old**

# Opening Doors: LGBTQ Parents and Schools\*

Children need a safe, supportive atmosphere in which they can learn. Parents want what's best for their children. Educators and school administrators seek to balance the needs of a group of children and their families. Ultimately, we all want the same thing.

Making schools a safe place for all children is a complex task and has far reaching implications. Now is the right time to consider the issues of LGBTQ headed families, as many school systems are examining their policies and practices and officially declare that they will not tolerate discrimination.

Bias hurts. It hurts children, it hurts families and it hurts entire school communities. How do we create a community of openness and trust rather than discomfort or hostility, of shared efforts rather than cross purposes, of growth through knowledge rather than avoidance?

The first step to creating such a community is making the conscious commitment to do so.

In this booklet you will find a set of facts and fears that shape the thinking about LGBTQ-headed families in this country. Also included is information intended specifically for parents and educators; the voices of children inform us about their daily experiences in schools and serve as a backdrop for why educators and parents need to participate in this dialogue. This booklet concludes with a set of rights and responsibilities designed to serve as a guide for all members of the greater learning community.

Everyone involved in this process has questions. Opening Doors addresses some of these uncertainties, drawing heavily upon research about LGBTQ parents.

Our aim in creating this booklet is to open the doors between LGBTQ parents and their children's schools. If these doors are closed, begin by opening them a crack. If they are open a little, open them even wider. If they are open halfway, use this booklet's resources and rationale to fling them open completely.

## Questions answered in this publication for:

### Children in LGBTQ Families...

What do they need for a safe and supportive learning environment?

### LGBTQ Parents...

What do they want for their children in school?

### Educators\*\*...

What do they need to know to best serve children who are growing up in LGBTQ-headed families?

\* "Schools" refers to any program for children (child-care, preschools, Head Start, nursery schools, family child care homes, before and after school programs, public schools and private schools).

\*\* "Educators" refers to all people who work with children and youth (teachers, caregivers, family childcare providers, assistant teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, specialists and all other school personnel).

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# Facts and Fears

## For and About LGBTQ-Headed Families

### NOTES

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### FACTS:

Millions of children are being raised by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer parents in the United States.

Numerous studies have shown that when there is a positive relationship between families and schools, students perform better academically and socially.

The National Education Association, American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, American School Counselor Association, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and several other education-related organizations all endorse comprehensive bullying and harassment policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>1</sup>

LGBTQ parents tend to be highly involved in their children’s education and may be even more likely to be involved than the general population of parents.<sup>2</sup>

While many LGBTQ parents have a very positive experience in their school

communities, some LGBTQ parents experience exclusion, marginalization, or mistreatment by school personnel, other parents or students.<sup>3</sup>

Children with LGBTQ parents face heightened levels of bullying, name calling and harassment. One study found that 42% of students said they had been verbally harassed at school in the past year because their parents were LGBTQ. 28% said they heard teachers or school staff make negative comments about LGBTQ families.<sup>4</sup>

In a groundbreaking lawsuit in 1996, a Federal appeals court found school officials liable for failing to protect former student, Jamie Nabozny, from anti-gay harassment and violence at school, resulting in a settlement of \$900,000.

You can report incidents of bullying and harassment to the Federal Department of Education Office of Civil Rights so they can build a record and become aware of dangerous social climates.

## FEARS:

### For the child

Teachers and kids will think I am strange.

Teachers and kids will treat me unfairly.

My family and I will be called names.

My family will not be included like other families in the school.

My friends' parents might not let their kids come over to my house to play or for a sleepover.

Teachers and kids might assume I am LGBTQ.

### For the LGBTQ parents

My child will not feel comfortable being open about our family.

My child will be discriminated against or experience harassment.

My child will not be invited to friends' homes. Friends will not accept my child's invitations to come to our home.

The school won't provide opportunities for my child to see his or her family reflected in the curriculum.

The school will "out" me and I will risk losing my job.

The school will "out" me and I will risk losing custody of my children.

### For the teacher/school

Addressing issues about LGBTQ-headed families means that I will have to talk about sex in the classroom.

I am uncomfortable using the words "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," "transgender" and "queer."

I don't know what words to use when interacting with members of LGBTQ-headed families.

I don't know how to reconcile my personal beliefs with my responsibility to all the children and families in my classroom/school.

I don't know what resources about LGBTQ-headed families exist or where to find them.

If I am inclusive, I could be accused of promoting homosexuality and lose my job.

### For the larger school community

My child will be taught values with which I disagree.

My child will be influenced to be gay.

My son will become a "sissy."/My daughter will become a "tomboy."

The "traditional" family will be devalued.

### References

1. National Safe Schools Partnership (2007). Bridging the Gap in Federal Law: Promoting Safe Schools and Improved Student Achievement By Preventing Bullying and Harassment in Our Schools.

2,3,4. Kosciw, J.G. and Diaz, E.M (2008). Involved, Invisible, and Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K-12 Schools. New York: GLSEN.



**“When people use gay as an insult, it’s like they are hurting my family.”**

**Pablo, 10 years old**

# Children’s Voices

## Stories kids tell us about what happens at schools

**7-year-old child:** *“Your mom’s a lesbian.”*

**6-year-old child:** *“Yeah, she is.”*

For children of LGBTQ-headed families, the labels used by their families are a matter of fact. Unlike some students, they do not assign negative interpretations to the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. Many are accustomed to hearing the words and respond to them comfortably. Teachers and school personnel can help other students learn that the words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “transgender” and “queer” are not negative words, but rather words that describe people in our communities. It is important to determine whether these words are being used as a statement of fact or as an insult and respond accordingly.

**8-year-old child:** *“A mom and a dad! A mom and a dad! Why is it always a mom and a dad?”*

Children need to feel acknowledged and affirmed by their teachers and peers. They need to see their families reflected in materials throughout the

educational environment and they need to hear about families like theirs.

Children pay close attention to who is represented and who is not. Visibility or invisibility establishes which groups are powerful and which are marginalized.

**10 year old child:** *“No one talks about that kind of stuff in my class.”*

Silence can be just as powerful as the spoken word—if not more so. When children do not feel welcome to talk about their families at school, they are forced to leave a significant part of their lives behind when they enter the school or child care setting. This can have a negative impact on their self-esteem. When children do not feel comfortable in the school environment, their learning and development can be negatively affected.

**9-year-old child:** *“I know being gay is not bad but other kids don’t even know what it means. They just think it’s bad.”*

**10-year-old child:** *“When people use gay as an insult, it’s like they are hurting my family.”*

### NOTES

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All homophobic remarks feel like personal attacks to the children of LGBTQ-headed families. Parents are the most important people in the lives of children and, therefore, anti-LGBTQ slurs can have a profound and devastating effect on children whose parents are LGBTQ. Not challenging the negative use of the words like “gay,” such as in the expression “that’s so gay,” tacitly sends the message that homophobia is an acceptable bias.

**9-year-old girl:** *“Today, in the hallway, Emily and I had our arms around each other and Michael called us gay. He meant gay in a bad way. My teacher told him that she would not let him hurt anyone’s feelings. She told him she thought it was great when friends love each other enough to hug each other.”*

Teachers hold a great deal of power in their schools and the lives of their students. A supportive response to a difficult situation sends a clear message that the teacher will not tolerate harassment and supports all children.

**10-year-old boy:** *“Everyone calls Charles ‘gayboy’ and I’m afraid if I tell them to stop they will call me ‘gayboy’ too. The teachers don’t even say anything.”*

When one child is harassed all children in the group are negatively affected. No one wants to be singled out as the object of abuse. When teachers keep the children safe emotionally as well as physically, they are partners in creating a healthy learning environment.

**11-year-old child:** *“I’m just a kid with parents.”*

**12-year-old child:** *“I don’t want to talk about it.”*

Most children with one or more LGBTQ parents do not view their families as “different” or “deficient.” For these children, like all children, their families are just their families. However, children encounter negative messages about LGBTQ people in the world outside their family. As a result, children with LGBTQ parents are made painfully aware of the differences and the possible physical, social and emotional dangers of disclosing that they have one or more LGBTQ parents. Because they are sensitive to and fearful of the repercussions, some children may choose never to talk about their families within the school community. Adults need to respect these feelings.

## NOTES

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**“I don’t want to  
talk about it.”**

**Ashley, 12 years old**

# Parents

## How LGBTQ Parents Can Help With Their Children’s Education

### NOTES

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Your child’s school or child care program may have never encountered a family like yours and may not know that you exist, what you need, what to call you or how to treat you and your children. Most importantly, they may not be aware that the curriculum excludes you. Individuals at the school may have personal views that are not compatible with your life, but it is their job to provide your child with a nurturing environment for learning.

Parents are advocates for their children. As LGBTQ parents, it is primarily up to you, in partnership with school personnel, to ensure that your children’s school and/or childcare program is or becomes a safe and supportive place for your children and your family.

Children deserve to see their families reflected at school on a regular basis throughout the school year. Make sure LGBTQ-headed families are included in the spectrum of families in pictures on the wall and in books in the classroom and school library.

Children need teachers to use language that is inclusive of all families— especially theirs. Early in the school year, request that the first and last names of all the members of your family be reflected accurately in school communications—directories, newsletters, notes, etc. Encourage the school to use “Parents/Guardians” on forms in place of “Mother/Father.” Let the school know in advance how you would like them to handle potentially awkward situations such as Mother’s Day or Father’s Day card making, father-daughter dances or brunches.

Your children deserve to be and feel safe at school. Talk to your children and see if they are being teased or harassed for having an LGBTQ parent. If they are, approach the teachers and school administrators. Teasing is often the result of ignorance, not true hatred. School wide education by adults and children is the best way to put an end to it—or stop it from developing.

## Here are more things you can do:

**Determine your level of comfort in being open.** For a variety of reasons including custody issues, job security and personal safety; you may choose to be less open. Become as empowered and informed as you can so that when an opportunity arises you will be prepared to take a step.

**Be as open as possible about your relationship.** School personnel cannot be supportive of family constellations about which they have no knowledge. If you choose to label the other same-sex adult as an “aunt,” “roommate,” etc., the school will not know there are LGBTQ-headed families in the school or community and they may see no reason to incorporate any information about them into the curriculum.

**Find a way to contribute to your children’s school community.** The single best way to become accepted in a school community is to establish a presence within it. Devote as much time as you can spare—at least a few hours over the course of the school year—to PTA meetings, committees, classrooms, trips, tutoring or potlucks. Let people get to know you and your children as individuals. Don’t be limited by labels or stereotypes.

**Provide your children’s school with appropriate language and resources.** Tell the teachers who is in your family and

the names your children use to identify them and provide a glossary of correct terms for LGBTQ families. Give the library a list of books, videos and other educational materials (see resource page) and encourage school administrators and librarians to purchase these materials for the school.

**Seek to create support from other LGBTQ parents and/or organizations.** You may find that you are not the only LGBTQ parent(s) in the school or in the area. You may believe you are, but if your relationship is hidden, the same may be true for others. We are everywhere. To get a list of local organizations and family activities, visit the Family Equality Council website at [www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org).

**Advocate for your child, but do so in a manner that respects the world of the school personnel.** Schools have hundreds of children to educate, ever-shrinking budgets to juggle and people’s careers to manage. Most schools want to accommodate all children and all families in the best way possible, but please keep in mind that your child’s needs are not the school’s only concern. Also remember that ignorance does not necessarily equal homophobia or transphobia; just because a school hasn’t addressed LGBTQ family issues doesn’t mean it won’t address them

if asked to. If you approach educators with information, confidence and patience, they are much more likely to be receptive to your messages than if you charge in with anger and defensiveness.

**Be sensitive to the ever-changing needs of your child.** At some point children need to be given a certain amount of control over what, when and to whom things are said. Pay attention to his/her signals and consult with your child/ren about these issues.

# Educators

## How Educators Can Best Support Children in LGBTQ-Headed Families

### NOTES

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There are millions of children being raised by LGBTQ-headed families in the United States. These children attend our schools. LGBTQ parents, like other parents, are seeking partnerships with schools to support their children’s academic, social and emotional growth. Educators and LGBTQ parents are continuously learning how to interact with each other. At the same time, we need much more understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ-headed families to form home-school partnerships that support all children.

You may never have knowingly encountered a LGBTQ-headed family, but this does not mean that they are not a part of your school’s community. There may be two moms, two dads, a family with one or more transgender parents, a single LGBTQ parent or a blended family. While the family constellation may be new to you, your role as an educator does not change and includes addressing the children’s academic, social and emotional needs in partnership with parents.

Research has shown that student success in school is related to the level

of positive interaction between home and school. Your role is to provide each child with equal educational opportunities. In order to do so, it is necessary that you create an environment that reflects all family constellations, whether there are children from LGBTQ-headed families or not. Just as you strive to have children understand people of all cultures, you must provide a way for children to see the many kinds of families that exist. If your personal views conflict with the family constellation, it is your job to put aside those views in order to fully address the child’s needs.

All children need to feel safe in school. Ignoring harassment gives bullies permission to continue their offensive and inappropriate behavior. Just as you must stop comments that have derogatory racist connotations, you must also stop teasing that is based upon sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Help children to recognize that words like “gay,” “dyke,” “faggot,” “queer” and “sissy” can be hurtful and will not be tolerated.

## Here are more things you can do:

**Use appropriate language in acknowledging the parent(s) in a LGBTQ-headed family.** In order to foster a positive relationship with LGBTQ parents, use terms they choose. Be proactive and ask the parent(s) what names their child uses for them, such as Mama Kate, Mommy, Papa or Daddy. Find out about what other family members their child might refer to in class.

**See that you and your colleagues get training on the topic of LGBTQ-headed families.** Through training, you can address whatever questions you may have and become informed about the issues that confront LGBTQ-headed families. Training creates a forum for shared discourse in which you may work through stereotypes or misconceptions. Training also provides concrete tools for creating safe, inclusive classrooms. There is a need for a safe place in which you can work through your personal feelings so you can support the children of all families in your school. We recommend that you invite LGBTQ parents to share their experiences with school faculty. Check your local community for an LGBTQ family organization that may offer training or have a speakers' bureau. The films *It's Elementary* and *Both of My Moms' Names Are Judy* (see resource list) are also excellent training resources.

**Change your school forms and other community documents to use neutral, inclusive language.** Many school forms ask

for "mother" and "father," and directory listing forms often contain such non-inclusive references as "room mother." Change the wording of forms from "mother" and "father" to "parent/guardian." Include several "parent/guardian" lines to accommodate blended families. Make sure you list all parents' names in the school directory (with their permission, of course). Include LGBTQ parents in class newsletters that announce family celebrations such as births, adoptions and second-parent adoptions.

**Update your curriculum to include materials that address the issues of LGBTQ-headed families.** Like all children, those in LGBTQ-headed families need to see their family reflected in the classroom curriculum. Incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive anti-bias curricula and other resources that model inclusiveness, such as the Families All Matter Book Project and Welcoming Schools (see resource list). Ask the parents if they have any books or resources that would be useful. Ask the school curriculum coordinator or resource center director to get materials that include LGBTQ-headed families. Include conversation about LGBTQ-headed families in the classroom. Discussion of LGBTQ-headed families is no more a discussion about sex than talking about heterosexual families would be.

**Work on creating a school environment that is inclusive of all community members.** Make sure that your school/district/state nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies include sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression and associational language that explicitly protects kids of LGBTQ parents.

Family Equality Council can help you update your school's policy to be more inclusive or we can assist you in drafting a policy if your school(s) don't already have one.

Ensure that LGBTQ-headed families and colleagues are free from harassment or any kind of discrimination in your school. Don't be afraid to use the words "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "transgender" and "queer" in the school so that all community members gain familiarity with these words and the existence of LGBTQ-headed families. (See the section below *Answers to Questions Children May Ask* for age-appropriate explanations of these words.) Provide a nurturing environment for parents and school faculty and staff to address questions or concerns without fear of retribution.

**Make sure your school leadership models inclusiveness and exhibits an understanding of the needs of LGBTQ-headed families.** School leadership plays a strong role in setting the stage for inclusiveness. Ask school leaders to demonstrate their acceptance of LGBTQ-headed families. School leaders should support LGBTQ-inclusive policies and curriculum and help the entire school community understand that inclusion of LGBTQ is essential for creating a safe and welcoming school environment. When leaders and all educators begin using the words "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," "transgender" and queer including LGBTQ-headed families in their policy statements and other community documents, educators will be more open to addressing such issues in the classroom.



# Questions and Answers

## NOTES

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### Questions for Educators to Ask Parents

*Tell me about your family. Who would you like us to include in discussions about your family? (Asking open-ended questions like this invites parents to speak freely and openly.)*

*What are the names your child uses to refer to your family members? (Daddy/Papa, Mama Jane/Mama Sally, first names, etc.)*

*How open are you about your relationship with the rest of the community? (For some families, public disclosure may result in discrimination, harassment and danger of losing custody and/or jobs.)*

*Do you have resources and materials that might help me learn about LGBTQ families and cover it in class?*

*How does your family explain how your children came to be with you? (Families can be created by birth, adoption, surrogacy, from previous marriage, and other arrangements.)*

### Questions for Parents to Ask Parents

*Do you have anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies in your school that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression? How are these policies communicated to staff, parents and students?*

*How prevalent is anti-gay name-calling at your school? How does your school deal with issues of teasing, name calling, harassment and bullying?*

*Have you ever had openly LGBTQ parents or teachers at your school? If you have, how did your school address their needs?*

*Has staff at your school been provided with training and/or workshops about working with LGBTQ families?*

*Does your school have books or other resource materials that reflect LGBTQ-headed families and explore the issues related to them?*

## Answers to Questions Children May Ask

### Nonjudgmental ways to answer children's questions:

These can be adjusted to accommodate your family's values and/or the developmental level and personal experiences of your child/ren.

*What does "gay" or "lesbian" mean?* Being gay means that a person loves, in a very special way, someone who is of the same gender. For example, a gay man wants to be involved with and love another man. A gay woman, or lesbian, wants to be involved with and love another woman. Gay people might choose to have a special relationship with someone and share their home and have a family together.

*How can John have two dads?* Families are made up in many different ways. John lives in a family where there are two dads because his parents, like yours, love each other very much and wanted to bring a child into their family to be part of their lives.

*Where is John's mom?* His family is made up of two dads, John and any siblings. His dads are the ones who make a home for him and take care of him.

*Can girls marry girls or boys marry boys?* Grown-ups create relationships in many ways. Many grown-ups live their lives in couples and take care of one another as a family. Being married is one way to do this. In some places, women can marry women and men can marry men. In some places they cannot because there are laws that say they cannot. But people who love each other can live together, take care of one another and be a family, with or without children.

*Is Caitlin going to be gay because her moms are gay (lesbian)?* No. Caitlin will grow up to be who she was born to be. Having gay or lesbian parents does not make a child become gay or lesbian.

*Will I be gay if I play with Caitlin?* No. You are always going to be who you are, no matter whom you play with. Being gay, lesbian or straight is something that's inside a person; no one else can put it there.

*Did that person used to be a man? Why does he look like a woman now? or What does 'transgender' mean?* Yes, she used to be a man. Some people who were born as boys feel like they were born with the wrong body because they feel like a girl or woman on the inside. At some point in their

lives they may decide to make their outside appearance look like a woman so that their body and their feelings inside match. They believe that they will be happier to have what they look like on the outside match what they feel on the inside. And the same may be true for people born and raised as women who feel that they are men.

# Rights and Responsibilities of children, LGBTQ parents and educators

## NOTES

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### Rights

Parents have the right to advocate for their children.

Parents have the right to have open and honest communication with schools.

Parents have the right to have their family recognized, acknowledged and included in the school community.

Children have the right to a safe and harassment-free school environment.

Children have the right to have their family reflected in the school curriculum.

Children have the right to reach their full academic, social and emotional potential.

An educator has the right to have a personal view about homosexuality.

Educators have the right to feel safe about talking about LGBTQ issues in school.

Educators have the right to benefit from knowing any information about children's lives outside school that may affect their lives inside school.

## Responsibilities

Educators have the responsibility to consider parental concerns as essential to children's educational process.

Educators have the responsibility to provide opportunities for parents to establish a dialogue with them.

Educators have the responsibility to help LGBTQ-headed families feel welcome and included in the school community.

The educator has the responsibility to continually seek the tools to afford all children and families the same degree of safety and respect.

Schools have the responsibility to institute a written anti-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

Parents have the responsibility to keep educators informed about issues that may affect their children's academic, social and emotional development.

Educators have the responsibility to stop name-calling, bullying and discrimination.

Educators have the responsibility to include pictures, books and conversations about LGBTQ-headed families in depictions of general family life.

Parents and educators have the responsibility to nurture the parent-teacher partnership, to encourage that potential.

# Glossary of Terms

**ally**—a heterosexual person who supports and respects LGBTQ people, acts to interrupt and challenge anti-LGBTQ remarks or behaviors and advocates for equal rights and fair treatment of LGBTQ people.

**anti-discrimination policy**—a policy that states clearly that bias or discrimination against particular groups of people—in this case, LGBTQ people and their children—will not be tolerated. This discrimination includes both actions and words.

**bias**—having thoughts, feelings or displaying behaviors that assume people who are different from you or hold different ideas or beliefs are less worthy of equal rights and treatment.

**bisexual**—a person who is romantically and sexually attracted to people of either gender.

**blended families**—families created by the coming together of adults when one or more of the adults already has children.

**co-parent adoption**—(see second-parent adoption)

**custody**—the legal guardianship of a child. In the LGBTQ community, custody is

determined through biological connection and legal adoption. Many non-biological parents and parents not initially named in adoption papers choose to gain legal custody of their children through a process of second-parent adoption.

**gay**—1) the generic term used to describe gay and lesbian people or the gay and lesbian community. 2) more specifically, a man who is romantically and sexually attracted to other men. 3) a slur used to describe anything, anyone or any behavior that does not meet the approval of a given group.

**gender identity/expression**—a person’s deeply-rooted sense of oneself as male, female, or something in-between. This identity may or may not match the individual’s biological sex.

**harassment**—behavior meant to frighten, taunt or defame someone. Harassment can be either physical, verbal or emotional in nature, and is a legally recognized form of discrimination.

**heteronormativity**—the institutionalization of heterosexuality as the norm.

**heterosexism**—the (usually implicit)

assumption that heterosexuality is a norm, a standard, an ideal, preferable to other sexual orientations or the only option.

**homophobia**—the fear of homosexuality and homosexuals. This often leads to bias, hatred and harassment of gay and lesbian people.

**lesbian**—a woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.

**“out”**—a term used to describe an LGBTQ person who is open about his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. The process of coming out includes becoming aware of one’s own identity, accepting it, and telling others about it, and usually occurs over time and in stages. Individuals, for personal reasons or perceptions of safety and acceptance, may choose to be out in some situations and not in others. It is a matter of each individual’s personal choice.

**“outing”**—revealing the sexual identity of another person usually without his or her consent.

**queer**—term used by some people to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and/or sociopolitical perspective; often used as an umbrella

term to identify LGBTQ-identified people and others who fall outside of "traditional" sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. This term, when used outside of the LGBTQ community, is often used as a biased or derogatory term.

**second-parent adoption**—the legal process through which a non-biological or non-adoptive parent (in the original adoption procedure) gains shared legal custody of a child, most often applied to LGBTQ couples. (Laws and policies regarding second-parent adoption differ from state to state.)

**sex**—anatomical categorization of persons typically given at birth (i.e. male or female).

**transgender**—a broad term used to describe the continuum of individuals whose gender identity and expression may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth.

#### **Terms we don't advocate using:**

**cross-dresser**—term used to describe a person of one gender who sometimes dresses in clothes typically associated with the other gender (see also "transvestite"). This term is often used as a biased and derogatory term.

**dyke**—term used to describe a lesbian, most often one who does not display traditionally feminine characteristics. This

term, when used outside of the LGBTQ community, is often used as a biased and derogatory term.

**faggot**—term used to describe a gay man, most often one who does not display traditionally masculine characteristics. This term, when used outside of the LGBTQ community, is often used as a biased and derogatory term.

**homosexual**—a person with emotional and sexual attractions to people of the same gender. This is not the preferred term to describe LGBTQ people due to the negative historical and scientific connotations. "LGBTQ" or "gay" are preferred terms

**lifestyle**—another term to avoid. The LGBTQ community is incredibly diverse. Just as there is no single heterosexual lifestyle, there is no single gay lifestyle. The lives of LGBTQ people are as varied as the lives of heterosexual people and do not revolve solely around sex.

**sexual preference**—another term to avoid. Sexual orientation is the correct term. Preference implies choice, and most scientists believe that sexual orientation is determined by a combination of genetic, hormonal and environmental influences.

**special rights**—a term used to describe the assumption that accommodations made to include or protect the rights of

people outside the mainstream (and for whom there are no constitutional laws to protect) are special and therefore, not necessary. In almost all cases, the disenfranchised groups are seeking equal rights, or the same protections of safety, liberty and justice to which others are entitled.

**tranny**—term sometimes used to describe transgender people. This term is often used as a biased or derogatory term.

**transsexual**—term typically used to describe persons who have undergone sex reassignment surgery or other physical alterations of self to achieve their desired gender identity/expression; often subsumed under the broader term "transgender".

**transvestite**—term used to describe persons of one gender who sometimes dress in clothes typically associated with the other gender (see also "crossdresser").

# Resources for Families and Educators

## Family Equality Council

PO Box 960510  
Boston, MA 02196  
Ph: 617-502-8700  
Fax: 617-502-8701  
E-mail: [info@familyequality.org](mailto:info@familyequality.org)  
[www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org)  
*Resources available:*  
*Opening More Doors*  
*Back to School Tool*  
*Anti-Bullying Policy Map*

## Asian Counseling and Referral Service

3639 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S  
Seattle, WA 98144  
Ph: 206-695-7600  
Email: [events@acrs.org](mailto:events@acrs.org)  
<http://www.acrs.org/>

## API Family Pride

P.O. Box 473  
Fremont, CA 94537  
Ph : 510-818-0887  
Email: [info@apifamilypride.org](mailto:info@apifamilypride.org)  
<http://www.apifamilypride.org/>  
*Resources available:*  
*Asian & Pacific Islander Family Stories*  
*Wall of Pride*

## Advocates for Youth

2000 M Street NW, Suite 750  
Washington, DC 20036  
Ph: 202.419.3420  
<http://www.amplifyyourvoice.org/youthresource>  
*Resources:*  
*Organizations*  
*Gay/Straight Alliances*  
*Hotlines*  
*Not the Only One: Gay and Lesbian Fiction for Teens Young, Gay and Proud*

## Bisexual Resource Center

P.O. Box 170796  
Boston, MA 02117  
Ph: 617-424-9595  
E-mail: [brc@biresource.net](mailto:brc@biresource.net)  
[www.biresource.net/](http://www.biresource.net/)

## Californita Safe Schools Coalition

1550 Bryant Street, Suite 800,  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Ph: 415-626-1680  
<http://www.casafeschools.org/>  
*Resources available:*  
*All Families Welcome Brochures*  
*Safe Schools resource Guide*

## Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)

3815 S Othello St Suite 100 #310  
Seattle, WA 98118  
Ph: 415-861-KIDS (5437)  
Fax: 415-255-8345  
E-mail: [colage@colage.org](mailto:colage@colage.org)  
[www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org)

## Families Like Ours

603 Stewart Street, Suite 902  
Seattle, Washington 98101  
Ph: 206-441-7602 | 1-877-230-3055  
<http://www.familieslikeours.org>  
*Resources available:*  
*Adoptive & Foster Families*  
*Case Workers, Agencies & more*

## Family Diversity Projects

PO Box 1246  
Amherst, MA 01004-1246  
Ph: 413-256-0502  
Fax: 413-253-3977  
E-mail: [info@familydiv.org](mailto:info@familydiv.org)  
<http://www.familydiv.org/>  
*Resource Available:*  
*Love Makes a Family*  
*In Our Family*

### **Family National Center for Lesbian Rights**

870 Market Street Suite 370  
San Francisco CA 94102  
Ph: 415.392.6257  
Fax: 415.392.8442  
E-mail: [info@nclrights.org](mailto:info@nclrights.org)  
<http://www.nclrights.org/>

### **Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network (GLSEN)**

90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor  
New York, New York 10004  
Ph: 212-727-0135  
Fax: 212-727-0254  
E-mail: [glsen@glsen.org](mailto:glsen@glsen.org)  
[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

### **GroundSpark**

4104 24th St, Suite 201  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
Ph: 415-641-4616 or 800-405-3322  
Fax: 415-641-4632  
[www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org)

*Resources available:*

*It's Elementary & It's Still Elementary*  
*That's a Family*  
*Let's Get Real*

### **Human Rights Campaign Foundation Family Project**

1640 Rhode Island Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Ph: 202-628-4160  
[www.welcomingschools.org](http://www.welcomingschools.org)  
*Resources available:*  
*Welcoming Schools Guide*

### **International Foundation for Gender Education**

272 Carroll St NW  
Washington, DC 20012  
Ph: 781-899-2212  
E-mail: [info@ifge.org](mailto:info@ifge.org)  
[www.ifge.org](http://www.ifge.org)

### **National Center for Transgender Equality**

1325 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 700  
Washington, D.C., 20005  
Ph: 202-903-0112  
Fax: 202-393-2241  
Email: [NCTE@NCTEquality.org](mailto:NCTE@NCTEquality.org)  
[www.nctequality.org](http://www.nctequality.org)

### **Our Family Coalition**

1385 Mission Street, Suite 340  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Ph: 415-981 1960  
Fax: 415-981 1962  
E-mail: [webmaster@ourfamily.org](mailto:webmaster@ourfamily.org)  
<http://www.ourfamily.org/>  
*Resources available:*  
*Best of the Gay Bay*

### **Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**

1828 L Street, NW, Suite 660  
Washington, DC 20036  
Ph: 202-467-8180  
Fax: 202-467-8194  
E-mail: [info@pflag.org](mailto:info@pflag.org)  
[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

### **Rainbow Rumpus- The Magazine for Kids with LGBT Parents**

PO Box 6881  
Minneapolis, MN 55406-2999  
Ph: 612-721-6442  
E-mail: [admin@rainbowrumpus.org](mailto:admin@rainbowrumpus.org)  
<http://www.rainbowrumpus.org/>  
*Resources available:*  
*The Girl Who Stole the Stars*

### **Safe Schools Coalition**

PO Box 2388  
Seattle, WA 98122  
Ph: 206-632-0622 ext. 49  
[www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)

### **Straight Spouse Network**

P.O. Box 4985  
Chicago, IL 60080  
Ph: 201-825-7763  
E-mail: [dir@straightspouse.org](mailto:dir@straightspouse.org)  
[www.straightspouse.org](http://www.straightspouse.org)