Transgender Students
What counselors need to know to support gender non-conforming students.

Objectives
- Describe the environment for transgender and gender non-conforming youth in schools.
- How to support students when they come out to you.
- Understand differences among sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and biological sex.
- Understand the counselor's role in providing a safe environment for LGBTQ students, especially those who are transgender and gender non-conforming.
- Access resources for LGBTQ students.

2013/2015 National School Climate Survey - Notable Findings
- Percent of respondents who report hearing negative remarks about gender expression (not being “masculine” or “feminine” enough)
  - 2013: 85%
  - 2015: 87%
2013/2015 National School Climate Survey - Notable Findings

- Percent of respondents who report hearing staff members make negative comments about gender expression
  - 2013: 30%
  - 2015: 39%

- Based on their gender expression...
  - Verbally harassed: 63% to 57%
  - Physically harassed: 28% to 23%
  - Physically assaulted: 11% to 11%

- Of those who were harassed, didn’t report it to a staff member and didn’t report it to a family member
  - 2013: 59% (staff), 50% (family)
  - 2015: 50% (staff), 50% (family)
2013/2015 National School Climate Survey - Notable Findings

- Percent of respondents who did report an incident of harassment and say the adult effectively handled it
  - 2013: 33%
  - 2015: 26%

Source: GLSEN, 2015

Diagram of Sex and Gender

- Biological Sex
  - Male (anatomy, chromosomes, hormones) --- Intersex --- Female

- Gender Identity
  - Man (psychological sense of self) --- (bisexual/third gender) --- Woman

- Gender Expression
  - Masculine --- Androgynous --- Feminine

- Sexual Orientation
  - Attracted to women --- Bisexual --- Attracted to men

Transgender Terms Quiz
When a Student Comes Out to You

- Offer support but don’t assume a student needs any help.
- Be a role model of acceptance.
- Appreciate the student’s courage.
- Assure and respect confidentiality.
- Ask questions that demonstrate understanding, acceptance and compassion.
- Remember, the student has not changed.
- Validate the person’s gender identity and expression.
- Remember that gender identity is separate from sexual orientation.

Support Transgender Youth

- Respect gender pronoun and name preferences
- Work with student about whether/when/how to inform parents/guardians (esp. when is wanting to be out at school)
- Work with student, family and school to address bathroom and locker room issues
- Reach out to organizations to find best practices for other issues that arise

Legal Protections for Trans Youth

- First Amendment: Protects external expressions of gender that might include
  - Taking a date to a dance regardless of either date’s biological sex
  - Running/competing for titles related to a given gender regardless of biological sex (i.e. prom king or queen)
  - Dressing in a manner that may not conform to one’s biological sex.
- Title IX: protects students from harassment based on gender stereotyping (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2017)
Guidance from Missouri School Board Association

- After guidance from Obama administration, MSBA recommended allowing transgender students to use the restrooms and/or locker rooms of the sex with which they identify.
- The joint decision by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education to withdraw last year’s guidance for transgender students means those departments will not be independently pursuing enforcement actions against schools and/or threatening the loss of federal funds based on the withdrawn guidance.
- A separate policy for transgender students is likely premature until the issues are settled by the courts.
- Gloucester County School Board vs. Gavin Grimm
  - Transgender student brought case against school district
  - Made it to Supreme Court, but decision was vacated after Trump reversed Obama’s decision
  - “Work with parents and students at the local level to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for all students” (MSBA, 2017).

From a Trans Teen

- Leon, 20 years old: “We don’t want a bunch of promises, all we want is to be comfortable and to be understood. If something is not possible then let us know that. Being understood means more to us than anything. If you don’t understand something then don’t be afraid to ask, it is better to know about something because you asked than to assume because you are afraid to ask.”

From a trans teen

- Riley, 17 years old: The most difficult was the constant pressure of being my original identity. It would help if, in class at least, the teacher asked (individually and privately) each student their preferred name/pronouns. The biggest obstacle I have had to overcome was self-denial. A lot of times I will also slip up and call myself by my original name and pronouns, which is really harming to my progress as a trans* person.
From a trans teen

Riley, 17 years old: Labels are also a big issue. This generation is big on not being labeled, but it should be apparent to most people that a lot of people in our generation crave labels or apply labels to themselves. The thing is, labels are a personal issue. Sort of a self-confirmation deal. I needed the transgender and pansexual label for myself because I felt like a freak, like I didn’t belong. So, personally, I needed the label to confirm to myself that I’m not weird or whatever. But I don’t need anyone else to know that, or to put me into a box that I don’t want/is not me.

Letter home at Elementary

May 1, 2014

In the interest of creating a positive and safe learning environment for all students, this information is being shared with parent permission.

A newly assigned gender male student who has been known as [male name] has entered the school as [female name] and is the primary contact. School procedures have been created to refer to the student by his/her name, and [female name]'s teacher will introduce her to other students by her new name.

Teachers will encourage students to continue to be respectful of all students in their classes and not to refer to a student by their former name if they would like to be called by a different name.

If you have any questions or would like to talk more with me, please call school at [phone number].

Sincerely,

Mrs. [Principal]
What Can We Do?

- Promote LGBT-inclusive school organizations (i.e. Gay-Straight Alliances)
- Support LGBT and LGBT-supportive faculty and staff
- Be familiar with and use LGBT-inclusive language
  - Queer
  - Parents

What Can We Do?

- Promote inclusive school policies
- Provide or facilitate professional development: small and large scale
- Forge community partnerships
  - LGBT youth centers
  - LGBT-inclusive (but not exclusively LGBT) youth organizations

Handout - MSCA Website

- Slides
- GLSEN National School Climate Survey: Missouri Snapshot
- Resources
  - Local (Kansas City) resources
  - Missouri resources
  - National resources
- How to be an ally to transgender students
References


Questions?

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Findings from the GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that Missouri schools were not safe for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) secondary school students. In addition, many LGBTQ students in Missouri did not have access to important school resources, such as having Gay-Straight Alliances or similar student clubs, and were not protected by comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment school policies.

**FACT:** The majority of LGBTQ students in Missouri regularly heard anti-LGBT remarks (Fig. 1). Many also regularly heard school staff make homophobic remarks (27%) and negative remarks about someone’s gender expression (39%).

**FACT:** Most LGBTQ students in Missouri had been victimized at school (Fig. 2). Of those, most never reported the incident to school staff (55%). Only 26% of those students who reported incidents said it resulted in effective staff intervention.

**FACT:** Many LGBTQ students in Missouri reported discriminatory policies or practices at their school (Fig. 3). Most (62%) experienced at least one form of discrimination at school during the past year.

- About 1 in 3 LGBTQ students in Missouri were disciplined for public affection that does not result in similar action when it occurs between non-LGBTQ students (32%).
- In Missouri, about 1 in 4 LGBTQ students (26%), and over half of transgender students (57%), were unable to use the school restroom that aligned with their gender. Additionally, nearly 1 in 4 (24%) of LGBTQ students, and nearly half of transgender students (45%), were prevented from using their preferred name and gender pronouns in school.
- LGBTQ students experienced other forms of school discrimination (not in Fig. 3): being unable to wear LGBT-supportive apparel (15%), being unable to discuss LGBT issues in assignments (20%), being unable to include LGBT themes in extracurricular activities (e.g. school yearbook, Day of Silence) (20%), and being prevented or discouraged from playing school sports due to an LGBT identity (11%).
FACT: Many LGBTQ students in Missouri did not have access to in-school resources and supports (Fig. 4).

- Only 8% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- Nearly all could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBT students, but only half (56%) could identify 6 or more supportive school staff.
- Only 15% were taught positive things about LGBT people in class.
- Only half could access information about LGBT communities on school Internet.

**Figure 4. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources & Supports in Missouri Schools**

*Comprehensive Policy: 8%
At Least One Supportive Educator: 97%
6 or More Supportive Educators: 56%
Gay-Straight Alliance: 53%
Inclusive Curriculum: 15%
Library Resources: 43%
Internet Access: 50%*

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

School-based supports such as comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, school personnel who are supportive of LGBTQ students, Gay-Straight Alliances, and LGBT-inclusive curricular resources can positively affect school climate for LGBTQ students. Findings from the 2015 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that students attending schools with these resources and supports report more positive school experiences, including lower victimization and absenteeism and higher academic achievement.

Given the high percentages of LGBTQ students in Missouri who experience harassment at school and the limited access to key resources and supports that can have a positive effect on their school experiences, it is critical that Missouri school leaders, education policymakers, and other individuals who are obligated to provide safe learning environments for all students take the following steps:

- Implement comprehensive school anti-bullying/harassment policies;
- Support Gay-Straight Alliances;
- Provide professional development for school staff on LGBTQ student issues; and
- Increase student access to LGBT-inclusive curricular resources.

These actions can move us toward a future in which all students in Missouri will have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

To learn more about GLSEN and to get involved, visit glsen.org or contact glsen@glsen.org.
To get involved in the Greater Kansas City chapter, visit glsen.org/chapters/kansascity or contact kansascity@chapters.glsen.org.
To get involved in the Springfield chapter, visit glsen.org/chapters/springfield or contact springfield@chapters.glsen.org.

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

In 2015, GLSEN conducted the ninth National School Climate Survey (NSCS), a biennial survey of the experiences of LGBTQ youth in U.S. secondary schools. The national sample consisted of 10,528 LGBTQ students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A total of 276 respondents were attending schools in Missouri. The Missouri sample was majority White/European American (82%), 7% Multiracial, 5% Hispanic/Latino, and 4% Black/African American. The gender composition was 21% cisgender male, 37% cisgender female, 18% transgender, 10% genderqueer, and 15% another gender (e.g., genderfluid). Most (92%) attended public schools. The school community makeup was 30% rural/small town, 39% suburban, and 31% urban. The results reported for Missouri have a margin of error of +/-6%.

For the full 2015 National School Climate Survey report or for any other GLSEN research, go to glsen.org/research.
Follow @GLSENG research on Twitter.

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GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students.
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Kansas City, Missouri and National LGBTQ-Supportive Organizations and Services

**AIDS Walk Kansas City**
816-931-0959  [www.aidswalkkansascity.org/](http://www.aidswalkkansascity.org/)
Over 5,700 men, women and children are living with HIV/AIDS in Kansas City. Over 700 are between the ages of 13 and 24. Be Ready to help those living with HIV/AIDS in Kansas City and to support our local AIDS service organizations.

**Campfire USA – Heartland – All Inclusive Alternative to Scouting Programs**
Camp Fire USA builds caring, confident youth and future leaders. We are inclusive, welcoming children, youth and adults regardless of race, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation or other aspect of diversity.

**Children's Mercy – Gender Pathway Services**
Gender Pathway Services at Children's Mercy provides interdisciplinary, family-centered services for transgender, gender-variant, and gender-questioning children. Their services are aimed at supporting the physical, mental and social health of patients and their families as they navigate the process of gender identity development.

**GLSEN, Greater Kansas City chapter**
913-608-4528  [glsen.org/kansascity](http://glsen.org/kansascity)
The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

**Genders & Sexualities (GSA) Network**
[www.gsanetwork.org/](http://www.gsanetwork.org/)
Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network is a youth leadership organization that connects school-based Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) to each other and community resources through peer support, leadership development, and training. GSA Network supports young people in starting, strengthening, and sustaining GSAs and builds the capacity of GSAs to create safe environments in schools for students to support each other and learn about homophobia and other oppressions, educate the school community about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues, and fight discrimination, harassment, and violence in schools.

**Gender Spectrum**
[https://www.genderspectrum.org/](https://www.genderspectrum.org/)
As the largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans, the Human Rights Campaign represents a force of more than one million members and supporters nationwide — all committed to making HRC’s vision a reality.

**Human Rights Campaign-Kansas City**
[www.hrc.org/steering-committees/kansas-city](http://www.hrc.org/steering-committees/kansas-city)
As the largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans, the Human Rights Campaign represents a force of more than one million members and supporters nationwide — all committed to making HRC’s vision a reality.

**Kansas City Anti-Violence Project (KCAVP)**
[www.kcavp.org](http://www.kcavp.org)
The Kansas City Anti-Violence Project (KCAVP) is a Missouri nonprofit corporation committed to providing domestic violence, sexual assault, and hate crimes advocacy and education to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. Currently, there are no LGBT-specific domestic violence or sexual assault services in western Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, or Iowa. KCAVP was created to address this gap by providing support and services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and hate crimes in western Missouri, eastern Kansas, with a focus on the Kansas City area.

**Kansas City CARE (formerly Free Health) Clinic**
(816) 753-5144  [kccareclinic.org/](http://kccareclinic.org/)
The Kansas City CARE Clinic is an integral part, the net under the safety net, of the health care delivery system in the Kansas City community. As it was formed to do in 1971, the Clinic provides basic health care services at no charge to people who cannot pay for care and to those who do not have insurance available to them. The Clinic helps keep the uninsured and underinsured healthy!

**Kansas City Passages – Youth Center**
816-931-0334  [www.kcpassages.org](http://www.kcpassages.org)
Passages Youth Center is a drug-free, alcohol-free, and hate-free center for 14- through 20-year-old lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Our goal is to help them grow as they explore the nature of their sexual and gender identities while having fun and meeting new friends at the same time. We provide educational information and experiences to encourage personal growth and social interaction to ease their transition into self-acceptance and to become empowered LGBTQ youth. These programs form a foundation of vital resources that provide youth with alternatives to risk-taking behavior.

**Kansas City Gay Pride**  
[www.gaypridekc.org](http://www.gaypridekc.org)  
Our organization consists of an eager group of volunteers from the greater Kansas City metropolitan area. Our committee members are all greatly involved in their own businesses, as well as members of other organizations within our city.

**Kansas City Center for Inclusion (formerly Like Me Lighthouse)**  
816-756-7770  
[http://www.inclusivekc.org](http://www.inclusivekc.org)  
To provide a safe and welcoming space where LGBT individuals and their families, friends, and straight allies can come for education, resources and to build a cohesive LGBT community in the Midwest. The Lighthouse will promote inclusion, respect and equality for the LGBT community. The Lighthouse will provide educational and social events to bring all individuals into the Lighthouse, as well as an outreach program to make the Midwest aware of the needs of the LGBT community. The LIKEME® Lighthouse will serve as a voice for the LGBT community in the Midwest.

**Modern Family Alliance (formerly Midwest Alternative Family Alliance)**  
[modernfamilyalliance.wordpress.com](http://modernfamilyalliance.wordpress.com)  
The Modern Family Alliance was organized in 2002 by a small group of people in Kansas City who were concerned that local gay and lesbian parents and prospective parents needed a presence, a voice, and a way to connect with each other. MFA supports LGBT parents in the greater Kansas City area and beyond to build families and raise children in a community that is respectful, encouraging, and inclusive.

**PFLAG-KC**  
816-765-9818  
[www.pflagkc.org](http://www.pflagkc.org)  
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays of Kansas City (PFLAG-KC) is a group of parents, siblings, friends, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans gendered (LGBT) people who: Provide a support system for the families and friends of LGBT people to enable them to understand, accept and support their children with love and pride; Provide education for individuals and the community at large on the nature of homosexuality; and Support the full human and civil rights of LGBT people.

**Perform Out KC – Creative and Musical Expression for KC LGBT Youth**  
[www.performoutkc.org](http://www.performoutkc.org)  
PerformOUTKC provides a safe, inclusive atmosphere for youth (13-20) of any and all identities, which fosters positive identity development through excellence in music performance and creative expression in the Kansas City Metro area. Explore self expression through the performing arts (Vocal and Instrumental Music, Dance, Theater, Writing, and the Visual Arts), share their life experiences and voices with the Kansas City Community through performance.

**Safe Schools Coalition**  
[www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)  
The Safe Schools Coalition is an international public-private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, that is working to help schools – at home and all over the world – become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.
Street Outreach Services (SOS) at Synergy
24-hour Youth Crisis Line: 888-233-1639  www.synergyservices.org/?page=Main_Our_Services_Youth_SOS 816-741-8700
Our Street Outreach team canvases Greater Kansas City helping homeless youth, up to age 22. The team provides basic necessities like food, water, clothing, blankets and hygiene products. Transportation and case management/referral services are also provided to youth as needed. For youth that want to get off the street, the team provides a bridge to Synergy House, our youth shelter.

Suicide Awareness Survivor Support
913-681-3050  www.sass-mokan.com/
SASS unites survivors of suicide (family, friends, etc.) throughout the greater Kansas City metropolitan and surrounding areas. We believe the public must be educated about suicide. We sincerely feel that “Suicide is everyone’s business.”

Veronica’s Voice Youth Group – Kansas City
Crisis Line: 816-728-0004  www.veronicasvoice.org/
Veronica’s Voice is here to encourage, educate and empower American victims of commercial sexual exploitation of all ages to make lifestyle changes which lead to the recovery of their minds, bodies and spirits. Veronica’s Voice is Kansas City’s only advocacy and survivor-recovery program dedicated solely to victims of prostitution, commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. The primary focus of Veronica’s Voice is to offer compassionate and non-judgmental support to victims through survivor-run services. Veronica’s Voice offers exploited individuals a safe place to process their experiences with others who can relate to them, allowing them to take control of their lives.

Missouri Resources
ACLU of Missouri  http://www.aclu-mo.org
Mid-Missouri    MU LGBTQ Resource Center: http://lgbtq.missouri.edu
                  Megan’s Rainbow: free therapeutic, expressive arts group for LGBTQ teens: contact Brian Vega at briancvega@me.com
Southeast Missouri PROMO: https://promoonline.org/resources/southeast-region/southeast-region.html

National Resources
COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere)  www.colage.org
GLSEN (formerly Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network)  www.glsen.org
Human Rights Campaign  www.hrc.org
National Center for Transgender Equality
PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays)  www.pflag.org

Suicide Prevention Hotlines
The Trevor Project (LGBTQ Youth Hotline)  1-866-488-7386
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  1-800-273-8255
DeafLine Missouri  1-800-380-3323
Be an Ally to Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students

The identities, experiences and needs of transgender and gender nonconforming people are often overlooked in schools. As an ally to trans and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) people, you can do your part to make sure that all students, including TGNC students, are safe and respected in school. These ideas are still good to practice even if you don’t know any transgender or gender-nonconforming students at your school.

Ask, Don’t Assume

Names aren’t the only way we refer to people. Personal gender pronouns, or PGPs, are pronouns that an individual personally identifies with. Asking PGPs is a way to respect each person’s unique identity and ensure you don’t misgender anybody. Some of the most commonly used pronouns include:

- She/her/hers
- He/him/his
- Zie/hir/hirs (pronounced “zee/here/heres”)
- They/them/their
- All or no pronouns

Start off each GSA meeting by asking each person to introduce themselves using their name and PGPs. Don’t ask only your TGNC members about PGPs; ask PGPs of everyone equally.

Respect All Gender Identities & Expressions

Allies to transgender and gender-nonconforming students recognize that there are infinite ways that gender can be expressed. Allies accept this diversity of gender expression and gender identity. Be careful not to tell people to act more masculine or feminine, or to suggest their appearance doesn’t match their gender identity. Allow all people to express themselves freely.

Challenge Gender Assumptions

Gendered images are everywhere, from sports teams to bathrooms to pictures on school posters. As an ally, challenge the gender images in your school. Talk with people in your GSA about how gender assumptions can affect students, and make conscious efforts to stop using unnecessarily gendered language.

Buddy Up

Transgender and gender-nonconforming students can be uncomfortable in gender-exclusive spaces, like locker rooms and bathrooms. Accompany your friends in spaces that may feel unsafe.

Be Supportive

To be an ally, you need to be informed. Learn more about transgender issues. Recognize that every person is different and has a unique experience, identity and needs. Check in with your friends about how they would like to be supported rather than making assumptions. Pay attention to intersections of transgender identity with factors such as race and class. Remember that there is no universal trans experience or perspective, and be open to listening to a diverse array of stories.

NOTE: Transgender people are people whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender doesn’t conform with traditional or societal gender norms. Gender nonconforming people express gender characteristics that do not conform to traditional or societal norms.