

This document was put together based on a series of frequently asked questions by athletic administrators. We hope you will find this resource useful in developing LGBTQA+ policies at your institution or within your athletic department.

HOW DOES LGBTQA+ EDUCATION BENEFIT ALL ATHLETES? WHAT CAN I DO TO CHANGE THE CULTURE ON MY CAMPUS AND IN MY DEPARTMENT?

It's important for all students to understand the importance of LGBTQA+ respect and inclusion. When all athletes are able to live and compete openly as their authentic selves, **teams are able to excel**. We've heard repeatedly from LGBTQA+ athletes that being isolated and closeted has prevented them from fully competing and thriving in their sport. **Changing culture on campus takes time and often starts with open and honest conversations**. Education on LGBTQA+ respect and inclusion is an important step for all members of your athletic community.

HOW DO I EVEN GET STARTED IN CREATING LGBTQA+ INCLUSIVE POLICIES?

Identify your partners: Prior to initiating the conversation about creating policies, you must first identify current and potential department, campus, and community partners who could support you in developing and implementing these policies, as LGBTQA+ inclusion work cannot be done in isolation. These are individuals or groups who you would consider "powerful partners." Some examples of powerful partners include the campus LGBTQ center, your athletic director or associate athletic director, coaches, members of Student Athlete Advisory Committees, out athletes, and other faculty or staff who could provide important feedback or support to the process.

After you've identified your partners, **connect with them in person**. This could include individual or small group conversations, such as inviting folks for a coffee. After you've identified who is interested in working with you to create LGBTQA+ inclusive policies, a next step might be creating an interest group, a working group, or a committee that would focus on creating LGBTQA+ inclusive spaces either on campus or directly within the athletics department.

Develop a strategic plan: Consider using a **SWOT analysis** to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats regarding LGBTQA+ inclusive practices. Strengths and Weaknesses are internal; Opportunities and Threats are external. Be sure to complete this exercise with your "powerful partners." Once you have completed your SWOT, put yourself into action. Develop an action plan and execute.

Consult with your legal counsel: When developing new policies or revising existing policies, be sure to consult with your legal counsel and any other constituents that may need to review drafts or final policies.

Build a timeline: A reasonable timeline for policy development and implementation would be one calendar year. This process could feasibly take up to two years. It is important to set realistic expectations when developing and implementing LGBTQA+ inclusive policies.

Continue the Conversation: Each department has their own individual ways in which they educate student-athletes. The important thing to remember is that education should not be a one-time event, but continuous. Consider addressing your new policy during Student-Athlete Orientation, or pre-season Compliance Meetings. You may also want to partner with your Student-Athlete Development team or SAAC reps to host LGBTQA+ related programs, or bring in a guest speaker to address small or large groups of student-athletes.

HOW DO I BEGIN
IMPLEMENTING
LGBTQA+
PROGRAMMING
WITHIN MY
DEPARTMENT?

The level of engagement on and knowledge about LGBTQA+ issues within colleges and universities across the country varies. One of the primary obstacles to respect and inclusion for LGBTQA+ student-athletes is that some athletic departments do not believe that they have an LGBTQA+ student-athlete, or they may feel that the environment is already welcoming enough that they do not need proactive policies reflecting openness to and acceptance of LGBTQA+ athletes. **However, it's important to underscore that proactive policies create a more welcoming environment for athletes to come out, and make it clear to the full student body that LGBTQA+ athletes are to be included and welcomed.** Accessible policies and visible support matters.

Begin by **incorporating LGBTQA+ issues into your student-athlete development programming or student-athlete curriculum.** When looking at the academic year calendar, consider scheduling at least one programming event during the academic year that relates to LGBTQA+ issues in athletics. Consider partnering with on-campus or community resources who offer safe zone trainings, or educational sessions on inclusive language. Many of these campus and community partnerships are free or very low cost.

There are many individuals and organizations available for hire whom specialize in LGBTQA+ inclusion in athletics. The cost of these resources varies and is dependent on the services they provide, but they can range anywhere from \$500-\$3,000.

When approaching an AD or supervisor regarding additional funding, or funding allocation for LGBTQA+ related programming (or any programming for that matter) consider putting together a budget request or proposal. AD's and supervisors appreciate when they can see you've done your homework and can present them with enough detail to make an informed decision, especially when it impacts budget.

WHAT KIND OF INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL RESOURCES DO I HAVE AVAILABLE TO ME?

The short answer? A whole lot!

Here's the good news: you probably have more resources on your campus to learn more about LGBTQA+ respect and inclusion than you realize. Many student athlete development staff have already been working on LGBTQA+ respect and inclusion issues. In addition, try reaching out to departments or offices on campus who have already been doing work on LGBTQA+ inclusion. For example, many campuses have a **LGBTQA+ student center or student group, a campus diversity office, or alumni or donors who may have some expertise on LGBTQA+ issues.**

As mentioned previously, in terms of external resources, there are a number of organizations that you can bring to campus to facilitate trainings with your department or student-athletes. Some organizations include **LGBT SportSafe, Out in Athletics** and **Athlete Ally**.

HOW SHOULD WE BE ASKING ABOUT GENDER ON FORMS?

We suggest a **two step process** for asking about sex assigned at birth and gender identity. For example:

What is your current gender identity? (Check all that apply)

Female
Male
Trans male/Trans man
Trans female/trans woman
Genderqueer/gender-nonconforming
Different identity (please state):

What is your sex assigned at birth?

Female
Male

HOW CAN I GO ABOUT MAKING MY PROSPECTIVE STUDENT RECRUITING FORM INCLUSIVE WHEN ASKING ABOUT GENDER/SEX, WHILE STILL KNOWING WHAT TEAM THEY WANT TO BE ON?

Many recruiting forms or recruiting materials include questions regarding gender/sex. If possible, **be sure to include numerous options for student-athletes to choose their own answers, or provide an open-ended box where they can fill in the blank with an answer of their choice.** See above for suggested ways to ask for sex and gender on forms. Similarly, if you're asking about parents or other family members try to use gender neutral language. For example, instead of "Mother/Father" use "Parents" or "Parent."

You may also want to consider including a question about the student-athlete's pronouns. The same considerations above would apply to this question. You may also want to consider including a link or additional educational information on pronouns (i.e. mypronouns.org). It's important to remember that some prospective student-athletes haven't learned about the importance of pronouns. Before asking them what their pronouns are, it's helpful to first educate them by sharing a resource like the one above, so that they understand why you are asking the question.

HOW DO I HANDLE MEDIA?

Talking to media can be tricky and at times scary, especially if we don't feel well versed on LGBTQA+ issues. We love [GLAAD's Media Reference Guide](#) because it offers clear guidance on what terms to use and what terms to avoid when talking about the LGBTQA+ community. A few key tips:

Prepare: Understand what three key messages you want to get across in the interview on the issue at hand. Consult your colleagues in communications and at the LGBTQA+ center if you're unsure about messaging.

Say what you're for, not what you're against. For example, if a student comes out publicly, affirm that student's identity and your department's commitment to equality and access to sports for all. "We are proud to have [athlete] as a part of our department; we believe everyone should have the opportunity to be themselves on and off the field."

If you're not sure how to answer a question, pivot. You never have to answer something you don't want to. There are many ways to pivot away from a tough question:

Bridging: Link the question to your point. "The real issue is..."

Flagging: Steer the interview with a hook. "But, that's not the only important issue..."

Hooking: Highlight the key point. "The most important thing is..."

Correcting: Correct problematic questions. "A lot of people have that misconception, but..."

OUR TRAVEL SCHEDULE TAKES US TO STATES THAT ARE ACTIVELY DISCRIMINATING AGAINST THE LGBTQA+ COMMUNITY. DO WE NEED A POLICY OR A STATEMENT TO ADDRESS THIS?

No athlete should be required to travel to a city or state where their fundamental rights are not protected. It's important for your athletic department and all coaches to be aware of the political climate overall as it relates to LGBTQ inclusion, as there are no federal protections for LGBTQ people, and options for someone experiencing discrimination vary greatly from city to city. Since there are no federal protections, you should be aware of the protections in your state -- as it relates to non-discrimination, employment, access to gendered spaces like bathrooms and locker rooms, trans-inclusion, school climate, health-care, confidentiality, safe schools laws and more. If your state doesn't provide these protections, you can also look into these policies and laws at the city level.

While conference games are often locked and mandatory within a team's schedule, non-conference matches often allow for flexibility in scheduling. Consider proactively scheduling non-conference contests out of state only in states and cities that actively protect the LGBTQ community. This will send a powerful signal to LGBTQ student-athletes and all athletes that you take the issue of inclusion seriously.

Finally, if your team travels, be aware of how these laws and policies change from city to city. If you have LGBTQ athletes, fans, parents, coaches, or staff -- understand how their rights might be altered, and how you can go about mitigating that or ideally avoid spaces that put them in that situation. Be aware of this BEFORE you travel, and always have a plan in place.

For the most up-to-date information about state nondiscrimination protections, safe schools laws, and city-level nondiscrimination protections, take a look at the [Equality Maps](#) from the Movement Advancement Project.

MY ATHLETES AND COACHES WERE TRAINED ON LGBTQ RESPECT & INCLUSION. WE HAVE POLICIES IN PLACE. NOW WHAT?

We get many questions about what happens after an institution hosts a speaker or has an LGBTQA+ respect and inclusion training. One training or speaker does not change culture. There are a series of ways to show continued support for LGBTQA+ athletes and to continue your coaches' education:

Host a Pride Night: Many teams hold pride games or nights, where they partner with the on-campus LGBTQA+ Center. The team will showcase their commitment to equality throughout the night -- in the team uniforms, on the tickets, in sports media, on the field, and in the game day schedule. Give your team some ownership of planning what they want to do in conjunction with the game -- do they want to sell t-shirts to benefit a local LGBTQA+ rights organization?

Do they want to help write an inclusive fan code of conduct to roll out on the pride night? Do they want to invite LGBTQA+ youth to participate in halftime? Empowering your players to quarterback the planning process builds their leadership skills and creates a meaningful commitment to inclusion that is team-led.

Volunteer: Another great way to engage your team in continued LGBTQA+ respect & inclusion is through relevant volunteer opportunities. Check out your local nonprofits and city organizations, and see how your team can get involved. Maybe it's doing a clothing drive for homeless LGBTQA+ youth, visiting the local LGBTQA+ center and doing a field day, making a PSA to be played at your games, or just showing up at community events as a team.

Use Available Resources to Continue the Conversation: Organizations like Athlete Ally, Out in Athletics, LGBT SportSafe and the [NCAA Office of Diversity & Inclusion](#) have a number of resources that can be used with coaches to continue their education and as tools to facilitate further conversation. For example, [Champions of Inclusion](#), the first free, comprehensive online curriculum on LGBTQA+ respect and inclusion in sports, is a great way to make sure coaches stay sharp on LGBTQA+ issues.

To ensure policies are consistently enforced, some schools have developed a **committee of coaches and administrators**. In addition to monitoring policy enforcement, this committee may also address policy violations.

FAQ:

LGBTQA+ / TRANSGENDER & GENDER EXPANSIVE POLICIES



In thinking about enforcement of policies, some schools have put together a committee of coaches and administrators to look at consistent enforcement of policies and to address disciplinary issues. In terms of disciplining student-athletes who violate policies, each athletic department has a perspective and procedure on disciplinary measures. For policies like athlete or fan codes of conduct that govern student behavior, it's important to be consistent in disciplining student athletes for violations. For example, if the captain on the highest performing team uses a homophobic slur, they should be disciplined in the same manner that any other student-athlete would. It's also important to recognize that high-profile athletes have a responsibility as role models to demonstrate respectful and inclusive behavior.

Many colleges and universities already have discrimination, harassment, and hate or bias related conduct policies, in addition to Title IX policies. Instead of creating a new reporting system for LGBTQA+ inclusive policies, partner with the individuals or offices on your campus that regularly handle violations to these policies.

If one does not exist already, it is important to develop an accessible reporting system which can be used to report any violations of LGBTQA+ inclusive policies.

Athletics departments should take precautions to prevent retaliation against a complainant.

FOR MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION VISIT

WWW.ATHLETEALLY.ORG OR WWW.OUTINATHLETICS.ORG