



GSA/ LGTQA
Student Group
Resource Manual

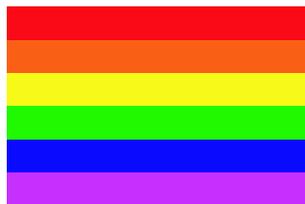


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A. Overview of this Manual

This manual is for officers, organizers, and other students/youth that help facilitate their LGBTQ groups at their schools. Whether you call your club/group a GSA, a Diversity Club, or something completely different, this manual is for you. In it you will find helpful information, resources, and activities to help you throughout the year to keep folks interested and involved in all you do!

History and Background of the Pride Center:

The Pride Center of the Capital Region's mission is to promote the well being of all gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer identified people and those discriminated against based on gender identity and expression.

The Pride Center was founded in 1970 to work to make the Capital Region more welcoming for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people. We accomplish this by empowering and supporting people to live their fullest lives and by educating the broader community on the unique issues LGBTQ people face.

As the oldest continuously-operating LGBTQ community center in the country, the Pride Center has helped build one of the strongest and most welcoming communities in the country for LGBTQ people.

Center Youth Program:

Through a combination of support, education, and advocacy, the Pride Center's programs directly serve 8000 people a year, and educate over 5000 community members on the needs of LGBTQ people. Our Center Youth program encompasses support, social and advocacy opportunities for youth ages 13-18 in order to empower them to live successful lives.

- Center Youth Action Team
Leadership team comprised of LGBTQ high school students that visit schools throughout the region
- LGBTQ Youth Peer Support Groups
Every Friday Night from 7-8:30PM @ the Pride Center (332 Hudson Avenue, Albany)
1st & 3rd Thursday from 6-7:30PM @ Proctors Theater Underground (432 State Street, Schenectady)
- THRIVE Group
Mental health and wellness group from LGBTQ young adults between 16-24.
- Alternative Prom
- Much more!

****Please see our Center Youth Flier for more information!****

Contact at the Pride Center:

Mailing Address:
Pride Center of the Capital Region
332 Hudson Avenue
Albany, NY 12210

James Shultis, Youth Program Assistant
Email: jshultis@capitalpridecenter.org
Phone: (518) 462-6138 x15
Website: www.capitalpridecenter.org



Best Practices for a Successful GSA

- Widely publicize the group– hang flyers, make announcements, create appealing messages that demonstrate ally inclusion
- Create a common vision– know why students come to GSA, and what they want to get out of participating. This can be done by using intake forms, facilitating a group check in periodically, brainstorming at the start of a year, or semester to strategize.
- Get to know all of the skills and resources in the group. You won't know how to use people's talents unless you ask! This can be helpful in finding youth to speak for the group, make posters, provide transportation, etc.
- Maximize the energy of the students! Many groups try to achieve too much and get discouraged. Have the leaders work with the group to prioritize their actions. Make sure the goals are realistic and attainable so the group can gain momentum from its success!
- Create a timeline to stay on track, it will remind the group how precious their time is together, and ensure that tasks get completed to accomplish their goals.
- Delegate tasks to specific people, or groups of people. Make sure they are clear on what to do. This will keep people feeling engaged in the group!
- Brag about your group! Let faculty, staff and administrators know what good work the group is doing! Always find ways to publicize the group, not just early in the year! Encourage participants to do the same.



The Week Long Visibility Campaign



Create an enhanced presence at your school by...

- *Distribute rainbow ribbons or buttons for people to wear all week*
- *Create an LGBT themed mural that can be hung in a public space*
 - *Have a GSA sponsored dance or Pride Dance*
- *Invite a speaker to talk about their experiences as an LGBT person*
 - *Have the GSA make flyers to hang around school*
- *Ask your school to hang a rainbow flag from the flag pole for the week*
 - *Host an LGBT themed movie night*
- *Use the PA system to make announcements about the experiences of LGBT youth*
- *Have ally teachers and staff announce why they are allies over the PA system between classes*
 - *Have a bake sale with rainbow items sold with the baked goods*
- *Have teachers and students sign a pledge to interrupt anti-LGBT language*
 - *Get a story published about your GSA in the school newspaper*
- *Set up a table during lunch for the week to advertise your GSA and hand out LGBT resources and brochures*
 - *Make GSA t-shirts to wear for the week or order them*



GSA Activities Brainstorm: *What to do with your GSA!*

1) Common Ground Icebreaker

Students and faculty advisors stand in a circle. One person begins by saying, "I've got a younger sister," or some other statement that is true for them. Everyone for whom this is also true steps into the center of the circle. Everyone who doesn't have a younger sister stays on the outside. You can always choose not to step into the circle. The game often brings up personal and important issues that students may not want to discuss in a more formal setting. This also allows us to recognize our differences and similarities.

2) Gender Stereotypes Activity

Trace a male and a female body on butcher paper, then have a free-for-all where everyone writes/expresses as many gender stereotypes as they can think of, and place those stereotypes on the bodies where they would apply (i.e. "boys are smart at math" would be placed on the head of the male body). From here, you can talk about how gender stereotypes and traits relate to perceptions about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people – as well as how these stereotypes limit our possibilities, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. These exercises can also be done using stereotypes of gay men and lesbians – helping us to recognize that everyone has different traits that don't define our sexual orientation or gender.

3) LGBT Themed Movie Night

Attend a screening of an LGBT themed film at a local theatre, or if you have a big enough group, consider arranging a special showing. You can also rent movies and get together to watch them and hang out one evening during a meeting. Serve popcorn!

4) Heterosexism in the Media Brainstorm

Bring in popular, mainstream magazines or other forms of media, and cut out images you perceive to be heterosexist. Explain what you think heterosexism is and how it affects people. This can be an eye-opening experience for those who have never looked at how media plays a part in the formation of our identity. With all the images you collect, your GSA can make a collage or exhibit that examines heterosexism. To go a step further, bring in LGBT publications, and make posters of images that are not heterosexist. Show lots of different sexual orientations, genders and gender identities exhibiting the spectrum of diversity that is society. You can compare the posters you make, and even display

them somewhere in your school, like in the library or a display case. You might include some statements about what heterosexism is and how it affects all of us, especially LGBT youth.

5) Awareness Day at your school

Bring speakers, host workshops, have entertainment, and raise awareness about LGBTQQ issues at your school! Pass out rainbow stickers and buttons and hang flyers about your GSA with catchy slogans and quotes to raise visibility. Organized a panel of LGBT and ally students and teachers or set up a table during lunch period.

6) Three Chair Listening Exercise

Three Chairs are set up, the outer two turned toward the inner one. The chair on the left holds the position of the "specialist"; the middle chair, the "listener"; and the right chairs the "real story". The specialist person and the real story person talk to the listener simultaneously, while the listener tries to listen and respond to both, as best they can. The two talkers are competing for the listener's attention, and the goal is for the listener to see which talker holds their attention more. The Specialist talks as if they're a doctor or clergyman or professional in some field related to LGBT youth and issues in the schools. He or she may site statistics, give medical information, etc. The Real Story person is the one who speaks as if they're someone you met on the street. He or she can tell a true story from their life or make up a story related to the experiences of LGBT youth in the schools. The story should be "personal". When playing with more than three people, let each trio act for two minutes and then call time. The Real Story person then leaves the trio, and the other two players move into the seats to their left (the Listener to the Real Story Chair and the Specialist to the Listener chair). The next player in line takes the chair of the Specialist. This is a good exercise for gagging your own personal feelings. After the game has been played for a while, your group can discuss which "chair" they found themselves listening and responding to more attentively. You can then discuss how different techniques are used to portray LGBT persons in different lights. You can discuss how your own listening style might make you more apt to internalize information presented according to one approach or the other.

7) Field Trip to local rallies, student protests, or lobbying events

It is always exciting to actively make change! There are always rallies, protests, and lobbying events you can find out about or learn from others on how to plan your own!

8) Concentric Circles, Inner/Outer Circles Activity

This exercise works great to open dialog. Recommended 6-8 people, works best with 20 or more. (Must be an even number). Lets people talk in pairs.

Have people count off by twos (1, 2, 1, 2...). Tell the ones to make an inner circle and the twos to make an outer circle. The inner circle should face outward and the outer circle should face inward, each person having a partner in the opposite circle. The facilitator instructs that she will ask a question and the outer circle is to talk for one minute as the inner circle listens. After the minute is

up, the inner circle answers the same question. Then the outer circle moves clockwise two people over, so everyone has a new partner. A new question is asked of the outer, then inner, circles.

When finished, the participants should talk in large group about what kinds of things came up.

If it is a group that doesn't know one another, you can have them introduce themselves to their partners before they begin answering the question asked.

Sample Questions to ask are: Growing up, what were all of the names (positive, negative, neutral) that you heard related to gays, lesbians, and bisexuals? Growing up, what were some of the stereotypes you heard about lesbians, gays, and bisexuals? What were some of the things you heard about these groups growing up that you have come to find out are not true?

9) The Culture Walk

There are one or two mediators, and they begin by asking a group of people, for example, women, to move to one side of the room. The people who then haven't identified as women ask questions, and the women give them answers. Then the women get to say what they'd like other people to know about them. You don't have to "talk" or "walk".

10) Pride Dance or LGBTQ Dance

Dances can be a great way to bring GSA members together and reach out to the school community, and Pride Proms are the highlight of the year's social activities for many GSAs. Large dances require a lot of planning, so it's a good idea to have several GSAs sponsor and coordinate the event. If you don't want to plan your own, look into a LGBTQ dance in your area.

11) Dictionary Activity

A fun word game for groups of four or more. Requires a good dictionary (preferably a large one, but it needn't be unabridged), pens, paper.

Each round: A player is chosen to be the dictionary. (At the next round, someone else is the dictionary) That person chooses an unfamiliar word in the dictionary and says it out loud. If anyone in the room knows what the word is, they must say so (this is on an honor code). Everyone writes down a fake definition-- but one that sounds like it could be the real definition (remember-- the players don't really know what the word means) except for the person who selected the word-- who writes down the real definition. On each card the players should write their definition along with their name. The dictionary person collects all the papers and reads them aloud, but doesn't read whose definition it is. Once all the definitions have been read twice, they are read a third time and everyone votes one which they think is the real definition. If you vote for the correct definition, you get a point. If someone else votes for your definition, you get a point. (If you vote for the wrong one, no penalty.)

Optional: The dictionary person gets a point for each person who votes for the correct definition. Also optional: You get two points if someone votes for your definition (instead of just one).

12) GSA BBQ or Picnic

Involve the other GSAs in your area for a potluck picnic or BBQ. You can have the event in a public park or in someone's back yard. If it's fun, consider having one once a quarter or semester, or at the end of the school year. Plan to play frisbee, softball, flag football, or whatever you want. Or plan a hiking or camping trip.

13) Name That Person Activity

Entertainment game with teams; for fun; too long to be an ice-breaker
Materials: Pencils/pens (1 for each person), paper, hat or box for holding names.

SETUP: Teams of 4-8 people work best (teams of 4-5 are most preferable). Maximum of four teams total. Each person playing is instructed to write at least five names and rip off each one. (That is, each person should put five scraps of paper into the hat, each scrap with one name on it.) The names can be anyone related to LGBT issues (pro or con) – including politicians, sports players, actors/actresses, community leaders, performers, people from history. Rules for choosing names: (1) More obscure names are better. Easy to identify names are not at much fun. IMPORTANT: Tell no one what names you put in, if you do, those names can't be used. (2) The name must be common. While it is not necessary for everybody playing to know who you are talking about, at least a few must. Unless otherwise decided, co-workers, friends, teachers, family, etc are not allowed.

RULES OF PLAY: Player to start grabs a name out of the hat and proceeds to describe that person or name to her teammates in the first person. For example, if her clue were Bill Clinton, she could say as president of the United States I signed into law the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act. The teammates call out any name they think it may be. She may not say any part of the name unless her teammates have already called out that part. For example, if the clue was Bill Bradley, you can't say: "Rhymes with 'key'" because sound "ey" is written on the paper. You may, however, describe what it rhymes with by saying "Rhymes with that metal thing you stick in a lock to open a door..." When someone in the group guesses correctly, she chooses another name. She has exactly one minute to get her team to guess as many names as possible. For each name they guess, the team gets one point.

If a team gets stuck on a name and the time expires in the middle of a name, that name must be passed on to the next team. You may not reject a name for any reason whatsoever. Only if one name goes through all the teams without being guess can it be discarded, and the team who first started with it gets one point for it.

Team members who do the reading rotate each time around. Play continues until hat is emptied.

14) Cultural/Identity Linking

Cultural Experiment. Everyone is instructed to close their eyes and look into the "inner mirror of them". Examine what culture means to you and what you think of as your own cultural identity. Look for the cultural identities you claim and, when you are ready, open your eyes and look around the

room. Without talking, find someone who you think shares a cultural identity with you. Approach that person and link hand. If you do not think that person shares a common cultural identity, you may refuse to link hands. If someone offers his or her hand to you, try to find a cultural commonality. Link hands only if you think you have found one. Remember, no talking. Once everyone is linked, stand the group in one large circle, and go around and answer the questions "why did you offer your hand to someone you linked to, and why did you accept/refuse someone's hand?"

Other questions: – How did it feel to assume someone's cultural identity? – Were you always correct? – Was it easy to find a cultural connecting? – How did it feel to not make a link?

Note: The word culture is use to keep this activity open-ended. People often interpret "culture" as race, ethnicity, religion, color, queerness, gender, gender identity, clothing, multi-racial/ethnic identity, non-conforming/represented race, ethnicity, etc.

15) GSA Mixer on campus or at a local queer or queer-friendly cafe

It's cool to just hang out in a "safe-space" and chat – and it's good to get to know GSA members from other schools. Building coalitions with GSAs at other schools or getting together with different student share stories, get advice, plan events, learn from each other, and have fun!

16) Pretzel, Knots

Group building cooperation game. Everyone stands in a circle. Everyone puts his right hand forward into the middle and grabs the right hand of someone. Then, take your left hand grab the left hand of someone else in the circle. Thus, with your right hand you are attached to one person's right hand, and your left hand is attached to someone else's left hand. You are all now in a tangled ring of bodies. Without letting go, untangle yourselves. You may switch positions of your hands, but do not break the ring. Sometimes the group is tangled in one big loop, but sometimes it is tangled in several smaller ones.

17) Arts and Crafts

Get together after school or during lunch and make your own pride gear, a banner to use in marches, or art to display in the library and display cases. Get crafty and make flyers to hang advertising your GSA and create invisibility.

18) GSA Members Graduation Party

"Lavender graduations" are a neat way to show appreciation for the seniors in your club and give them a meaningful send-off. Consider investing in small gifts to present to graduating seniors at an end of the year event.

**Activities compiled from the GSA Network & GLSEN*



What is it Like To Be a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT) Youth?

- Faced with discrimination and threats of violence from peers, family, schools, and even institutions to which they turn for help, LGBT youth are at increased risk for a variety of health problems and high-risk behaviors. LGBT youth need access to health and wellness services to cope with the stressors of being gay in a discriminatory society.
- Without access to crisis prevention providers, and faced with unsafe environments at home and school, these youth are at increased risk of substance abuse, dropping out of school, homelessness, and suicide.
- 40% of homeless youth identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual – LGBT youth are often rejected by their own families and forced to leave home to avoid verbal and physical abuse.
- Transgender youth are frequently turned away from shelters or assigned to a shelter where their appearance places them at risk for violence.
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are two to three times more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to have used alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and heroin. Bisexual male and female youth are even more likely to use alcohol and marijuana than their gay and straight peers.
- Attempted suicide rates are higher among LGBT youth: four out of ten LGBT youth will attempt suicide, as opposed to one in ten of their heterosexual peers.
- Transgender youth are especially at risk. Frequently rejected for their gender-nonconforming appearance and behavior by family, school, church and peers, and other communities of origin, many transgendered youth become homeless. They are also frequently turned away from shelters or assigned to a shelter where their appearance places them at risk of violence.
- A barrier to accessing the few targeted services for LGBT youth that do exist in suburban and rural communities is the lack of adequate and affordable public transportation.



What Is It Like To Be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT) in School?

- More than 90% of LGBT youth regularly hear homophobic remarks in school. Almost half of LGBT youth who report verbal harassment experience it daily.
- More than 83% of LGBT youth experience verbal, sexual, and physical harassment and assault.
- Nearly 70% of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe in their schools because of treatment due to their sexual orientation.
- 80% of parents support teacher sensitivity trainings on tolerance that include instructions on dealing with gay and lesbian harassment in schools.
- About 3/4 of lesbian or bisexual female students report being sexually harassed.
- About 1/3 of LGBT students report harassment based on gender expression.
- Nearly 25% of LGBT students report being physically assaulted (punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation.
- Nearly HALF of LGBT students of color report being verbally harassed because of both their sexual orientation and their race / ethnicity.
- Victims of anti-gay harassment include LGBT students, as well as those who are perceived to be LGBT.
- LGBT youth are two to five times as likely as their non-gay classmates to skip school because they feel unsafe.
- Almost two-thirds of guidance counselors and 80 percent of prospective teachers express negative attitudes toward LGBT people.



LGBTQ Youth Resources

Hotlines

United Way 211 Hotline

2-1-1 is a free, confidential number to call for anyone who needs help and answers. 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember telephone number that functions as a powerful service to communities by connecting people with important services and volunteer opportunities.

Toll Free 1-(888)-366-3211
211
9-5PM

The Gay and Lesbian National Hotline (GLNH)

GLNH provides nationwide toll-free peer counseling, information and referrals to the LGBT community. Peer counselors are Available Monday-Friday, 4:00pm to midnight, and Saturday, noon to 5:00pm.

Toll Free: 888-843-4564

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project provides a national 24hr toll-free suicide prevention hotline aimed at LGBT and questioning youth and offers an educational package and other resources to tolerance for LGBT youth in school and institutional settings.

Toll Free: 866-4U-TREVOR
8950 West Olympic Blvd., Suite 197
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
www.thetrevorproject.org
310-271-8845

National Runaway Switchboard

The National Runaway Switchboard provides crisis intervention and local and national referrals to youth and their families, training materials and resources for communities and schools and is the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth.

Hotline: 800-621-4000
3080 N. Lincoln Ave.
Chicago, IL 60657
www.nrscrisisline.org
800-344-2785

Support-Local

Pride Center of the Capital Region

The Center Youth Program at the Pride Center provides resources, referrals, and a supportive environment for LGBTQ youth and their straight allies to discuss issues of coming out, family, school, work, and relationships among their peers. There are currently two youth groups offered by the Pride Center in Albany and Schenectady.

332 Hudson Ave
Albany, NY 12210
www.capitalpridecenter.org
518-462-6138

In Our Own Voices

In Our Own Voices' mission is to promote the physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, cultural, and economic survival and growth of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people of color communities.

245 Lark Street
Albany, NY 12210
www.inourownvoices.org
518-432-4188

GLSEN New York Capital Region

GLSENCR strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

P.O. Box 5392
Albany, NY 12208
www.glsennycr.org
518-448-7777

Equinox Inc.

Hope, dreams, compassion and respect are often missing from the vocabularies of the children that come to Equinox. Many are not only lacking solid family foundations and healthy relationships within their community, they are often homeless, hungry, poor and in crisis.

95 Central Ave.
Albany, NY 12206
www.equinoxinc.org
518-434-6135

Empire State Pride Agenda

The Empire State Pride Agenda is a New York State lesbian and gay political advocacy organization that works for equal rights by lobbying elected officials, electing supportive candidates, and community organizing.

One Commerce Plaza
99 Washington Ave.
Suite 805
Albany, NY 12260
www.prideagenda.org
518-472-3330

National/Non-Local

Human Rights Campaign

HRC is a bipartisan organization that works to advance equality based on sexual orientation and gender expression and identity, to ensure that LGBT Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work, and in the community.

1640 Rhode Island Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
www.hrc.org
202-628-4160

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)

NGLTF is a national progressive organization working for the civil rights of LGBT people. Its website provides reports and guides for activists, including a report on making schools safe.

1325 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
www.thetaskforce.org
202-393-5177

National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC)

In collaboration with national and community organizations, NYAC addresses public policy issues related to LGBT youth and distributes resources and information about local LGBT youth agencies.

1638 R Street, NW Suite 300
Washington, DC 20009
www.nyacyouth.org
800-541-6922

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)

GLAAD is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate, and inclusive representation of individuals and events in all media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

248 West 35th Street, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10001
www.glaad.org
212-629-3322

Resources for Parents, Family, and Friends-Local

Capital Region Support Group for Family and Friends of Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People

This group is for the support of family and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Its purpose is to lend them support and information about coming to terms with their LGBT family member or friend.

Contact the Pride Center
for more information.
518-462-6138

National/Non-Local

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)

COLAGE is a national and international organization that supports young people with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender parents through education and community building.

3543 18th Street, #1
San Francisco, CA 94110
www.colage.org
415-861-5437

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

PFLAG is a national nonprofit organization with over 200,000 members and supporters and almost 500 affiliates in the United States. As part of its "Our House to the Schoolhouse" campaign, PFLAG provides resources and plans for making schools safe for LGBT youth.

1726 M Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
www.pflag.org
202-467-8180

Health-Local

Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood

Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood is a community-based non-profit organization providing advocacy, education and medical services for reproductive health care in the capital region of New York state since 1934. Our services are delivered with special concern for the underserved.

Schenectady Health Center
1040 State Street
Schenectady, NY
(518) 374-5353

34 Jay Street #6
Schenectady, NY
(518) 374-0739

www.uhpp.org

The AIDS Council of Northeastern New York

The AIDS Council of Northeastern New York is a not-for-profit human service agency whose mission is to reduce the risk, fear and incidence of HIV infection, encourage the independence of people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS and promote understanding of their needs. We provide education and outreach to at-risk individuals and the general public, offer direct assistance and service coordination for people living with HIV/AIDS.
<http://www.aidsCouncilofnyny.com>

927 Broadway
434 Franklin Street
Schenectay, NY
518-346-9272