



Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

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Know! To Support Your LGBT Student

The new school year is fast-approaching for most students across the nation, and with it comes excitement (even if they won't admit it) mixed with a bit of fear and anxiety; especially if a student is moving up to middle or high school or attending a new school. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth however, fear and anxious feelings may be further intensified.

[A new report](#) from the University of Oregon shows LGBT students face increased risk of bullying, violence, and sexual assault compared to their heterosexual peers. Data from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey supports this research, with the following findings:

- 10% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.
- 34% were bullied on school property.
- 28% were bullied electronically.
- 23% of LGBT students who had dated or went out with someone during the 12 months before the survey had experienced sexual dating violence in the prior year.
- 18% of LGBT students had experienced physical dating violence.
- 18% of LGBT students had been forced to have sexual intercourse at some point in their lives.

With statistics such as these, it is not surprising that this group of students also face higher rates of depression, suicide, substance use, and risky sexual behavior.

The good news and bad news is that when it comes to the overall health and wellbeing of LGBT youth, family influence carries a lot of weight.

[According to research through the American Academy of Pediatrics](#), LGBT young adults who reported [high levels of family rejection](#) during adolescence were:

- 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide.
- 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression.
- 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs.
- 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse.



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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

Know! encourages you to share this Parent Tip with friends and family.

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– compared with peers from families that reported no or low levels of family rejection.

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On the other hand, family acceptance proved to help protect LGBT adolescents against depression, suicidal behavior, and substance abuse, as well as promote self-esteem, social support, and physical health.

The CDC shares the following research-based steps parents can take to support their LGBT child's health and well-being:

Talk and Listen: An open discussion about sexual orientation can help your child feel loved and accepted. It is important to talk about sex and how to avoid risky behaviors and unsafe situations. While this may not be an easy conversation for you, it is likely even more uncomfortable for your teen.

Provide Support: It is important to first come to terms with how you feel about your child's sexual orientation, so that when talking with them, you can respond calmly and use respectful language. In your conversations, be sure to acknowledge their courage for coming to you, and reassure them of your unconditional love.

Stay Involved: Keep your teen involved in family activities; help them develop a plan for dealing with challenges, staying safe and reducing risk; and get to know your child's friends and romantic partners.

Be Proactive: Build relationships with your child's teachers and school personnel to ensure a safe and welcoming school environment; seek assistance if you feel your child is depressed or needs other mental health support; learn more about how you can be there for your child and help them to access LGBT-related organizations, events and activities.

Get more information from the CDC Resource Guide for youth, friends and family members at <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm>.

In the next Know! Tip, we'll focus on what schools can do to promote safety and provide support for LGBT students.

Sources:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health - LGBT Youth - Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System 2015.](#)

[Emily Halnon, University of Oregon: Report says school violence on the rise against LGBT students, May 30, 2018.](#)

[A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children was prepared by Caitlin Ryan, PhD, ACSW, Director of the Family Acceptance Project at San Francisco State University under contract number HHSP233201200519P for SAMHSA, HHS. Ryan, C., Huebner, D., Diaz, R. M., & Sanchez, J. \(2009\).](#)

[Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay and bisexual young adults. Pediatrics, 123\(1\), 346-352.](#)