



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! How to Create Safe and Welcoming Schools for LGBT Students



As discussed in the previous tip, [Know! To Support Your LGBT Student](#), we learned that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth face an increased risk of bullying, violence, and sexual assault, compared to their heterosexual peers. In turn, these youth experience higher rates of depression, suicide and suicidal thoughts, substance use, and risky sexual behavior. We also discussed the impact of parental acceptance versus rejection on a child’s mental, emotional, and physical health, and learned what parents can do to better protect and support their LGBT child’s overall health and well-being.

In this tip, we focus on how LGBT students can thrive in school, which they need and deserve like all other youth. Unfortunately, due to teasing, harassment, and other safety concerns, LGBT students are more likely to miss school than their peers. In fact, according to the 2015 national *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, LGBT students were 140% more likely to not go to school at least one day during the past 30 days compared to heterosexual students. And absenteeism, while not a direct measure of school performance, does impact graduation rates, which can have lifelong implications as well.



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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.

Learn more at [preventionactionalliance.org](http://preventionactionalliance.org)

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Just as one's home environment is vital to an LGBT child's well-being, one's school environment is equally important.

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**As a parent, you are encouraged to work with a teacher, counselor, or other school personnel to help implement policies and procedures within your child's school that promote health and safety among LGBT youth** (taken directly from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)):

- Policies should encourage respect for all students and prohibit bullying, harassment, and violence against all students.
- "Safe spaces," should be made known, such as counselors' offices or designated classrooms, so that LGBT youth can receive support from administrators, teachers, or other school staff.
- Encourage student-led and student-organized school clubs that promote a safe, welcoming, and accepting school environment (such as gay-straight alliances or gender and sexuality alliances, which are school clubs open to youth of all sexual orientations and genders).
- Work to ensure that health curricula or educational materials about HIV, other STI, and pregnancy-prevention include information LGBT youth find relevant.
- Reach out to your school or district leaders to provide mandatory trainings for all staff on how to create a safe and supportive school environment for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Encourage your school to facilitate access to community-based providers who have experience providing health services, including HIV/STI testing and counseling, social, and psychological services to LGBT youth.

When LGBT students feel welcome and secure within their school environment and have caring and accepting parents at home, they are much more likely to achieve good grades in the classroom and maintain good mental and physical health, including decreased depression, suicidal feelings, substance use, and unexcused school absences. You are encouraged to take action to help our students get the education and support they need and deserve to live healthy, happy and productive lives.

[To access more LGB resources for Educators and School Administrators, click here.](#)

Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health - LGBT Youth.](#)