



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

151 West 30th Street, Fifth Floor
New York, New York 10001
Phone: (212) 947-9779
Fax: (212) 947-9790
E-mail: info@advocatesforchildren.org

PRESS RELEASE

Report Finds Harassment and Discrimination of LGBT Students in NYC Schools

Contact: Jill Chaifetz, Executive Director, Advocates for Children,

Full Report can be downloaded after 10 a.m. at www.advocatesforchildren.org.

NEW YORK CITY, October 27, 2005

Advocates for children of New York (AFC) released a report today, entitled **IN HARM'S WAY: A Survey of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students Who Speak About Harassment and Discrimination in New York City schools**. This report outlines the results of AFC's survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth documenting high levels of harassment and discrimination against LGBT students in New York City public schools, despite existing laws protecting these students.

"The results of our survey were very disturbing, indicating that LGBT students too often face serious harassment and discrimination in school. It is our hope that this report is a wake-up call for schools to fully implement existing laws and to help create an atmosphere of tolerance and diversity," stated Jill Chaifetz, Executive Director of AFC.

The survey conducted at youth centers and high schools compiled the responses from 75 self-identified LGBT young people and found that nearly thirty percent of those surveyed who were not enrolled in school reported that they had left school because they encountered violence and harassment based on either their sexual preference or gender identity. Nearly 70% of all those surveyed reported being called offensive names by fellow students because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and almost half of those had been called offensive names on a daily basis. Over a quarter of students surveyed reported being physically threatened or hurt in school because of their sexual

orientation or gender identity. Of those who reported the incidents to school staff over 60% reported that no investigation was done after making a complaint.

Harassment was not only reported from a peer-to-peer basis, but also happened between school staff and students. Twenty-three percent of students surveyed reported that school personnel called them offensive names. Of those 17 students who responded that school personnel had called them offensive names, nearly half identified the staff person who did so as a teacher. Over half of those respondents reported such incidents to school staff, but less than half reported that there was any investigation of the incidents.

Other findings include:

- 59% of respondents who reported that school staff were present during peer-to-peer incidents but provided no assistance at the time of the harassment and violence.
- 93% of respondents reported that they knew of other LGBT students who have been harassed or discriminated against by their peers.

Youth surveyed were generally uninformed about the existence of anti-discrimination policies or laws; one third of respondents stated that their schools did not have any anti-discriminatory rules and over one third did not know whether their school had that type of rule. Nearly three quarters of survey respondents didn't know whether their student handbook had an anti-discrimination policy. Nearly half of respondents did not know where to file a complaint pertaining to school staff.

The report outlines a number of recommendations to remedy these serious problems. Implementing existing laws and regulations in a meaningful manner should begin immediately. A written statement regarding New York City's schools harassment and discrimination policy should be provided yearly to students and school staff. Identification and thorough training of Local Equal Opportunity Coordinators, those individuals who are responsible for enforcing the Department of Education's anti-discrimination policy, should be undertaken on an annual basis. Lastly, encouraging the creation of Gay and Straight Alliance clubs in high schools to help create an environment of tolerance and respect should begin.

For the full report please download at www.advocatesforchildren.org.