



AFC'S

LGBTQ Education Guide

YOUR RIGHTS AS AN LGBTQ STUDENT
IN A NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL

March 2016



Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

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This guide does not constitute legal advice. This guide attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE



This is a guide for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) students in New York City public schools, and their allies. It lays out LGBTQ students' rights and what to do if these rights have been violated. We also answer common questions about LGBTQ youth in public schools. We hope that this guide helps you know your rights and that it gives you tips for speaking up for yourself and others.

Laws and policies in this area are constantly changing. We know this can be very confusing and frustrating. Don't be afraid to reach out for help if you are experiencing problems in school.

If you have additional questions or would like more information about anything in this guide, please call our **Helpline**, Monday through Thursday, 10AM to 4PM at **866-427-6033**. You can also email us at info@advocatesforchildren.org. Any information you share with us will be kept confidential.

NEED HELP NOW?

Hopeline: (800) 784-2433 (English), (800) 784-2432 (Español)

Suicide prevention and crisis intervention; online chat support at www.imalive.org

Safe Horizons: (866) 621-4673

Victims of crime, domestic abuse, or sexual assault

National Runaway Switchboard: (800) 786-2929

Runaway youth assistance

Trevor Project: (866) 488-7386

Suicide and crisis support for LGBTQ youth; online chat support at www.thetrevorproject.org/section/get-help

GLBT National Help Center: (212) 989-0999

Helpline for LGBTQ community; online chat support at www.glnh.org



WHAT IF I AM BEING BULLIED OR HARASSED?



You should never be harassed based on your sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity/expression. Examples of harassment include:

- The use of slurs;
- Repeated, deliberate use of pronouns or names that are inconsistent with your gender identity;
- Inappropriate touching, insults or remarks about your behavior, dress or body parts being “too masculine” or “too feminine;” or
- Asking inappropriate or unnecessary questions about your gender identity, anatomy or sexuality.

In New York City, a set of rules called the **Chancellor’s Regulations** prohibits harassment and discrimination in public schools on the basis of gender, gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior and gender expression. These regulations protect you whether you *self-identify* as, or *someone thinks* you are, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or gender nonconforming. They also protect you before, during and after school, at school-sponsored events, and while on school buses.

Chancellor’s Regulation A-832 prohibits harassment, intimidation or bullying by other students on the basis of your gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. This includes:

- Physical violence, stalking, or aggressive gestures;
- Threats, taunts, or teasing;
- Purposely excluding you from peer groups;
- Using derogatory language or slurs; or
- Offensive written or graphic material that is sent by email, through the Internet (like on Facebook, Twitter, or Tumblr) or in print.

Chancellor’s Regulation A-830 prohibits any school employee from discriminating against or harassing a student. This includes *verbal, written or physical acts* on the basis of the student’s actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

WHAT IF I AM BEING HARASSED BY OTHER STUDENTS?

STEP 1: Make a complaint to your school

The Dignity for All Students Act requires school districts to have a Respect for All Students Liaison (RFA Liaison). This person should be trained to handle reports of harassment, intimidation, and bullying. The RFA Liaison should also have a “Respect for All” poster (shown at right) on display with their contact information. You should complain to your school’s RFA Liaison if you are being harassed by another student or students.

If you feel uncomfortable talking to the RFA Liaison, report the harassment to any school employee with whom you feel comfortable. This could be a guidance counselor, teacher, coach, or advisor. You can remind this person that the law requires them to promptly report information about harassment to the principal. You may also complain directly to RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov (see page 7).



TIP:

Always take notes about every incident — including who, what, when, and where. Get documentation of every interaction you have with school officials and the police.

What will happen?

Your school must investigate within five days. The investigation should include interviewing and getting written statements from the reporter of the harassment, the accused student and any witnesses. The school will notify everyone’s parents. If you don’t want your parents to know due to safety concerns, you can ask your principal not to tell, but it is ultimately the principal’s decision. The school may separate students, send students to counseling, or take disciplinary action against students who have harassed or bullied other students.

WHAT IF A TEACHER OR SCHOOL EMPLOYEE HARASSES ME?

STEP I: Make a complaint with the Office of Equal Opportunity

The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) handles complaints of discrimination and harassment by school employees. The complaint can be made anonymously. You can fill out an online form at: <http://tinyurl.com/OEOComplaintForm>, or call (718) 935-3320.

What will happen?

The OEO will investigate the complaint and report what it found to the Chancellor. The Chancellor must then make a written recommendation within 90 work days of what action the school or school district must take. The OEO should make sure that the discriminatory school or school employees are properly disciplined. School personnel who violate the Chancellor's Regulation may be disciplined, even if their behavior doesn't break any other laws.

Making anonymous complaints

- Complaints about student harassment can be made anonymously by emailing RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov. In addition, your school may have a box or envelope where you can put anonymous complaints. Complaints about school employees can be made anonymously to the OEO, as detailed above.
- However, providing your identity and cooperating with the investigation will make it more likely that your problem will be resolved.
- If you only feel safe making an anonymous complaint, be sure to give as many specific details as possible so that investigators know where to look: include locations and times, who was present, and exactly what was said or done.





WHAT IF THE HARASSMENT DOESN'T STOP?



If you're still being harassed by students or school employees and your school isn't doing enough to stop the harassment, or you feel uncomfortable complaining to your school, take these steps to bring the issue to higher authorities.

STEP 2: Report to the Office of Safety and Youth Development

Make a complaint to the Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD). The complaint form and contact information can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/OSYDComplaint>. You can email a complaint to the OSYD at RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov, or call (718) 935-4357. You should also report the complaint to the Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) by emailing face@schools.nyc.gov or by calling (212) 374-2323. FACE will connect you to your Family Support Coordinator, who can work with you to help you reach a resolution.

STEP 3: Appeal to the Commissioner of Education

If you disagree with a decision from the offices in steps 1 and 2, you may appeal the decision to the New York State Commissioner of Education. You must file any appeal within thirty days of receiving the decision. Learn about the appeal process here: <http://tinyurl.com/CoEAppeal>. If you win, the Commissioner has the power to order the Department of Education to take steps to comply with the laws and regulations against discrimination and harassment in schools.

STEP 4: Take legal action

Federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, race and disability. You can file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights (learn more: <http://tinyurl.com/OCRHowTo>), or find a lawyer to help you sue in court. A list of free legal services providers can be found at the back of this guide.

WHAT IF I WITNESS ANOTHER STUDENT BEING HARASSED?

Anyone can report!

You do not have to be the victim of harassment, bullying or discrimination to report it. If you witness a student being harassed or bullied, do the right thing and report it to an RFA Liaison, school employee, or the Office of Equal Opportunity.

The law protects reporters of harassment from retaliation

The Chancellor's Regulations, Dignity for All Students Act, and federal law all prohibit schools from retaliating against anyone who reports an incident of harassment, so long as the reporter genuinely believes that what they saw was harassment. This means that even if the incident is ultimately found not to be harassment, you cannot get in trouble for reporting it if you genuinely believed that it was harassment.

Confidentiality

If possible, you should provide your name and contact information with the complaint so that investigators can follow up and do a more thorough job. However, if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe providing your information, you can make an anonymous complaint. See page 6 for details about making an anonymous complaint.

School employees have a duty to report harassment

The Chancellor's Regulations and the Dignity for All Students Act require all school employees to promptly report incidents of harassment, bullying and discrimination. This applies whether the school employee saw the incident him or herself or was told about the incident orally or in writing. If you think a school employee knows about harassment but is not reporting it, you can politely remind them of their duty to report, or report the harassment yourself.



WHAT IF I GET SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL?

Suspensions generally

LGBTQ students are held to the same standards of behavior as any other student. If you get a principal's suspension, you have the right to a conference, where you will have an opportunity to hear the charges against you, tell your side of the story, and question any witnesses. If you get a superintendent's suspension (more than five days), you have the right to a formal hearing in front of a hearing officer, where the school must prove the charges against you and give you a chance to question witnesses. For either type of suspension, you have the right to bring someone to the conference or hearing to advocate on your behalf.

Protection for suspensions based on gender or retaliation

Chancellor's Regulation A-830 prohibits schools from disciplining you based on your gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. In addition, the law prohibits schools from disciplining you in retaliation for reporting harassment or discrimination that you genuinely believe has occurred. If you think you are being disciplined because of your gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation, or as retaliation for reporting harassment, you should raise this argument at the beginning of the suspension hearing. In addition, you should file a complaint with the OEO, as described on page 6.

Transfers and superintendent's suspensions

You may request a transfer to a different school during the disposition phase of a superintendent's suspension hearing. The suspension office is not required to grant a transfer, but it doesn't hurt to ask, especially if you present it as a way to solve any harassment or bullying at issue in the suspension hearing.

For more information on suspensions, check out **AFC's suspension guide**: http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/suspension_guide.pdf.

CAN I CHANGE SCHOOLS?

School transfers can be very difficult to get. If you meet one of the requirements below, you may qualify for a transfer to another school. To get any type of transfer, bring the required paperwork to your school and ask them to request a transfer from the Family Welcome Center. You should bring a list of schools you would like to transfer to, but the Family Welcome Center does not have to place you in one of these schools. Where you end up will be based on what schools have space available.

You can get a safety transfer if you have been the victim of a violent crime on school grounds, or if you believe that staying at your current school puts you in danger.

If you are trying to get a safety transfer, it is very important to document everything. You must report incidents to the school or police, and request reports in writing so that you can prove that you need a safety transfer. You have the right to request a safety transfer even if a specific incident (like getting jumped or robbed) has not occurred, but it is very hard to get a safety transfer without documentation of the specific danger you face by staying at your current school.

To request a safety transfer, give a letter to your principal requesting a school transfer along with a copy of any documentation you have that shows you are in danger if you stay at your school. You can also include a list of schools you would like to transfer to, although the Department of Education does not necessarily have to put you in one of these schools.



To get a safety transfer, your school will need:

- Safety transfer intake form
- Summary of investigation
 - Occurrence report
- Police report from you (if applicable)

You can get a medical transfer if you have a medical condition that requires a change in school.

A medical transfer may be appropriate in cases of physical disability, pregnancy, or mental illness, like severe anxiety. To apply, get a letter from your doctor, on letterhead, explaining your medical condition and the reason you need a school transfer.

Some LGBTQ students have gotten medical transfers because of severe anxiety at school due to bullying or starting hormone therapy as part of their transitioning process. If you believe you fall into this category, ask your doctor or psychiatrist to write you a letter explaining why the transfer is necessary.

You can get a travel hardship transfer if it takes you more than 75 minutes each way to get to school.

In order to apply, you must provide proof of address and a statement saying it takes more than 75 minutes one way to get to school. If you are unsure of the exact distance from your home to the school, check <http://tripplanner.mta.info/>, as this is the website the Department of Education uses when determining travel time.



You can get a public school choice transfer if you attend a “priority,” “focus,” or “phasing-out” school under a law called the No Child Left Behind Act.

Transfers are not guaranteed and depend on availability. Students can choose from a limited list of schools with open seats. If you attend a school that’s eligible for public school choice, you should get a packet in the mail in the spring with information on how to transfer. Transfers go into effect the following September for the new school year. To see if you might be eligible for a transfer, go to <http://schools.nyc.gov/choicesenrollment/changingschools/default.htm>.

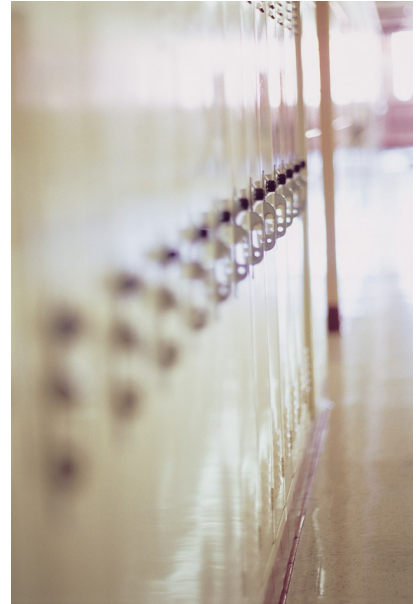
WHAT IF I CAN'T GET A TRANSFER?

If you are currently in high school and don't qualify for a school transfer, you might want to look into a transfer high school or other alternative program. You have the right to go to school until the school year in which you turn 21 years old.

Transfer Schools

These schools are for older students (usually 16 and older) who are behind in credits. Many transfer schools help you catch up by earning credits more quickly. They often have smaller classes and can offer more attention to students. Students can graduate with a Regents diploma from a transfer school.

Most transfer schools require students to have been in high school for at least one year before you can start. However, each transfer school has its own admissions requirements and process. For more information on transfer schools, check out the Department of Education's website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/SpecialPrograms/AlternativesHS/TransferHS>.



The Harvey Milk High School is a unique transfer school in Greenwich Village designed specifically to support and nurture LGBTQ students who are at risk of dropping out due to harassment. You must be at least 16 years old with 11 credits to apply. The application can be found here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolPortals/02/M586/TopLinks/Application+Page.htm>.

Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs)

YABCs are evening programs designed for students who can't go to class during the day. Students must be at least 17 and a half, have 17 or more credits, and have been in high school for at least 4 years to be eligible. Students can earn a regular Regents diploma at a YABC. Talk to your guidance counselor if you would like to apply.

TASC Programs

The Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) is the new high school equivalency test that replaced the GED in 2014. The Department of Education and many community-based programs have TASC classes specifically for youth. Typically, you have to be at least 17 and a half and pass an entrance test to begin a TASC course. The TASC is not an easy test or a quick fix, so make sure you are prepared to do the necessary work. Many TASC programs are free. For more information on Department of Education TASC programs, go to your nearest Referral Center. For a list, visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/District79/SchoolsProgramsServices/default.htm>.

Co-op Tech

Co-op Tech is a technical school for students who want to learn a career skill like culinary arts, computer repair, beauty salon services or welding. Students without a high school or high school equivalency diploma attend Co-op Tech for half of the day, and their home school or high school equivalency program for the other half of the day. Students who have earned their diploma, but have not yet turned 21, can attend Co-op Tech full time, taking classes both in the morning and afternoon. Learn more at <http://www.co-optech.org/>.

For more information on any of these programs, talk to your guidance counselor or go to:
www.goingforme.org.

Types of Diplomas

Available to all students

- Regents Diploma
- Advanced Regents Diploma
- Local Diploma (in limited circumstances)
- High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma



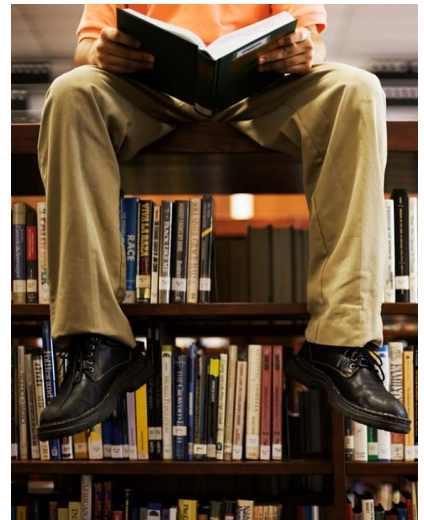
To learn more about all of the diploma types and other exiting credentials, see AFC's "High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities," available at http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/graduation_options_for_students_with_disabilities.pdf.

WHAT IF I AM HOMELESS OR HAVE RUN AWAY FROM HOME?

If you are homeless or living in a temporary situation, you are protected by the **McKinney-Vento Act**, a federal law, as well as **Chancellor's Regulation A-780**, a New York City Department of Education regulation. Students experiencing homelessness have a choice about whether they will attend their old school or a new local school, and they are entitled to transportation, free meals, and other services.

The **McKinney-Vento Act** defines homelessness very broadly, and students who are covered under this law are often referred to as "Students in Temporary Housing." Some examples of temporary housing include:

- Living in a shelter, emergency, or transitional housing;
- Sharing housing of others (for example, couch-surfing) due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (for example, if you have been kicked out);
- Living in a motel, hotel, or hostel;
- Living in a subway station, bus station, car, park, public space, or abandoned building; or
- Any living situation that is not fixed, regular, and adequate.



If I left my home because I felt unsafe or unsupported there, but my parents say I can come home, might I still be covered by the McKinney-Vento Act?

Eligibility under the McKinney-Vento Act is based on whether your current housing is temporary, as described above. If you have left home and entered a shelter, are staying temporarily with friends, or are in any of the situations listed above, you most likely qualify as temporarily housed under this law. Call us at 800-388-2014 and we will assist you with any questions.

If I am living in temporary housing, where can I go to school?

If you are living in temporary housing, you may go to the school you attended when permanently housed, the school where you were last enrolled (your school of origin), or you may go to the Family Welcome Center in the borough where you are temporarily housed, which will help to place you in a local school. If you choose to continue attending your school of origin, you are eligible for free transportation, which is usually a free MetroCard.

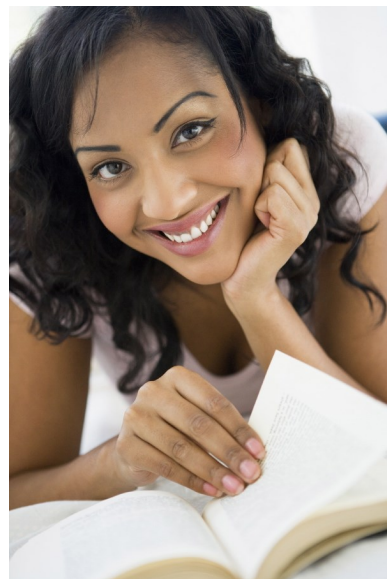
Do I need my parent or guardian's permission to enroll in a new school?

Youth living in temporary housing **apart from their parents** *do not* need a parent with them or a parent's permission to enroll in school. Youth who are living in temporary housing and not staying with a parent or guardian are *unaccompanied youth* and have the right to make a decision about school enrollment with the help of a shelter caseworker or Department of Education liaison. If you are enrolling in a new school, the Family Welcome Center should make sure that you are enrolled immediately, even if you do not have all the paperwork or documentation normally needed to enroll in school.

Who can I turn to for help?

The New York State Technical & Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (**NYS-TEACHS**) is a project at Advocates for Children that helps students living in temporary housing with school-related issues. Call us for help enrolling in school, getting transportation to school, or with any other related questions you may have: **800-388-2014**.

The Department of Education's Students in Temporary Housing Program can also assist you. The Students in Temporary Housing webpage, including a list of contacts in your borough, is available here: <http://tinyurl.com/2cslunl>.



Are you homeless and in need of assistance? The **Ali Forney Center**, **The Door**, and **Streetwork Project** provide support for homeless LGBTQ youth. Check them out in the resources section at the back of this guide.

STARTING A GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCE

What is a GSA?

A Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) (sometimes known as Gay-Straight Alliance) is a student-run club that provides a safe place for LGBTQ students and their allies to meet one another, find support and guidance, and plan events and activities to raise awareness and create change for the LGBTQ community. The presence of a GSA in school has been shown to decrease anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment and make students feel safer and more comfortable. Starting a GSA can go a long way toward making your school a better place.

You have the right to start a GSA in your school

Under a federal law called the Equal Access Act (EAA), public schools cannot prohibit students from starting a GSA so long as there are other non-academic clubs at the school. In addition, under the EAA all student clubs must be treated the same way and have equal access to school resources. This means that if other clubs get to be listed in an official directory, use classrooms, put up fliers, and participate in school events, the GSA must be allowed to do these things as well.

How do I start a GSA?

Ask your school's guidance counselor for information on how to start a student-run club. You may need to find a faculty member to sponsor your group and write a set of rules detailing your club's mission.



TIP:

Check out all of the resources available for starting your own GSA from the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN): <http://tinyurl.com/GLSENguide>.



CAN I PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS AND GYM CLASS ACCORDING TO MY GENDER IDENTITY?



According to the Department of Education’s **Transgender Student Guidelines** (<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/TransgenderStudentGuidelines>), transgender students should be able to participate in gym class and on sports teams that match their gender identity. Participation in competitive and contact sports will be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Ask to participate in classes and on teams that reflect your gender identity. If you feel that school staff are refusing to place you in a gym class or on a team that matches your gender identity, you may want to consider getting legal assistance.

Bathrooms and Locker Rooms

State and local laws forbid schools from discriminating against you because of your gender identity or gender expression. This means that schools should let you use whichever bathroom or locker room matches your gender identity, just like they would let any student. So, if you identify as a girl, you should be able to use the girls’ bathroom in most cases. The DOE’s **Transgender Student Guidelines** state that school staff should support transgender students, honor your preferences, and allow you to use facilities that include you with other students, don’t stigmatize, or single you out, and ensure your safety. If you need extra privacy for any reason related to your gender identity, the school should let you use a gender neutral or single stall bathroom, like an accessible bathroom, the teacher’s bathroom, or a bathroom in the nurse’s office. Your bathroom, changing area or changing schedule should protect your ability to keep your transgender status confidential.

You should never have to use a locker room or bathroom that conflicts with your gender identity.

If your school is making you use the wrong locker or bathroom, talk to your RFA Liaison, counselor, or any other adult with whom you feel comfortable. You can also file a verbal or written complaint with the Office of Equal Opportunity. See page 6 for more information.

CAN I CHANGE MY NAME AT SCHOOL?

The Department of Education's **Transgender Student Guidelines** (<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/TransgenderStudentGuidelines>) address name changes at school for students who are transgender. If you feel that school staff are refusing to use your preferred name because of your gender identity or sexual orientation, it may be time to get legal assistance. See the back of this pamphlet for a list of free legal service providers.

Changing Your Legal Name

To change your legal name, you will need to go to civil court. If you are under 18, your parent or guardian must apply for you. Bring your birth certificate to your nearest civil court (there is one in each borough). Pass through security and ask for the court clerk's office. In the clerk's office, tell them you are filing to change your name.



The clerk will give you papers to fill out and charge a \$65 fee. If you can't afford this fee, you can tell the clerk you would like to file as a "poor or indigent person." They will give you more forms to fill out about your financial situation. The clerk will schedule a date for you to come back and have the name change approved by a judge.

Usually you are required to publish your new name in a newspaper to give "public notice." But, you can ask the judge to waive this requirement if you are changing your name for safety reasons. A guide for changing your name can be found here: <http://srtp.org/resources/namechange/>.

Your New Legal Name at School

Once you have documentation of your new name from the court, you can bring it to the principal's office at your school. Explain to them that you have a new legal name and that you would like everyone in the school to start using this name. You should also ask them to update your official records to reflect your new legal name.

REMEMBER: If you change your name *legally* and notify the school of this change, they must use your new, legal name in all instances.

You can also request a name and/or gender change to your old school records if you legally change your name after you graduate. When you contact your old school, they should forward your request for a name and/or gender change to the appropriate Borough Field Support Center, which will then make sure that the changes are made in the Department of Education’s database.

Your Preferred Name at School

It is important to know that your school must address you by your preferred name even if you have not changed your name legally. DOE guidelines require schools to address you by the name and pronouns that match the gender identity you “consistently assert at school” *even if you have not legally changed your name*. You may request a Student ID that reflects your gender identity and preferred name.

REMEMBER: Repeated, deliberate use of pronouns and names that are inconsistent with your gender identity is considered harassment.

If you have not legally changed your name, official school records, such as your transcript, will list the name and gender on your birth certificate. School personnel must take steps to keep these records, and your transgender status, confidential.

Dress Codes at School

You have the right to dress in accordance with your gender identity, which does not require getting a legal name or gender change. You still have to follow the dress code that has been adopted at your school.

For example, if you identify as male, you may wear your school’s prescribed uniform for male students, or follow your school’s dress code for male students. For more information, see the DOE’s **Transgender Student Guidelines**.

TIP:

New York City offers a free, government-issued photo ID for people 14 and older. You can apply without an adult if you have another photo ID. You do NOT have to include gender on your NYC ID. For more information on how to apply, visit www.nyc.gov/idnyc.





RESOURCES FOR LGBTQ YOUTH



If you need **immediate assistance**, check out the box on page 3 of this guide!

NYC Department of Education LGBT Community Liaison

Jared Fox | jfox16@schools.nyc.gov | (212) 374-6908

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

356 West 18th Street, NYC 10011 | (212) 271-7200 | callen-lorde.org

A quality health facility dedicated to LGBT patients. Primary care, HIV/AIDS treatment, STD testing and treatment. Provides **free** comprehensive primary care and mental health counseling for youth through the **Health Outreach to Teens (HOTT)** program.

The Center: The LGBT Community Center

208 West 13th Street, NYC 10011 | (212) 620-7310 | www.gaycenter.org

Offers over 30 programs covering culture, recreation, and mental health. Hosts over 300 LGBT groups, including groups for youth.

The Ali Forney Center (Drop-in Center)

321 West 125th Street, NYC 10027 | (212) 206-0574 | aliforneycenter.org

Assists homeless LGBTQ youth to become independent, offering meals, showers, medical care, HIV testing, mental health services, employment assistance, and emergency and transitional housing.

The Door: A Center of Alternatives

555 Broome Street, NYC 10013 | (212) 941-9090 | www.door.org

Provides a range of services to youth, including a health center, support for runaway, homeless and foster care youth, legal representation, and LGBTQ support groups.

Streetwork Project

209 West 125th Street, NYC 10027 | (212) 577-7777 | www.safehorizon.org

Services for homeless LGBTQ youth including emergency housing, counseling, advocacy, hot meals, clothing and showers.

The Hetrick-Martin Institute

2 Astor Place, NYC 10003 | (212) 674-2400 | www.hmi.org

A safe and supportive place for LGBTQ youth, including after school programs and supportive services like meals, clothing and counseling.

FREE LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Advocates for Children of New York

151 West 30th St., NYC 10001 | (866) 427-6033 | advocatesforchildren.org

Representation and guidance for education-related issues, including bullying, special education, and LGBTQ discrimination in schools.

NY Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG): LGBT Law Project

7 Hanover Square 18th Floor, NYC 10004 | (212) 613-5000 x5107 | nylag.org

Representation and referrals for the LGBT community in family law, discrimination, name changes, homelessness and public assistance.

New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)

125 Broad Street, NYC 10004 | (212) 607-3300 | nyclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights

Advocacy and policy reform for LGBTQ rights.

Lawyers for Children, Inc. (LFC): LGBTQ Project

110 Lafayette St., NYC, 10013 | (212) 966-6420 | lawyersforchildren.org

The LGBTQ Project provides legal representation to LGBTQ youth in care and referrals to any LGBTQ youth in need.

Peter Cicchino Youth Project of the Urban Justice Center

40 Rector Street, 9th Floor, NYC 10006 | (877) 5428-529 | urbanjustice.org

Representation, trainings and referrals for LGBT youth ages 11-24.

The Door: A Center of Alternatives

555 Broome Street, NYC 10013 | (212) 941-9090 x3280 | www.door.org

Legal advice and representation for immigration, public benefits and housing.

Sylvia Rivera Law Project

147 West 24th Street 5th Floor, NYC 10011 | (212) 337-8550 x308 | srlp.org

Representation and clinics for low income transgender people and transgender people of color, including health care and immigration.

Make the Road New York

301 Grove Street, Brooklyn 11237 | (718) 418-7690 | maketheroad.org

Representation and youth development for the Latino community.



COMMONLY-USED TERMS



Assigned Sex at Birth — a term used to describe the sex designation, usually “male” or “female,” assigned to a person when they are born.

Cisgender — a term used to describe a person whose gender identity is the same as their physical anatomy at birth.

Gender identity — the inner sense of being male, female, both or neither.

Gender expression — how you express or show your gender identity to the world. Everyone expresses gender in different ways. For example, you might express your gender in the way you dress, the name or pronoun you use (“he” or “she”), the way you wear your hair, how you act, how you speak, or by choosing whether or not to wear makeup.

Gender nonconforming — expressing yourself in ways that are different from people’s traditional ideas and stereotypes about how girls, boys, women or men should look or act.

Queer — often used to include anyone who wants to identify as queer and who chooses to be outside of societal norms in terms of gender, sexuality or/and even politics. The term has historically been a derogatory one but has been reclaimed by many LGBTQ people in recent times. Many individuals proudly identify as queer while others in the LGBTQ community still find it to be an offensive word.

Questioning — this term can refer to a person who may be trying out different gender or sexual orientations.

Sex or biological sex — a term used historically and within the medical field to identify genetic, biological, hormonal, and physical characteristics (including genitalia), which are used to classify an individual as female, male or intersex.

Sexual Orientation — sexual orientation is different from gender and refers to who a person is attracted to. Gay, straight, lesbian and bisexual are examples of sexual orientations.

Transgender (trans) — a general term to describe a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. This is also sometimes used to describe people who identify as transsexual, gender queer, gender non-conforming, cross-dresser, femme queen, A.G., Two Spirit, and many more. It is important to refer to people with the term they prefer.

Transition — the process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.



Our Mission

Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)'s mission is to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. AFC achieves this through four integrated strategies:




- Free advice and legal representation for families of students;
- Free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals, to equip them to advocate on behalf of students;
- Policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and
- Impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and to compel needed education reform.

Still have more questions? Please call the Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline:

Monday through Thursday
10 am to 4 pm
866-427-6033 (toll free)

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