

# LGBTQ+ Students

## Know Your Rights & Resources



School should be a safe place for ALL. We recognize the stress and worry that can come with fighting back against oppressive policies and discrimination.

Furthermore, the emotional wear and tear of being subject to an unaccepting, harmful space every day is incredibly hurtful.

If at any point you need to talk to someone, [The Trevor Project](#) has free support services 24/7, 365 days a year via chat, call, or text.

Disclaimer: This is a living document. We will continue to update as appropriate. Our [website](#) will always have the most updated version.

This guide was created by [Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health \(MOASH\)](#) in collaboration with [Queer Families of Livingston \(QFL\)](#). It was reviewed by members of the [Pride Alliance of Livingston](#), MDE LGBTQ+ Students Project, [Stand with Trans](#), and [MOASH youth advisory councils](#).



# Why Does This Guide Exist?

The purpose of this guide is to equip LGBTQ+ students with the necessary tools, resources, and knowledge to effectively advocate for themselves when faced with discrimination, non-compliance with state standards, or unequal treatment within their schools.

This guide recognizes the pressing need for a resource that addresses the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth in educational settings. By placing the power back into the hands of the students themselves, this guide aims to foster resilience, amplify voices, and promote positive change within schools, creating safer and more inclusive environments for all.

While this guide is intended for youth and built on the idea that youth are their own best advocates, it's also a helpful resource for parents to understand the legalities of their child's rights in the public school system.





## What Rights Do I Have?

[This document](#) from the ACLU & GLSEN offers a fairly comprehensive look at common questions regarding the rights of freedom, equality, and safety for LGBTQ+ students in Michigan schools while providing specific citations to back up the facts.

## Record Everything!

If you are experiencing any sort of discrimination, bullying, or harassment at school, it is crucial to document everything! Keep a log of dates, messages, screenshots, emails, etc. on a private, non-school owned device or notebook.

Please note that Michigan requires consent from BOTH parties for any audio recording of conversations.



# I Want to Start a GSA...

Under the federal Equal Access Act (EAA) of 1984, any school that permits non-curriculum related student groups must provide equal access to all student groups, and that includes equal access for GSAs.

Equal access means that the GSA must be afforded all the same rights and privileges as other student groups to use school facilities for meetings and communications.

For more details and answers to common follow-up questions, visit [this resource](#) from GLAD.



# Formal Complaints

Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to file a complaint is yours. If you do decide to file a complaint, you have 180 days from the date of the incident to do so. Complaints are confidential and retaliation for filing a complaint is not permitted under any circumstances.

- [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\) Online Complaint Form](#)
- [Michigan Department of Civil Rights Complaint Form](#)
- [Office for Civil Rights Online Complaint Form](#)



Vic, co-facilitator of the Michigan Youth Trans Voice Advisory Council at MOASH, has put together a presentation regarding trans advocacy within schools. It includes further learning, actionable steps, examples, and resources.

[Find it here!](#)

# Advocating To School Staff

The following resources are intended to provide you with the appropriate information to speak directly to school staff about your rights & LGBTQ+ issues in schools.

- [Michigan Department of Education \(MDE\) Guidance](#) - please note these are not mandates but they are strong suggestions for Michigan schools.
- The previously linked [ACLU/GLSEN document](#) provides factual information about LGBTQ+ student rights with the standards to back it up.
- School board meetings provide a public forum to share your experience, call for change, and any other relevant information. You have a right to speak at school board meetings if you feel safe and comfortable doing so. Please note that many meetings require you to show up a bit in advance to "sign up" to speak and speaking windows tend to be limited to 2-3 minutes/person. Check with your school board in advance to see what might work best for you!



# What is Title IX — and how can I utilize it?

It is a **federal** law that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in any public or private elementary school, secondary school, school district, college, or university that receives federal funding.

Title IX exists to protect students from discrimination, bullying, harassment, and hostile environments. These protections apply to all school-run programs and extracurricular activities, including sports and clubs.

Need to find your Title IX officer? A Google search of "[school name] Title IX" should pull their contact information right up!

"Title IX is an important safeguard, but it can't be enforced unless you file a complaint if and when you experience discrimination.

Additionally, by filing a complaint, you are contributing to the national record of what is happening in schools across the country. The more people speak out about the discrimination they've experienced using Title IX complaints, the clearer the patterns are — and the easier it is for policymakers to recognize a need for change."

[\(Family Equality\)](#)





# Examples of Scenarios Warranting Title IX Intervention

(all retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education)

A lesbian high school student wants to bring her girlfriend to a school social event where students can bring a date. Teachers refuse to sell her tickets, telling the student that bringing a girl as a date is “not appropriate for school.” Teachers suggest that the student attend alone or bring a boy as a date.

When he starts middle school, a transgender boy introduces himself as Brayden and tells his classmates he uses he/him pronouns. Some of his former elementary school classmates “out” him to others, and every day during physical education class call him transphobic slurs, push him, and call him by his former name. When he reports it to the school’s administrators, they dismiss it, saying: “you can’t expect everyone to agree with your choices.”

On her way to the girls’ restroom, a transgender high school girl is stopped by the principal who bars her entry. The principal tells the student to use the boys’ restroom or nurse’s office because her school records identify her as “male.” Later, the student joins her friends to try out for the girls’ cheerleading team and the coach turns her away from tryouts solely because she is transgender. When the student complains, the principal tells her “those are the district’s policies.”





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adolescent sexual health

**Feedback? Are we missing something?  
We want to know!**

**Please email [sarah.yoakum@moash.org](mailto:sarah.yoakum@moash.org) with  
any suggestions.**

