

Sexual Violence Prevention in Schools

Recommendations from LGBTQ+ youth

Sexual violence (SV) includes rape, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual contact, sexual harassment, stalking, or unwanted sexual comments.

SV begins early and is associated with adverse health outcomes for youth, including **depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, injury, substance use, and decreased academic achievement.**

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE IS EXPERIENCED
BY 11% OF ALL
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**LGBTQ+ YOUTH EXPERIENCE
HIGHER RATES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE
THAN THEIR CISGENDER PEERS**

51% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling **unsafe at school** in the past year because of their **sexual orientation.**



61% of LGBTQ+ students experienced **verbal harassment** (e.g., called names, threatened at school) in the past year based on their **sexual orientation.**



54% of LGBTQ+ students experienced **sexual harassment** (e.g., unwanted touching or sexual remarks) at school in the past year.



22% of LGBTQ+ students experienced **physical harassment** (e.g., pushed, shoved) at school in the past year based on their **sexual orientation.**



43% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling **unsafe at school** in the past year because of their **gender expression.**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ+) students in middle and high school

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW SCHOOLS CAN PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Centering youth voices is critical to identify effective SV prevention strategies. Schools have an important role in the prevention of SV among youth. LGBTQ+ youth are often not represented in sexual violence education and experience obstacles to accessing support.

We interviewed 31 LGBTQ+ Washington State students who recommended **5 essential changes** schools can make to better respond to SV.

01 Provide LGBTQ+ competent mental health support.

There is a need for LGBTQ+-competent mental health support, where students can feel comfortable and know that conversations about their gender, sexuality, or concerns are confidential.

“We had counselors at my school to talk to, but I felt a little bit afraid they’d tell my parents.”

02 Enforce SV and anti-bullying policies and ensure accountability.

Reported instances of SV should not be minimized by school staff; the lack of transparency or inaction against SV perpetration results in students thinking that they will be ignored.

“Without that open line of communication, victims sometimes think it’s not worth [reporting].”

03 Increase and ensure access to gender-neutral spaces.

By increasing the capacity and accessibility of gender-neutral spaces where SV occurs, particularly locker rooms and bathrooms, middle schools can provide safer physical spaces to all students, regardless of gender identity.

“I usually change in the [bathroom] stalls of the locker room. But there’s not many of those... people can make fun of each other’s bodies or touch each other inappropriately in [locker rooms].”

04 Include LGBTQ+ relationships and SV in the comprehensive sexual health education curriculum.

SV should be holistically prevented by expanding sexual health education to include all types of relationships, in addition to teaching consent and healthy relationships.

“There’s not enough teaching on what happens when you’re sexually assaulted or what is sexual violence...some people experience it and don’t even realize that they’re experiencing it...especially among queer people who aren’t addressed in those conversations.”

05 Train staff in cultural humility to support LGBTQ+ students.

School staff should acknowledge and support LGBTQ+ students, including using students’ correct name and pronouns.

“Unfortunately, it’s sad to see...but teachers will even join in on some of the very heinous things that people will say to other people.”

“I appreciate you asking us these questions. I felt like nobody cared about queer and trans youth and what we’re dealing with in schools until today...so thank you for this.”

