



AFC'S

LGBTQ+

# Education Guide

YOUR RIGHTS AS AN LGBTQ+ STUDENT

March 2023



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

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABOUT THIS GUIDE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>WHAT IF I AM BEING HARASSED, BULLIED, OR DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN SCHOOL? .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WHAT IF OTHER STUDENTS ARE HARASSING OR BULLYING ME?.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WHAT IF THE BULLYING, HARASSMENT, OR DISCRIMINATION DOESN'T STOP?.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>WHAT IF I SEE ANOTHER STUDENT BEING HARASSED OR BULLIED?.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>WHAT IF SCHOOL STAFF HARASSES, BULLIES, OR DISCRIMINATES AGAINST ME? .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>WHAT IF I GET SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL?.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CAN I CHANGE SCHOOLS?.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>WHAT IF I CAN'T GET A TRANSFER?.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>WHAT IF I'M HOMELESS OR HAVE RUN AWAY? .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>STARTING A GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCE (GSA).....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>BATHROOMS, SPORTS, AND DRESS CODES.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CAN I CHANGE MY NAME AT SCHOOL? .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>RESOURCES.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>COMMONLY-USED TERMS .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>NOTES .....</b>	<b>28</b>

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 and allies in New York City Department of Education schools. It lays out LGBTQ+ students' rights and what to do if these rights are violated. We hope this guide helps you understand your rights and 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 questions or would like more information about anything in this guide, please call our **Helpline**, Monday through Thursday, from 10am to 4pm, at **(866) 427-6033**. You can also email us at [info@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto: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](http://www.imalive.org)

**Safe Horizon:** (866) 689-4357 Victims of crime and their families

**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](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/section/get-help)

**GLBT National Help Center:** (212) 989-0999 Helpline for LGBTQ+ community

Online chat support at [www.glnh.org](http://www.glnh.org)

# WHAT IF I AM BEING HARASSED, BULLIED, OR DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN SCHOOL?

**State law and local rules say you have a right to go to school where you are safe and supported and there is no bullying, harassment, or discrimination.**

The New York state law is called the **Dignity for All Students Act**. The NYC Department of Education's (DOE's) rules are called **Chancellor's Regulations**. [Chancellor's Regulation A-832](#) says that you cannot be bullied, harassed, or discriminated against in public schools for any reason, including your gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.

These laws and rules protect you whether you *self-identify* as LGBTQ+ or gender non-binary or someone *thinks* that you do. They protect you before, during, and after school, as well as on the bus and at school-sponsored events.

## **Bullying can include:**

- Physical violence, stalking, or aggressive gestures;
- Threats, taunts, or teasing;
- Purposefully excluding you from peer groups;
- Using derogatory language or slurs; or
- Offensive material in email, online, on social media (like on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or TikTok), or in print.

## **TIP:**

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

Every public school in New York City must have a **Respect for All Liaison** (RFA Liaison). This person should be trained to prevent and address bullying, harassment, and intimidation. Your school should post a "Respect for All" poster listing the RFA Liaison's contact information.

State law and [Chancellor's Regulation A-830](#) prohibit *school staff* from discriminating against or harassing you for any reason, including spoken, written, or physical acts, because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

# WHAT IF OTHER STUDENTS ARE HARASSING OR BULLYING ME?

## STEP I: Tell someone.

If another student bullies, harasses, or discriminates against you, talk to your school's principal or Respect for All Liaison (RFA Liaison). If you feel uncomfortable talking to the principal or RFA Liaison, make the report to any school employee who you feel comfortable with. The law requires school staff members to report information about bullying to the principal right away.

You may also report bullying by calling 311 or (718) 935-2288. Your call may be anonymous. You can also email [RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov). Your email can be anonymous, and it can be written in any language.

## What happens next?

The DOE has a responsibility to keep you safe. **Your school must make a written report of your complaint in the DOE's Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) within 24 hours and investigate within 5 days of getting the report.** The investigation should include interviews with anyone involved in the incident and any witnesses. Your school will also notify everyone's parents. If you don't want your parents to know about your complaint, you can ask your principal not to tell them, but it is ultimately the principal's decision. Your school may separate students, recommend supports and interventions (such as counseling), or take disciplinary action against students who harass or bully others. The principal needs to make sure the bullying, harassment, or intimidation stops.

**If your school doesn't follow these steps, go to the next page.**

## LEARN MORE:

For more information on how to report bullying and how schools must respond to bullying, check out **AFC's Guide to Preventing & Addressing Bullying**:  
[http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/bullying\\_guide.pdf](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/bullying_guide.pdf).

# WHAT IF THE BULLYING, HARASSMENT, OR DISCRIMINATION DOESN'T STOP?

## STEP 2: Report to the Department of Education (DOE)

If the bullying doesn't stop or you don't feel comfortable talking to someone at your school, make a complaint to other people or offices within the DOE by calling 311 or (718) 935-2288. You can also contact any of the following:

- **Office of Safety and Youth Development** at [RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov) or (718) 935-4357
- **Division of Family and Community Empowerment** at [face@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:face@schools.nyc.gov) or (212) 374-2323
- **Superintendent** of your school district (you can find this person's name under the superintendent and district contacts tab of your school's official DOE webpage)
- **DOE's Manager of LGBTQ+ Programs**, Kalima McKenzie-Simms, at [lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov); or email [LGBTQ@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:LGBTQ@schools.nyc.gov).

## STEP 3: Appeal to the Commissioner of Education

If you disagree with a decision from the people listed in step 1 (page 5) or 2, you can appeal the decision to the New York State Commissioner of Education. You must file your appeal within 30 days of getting the decision. Learn about the appeal process at [www.counsel.nysed.gov/appeals](http://www.counsel.nysed.gov/appeals).

If you win your appeal, the Commissioner can order your school to take steps to follow the laws and rules against bullying, discrimination, and harassment in schools.

### Still have more questions or need help?

Reach out to Advocates for Children to see if we can help.

# WHAT IF I SEE ANOTHER STUDENT BEING HARASSED OR BULLIED?

## **Anyone can report bullying!**

You do not have to be harassed, bullied, or discriminated against yourself to report it. If you see another student being harassed, bullied, or discriminated against, report it to the principal, the RFA liaison, or other school employees; call 311 or (718) 935-2288, or email

[RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov).



## **The law protects you from retaliation.**

The Chancellor's Regulations, state law, and federal law do not allow schools to retaliate against anyone who reports bullying as long as the reporter genuinely believes they saw bullying. This means that even if the incident is ultimately found not to be bullying, you cannot get in trouble for reporting it if you really believed that it was bullying.

## **Confidentiality**

If possible, you should provide your name and contact information with the report so that investigators can follow up if they need to. If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe doing this, you can make an anonymous report to the school principal, 311, (718) 935- 2288, or [RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov).

## **School staff have a duty to report bullying.**

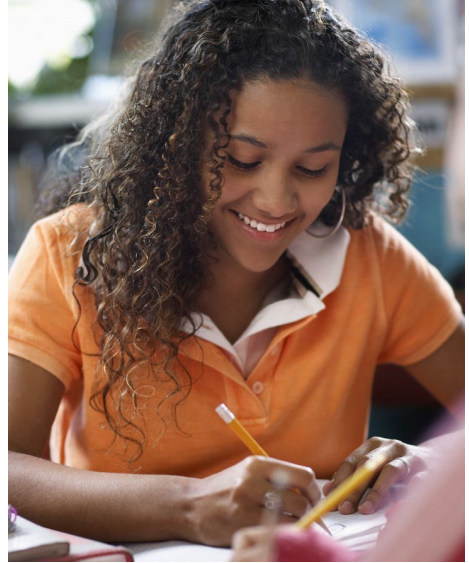
The Chancellor's Regulations and state law require school staff to promptly report harassment, bullying, and discrimination. This applies whether they actually saw the incident or were told about it. If you think a school employee knows about harassment, bullying, or discrimination and is not reporting it, you can politely remind them of their duty to report or you can report it yourself.

# WHAT IF SCHOOL STAFF HARASSES, BULLIES, OR DISCRIMINATES AGAINST ME?

**If a school employee is bullying or harassing you, make a complaint with the Office of Equal Opportunity.**

The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) handles complaints of discrimination and harassment by school staff.

You can fill out an online form at: <https://www.nycenet.edu/oeo> or, to make an anonymous complaint, 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 decision within 90 work days of the OEO getting the complaint.

School staff who violate [Chancellor's Regulation A-830](#) may be disciplined, even if their behavior doesn't break any other laws.







# WHAT IF I GET SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL?



LGBTQ+ and non-binary students have the same rights and responsibilities as other students. This means that the Discipline Code applies to you, even if you are being bullied.

However, [Chancellor's Regulation A-830](#) does not allow you to be suspended from school based on your gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Your school also cannot discipline you for reporting harassment or discrimination that you truly believe has happened. If you think you are being disciplined because of your gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or as retaliation for reporting harassment, you should bring this up at the beginning of your suspension hearing. You can also file a complaint with the Office of Equal Opportunity (page 8).

For more information about your rights if you are suspended, check out [AFC's Suspension Guide](#).

Students with IEPs or 504 Plans get legal protections if they are being disciplined in school. For more information, check out [AFC's Manifestation Determination Review \(MDR\) Guide](#).

## **TIP:**

Remember, if you need support, there are places outside of school that can help. Check out the resources listed on **pages 21-23 of this guide**.

## **Transfers and Superintendent's suspensions**

If you are suspended from school and go to a hearing, you can ask for a school transfer at the end of the hearing. If the hearing officer grants you a transfer, the DOE will give you a new school after your suspension. You do not have the right to choose your new school. But you may tell the DOE which schools you are interested in and ask the DOE to offer them to you if they have available seats.



## CAN I CHANGE SCHOOLS?



School transfers can be hard to get. However, you may be able to change schools if you fit into one of the categories described below. To request a transfer, bring the paperwork described below to your school or a [Family Welcome Center](#).

The Family Welcome Center, not your school, decides whether you get a transfer. You won't get to choose which school you transfer to, but you should tell the Family Welcome Center which schools you are interested in. Where you end up depends on which schools have space.

### **You can get a safety transfer if you have been bullied, harassed, or assaulted at or near school or if staying at your school puts you in danger.**

To get a safety transfer, you will need to gather documents that show why you feel unsafe at your current school. If something happens that makes you feel unsafe at school, report it to the school or another adult, like a social worker or therapist. Get reports in writing so you can prove that you need a transfer. You can ask for a safety transfer even if an incident, like getting jumped or robbed, has not taken place. Bullying may make you feel unsafe at school and could be a reason for a transfer.

To start the safety transfer process, bring a letter to your principal or the Family Welcome Center asking for a transfer. Include any papers that show you are not safe at school like police reports, court orders, hospital records, letters, texts, or screenshots from social media. You do not need a police report.

### **You can get a guidance transfer if you are struggling in school and a new school would help.**

Guidance transfers are for students who are having trouble with their attendance, grades, or behavior in school. Talk to your guidance counselor if you think a new school would help you do better in one of these areas. Your parent or guardian must request the transfer.

## **You can get a medical transfer if you need a new school because of a medical condition.**

The medical condition might be for a physical disability, illness, pregnancy, or mental health needs. For example, students have gotten medical transfers for severe anxiety due to bullying or harassment. Other students have gotten medical transfers because they were starting hormone therapy as part of their transition.

To apply for a medical transfer, get a note on letterhead from your doctor, therapist, or healthcare provider. The note should explain your medical condition and why you need to change schools. The DOE may contact your doctor to get more information.

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

To get this transfer, bring proof of address to the Family Welcome Center. Check Google maps or another app if you aren't sure of the exact travel time from your home to school.



## **If you attend a charter school, you have the right to leave and attend a Department of Education (DOE) school.**

If you attend a charter school, go to a Family Welcome Center with your parent to request placement in a DOE school. For grades K-8, your parent or guardian can also go directly to your zoned DOE school to register you. Find your zoned school by searching your address at <https://schoolsearch.schools.nyc>.

## **If you are living in temporary housing, you have the right to transfer to your local school, and other school options.**

For more information, go to pages 14-15.

# WHAT IF I CAN'T GET A TRANSFER?

If you need a new high school and don't qualify for a transfer, one of these programs might interest you. Remember, you have the right to be in school until June 30th after your 21st birthday.

## Transfer Schools

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

Most transfer schools require you to have been in high school for at least one year before you can start, but each transfer school has its own admissions requirements, and some take first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders. For more information on transfer schools, check out the [Department of Education's website](#).

Harvey Milk High School is a unique transfer school in the East Village designed to support LGBTQ+ students who are at risk of dropping out. To apply, you must be at least 16 years old with 11 credits. Get the application at <https://www.hmhsnyc.org>.



## Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs)

YABCs are evening programs for students who can't go to class during the day. To transfer full-time into a YABC and only go to evening classes, you must turn 18 before July 1st. Students can earn a regular Regents diploma at a YABC. Talk to your guidance counselor if you want to apply.

## High School Equivalency Programs

The DOE and many community organizations have free programs to help you earn a High School Equivalency Diploma by passing the GED exam. The DOE programs are called Pathways to Graduation, or P2G. You must be turning 18 by the end of the school year to enroll. The GED is not an easy test or a quick fix, so make sure you are prepared to do the necessary work. For more information on DOE GED programs, go to your nearest [Referral Center](#).

## 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 regular high school or a high school equivalency program for the other half of the day. Students who already have a 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 [www.co-optech.org/](http://www.co-optech.org/).

### LEARN MORE:

For more information on any of these programs, talk to your guidance counselor or visit

[www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate).





# WHAT IF I'M HOMELESS OR HAVE RUN AWAY?



If you do not have a permanent home, you are protected by a federal law called the **McKinney-Vento Act** and by [DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-780](#).

The McKinney-Vento Act protects students who are living in temporary housing. You are considered a student in temporary housing and have extra protections if you are:

- Living in a shelter, emergency housing, or transitional housing;
- Couch-surfing or sharing someone else's house or apartment because you have lost your housing, are experiencing economic hardship, or have been kicked out;
- Living in a motel, hotel, or hostel;
- Living in a subway or bus station, car, park, public space, or abandoned building.

## **You have choices about where to go to school.**

If you are living in one of the temporary housing situations above, you can stay at your current school, enroll in a new school, or may have the right to go back to one of your old schools. To enroll in a school near you, go to the Family Welcome Center in the borough where you are staying. For help or more information, you can call Advocate's for Children's Students in Temporary Housing Project at (212) 822-9546 or email them at [ProjectLIT@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto:ProjectLIT@advocatesforchildren.org).

## **What if I left my home because I felt unsafe or unsupported, but my parents say I can come home?**

If you have left home and entered a shelter, are staying with friends, or are in any of the situations listed above, you most likely qualify for protections under this law. It doesn't matter if your parents say you can come home.

## 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 called unaccompanied youth and have the right to make decisions about school enrollment with the help of a shelter caseworker or DOE liaison. If you are enrolling in a new school, the Family Welcome Center must make sure that you are enrolled immediately, even if you do not have all the paperwork normally needed to enroll.

## Thinking about life after high school?

Schools must help students experiencing homelessness with college planning and applications. If you are an unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, you should also get help applying for federal financial aid as an independent student, which means that you do not need to put your parent or guardian’s financial information on your FAFSA. **For more information, check out this [FAFSA toolkit](#).**

## Who can help?

The Learners in Temporary Housing Project (Project LIT) at Advocates for Children helps students living in temporary housing with school-related issues. For help enrolling in school, getting transportation to school, or with any other related questions, call: (212) 822-9546.

The Department of Education’s Students in Temporary Housing Program can also assist you. Visit the [Students in Temporary Housing webpage](#) to learn more, including a list of contacts in your borough.

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 (GSA)

## What is a GSA?

A Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) is sometimes known as a Gay-Straight Alliance. It is a student-run club that provides a safe place for LGBTQ+ students and their allies to meet, find support, and plan activities. Starting a GSA can decrease anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and harassment at school. It can make students feel safer and more comfortable.

## 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 if there are other non-academic clubs at the school. The law also says that 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, or participate in school events, the GSA must be allowed to do these things too.

## How do I start a GSA?

Ask your school's guidance counselor for information. You may need to find a faculty member to sponsor your group and write a set of rules detailing your club's mission. For help, you can also reach out to Kalima McKenzie-Simms (she/her), the DOE's Manager of LGBTQ+ Programs, at [lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov).



### TIP:

Check out these resources on starting your own GSA from GLSEN:

[www.glsen.org/support-student-gsas](http://www.glsen.org/support-student-gsas).



# BATHROOMS, SPORTS, AND DRESS CODES

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

State and local laws prohibit schools from discriminating against you because of your gender identity or gender expression. This means your school should let you use the bathroom or locker room that matches your gender identity. So, if you identify as a girl, you should be able to use the girls' bathroom in most cases.

The DOE's [Guidelines to Support Transgender and Gender Expansive Students](#) say that schools should create a culture that respects and values all students and fosters understanding of gender identity and expression within the school community. Schools must let you use facilities that ensure your safety and don't make you feel bad or single you out, and you cannot be forced to use an alternative facility, such as a gender neutral or single-occupancy restroom or changing area, instead of your preferred facility corresponding with your identity. However, if you need or want extra privacy for any reason related to your gender identity, the school must 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, and changing schedule should allow you to keep your transgender status confidential if that is what you want. Any arrangements also must be provided in a way that is not marginalizing or disruptive for you.

If your school is making you use the wrong locker room or bathroom, talk to your Respect for All Liaison, counselor, or any school staff you feel comfortable with. You can also file a complaint with the Office of Equal Opportunity (page 8).



## Sports

The DOE's Transgender Student Guidelines say you must be allowed to participate in gym class and on teams that match your gender identity for intramural and competitive sports (including contact sports). Schools may not be required to follow these guidelines for wrestling and mixed competition sports teams, and separate requirements apply for participation in these activities. You can contact [lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov) for more information on these requirements.



## School Uniforms & Dress Codes

You have the right to dress in a way that matches your gender identity, but you still have to follow your school's dress code. For example, if you identify as male, you may wear your school's uniform for male students, or follow your school's dress code for male students.



# CAN I CHANGE MY NAME AT SCHOOL?

The DOE's [Guidelines to Support Transgender and Gender Expansive Students](#) talk about name and pronoun changes at school. If you feel that school staff are refusing to use your preferred name and pronoun because of your gender identity, it may be time to get legal help. Check out page 23 for a list of free legal service providers.

## Your school must use your preferred name and pronoun.

You have the right to be called by the name and pronoun that match the gender identity you use at school. You do not need your parent's consent or a court-ordered name or gender marker change to be addressed by your preferred name and pronoun. Your school's principal must make sure that teachers and other school employees honor your name and pronoun preferences. Teachers and other school staff are responsible for ensuring that other students also call you by the name and pronouns you use.

### REMEMBER:

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

## What about my school records?

You don't need documentation to update a name or gender marker in records that are not part of your permanent file, such as middle school diplomas, guidance logs, graduation programs, sporting rosters, and yearbooks. For Public School Athletic League activities, you can update your name and gender on a roster by speaking to your athletic director who will email [lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov) for support in making the change.

## How do I change my permanent school records?

Your permanent school records include documents such as high school diplomas, transcripts, report cards, attendance records, and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). When enrolling in a DOE school, parents self-report their child's gender and may also self-report their child's chosen name at that time. No documentation (e.g., birth certificate) is required to self-report this information.

If you already attend DOE schools, updating your name or gender marker on a permanent record requires a change in the DOE's computer system called ATS. This change can be made with approval from your parent (or you if you are an emancipated minor or at least 18 years of age).

If you legally change your name or gender marker, you can ask the DOE to change your permanent student records. If you are still enrolled in school, bring a court order showing your name change or documentation of a legal change or gender marker to your school and request that this information be changed in ATS. If you have not legally changed your name, you may still change the name or gender listed on your school records by having your parent submit a signed [Name and Gender Change Request Form](#) to the school. If you are 18 years old or older, you may submit the form yourself.

If you legally change your name after you graduate or leave school, you can ask the DOE to change your old school records. Contact your old school. They should forward your request for a name or gender marker change to their assigned Academic Policy, Performance, and Assessment Specialist. The Specialist will then make sure the appropriate changes are made in ATS.

## How do I change my legal name?

To change your legal name, you need to go to court. If you are under 18, your parent or guardian must apply for you. Bring your birth certificate to your nearest civil court. Ask for the court clerk's office and tell them you are filing to change your name. The clerk will give you papers to fill out. The fee is \$65. 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 your name change approved by a judge.

Usually, you must publish your new name in a newspaper, 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 at [srtp.org/resources/namechange/](http://srtp.org/resources/namechange/).

For help changing your name, contact one of the organizations listed on page 23.



# RESOURCES



## NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- Kalima McKenzie-Simms, Manager of LGBTQ+ Programs: [lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:lgbtq@schools.nyc.gov)
- Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD): [RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov) or (718) 935-4357
- To make a bullying complaint, call (718) 935-2288.

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



## COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

### **The Center: The LGBT Community Center**

208 West 13th Street, NYC • (212) 620-7310 • [www.gaycenter.org](http://www.gaycenter.org) • @lgbtcenternyc

Offers many services and programs, including support and discussion groups, social activities and events, and substance abuse and mental health counseling.

### **The Ali Forney Center (Drop-In Center)**

321 West 125th St., NYC • (212) 206-0574 • [aliforneycenter.org](http://aliforneycenter.org) • @AliForneyCenter

Helps homeless LGBTQ youth offering meals, showers, clothes, medical care, HIV testing/support, mental health services, career help, and emergency and transitional housing.

### **The Door: A Center of Alternatives**

555 Broome Street, NYC • (212) 941-9090 • [www.door.org](http://www.door.org) • @Door\_NYC

Provides services to youth including medical care, support for runaway, homeless, and foster care youth; legal help, tutoring and college prep; career help; LGBTQ support groups; and hot meals every day.

## **Streetwork Project (Drop-In Center)**

Harlem: 209 West 125th Street • Lower East Side: 33 Essex Street • 212-695-2220 • [www.safehorizon.org](http://www.safehorizon.org) • @StreetworkNYC

Services for homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults (up to 24 years old) including emergency housing, hot meals, clothing, showers, counseling, medical care, advocacy, and legal help.

## **The Hetrick-Martin Institute**

2 Astor Place, NYC • (212) 674-2400 • [www.hmi.org](http://www.hmi.org) • @HetrickMartin

A safe and supportive place for LGBTQ youth with free after school and academic programs, a high school equivalency program, and supportive services like meals, clothing, job help, and counseling.



## **HEALTHCARE**

### **Callen-Lorde Community Health Center**

Manhattan: 356 West 18th St. & 230 West 17th St. • (212) 271-7200

Bronx: 3144 3rd Ave. • (718) 215-1800

Brooklyn: 40 Flatbush Ave. • (718) 215-1818

[callen-lorde.org](http://callen-lorde.org) • @CallenLorde

Health center dedicated to LGBT patients. Medical care, HIV/AIDS treatment, STI testing and treatment. Free medical care and mental health counseling for 13-21 year-olds through the Health Outreach to Teens (HOTT) program (only available at the 18th Street location).

### **LGBTQ Care at Montefiore**

[www.montefiore.org/lgbtqcare](http://www.montefiore.org/lgbtqcare)

Adolescent AIDS Program (serving 13–24 year-olds): (718) 882-0232 or

[info@adolescentaids.org](mailto:info@adolescentaids.org)

The Oval Center at Montefiore (serving 16 year-olds and up): (718) 882-5482

### **Adolescent Health Center at Mount Sinai (serving youth 10-22 year-olds)**

312-320 East 94th Street, NYC • (212) 423-3000 • [teenhealthcareorg@gmail.com](mailto:teenhealthcareorg@gmail.com)

[www.teenhealthcare.org](http://www.teenhealthcare.org) • @AdHealthCenter

Services include primary medical care, sexual health care, PrEP & PEP (HIV prevention pills), Trans\* care, dental care, eye care, mental health care and case management, and family counseling.



## **FREE LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS**

### **Advocates for Children of New York**

*151 West 30th Street, NYC 10001 • (866) 427-6033 • [advocatesforchildren.org](http://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](http://nylag.org)*

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

### **Lawyers for Children: LGBTQ Project**

*110 Lafayette Street, NYC 10013 • (212) 966-6420 • [lawyersforchildren.org](http://lawyersforchildren.org)*

The LGBTQ Project provides legal representation to LGBTQ youth in foster 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](http://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](http://www.door.org)*

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

### **Sylvia Rivera Law Project**

*147 West 24th Street, 5th Floor, NYC 10011 • (212) 337-8550 x308 • [srlp.org](http://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](http://maketheroad.org)*

Representation and youth development for the Latino community.

### **New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)**

*125 Broad Street, NYC 10004 • (212) 607-3300 • [nyclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights](http://nyclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights)*

Advocacy and policy reform for LGBTQ rights.





# COMMONLY-USED TERMS



*Please keep in mind that language changes over time.  
This is just one set of terms and is not all-inclusive or final.*

**Ally:** Someone who advocates for and supports members of a community other than their own.

**Asexual:** A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others or experiences a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior.

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

**Bisexual:** A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender and people of other genders.

**Cisgender:** A term used to describe a person whose gender identity is the same as their assigned sex at birth.

**Coming Out:** The process of recognizing, accepting, and sharing with others one's sexual or gender identity. Coming out is not a single event, but rather a life-long process.

**Gay:** A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

**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,” “she,” “they”), the way you wear your hair, how you act, how you speak, or by choosing whether to wear makeup.

**Gender Fluid:** A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid gender identity.

**Gender Identity:** Gender identity differs from sexual orientation and refers to one's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s).

**Gender Marker:** Notation of gender on an official document.



**Gender Nonconforming:** This refers to people who do not follow society's traditional ideas and stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

**Genderqueer:** Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither male nor female, may see themselves as outside of or in between the binary gender boxes, or may simply feel restricted by gender labels. Not everyone who identifies as genderqueer identifies as trans.

**Homophobia:** The fear, hatred, or discomfort with people who identify with, or are perceived to be part of, the LGBTQ+ community. Homophobia includes prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence brought on by fear and hatred.

**Intersex:** A person whose physical sex characteristics don't fit traditional medical definitions of "male" or "female."

**Lesbian:** A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to women.

**Nonbinary:** A person who does not exclusively identify as a man or a woman. They may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories.

**Pansexual:** A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of any gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

**Pronouns:** Pronouns are used as tools in language to refer to people. Examples of pronouns include "he/him/his," "she/her/hers," and "they/them/theirs."

**Queer:** Often includes those who choose to be outside of societal norms in terms of gender, sexuality or even politics. The term has historically been an offensive one but recently has been reclaimed by many LGBTQ+ people. 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 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 romantic attraction. Gay, straight, lesbian, and bisexual are examples of sexual orientations.

**Transgender (trans):** A term that is used broadly and often as an umbrella term to include anyone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. It is important to refer to people with the term they prefer/identify with. People who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, Two Spirit, and many more, may identify as transgender, though this is not always the case.

**Transition:** The process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

**Transphobia:** The fear or hatred of transgender people or people who do not meet society's gender role expectations.

**Transsexual:** A term that indicates a difference between one's gender identity and sex assigned at birth. Transsexual often, though not always, suggests hormonal/surgical transition from one binary gender (male or female) to the other. Unlike transgender/trans, transsexual is not an umbrella term, as many transgender people do not identify as transsexual.

**Two Spirit:** A cultural and spiritual identity used by some Indigenous people who have both masculine and feminine spirits.







## 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)

#### **Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.**

151 West 30th Street, 5th Floor

New York, NY 10001

Phone • 212-947-9779

Fax • 212-947-9790

[info@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto:info@advocatesforchildren.org)

[www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org)

 /advocatesforchildren

 @AFCNewYork

 @AFCNewYork