

“How do I support the **LGBTQ+** kids in my program?”

**Start** by making your support visible. (even if LGBTQ+ kids are not)

**Having just one supportive mentor or teacher can be the difference between health and harm for queer and trans kids.**

**You can respect and affirm the queer and trans kids in your program even if you don't understand them.** This is a very exciting moment for queer and trans kids in terms of self-definition and community. We are often behind the curve in terms of language, social mores, pop culture, and what matters. Ask, be curious, listen. Shift your language and practices.

**You can live your religious beliefs and affirm the kids in your program.** Many people belong to faith traditions that do not affirm LGBTQ+ identity even as they affirm and support the LGBTQ+ teens in their charge. Mentors of every faith are finding concrete ways to support and affirm LGBTQ+ young people. It's your job to support and protect these kids.

**Mentor affirmation saves lives.** The tragedy of LGBTQ+ youth suicide is preventable. LGBTQ+ youth have suicidal thoughts 3x to 10x as often than their cisgender and heterosexual peers – this risk drops significantly when queer and trans youth have even one affirming person in their life.

**Parent rejection is a significant risk factor in queer and trans youth suicide.** If you know that a child in your program has been rejected by their parents, their risk for parental violence, self-harm, homelessness, and substance use disorder is high. Pay attention. Be a resource.

**LGBTQ Youth Communication DOs and DON'Ts<sup>†</sup>**

**Do** express gratitude for their willingness to be visible and authentic. **Don't** interview or interrogate a child. All conversations about their queer and trans identity must be initiated by them.

<sup>†</sup> For more communication DOs and DON'Ts, visit [pastart.org/lgbtq](http://pastart.org/lgbtq)



**Now That You Know, Where Do You Start?**

Learning these facts is important. But it's just as crucial to create a plan for an open dialogue and to be mindful of engaging your kid with respect. Positive role modeling, compassion and the truth will go a long way to help you start communicating effectively.

**Use the following steps and resources to start your own Communication Action Plan.** ▶



**Fast Facts**

- LGBTQ+ teens whose family reject them attempt suicide at 8-10x the rate of teens whose families affirm their gender and sexuality.\*
- LGBTQ+ teens whose family reject them use drugs and alcohol at 3-4x the rate of teens whose families affirm their gender and sexuality.\*
- Family rejection has created a crisis of LGBTQ youth homelessness. Forty percent (40%) of all teens who are homeless in the US identify as LGBTQ+.\*
- A national study of at-risk queer youth found that 89% grew up without a mentor.\*



## Tips For Success

- Use their pronouns.
- Use the language they use to describe their sexuality.
- Use the name they ask you to use.
- If/when a child comes out to you, maintain their privacy.
- Never assume a child is out to their parents or others.
- Disrupt anti-queer and anti-trans language and behaviors in your program.
- Address anti-queer and anti-trans language and behaviors with the same seriousness you address racism, sexism, ableism, fatism and other forms of violence in your program.
- Seek help if you can't do these things.\*

# Start Here:

## 1 If You Can't Figure Out How to Support Queer and Trans Kids: Educate Yourself

- There are so many resources online,\* you can educate yourself privately.
- There are hotlines, helplines and support groups.

## 2 If Someone in Your Program is Struggling, Create Openings for the Conversation: Look for Your Moment.

- Refer to LGBTQ+ issues or role models in the news.
- Offer books that explore LGBTQ+ characters or issues.
- Share memes that speak to the joy of being LGBTQ+.
- Share a story about something you struggled with in your youth that was hard.
- Invite LGBTQ+ peers to your program to share about their amazing lives.
- Invite an LGBTQ+ person of faith or who has an LGBTQ+ child to talk about their coming out process or their child's.

## 3 You've Set the Stage: Now What?

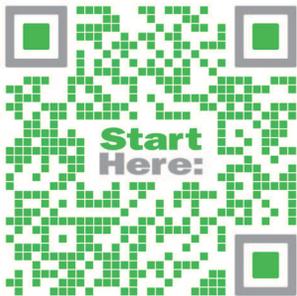
- Create Community Agreements that affirm and respect all kids.\*
- Create getting-to-know-you and ice-breaker exercises that signal your support of LGBTQ+ kids among many other important issues of respect.\*

## 4 Moving Forward: Don't Stop!

- Don't talk about a kid's LGBTQ+ identity as a difficulty or a problem.
- Get ready to learn about queer and trans culture and community.



Committing to visible and concrete support may seem challenging at first, but helpful information is out there. Resources, data and more are available at [PAStart.org/LGBTQ](https://PAStart.org/LGBTQ). Use our collection of links, videos and tools to create a strategy that will engage and empower you. They're all designed to help you get started.



\* For an expanded set of additional resources, all data citations and bonus interactive materials, click on the QR code above or visit [pastart.org/lgbtq](https://pastart.org/lgbtq)

Learn More.  
**PAStart.org**

 Commonwealth Prevention Alliance

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