

School-Based Health Quick Guide

Introduction

The California School-Based Health Alliance (CSHA) believes that advancing health equity and justice for young people requires centering the voices, leadership, and assets of all youth. CSHA strongly recommends that all School-Based Health Centers and Wellness Centers (SBHC/WCs) actively tailor their spaces and practices to affirm and empower LGBTQIA+ youth.

SBHC/WCs must help dismantle the barriers that create health disparities for LGBTQIA+ youth. Safe, inclusive, and affirming health services are a powerful practice for reducing these inequities and fostering well-being (Reference: Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ Youth).

This guide offers best practices on how SBHC/WCs can evolve their health and healing environments—from physical space to clinical practice and policy—to not just be safer, but truly affirming and equitable spaces where LGBTQIA+ youth can thrive and lead.

Questions to Consider When Creating Safer Spaces

Does your organization have **non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies**, which include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression? Are these policies available both digitally and in print?

Does your organization **provide staff training** on issues related to LGBTQIA+ youth, adolescent health, and culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery?

Does your **physical space** help transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming youth feel safe, affirmed, and able to thrive?

Does your **digital space** support transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming youth? Is it moderated?

Does your organization have **inclusive intake forms** that capture a young person's chosen name (if it differs from their legally assigned name), pronouns, gender identity, and assigned sex at birth?

Does your organization **normalize the use of pronouns and inclusive language**?



Non-Discrimination Policies

LGBTQIA-inclusive non-discrimination policies that explicitly mention sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are crucial for building an organization’s foundation for LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Once created, these policies should be made public and promoted within the organization’s physical space and online.

Below is some sample language:

- “(Organization) employees shall protect youth from discrimination, physical and sexual harassment or assault, and verbal harassment by other youth, based on a youth’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression - both perceived and actual.”
- “(Organization) will take all reasonable steps within its control to meet the diverse needs of all youth and provide an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression - both perceived and actual.”
- “(Organization) employees should model positive behavior when interacting with LGBTQIA+ youth and remind all youth that anti-LGBTQIA+ threats of violence, actual violence, or disrespectful or suggestive comments or gestures, will result in swift action against perpetrators so young people are protected and supported.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community: A Field Guide
Creating Equal Access to Quality Health Care for Transgender Patients: Transgender Affirming Hospital Policies
My School, My Rights - LGBTQ Student Rights



Staff Training

Recurring staff training that centers LGBTQIA+ youth and their intersectional identities is a significant way that organizations can prepare staff to support LGBTQIA+ youth. Topics can focus on LGBTQIA+ 101, cultural humility, LGBTQIA+ status, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and how to collect and record sexual orientation and gender identity data. Below are a variety of training opportunities:

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
Advocates for Youth: Racial Justice in Sex Education
The National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center
Spark: LGBTQIA2S+ Youth Series
GLSEN: Professional Development
The Trevor Project: Ally Training



Physical Space

- Offer gender-inclusive restrooms in public areas and post clear signs indicating a policy that allows individuals to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity.
- Display materials such as “safe zone” or “hate-free zone” posters that convey to youth that the facility takes their well-being seriously. [Here](#) are some free posters by GLSEN.
- Include LGBTQIA-affirming books, magazines, movies, and other materials in the waiting area. At the end of Advocates for Youth’s [Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ Youth Toolkit](#) is a list of resources.
- Create or distribute a LGBTQIA+ youth health education brochure or other print materials that include local resources. [Here](#) are some free materials by the National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center.
- Ensure sexual and reproductive health information is LGBTQIA+ friendly.
- Wear LGBTQIA-inclusive symbols (rainbows, pins, etc.). See the [Out for Safe Schools](#) badges as an example.
- Ask youth to fill out anonymous evaluation forms that measure the quality of your services— qualities such as youth-friendliness, cultural responsiveness, and safety.
- Annually participate in or support one or more LGBTQIA-related events or initiatives that center LGBTQIA+ youth of color.
- Post information about confidentiality and minor consent.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Tips for Parents & Guardians of Transgender Youth
Not Up for Debate: LGBTQ People Need and Deserve Tailored Sexual and Reproductive Health Care
Talking About Transgender Youth Health Care
Minor Consent and Confidentiality

Digital Space

- Dedicate a section of your organization's website to LGBTQIA+ health and wellness, particularly for young people.
- Include information about local LGBTQIA+ communities and resources on your website.
- Include an anonymous feedback form on your website.
- Incorporate LGBTQIA+ youth-inclusive resources, images, and posts in your social media channels.
- Incorporate LGBTQIA-inclusive symbols (rainbows, pins, etc.) in your physical surroundings or virtual backgrounds while on webinars.



LGBTQIA-AFFIRMING BOOKS:
TransFamily Support Services' List
GLSEN Rainbow Library
PFLAG List

Inclusive Intake Forms

- Provide explicit options to capture a young person's current gender identity on forms, including electronic health records (EHR), if it differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Use a two-question process to collect gender identity information (i.e. first asking current gender identity and then asking sex assigned at birth).
- Offer young people the option to note their pronouns in forms and EHR.
- Offer young people the opportunity to input their chosen name on forms, including EHR, if it differs from their legal name.
- Provide an option for young people to include their sexual orientation if they choose to volunteer that information.
- Offer explicit options for recording same-sex parents and other family structures, including in EHR.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**American Academy of Pediatrics:
A Pediatrician's Guide to an
LGBTQ+ Friendly Practice**



Pronouns and Inclusive Language

- State your pronouns during introductions.
- Include pronouns on staff nametags.
- Encourage staff to include pronouns in their email signatures and their usernames when on virtual meetings and hosting webinars.
- Provide opportunities for staff to practice using a range of pronouns when addressing students, recognizing that this may feel new or unfamiliar for some.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Quick and Easy Guide to Pronouns

What is a Pronoun?

Understanding Pronouns

BELOW ARE SOME SAMPLE LGBTQIA-INCLUSIVE PHRASES TO NORMALIZE:

Gendered or Less Inclusive	Gender Neutral or Inclusive
Hi guys!	Hi everyone!
What is your name?	What name would you like to be called?
How are you girls?	How are you all doing?

References

- Butler, A, Advocates for Youth, Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ Youth: A Toolkit for Education, Healthcare, and Community-Based Organizations, www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Creating-Safer-Spaces-Toolkit-Nov-13.pdf. Accessed 16 Sept. 2025.
- Butler, A, & Ortiz-Fonseca, L, Advocates for Youth, Building Cultural Responsiveness: A Toolkit for Youth-Serving Professionals, www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Building-Cultural-Responsiveness-National.pdf. Accessed 16 Sept. 2025.