Introduction

Where the public discussion of lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) issues was once taboo, the mainstream and educational media now address these topics with increasing frequency. Likewise, the inclusion of LGBTQ students on college campuses is now an integral part of the institutional diversity and inclusion mission in schools across the United States. LGBTQ issues join institutional efforts to address race, gender, disability and other issues of diversity designed to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to achieve their academic goals in a climate of respect.

Reflecting changes toward greater visibility and acceptance in the larger culture, more LGBTQ student-athletes are open about their sexual orientations and gender identities. At the same time, their heterosexual peers are increasingly comfortable with LGBTQ teammates and coaches. These changes are, in part, the result of more student-athletes having attended high schools in which LGBTQ students, teachers, parents and coaches are visible members of the community. Consequently, more student-athletes know LGBTQ friends, teachers, coaches and family members.

In addition, increasing numbers of professional and college athletes are speaking publicly in support of LGBTQ inclusion in sport and against anti-LGBTQ bullying in schools. The visibility of these athletes, both nationally and in their local communities, provides role models for younger student-athletes and sets examples of respect and support for coaches and parents. At the same time, when professional or collegiate student-athletes and coaches make anti-LGBTQ comments or use derogatory language in competitions or in social media, they are much more likely to encounter public disapproval and negative sanctions from fans and sports league officials.

Ten years ago few resources were available for college athletics programs, coaches or athletics administrators to assist them in developing policies that promote respect for and inclusion of athletes of different sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. Instead, individual coaches and athletics administrators relied on their own experiences and personal beliefs to fashion policies governing the inclusion of LGBTQ student-athletes. Many coaches had no policies at all and remained silent in response to anti-LGBTQ beliefs and actions on and off the field.

Today, resources are available and can provide guidance to make college sports inclusive and respectful for all participants. Increasing numbers of intercollegiate athletics departments are publicly affirming their commitment to the inclusion of LGBTQ people in sports and adopting effective policies and practices to make this commitment a reality. Despite these positive changes, challenges remain. Many colleges have not addressed LGBTQ inclusion in athletics. This inaction often results...
in an athletics climate where LGBTQ administrators, student-athletes and coaches are highly visible members of the school community. In addition, when athletics departments are not proactive in addressing LGBTQ issues, many straight members of the athletics department who privately support the inclusion of LGBTQ people remain silent out of fear of association or reprisal. In this silence, negative recruiting based on perceived or actual sexual orientation remains a far too common practice in women’s sports and anti-LGBTQ name-calling or taunting is the norm at far too many intercollegiate competitions, on practice fields and in locker rooms. A recent study of the athletics climate for student-athletes reports that LGBTQ student-athletes experience a more negative climate than their straight peers do. Moreover, LGBTQ student-athletes report experiencing twice the amount of hostile or exclusionary conduct that their straight peers report.1

Athletics departments have a responsibility to ensure that all student-athletes have an opportunity to participate in a safe, inclusive and respectful climate where they are valued for their contributions as team members and for their individual commitment and character, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. As an integral component of higher education, intercollegiate athletics departments have a responsibility to address discrimination and anti-harassment policies, as well as enforcing laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.2

In addition to this responsibility, coaches and student-athletes have a unique opportunity to assist in broad-based community efforts to promote and encourage respect on and off the field. The purpose of this resource guide is to provide NCAA member institutions, athletics conference leaders, athletics administrators, coaches and student-athletes with information, policy and best practice recommendations and resources to ensure that all members of the athletics department, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression can participate in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. The NCAA has offered educational programming on LGBTQ issues for individual member schools, provided sessions at NCAA-sponsored annual conferences for several years and, in 2011, provided policy guidance for the inclusion of transgender student-athletes on sports teams. This resource guide is another step in ongoing efforts to provide all NCAA member institutions with the resources and information they need to create an intercollegiate athletics climate in which all participants can succeed as valued members of their teams.

This resource consists of three parts. Part 1 is an overview that includes relevant definitions and three sections that provide a brief overview of the impact of LGBTQ issues in intercollegiate athletics. 2) Key misunderstandings about addressing LGBTQ issues in college athletics. 3) The role of Safe Athletes in making athletics inclusive and respectful for all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. 4) How LGBTQ issues are the same and different on women’s and men’s teams, and 5) How issues such as race or class affect the experiences of LGBTQ student-athletes. Part 2 includes best practice and policy recommendations. Part 3 includes an appendix of definitions of relevant terminology and additional resources for addressing LGBTQ issues in athletics.


Finally, we must address LGBTQ issues in sports because some student-athletes embody respect and inclusion as integral to that definition. When coaches or other athletics leaders have the role of setting a climate of respect, they have unique opportunities to affect the lives of student-athletes. Student-athletes respect their coaches and, in most cases, student-athletes remember their coaches for more than what they learned about winning and losing. Coaches are mentors who can have an impact beyond winning championships. When coaches take the opportunity to lead by the example of their own behavior, what they say and what they do, they have the opportunity to help student-athletes redefine what it means to be a champion in ways that embody respect and inclusion as integral to that definition.

In addition to the responsibilities that coaches and other athletics leaders have to bring out the best in their teams, they have unique opportunities to affect the lives of student-athletes. Student-athletes respect their coaches, and most former student-athletes remember their coaches for more than what they learned about winning and losing. Coaches are mentors who can have an impact beyond winning championships. When coaches take the opportunity to lead by the example of their own behavior, what they say and what they do, they have the opportunity to help student-athletes redefine what it means to be a champion in ways that embody respect and inclusion as integral to that definition.

Finally, we must address LGBTQ issues in sports because some traditionally long accepted in athletics do not promote or reflect a culture of inclusion, diversity or respect. Practices such as LGBTQ or cissex name-calling as a way to taunt opponents or shame poorly performing teammates are common in many sports. In some cases, this behavior is rewarded and perpetuated by coaches and other athletics leaders. The goal of inclusion and respect for LGBTQ people is not just to create a team climate that is free from harassment of visiting teams or older athletes bullying younger team members, but to build a team climate that is free from the humiliation and disrespect that are part of the game rather than the divisive and destructive distractions that they are.

Addressing LGBTQ issues in athletics is not just for the benefit of participants who identify as LGBTQ. Creating a climate of respect and inclusion benefits everyone. Some straight athletes have family members or close friends who are LGBTQ, and when teammates or coaches make derogatory comments about LGBTQ people, it affects these straight athletes, too. Straight athletes also benefit from the ability to work with others who are part of a team that includes diverse members. Straight athletes who embrace respect and inclusion as personal values gain confidence in their ability to incorporate these values in their team, work, and personal relationships.

The goals of inclusion and respect are sometimes misunderstood as promotion or approval of particular groups of people or value choices. In particular, some coaches or student-athletes express the concern that addressing LGBTQ issues as part of a team or athletics department’s diversity and inclusion agenda might offend some prospective high school recruits and their parents.

Athletic teams are, like work teams, made up of people from different cultures, religions, genders, races, abilities, political perspectives and so forth. Understanding that we can work together effectively does not mean that team members, team hazing rituals, homeopathic harassment of visiting teams or older athletes bullying younger team members all encourage student-athletes to act in ways that are contradictory to it. Everyone on the team must agree to a common ground of respect, not necessarily agreement or even approval, in interacting with one another in and out of competition. The goal in an inclusive climate is that everyone on the team gives and receives respect to create an environment in which each team member can contribute her or his best effort to reach team goals.

Key Misunderstandings in Addressing LGBTQ Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics

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“Key Misunderstandings in Addressing LGBTQ Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009" Raynard S. Kington, President, Grinnell College

It has been very gratifying to see the campus support for initiatives around LGBTQ issues that have been led by our student-athletes and coaches. In particular, having our Student-Athletes Advisory Council and athletics department staff spearhead Allies pledging-signing efforts has been meaningful. More than 3,000 signatures, demonstrates the potential that athletics has to galvanize various campus constituencies. The leadership they provided around publicly expressing one’s intent to respect and welcome all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, has had a significantly positive impact at our institution.”

Kevin McHugh, Director of Athletics, Bates College

Coaches and student-athletes come from every religious and social background and every political perspective. Some coaches and student-athletes believe that LGBTQ behavior is sinful according to the tenets of their faith. Working toward the goal of inclusion and respect, it is not required that people renounce their faith or act in ways that are contradictory to it. Every coach, every student-athlete’s religious perspective should be respected just as every LGBTQ member of the team should be respected. What is required is that every team member must agree to a common ground of respect, not necessarily agreement or even approval, in interacting with one another in and out of competition. The goal in an inclusive climate is that everyone on the team gives and receives respect to create an environment in which each team member can contribute her or his best effort to reach team goals.
The Role of Straight Allies in Making Athletics Inclusive and Respectful for All Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities/Expressions

Allies, in the context of affirming diversity and inclusion, are people who are members of a majority group who speak up and take actions to ensure that all members of a community or team are treated with respect. For example, male allies are committed to gender equality in sports; white allies speak out to address the needs of coaches and student-athletes of color. Straight allies take actions to make sure that coaches and student-athletes of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expression are treated with respect. 

While many straight coaches and athletes believe discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression is wrong, straight allies take the next step by enacting this belief in their interactions with others, daily practices and team policies. The difference is that straight allies translate their personal beliefs into public action. 

The participation of allies is an essential part of all diversity and inclusion efforts. In the past two years the emergence of straight allies in athletics has dramatically changed the conversation about the inclusion of LGBTQ people in athletics. Professional, college and high school teams and individual athletes are speaking out as straight allies in increasing numbers against anti-LGBTQ bullying and discrimination in and out of sports. These affirmative actions by individual athlete allies, teams and athletics departments reflect and reinforce a changing sports culture in which inclusion, diversity and respect are core values. Allies in athletics recognize that, when every member of a team is included and treated with respect, it benefits the team as well as every individual on the team. Straight allies take advantage of their leadership opportunities and their athleticism to provide positive examples and set the tone for a team climate of inclusion and respect for all. 

The use of the lesbian label as a negative association for women athletes and coaches has a long history of discouraging and stigmatizing women’s participation in sports. This association makes some women athletes feel inferior and their accomplishments are sometimes denigrated as not as important, interesting or outstanding as those of male athletes and teams. 

The use of the lesbian label as a negative association for women athletes and coaches has a long history of discouraging and stigmatizing women’s participation in sports. This association makes some women athletes feel inferior and their accomplishments are sometimes denigrated as not as important, interesting or outstanding as those of male athletes and teams. Moreover, athletic women who exhibit these characteristics are sometimes viewed as masculine because of assumptions made about their sexual orientation and their accomplishments are sometimes dismissed as not as important, interesting or outstanding as those of male athletes and teams. 

The participation of allies has dramatically changed the conversation about the inclusion of LGBTQ people in athletics. Professional, college and high school teams and individual athletes are speaking out as straight allies in increasing numbers against anti-LGBTQ bullying and discrimination in and out of sports. These affirmative actions by individual athlete allies, teams and athletics departments reflect and reinforce a changing sports culture in which inclusion, diversity and respect are core values. Allies in athletics recognize that, when every member of a team is included and treated with respect, it benefits the team as well as every individual on the team. Straight allies take advantage of their leadership opportunities and their athleticism to provide positive examples and set the tone for a team climate of inclusion and respect for all. 

How LGBTQ Issues Are the Same and Different on Women’s and Men’s Teams

Though homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in men’s and women’s sports are expressed in many similar ways, the inclusion of LGBTQ athletes and coaches on sports teams has, historically, been framed as an issue primarily of concern in women’s sports. Part of this mistaken assumption is due to differences in gender expectations for men and women and confusion about gender expression and sexual orientation. Though much has changed over the past 40 years, athletics are still perceived by many as a primarily masculine activity requiring characteristics associated with men: strength, competitiveness, courage and masculinity, to name a few. As a result, athletic women who exhibit these characteristics are sometimes viewed as masculine because of assumptions made about their sexual orientation. 

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1. See Appendix 1 for definitions of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.
How LGBTQ Issues Are Manifested in Women’s and Men’s Athletics

Examples in Women’s Sports

- Harassment of lesbian or bisexual student-athletes or coaches because of perceptions about their sexual orientation.
- Discrimination against lesbian or bisexual coaches and student-athletes.
- Lesbian and bisexual coaches leave the profession and lesbian or bisexual student-athletes leave sports because of pressures to hide or because of ongoing discrimination or harassment.
- Straight student-athletes of color may have additional challenges if they fear that their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression will alienate them from other students of color, their families or their faith communities.

Examples in Men’s Sports

- Coaches’ use of anti-gay or female slurs to shame team members.
- Spectators use of anti-LGBTQ or sexist slurs to distract visiting teams.

In Summary

The introduction and Part 1 of this resource guide provide an overview and discussion of the importance of addressing LGBTQ issues in athletics. Perhaps the simplest and most compelling reason for intercollegiate athletics programs to take proactive steps to create and maintain an inclusive and respectful climate for student-athletes and coaches of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions is that it is the right thing to do. Every student-athlete and coach should have the opportunity to reach their athletic and academic goals in a climate of respect. No student-athlete or coach/administrator should fear discrimination or harassment in athletics because of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. The focus of Part 2 is to identify specific best practices and policy recommendations toward the goal of making athletics inclusive and respectful for student-athletes, coaches, and administrators of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.

How Issues Such as Race or Class Affect the Experiences of LGBTQ Student-Athletes

For LGBTQ student-athletes of color or LGBTQ student-athletes who are the first generation in their families to attend college, many additional factors relating to race and class differences can also affect their athletics experience. Student-athletes of color are already members of a minority group on most campuses and may face issues of alienation or isolation because of their race. LGBTQ student-athletes of color may have additional challenges if they fear that their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression will alienate them from other students of color, their families or their faith communities. These feelings of isolation may be intensified if campus LGBTQ support programs are not inclusive of the needs and concerns of LGBTQ student-athletes of color and campus support groups for students of color do not address LGBTQ issues.

Student-athletes who are the first generation in their families to attend college or student-athletes from low-income families often feel an additional imperative to succeed and, at the same time, are dependent on scholarship support to remain in college. When these student-athletes are LGBTQ, there may be added pressure to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression or out of concerns that being openly LGBTQ could jeopardize needed financial aid and scholarship support as well as emotional support from teammates and coaches.

Student-athletes often experience athletics teams as “second families” in which the relationships they build over the course of an athletics career are valued for a lifetime. When student-athletes feel isolated from teammates or coaches because of their sexual orientation or gender identity intensified by their race or class, they face unnecessary and often insurmountable challenges to reaching their potential in competition or in the classroom.

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

The focus of Part 2 is to identify specific best practices and policy recommendations toward the goal of making athletics inclusive and respectful for student-athletes, coaches, and administrators of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.
As society becomes more inclusive, the need for LGBTQ resources in college sports increases. Coaches and athletics leadership are uniquely positioned to value inclusion and serve as unbiased role models to student-athletes and colleagues, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Acceptance is one of the greatest gifts a coach can give to a young athlete coming to terms with his or her sexual identity.

Nevin Caple, Founder of Break the Silence Campaign; Former Women’s Basketball Student-Athlete, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Metropolitan Campus
Champions of Respect
Creating Inclusive Athletics Departments: Best Practices for Athletics Administrators

Overall Best Practices for Creating Inclusive Athletics Departments

Creating Inclusive Athletics Departments: Best Practices for Athletics Administrators

- Learn more about prejudice and discrimination based on such differences as race, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and religion.
- Assume that LGBTQ people are on your athletics teams and among your coaching and support staff, even if they have not identified themselves.
- Monitor your beliefs or assumptions about LGBTQ people and commit yourself to evaluating others on the basis of their character and abilities, not race, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and religion.
- Learn about LGBTQ issues in sport and how they can affect individuals and teams.
- Know what resources are available in your school and community for LGBTQ students, parents and staff.
- Know local and national resources and advocacy organizations for addressing LGBTQ discrimination or harassment in athletics.
- Identify print, video and Internet resources for addressing LGBTQ issues in athletics.
- Identify experts outside your school who would be available to provide resources and guidance to the school, team and/or you.
- Be a visible and active role model of respect and fairness for your school’s coaches and student-athletes.
- Use language that is inclusive of LGBTQ athletes and coaches.
- Do not make anti-LGBTQ slurs, jokes or other comments.
- Put a Safe Zone sticker on your office door.
- Treat all student-athletes, coaches and parents fairly and respectfully regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- Make clear to coaches and staff your expectations of respectful and fair treatment for all student-athletes and other coaches or staff.
- Make it clear to student-athletes and coaches that anti-LGBTQ actions or language will not be tolerated.
- If LGBTQ student-athletes or coaches identify themselves to you, respect their right to confidentiality and privacy.
- Be prepared to provide resources to parents or guardians of LGBTQ student-athletes, but always be careful not to out a student to a parent, guardian or family.

- Maintain an up-to-date coaches’ handbook for all coaches that includes school expectations for ethical coaching behavior, coaches’ legal responsibilities and specific school policies for which coaches are accountable.
- This is particularly important for part-time and volunteer coaches.
- Provide information about nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies and laws to athletics department staff and parents or guardians of student-athletes.
- Schedule educational programs about LGBTQ issues in athletics for student athletes, coaches, staff and parents.
- Encourage coaches associations, athletics administrations, athletics conferences and sport governing bodies to provide educational programs and materials to members about LGBTQ issues in athletics.
- Develop and implement departmental policy governing the following LGBTQ-related topics in athletics:
  - Nondiscrimination statements that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
  - The participation of transgender/gender nonconforming students on sports teams.
  - Anti-hazing policies that specifically address anti-LGBTQ practices.
  - Anti-LGBTQ name-calling that is used as a motivation tool or to taunt opponents.
  - Maintaining a religion-neutral athletics environment, particularly with regard to the participation of LGBTQ athletes or coaches.
  - Appropriate sports spectator behavior, including the prohibition of homophobic chants, cheers and songs directed at the opposing team, fans or any individual student-athlete, coach or referee.
  - Responses to college coaches who use “negative recruiting” based on perceived or actual sexual orientation when talking with high school student-athletes, high school coaches or parents of student-athletes (making negative comments about the sexual orientation of coaches or athletes at another college as a way to discourage high school students from considering that school).

Sarah Feyerherm, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Washington College (Maryland)

“In the absence of coaches and administration leadership, it’s imperative that our athletics departments keep pace. In fact, many of our student-athletes are way ahead of us. From the GPS analytics network to Athlete Ally, student-athletes have started the ball rolling. Through this resource guide and other efforts, we now have the chance to join them in support, and together we can create positive and respectful environments that help all LGBTQ members of our campus communities reach their full potential.”

“Through no fault of their own, our LGBTQ student-athletes, coaches and administrators have been underserved for far too long. The NCAA’s commitment to inclusion and its willingness to provide leadership in this area set the bar for athletics departments all over the country that want to both support and celebrate the contributions of all of its members.”

“Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

- Nondiscrimination statements that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- Show your support for LGBTQ student-athletes or colleagues.
- Make resources that address LGBTQ issues available to coaches and other athletics staff.
- Provide orientation programs for new coaches and staff about local, state and federal nondiscrimination laws, anti-harassment policies and procedures and athletics ethics policies.

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

- Maintain an up-to-date coaches’ handbook for all coaches that includes school expectations for ethical coaching behavior, coaches’ legal responsibilities and specific school policies for which coaches are accountable.
- Schedule educational programs about LGBTQ issues in athletics for student athletes, coaches, staff and parents.
- Encourage coaches associations, athletics administrations, athletics conferences and sport governing bodies to provide educational programs and materials to members about LGBTQ issues in athletics.
- Develop and implement departmental policy governing the following LGBTQ-related topics in athletics:
  - Nondiscrimination statements that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- The participation of transgender/gender nonconforming students on sports teams.
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- Maintaining a religion-neutral athletics environment, particularly with regard to the participation of LGBTQ athletes or coaches.
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- Responses to college coaches who use “negative recruiting” based on perceived or actual sexual orientation when talking with high school student-athletes, high school coaches or parents of student-athletes (making negative comments about the sexual orientation of coaches or athletes at another college as a way to discourage high school students from considering that school).

Sarah Feyerherm, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Washington College (Maryland)
Creating Inclusive Teams: Best Practices for Coaches

Prepare
• Learn more about prejudice and discrimination based on such differences as race, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and religion.
• Learn about LGBTQ issues in sport and how they affect individuals and teams.
• Identify national resources for addressing LGBTQ issues in sport (organizations, websites, speakers).
• Assume that LGBTQ people are on your athletics teams and among your coaching and support staff, even if they have not identified themselves.
• Monitor your beliefs or assumptions about LGBTQ people, and commit yourself to not evaluating others on the basis of their character, not on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Show the Respect Behavior You Want To See
• Don’t use anti-LGBTQ put-downs or demeaning language of any kind.
• Use inclusive language that acknowledges LGBTQ people and does not assume that all student-athletes are straight: Significant other, partner, boyfriend or girlfriend.
• Not assume that all student-athletes are straight: Significant other, partner, boyfriend or girlfriend.
• Do not make assumptions about teammates’ or coaches’ sexual orientation or gender identity based on appearance or stereotypes.
• Do not make assumptions about teammates or coaches based on their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
• Wear a pin, T-shirt or wristband supporting respect for LGBTQ people.
• Do not make anti-LGBTQ slurs, jokes or comments.
• Judge teammates, coaches and support staff on the basis of their character, not their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
• Use your visibility and leadership role as a student-athlete in your school to promote respect for diversity. If you or someone you know is targeted by anti-LGBTQ discrimination, harassment or violence, talk someone who can help (a counselor, a coach, a teacher).
• Support LGBTQ teammates who choose to identify themselves to others.

Educate
• Amaze for an educational program for your team about name-calling and bullying.
• Encourage/require student-athletes on your team to attend athletics department programming on LGBTQ inclusion in athletics.
• Promote enthusiasm around LGBTQ sports fan behavior at athletic events.
• Recommend that coaches associations or athletics associations to which you belong sponsor programs on LGBTQ issues in athletics.

Respond
• Intervene to stop the use of anti-LGBTQ slurs or other disrespectful behavior among students on your team.
• Respond to address violations of team policies related to the inclusion of LGBTQ students on teams.
• Report negative recruiting targeting your school or program to your athletics director and athletics conference.
• Report harassing behavior from spectators to your athletics director and conference officials.

Be Proactive
• At the beginning of your sport season, make clear your expectations of respect for diversity among all members of athletics teams, including LGBTQ coaches and student-athletes.
• Communicate to student-athletes, staff and coaches that anti-LGBTQ actions or language will not be tolerated.
• Encourage/require student-athletes on your team to attend athletics department programming on LGBTQ inclusion in athletics.
• Promote enthusiasm around LGBTQ sports fan behavior at athletic events.
• Recommend that coaches associations or athletics associations to which you belong sponsor programs on LGBTQ issues in athletics.

Creating Inclusive Teams: Best Practices for Student-Athletes

• Learn more about prejudice and discrimination based on such differences as race, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and religion.
• Treat diversity among teammates as a team strength.
• Judge teammates, coaches and support staff on the basis of their character, not their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
• Do not make assumptions about teammates’ or coaches’ sexual orientation or gender identity based on appearance or stereotypes.
• Do not make assumptions about teammates or coaches based on their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
• Wear a pin, T-shirt or wristband supporting respect for LGBTQ people.
• Do not make anti-LGBTQ slurs, jokes or comments.
• Use language that is inclusive of LGBTQ coaches, student-athletes and staff (Don’t assume that everyone on your team is heterosexual). If you are a team leader, use your leadership role to set an example of fairness and respect for other members of the team, including LGBTQ teammates.
• Use your visibility and leadership role as a student-athlete in your school to promote respect for diversity. If you or someone you know is targeted by anti-LGBTQ discrimination, harassment or violence, talk someone who can help (a counselor, a coach, a teacher).
• Support LGBTQ teammates who choose to identify themselves to others.

• Encourage your athletics department or coach to schedule work-shops on LGBTQ issues in sport.
• Encourage your team to take a public stand for respect in athletics: Make a video, sign a pledge.
• Start a Safe Zone Campaign in your athletics department.
• Start an LGBTQ student-athlete group at your school.
Guidelines for Athletics Directors and Sport Administrators

The leadership of athletics directors and sport administrators is essential to successful initiatives focused on the inclusion and respectful treatment of LGBTQ student-athletes. When athletics directors and sport administrators are visible and public advocates for diversity, respect and inclusion, athletics staff and student-athletes are more likely to understand these values as integral to departmental and school mission. The following guidelines are intended to assist athletics directors and sport administrators in making expectations and policies clear to all members of the athletics department and maintaining an athletics department climate of respect for diversity of all kinds.

Preparation

Learn the meaning of the following terms: sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, transgender, straight ally (see the definitions list in Appendix 1).
• Use appropriate language when discussing sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in athletics: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender-neutral.
• Use inclusive language that does not assume that all members of the athletics department are heterosexual or gender-conforming.
• Be familiar with school policies and local, state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Know how they apply to athletics and what policies and practices within athletics are needed to be in compliance.
• Know what resources are available on campus and nationally that address LGBTQ issues in athletics.
• Attend sessions on LGBTQ issues offered at professional conferences or request such sessions if they are not on the conference agenda.
• Identify speakers or workshop leaders who can work with athletics staff to address concerns they may have about addressing LGBTQ issues and provide guidance about best practices for creating team climates of respect and inclusion for all student-athletes.

Policy and Best Practices

Develop athletics department policies and guidelines for the fair and inclusive treatment of LGBTQ athletics staff and student-athletes on all teams, for example:
• Develop an athletics department policy for the inclusion of transgender student-athletes. Policies for including LGBTQ student-athletes can be found at www.ncaa.org/athletes.
• Develop a policy requiring department and team dress codes to be gender-neutral.
• Include information about department policies, legal requirements and best practice expectations in orientation materials for new coaches and other athletics department staff.
• Develop an athletics department policy governing negative recruiting based on perceived or actual sexual orientation.
• Schedule professional development workshops for all athletics staff to educate them about legal requirements and best practice expectations for including LGBTQ student-athletes.
• Integrate information about departmental expectations and legal requirements related to LGBTQ issues into student-athlete education programming.

Framing a Conversation With Athletics Staff About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression in Sports

• Describe the goal of addressing sexual orientation and gender identity/expression issues in athletics as part of a broader diversity and inclusion mission to make athletics a respectful and inclusive experience for all students and staff regardless of such factors as race, gender, religion, social class, disability or nationality.
• Stress the importance of encouraging respect across differences and articulate that respect is not to be misconstrued as endorsement of different sexual orientations or gender identities.

Resources for Athletics Administrators

Talking to Coaches and Athletics Staff About LGBTQ Issues

• Attend sessions on LGBTQ issues offered at professional conferences or request such sessions if they are not on the conference agenda.
• Identify speakers or workshop leaders who can work with athletics staff to address concerns they may have about addressing LGBTQ issues and who can answer questions and provide guidance about best practices for creating team climates of respect and inclusion for all student-athletes.
• Be familiar with school policies and local, state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Know how they apply to athletics and what policies and practices within athletics are needed to be in compliance.
• Know what resources are available on campus and nationally that address LGBTQ issues in athletics.
• Attend sessions on LGBTQ issues offered at professional conferences or request such sessions if they are not on the conference agenda.
• Identify speakers or workshop leaders who can work with athletics staff to address concerns they may have about addressing LGBTQ issues and who can answer questions and provide guidance about best practices for creating team climates of respect and inclusion for all student-athletes.

Policy and Best Practices

Develop athletics department policies and guidelines for the fair and inclusive treatment of LGBTQ athletics staff and student-athletes on all teams, for example:
• Develop an athletics department policy for the inclusion of transgender student-athletes. Policies for including LGBTQ student-athletes can be found at www.ncaa.org/athletes.
• Develop a policy requiring department and team dress codes to be gender-neutral.
• Include information about department policies, legal requirements and best practice expectations in orientation materials for new coaches and other athletics department staff.
• Develop an athletics department policy governing negative recruiting based on perceived or actual sexual orientation.
• Schedule professional development workshops for all athletics staff to educate them about legal requirements and best practice expectations for including LGBTQ student-athletes.
• Integrate information about departmental expectations and legal requirements related to LGBTQ issues into student-athlete education programming.

Framing a Conversation With Athletics Staff About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression in Sports

• Describe the goal of addressing sexual orientation and gender identity/expression issues in athletics as part of a broader diversity and inclusion mission to make athletics a respectful and inclusive experience for all students and staff regardless of such factors as race, gender, religion, social class, disability or nationality.
• Stress the importance of encouraging respect across differences and articulate that respect is not to be misconstrued as endorsement of different sexual orientations or gender identities.
**Addressing LGBTQ Issues: A Guide for Athletics Administrators**

**Anticipation:**
What proactive strategies can athletics administrators and coaches take to prevent placing the school or athletics department in a position of potential legal liability or requiring athletics personnel to react to LGBTQ-related situations without preparation or planning?

- **Conduct assessments.**
- **Make and implement policy.**
- **Identify local and national resources for parents of LGBTQ student-athletes.**
- **Educate athletics department members.**
- **Develop specific procedures for policy implementation.**

**Assessment:**
How can the department assess the climate for LGBTQ student-athletes, staff, and coaches?

- **Conduct a department survey of the climate for LGBTQ people in athletics at your school.**

**Policy:**
What current institutional and departmental policies and practices are expected to meet the climate for LGBTQ student-athletes and staff?

- **Make policy based on ethical principles and the goal of fair treatment for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.**

“...the field of athletics has long been a leader in supporting and encouraging diversity on the playing fields, from Jackie Robinson breaking baseball’s color barrier to the phenomenal impact of Title IX. By participating in the nationally recognized You Can Play Project, which supports the inclusion of lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender athletes, we aim to extend our campus community’s capacity for learning, enrich the quality and texture of campus life, and better prepare all students and student-athletes for life in a diverse world." —Patrick Nero, Director of Athletics and Recreation, George Washington University

**Suggestions:**
- **Develop and practice policies to protect LGBTQ student-athletes.**
  - Create a standing diversity and inclusion committee of athletics department personnel and student-athletes that addresses issues of diversity and social justice in athletics, including LGBTQ issues.
  - Create a “captains’ council” of team captains from all sports to provide leadership and take on responsibility.
  - Create an LGBTQ student-athlete group whose purpose is to provide support for LGBTQ student-athletes and to help make the athletics department more inclusive of LGBTQ coaches, staff and athletes.
  - Identify student-Athlete Advisory Committee projects that promote inclusion and diversity and LGBTQ inclusion in particular.
  - Include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in current discrimination and nondiscrimination policies that apply to athletics department personnel to abide by local, state and federal nondiscrimination laws.
  - Develop domestic partnership policies that address harassment based on perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender identity or expression as defined by your school's employment and anti-harassment policy, expect athletics department personnel to abide by that policy.
  - Develop athletic department policies for addressing verbal anti-LGBTQ, racist or sexist harassment of student-athletes, staff, officials or by spectators.
  - Develop guidelines that are consistent with nondiscrimination policies for addressing parental questions about the sexual orientation of coaches or student-athletes during recruitment visits.
  - Develop policies for addressing negative recruiting based on sexual orientation.

**Resources:**
What kind of resources are available in your school, community, or sport governing organizations for individual student-athletes, parents, coaches, teams or athletics departments?

- **Identify and provide athletics staff with campus, community educational, counseling and social resources for LGBTQ student-athletes and staff.**
- **Identify and provide athletics staff with community educational, counseling and social resources for student-athletes and athletics department personnel to help them become straight allies in athletics.**
- **Identify local and national resources for parents of LGBTQ student-athletes.**
- **Identify local and national educational and legal resources to assist athletics administrators, coaches, staff and student-athletes in identifying straight allies and addressing anti-LGBTQ incidents and the needs of LGBTQ student-athletes.**

**Education:**
How are student-athletes, parents, coaches, and other athletics staff educated about policies and expectations for treatment of LGBTQ people?

- **Encourage coaches and association leaders to develop similar policies, and encourage your coaches to take leadership roles on diversity issues within their respective professional and institutional associations.**

**Suggested Educational Strategies:**
- **Conduct cyclical staff development programs (every year or two) for coaches and other athletics department personnel about best practices to address LGBTQ issues in athletics.**
- **Conduct staff training for athletics department staff for all athletics staff about departmental and institutional nondiscrimination policies.**
- **Annually, provide all new athletics department staff, student-...**
The Role of Conferences in Creating LGBT-Inclusive Athletics Teams

Athletics conferences play a key role in any efforts to ensure inclusive and respectful athletics experiences for student-athletes and coaches of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. In addition to providing resources and programming for their members, athletics conference leaders should adopt policies that apply to all conference member schools. This checklist can be a helpful tool in identifying actions that athletics conferences can take.

Structure: Does your athletics conference:
• Have an inclusion committee that addresses sexual orientation and gender identity/expression as a part of its mission?
• Include reports at conference meetings on the activities and accomplishments of the conference inclusion committee?

Assessment: Does your athletics conference:
• Encourage member schools to assess the athletics climate for LGBTQ students and coaches?
• Provide information and resources to member schools about how to assess the athletics climate for LGBTQ students and coaches?

Policy: Does your athletics conference:
• Have a nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?
• Have an anti-harassment, anti-bullying policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?
• Require member schools to have nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?
• Have a recruiting policy that specifically addresses negative recruiting based on perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?
• Have a policy for the inclusion of transgender student-athletes on sports teams?
• Have a policy on an appropriate spectaor behavior that specifically addresses anti-LGBTQ language or actions?
• Encourage member schools to include LGBT-Inclusive policies in coaches’ and student-athlete handbooks and orientation programs?

Education: Does your athletics conference:
• Sponsor educational programs or events on LGBTQ issues for conference leaders and university presidents or chancellors?
• Sponsor educational programs or events on LGBTQ issues for athletics directors?
• Sponsor educational programs or events on LGBTQ issues for coaches or other athletics staff?
• Sponsor educational programs or events on LGBTQ issues for student-athletes?

"As a Division III commissioner, I have been really pleased with the active role the Division III Commissioners Association has been taking in moving forward the need for policy regarding participation by transgender student-athletes. Our conversations as an association began at the 2010 Convention, spurred by one of our members, and it became clear to us action was needed on the national level. I applaud the efforts made by the national office and the final product that ensures fair access and opportunity for a diverse group of student-athletes.

"The opportunity for participation is one of the most important elements of Division III athletics, so ensuring inclusion is imperative for us. While issues of competitive equity have been discussed, the overarching focus for the DIII commissioners has always been about the well-being of our student-athletes. People have such varying degrees of comfort about discussing LGBTQ issues, so to ensure safety and a positive experience, resources like this guide are critical."

Julie Muller, Commissioner, North Atlantic Conference

Champions of Respect
Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs
Champions of Respect

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

Many colleges and universities have campus resources to address LGBTQ issues among students, faculty and staff. In addition to LGBTQ resource centers and student groups, these resources may also be available as part of multicultural or diversity centers, women’s centers, counseling centers, ombuds offices or other standing committees affiliated with the school administration or faculty and staff.

In addition to providing programming, support and information on LGBTQ issues of interest to the entire campus community, these resources can also assist athletics administrators, coaches and student-athletes to address the particular needs of student-athletes and coaches.

Developing a partnership with campus LGBTQ resource groups enables athletics administrators, coaches and student-athletes to take advantage of already available local expertise and information.

Ways To Develop Partnerships With Campus LGBTQ Resources

- Find out what LGBTQ resources are available on your campus.
- Post a list of campus LGBTQ resources on the athletics department website.
- Send a list of campus LGBTQ resources to all coaches and staff.
- Invite speakers from campus LGBTQ resources to talk to athletics department staff and student-athletes.
- Publicize campus LGBTQ events with members of the athletics department.
- Ask to meet with campus LGBTQ resource leaders to talk about how they can help to address LGBTQ issues in athletics.
- Have the athletics department participate in the campus Safe Zone program.
- Talk to campus LGBTQ resource leaders about ways to make athletics more inclusive and respectful for LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches.
- Invite campus LGBTQ resources to teach a lesson to the CHAMPS Life Skills class.
- Invite campus LGBTQ resources to meet with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee to talk about partnering for an educational or visibility initiative.
- Partner with the campus LGBTQ resource center to organize an LGBTQ student-athlete group.
- Offer to provide speakers, panels or workshops on LGBTQ issues in athletics for campus LGBTQ events such as Pride Week or LGBTQ history month.
- Partner with campus LGBTQ resource groups to make an “It Gets Better” video, “You Can Play” video or some other LGBTQ visibility campaign.

Additionally, there are many organizations committed to inclusive educational and competitive environments for the LGBTQ community. Please refer to Appendix 2 of this resource.

Visibility: Does your athletics conference:
- Participate in Safe Zone Campaigns?
- Participate in Ally Pledge initiatives?
- Participate in LGBTQ-inclusive web-based video projects?
- Participate in other initiatives with the purpose of making a public statement about a commitment to respect and inclusion for all student-athletes, staff, fans and coaches?

Athletics Department Partnerships With Campus LGBTQ Resources
Champions of Respect

Team captains set expectations for respectful interactions in which team members learn that it is acceptable. When coaches and team captains set the tone for team climate. If coaches use of anti-LGBTQ language by coaches, staff, fans and teammates. who have LGBTQ friends or family members also may be offended by the language can be perceived as especially hostile. Straight student-athletes student-athletes who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity often understand the acceptance climate whether intended or not. Student-athletes who have not disclosed being open about their identities would not be tolerated or welcomed. For however, the effect of using anti-LGBTQ language can create a disrespectful climate whether intended or not. Some coaches or student-athletes claim that when they use this kind language as a casual put-down, a joke or an intentional insult contributes to a disrespectful climate in athletics. Derogatory terms, such as those based on sexual, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, race, disability and religious stereotypes are never appropriate. Accepted in some athletics settings as “part of the game” are derogatory terms related to sexual orientation or gender that are sometimes used to taunt opponents, shame teammates, motivate athletic effort, tease athletes or opponents, generate negative feelings toward other people or even objects (“That shirt is so gay”).

Some coaches or student-athletes claim that when they use this kind of language they do not intend an insult to LGBTQ people or allies. However, the effect of using anti-LGBTQ language can create a disrespectful climate whether intended or not. Student-athletes who have not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity understand the acceptance of anti-LGBTQ language by teammates and coaches as an indication that being open about their identities would not be tolerated or welcomed. For these reasons, team captains are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, the climate perpetuated by the acceptance of anti-LGBTQ language can be experienced as especially hostile. Straight student-athletes who have LGBTQ Friends or family members may also be offended by the use of anti-LGBTQ language by coaches, staff, fans and teammates.

Coaches and team captains set the tone for team climate. If coaches and team captains use anti-LGBTQ language or allow others to use it, team members learn that it is acceptable. When coaches and team captains set expectations for respectful interactions in which name-calling, bullying or the casual use of anti-LGBTQ language is not accepted, the entire team benefits from the knowledge that everyone will be treated respectfully.

A Comprehensive Strategy for Addressing Anti-LGBTQ Language

- Set a Positive Example. Make sure that your behavior as a coach or team captain and the language you use sets an example of respect. Coaches who lead by example are role models for their support staff, band and fans.
- Be Proactive. At opening team meetings at the beginning of the season or school year, talk with the team about coaches’ and captains’ expectations that interactions with teammates and opponents will be positive. Be specific about naming anti-LGBTQ language as unacceptable on the team. Frame this conversation positively in that, as student-athletes, they role models for younger students and representatives of their school. Explain that you expect them to role models for respect.
- Ask the Team for an Affirmative Buy-In. Have team members sign a team pledge or take some other action that requires them to actively affirm their commitment to creating an inclusive and respectful team climate.
- Respond. If a team member, coach, administrator or support group uses anti-LGBTQ language, remind them of the team commitment to an inclusive and respectful team climate. Recognize that all team members have the responsibility to respond so that it is not just coaches and team captains who have the responsibility to speak up.
- Invite the Team To Participate in a Respect Visibility Campaign. Sign the Athlete Ally Pledge, make a You Can Play video or take other action that requires them to affirm their commitment to creating an inclusive and respectful team climate.
- Supportive Friends or family members. Explaining that the shifts in cultural acceptance of LGBTQ people are also signaled by a decreasing tolerance for anti-LGBTQ comments or use of derogatory terms.

Consistent with these changes, more schools have included sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in their nondiscrimination policies, and more states have adopted civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For example, the NCAA includes sexual orientation in its nondiscrimination policy, sponsors diversity workshops for member institutions and has a recommended policy for the inclusion of transgender students on college sport teams.

Responding to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Student-Athletes Coming Out: A Coach’s Guide

In the past, all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender student-athletes and coaches were expected to keep their sexual orientation or gender identity hidden for fear of negative consequences. Unfortunately, those hostile climates still exist within some athletics programs. In such programs, if an athlete or coach’s homosexuality or gender identity is questioned, either by rumor, suspicion or confirmation, their athletics career could be in jeopardy. Many athletics programs today can be described as conditionally tolerant: lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender student-athletes are tolerated on the condition that they keep their identities hidden. Even in programs where coaches talk about personal lives among teammates or in public. If an athlete or coach violates this code of silence, he or she may jeopardize his or her career.

However, social perceptions of LGBTQ people have become increasingly positive, more schools are comfortable with and supportive of their LGBTQ teammates and coaches. The shifts in cultural acceptance of LGBTQ people are also signaled by a decreasing tolerance for anti-LGBTQ comments or use of derogatory terms. Student-athletes are being encouraged to come out. For example, the NCAA includes sexual orientation in its nondiscrimination policy, sponsors diversity workshops for member institutions and has a recommended policy for the inclusion of transgender students on college sport teams.

Alcohol abuse, self-hatred or shame and risky sexual behavior are some of the effects of such secrecy. Pretending to be heterosexual or gender conforming to avoid being ostracized by teammates or discriminated against by coaches make closeted LGBTQ student-athletes feel dishonest and inauthentic in their relationships and isolated from their teammates and coaches. In such programs, if an athlete or coach violates this code of silence, he or she may jeopardize his or her career.

Fear of discrimination from coaches is a primary motivation for closeted LGBTQ college student-athletes. Coaches control a player’s place on the team and playing time. If a coach is uncomfortable with or hostile toward LGBTQ team members, the potential for discrimination is real. Fortunately, education and policy development focused on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression has provided coaches and student-athletes with more information and awareness. Although society as a whole faces ongoing, legally challenge discrimination against LGBTQ people in athletics.

The most important factor determining how an openly LGBTQ athlete is treated is the leadership provided by coaches and team captains. The head coach sets the tone, either positive or negative. When the coach
tires of keeping secrets from someone they respect. They might just want you to know about them because they are

Recommendations for Coaches - Setting a Positive Climate for LGBTQ Student-Athletes To Come Out

• Don’t assume that LGBTQ student-athletes need counseling.
• Assure the student-athlete that sexual orientation or gender identity makes no difference to you in how the athlete is treated regardless of differences in race, religion, sexuality, etc.
• Make it clear to team members that you expect everyone to be treated respectfully regardless of differences in race, religion, sexuality, etc.
• Schedule a team training on LGBTQ issues in sport.

Recommendations for Coaches Responding to a Student-Athlete Who Comes Out to Them

• Thank the student-athlete for placing trust in you by sharing this information (and put yourself on the back for being a trustworthy, approachable and respected person in the student’s eyes).
• Don’t assume that LGBTQ student-athletes need counseling.
• They might just want you to know about them because they are tired of keeping secrets from someone they respect.
• Assist the student-athlete that sexual orientation or gender identity makes no difference to you in how the athlete is treated on the team.
• Ask the student-athlete if there is anything she or he wants you to do to support the athlete.
• Ask the student-athlete if she or he wants to tell the team, and if so, how you can help.
• Respect the student-athlete’s right to privacy: Do not share information about the student-athlete’s sexual orientation or gender identity with anyone unless the student gives you permission to do so (see mandates reporter laws – if the student-athlete is in danger from others or him or herself, report this to a school counselor or counseling center or other appropriate authority and tell the athlete what you are doing).
• Offer counseling resources for student-athletes who would like to address their discomfort or fear about having an LGBTQ teammate.
• Reinforce your commitment to making sure everyone is respected on the team regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression.
• Reinforce the belief that being respectful does not necessarily mean approving of homosexuality, bisexuality or transgender identity. All team members have a right to their personal beliefs, but each member is responsible for treating everyone on the team with respect.
• Talk about specific actions that teammates can take to make the team a safer, more respectful place for everyone, including LGBTQ people.

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

Respect for difference and a belief that everyone on the team should acceptance of homosexuality or transgender identity. What is required

Respecting an openly LGBTQ team member does not require

Whether an LGBTQ student-athlete comes out should be his or her
choice. She or he should not be pressured one way or the other by the
c, or teammates. When coaches forbid student-athletes to come out publicly or tell them not to participate in campus or community

• Avoid anti-LGBTQ slurs and don’t allow team members, staff or support groups to use them even as jokes or teasing.
• Put up a Safety Card at your office door or locker room exit.
• Make it clear to your team members that you expect everyone to be treated respectfully regardless of differences in race, religion, sexuality, etc.
• Schedule a team training on LGBTQ issues in sport.

Teammates sometimes pressure LGBTQ student-athletes to keep their identities secret in an effort to avoid comparing the team or

Coach's commitment to helping student-athletes to understand their own identity and support them is important in part of making a team safe and respectful for everyone.

Recommendations for Coaches - Setting a Positive Climate for LGBTQ Student-Athletes To Come Out

• Use inclusive language. Don’t assume that everyone on the team is heterosexual or gender conforming.
• Don’t use anti-LGBTQ slurs and don’t allow team members, staff or support groups to use them even as jokes or teasing.
• Make sure that your team understands that you will encourage an open and honest dialogue about LGBTQ issues.
• Make sure that your team understands that they will be held accountable for their behavior.
• Use language that is safe and inclusive.
• Encourage an open and honest dialogue about LGBTQ issues.
• Hold team members accountable for their behavior.

Team members have a right to their personal beliefs, but each member is responsible for making sure everyone on the team is treated with respect, regardless of differences in race, religion, sexuality, etc.

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A Coming Out Guide for LGBTQ Coaches

Many LGBTQ coaches who keep their sexual orientation or gender identity a secret from their teams, colleagues, athletics administrators, opponents and families of team members do so out of fear of discrimination. Others hide their identities because they believe that sexual orientation or gender identity is personal information that is not necessary to disclose in the workplace. Whatever the reasons an LGBTQ coach has for not disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity assume that their student-athletes, colleagues and administrators know they are LGBTQ. This de facto “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy can create awkward relationships in which no one is sure what topics related to the coach's personal life are appropriate, and the “tell” policy can create awkward relationships in which no one is sure what topics related to the coach's personal life are appropriate, and the LGBTQ coach feels the need to split her or his life into a rigid division of professional and personal that never cross.

Whereas straight coaches can casually talk about their partners and families, closeted LGBTQ coaches are silent. Straight coaches include information about their partners and families in team media guides, while closeted LGBTQ coaches only include their athletics accomplishments. Closeted LGBTQ coaches set an example of deception and fear for LGBTQ student-athletes that perpetuates the notion that LGBTQ coaches must remain closeted to succeed and avoid discrimination. Because discrimination against LGBTQ coaches is a reality in many athletics departments, it is understandable that they choose not to disclose in the workplace. Whatever the reasons an LGBTQ coach has for not disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity assume that their student-athletes, colleagues and administrators know they are LGBTQ. This de facto “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy can create awkward relationships in which no one is sure what topics related to the coach's personal life are appropriate, and the LGBTQ coach feels the need to split her or his life into a rigid division of professional and personal that never cross.

Whereas straight coaches can casually talk about their partners and families, closeted LGBTQ coaches are silent. Straight coaches include information about their partners and families in team media guides, while closeted LGBTQ coaches only include their athletics accomplishments. Closeted LGBTQ coaches set an example of deception and fear for LGBTQ student-athletes that perpetuates the notion that LGBTQ coaches must remain closeted to succeed and avoid discrimination.

Because discrimination against LGBTQ coaches is a reality in some athletics departments, it is understandable that they choose secrecy as a way to try to protect themselves from being treated unfairly in hiring, retention, promotion and recruitment. Unfortunately, many LGBTQ coaches who attempt to hide their identities are still targeted by discrimination based on assumptions that administrators, parents, supporters, colleagues or other coaches make about them based on marital status, gender expression or the absence of information about their personal lives. The benefits of coaching as an openly LGBTQ coach need to be considered and balanced with concerns about discrimination. LGBTQ coaches who come out to student-athletes, colleagues and administrators are able to commit more energy to being a great coach rather than worrying about keeping a secret. No one can be his or her best professional self while living in fear. Being able to bring all of who you are to your coaching also encourages more authentic relationships with colleagues and team members. Coaching as an openly LGBTQ coach also dispels stereotypes and fear that others have about LGBTQ people and provides role models for other LGBTQ coaches and student-athletes.

LGBTQ Coaches' Coming Out Checklist

1. I coach in a state with a law that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
2. I coach in a school with a nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
3. I would use LGBTQ nondiscrimination laws or policies to challenge discrimination against me.
4. My athletics department sponsors programs about LGBTQ issues in athletics.
5. I believe most of my colleagues, student-athletes and athletics administrators assume I am LGBTQ accurately.
6. I have a record of success in coaching.
7. I have colleagues at my school not in athletics who will support my coming out.
8. I believe most of my colleagues, student-athletes and athletics administrators assume I am LGBTQ accurately.
9. I have discussed coming out as an LGBTQ coach with my partner and family, and they support my decision.
10. I have a personal support system of family and friends who love and care about me.
11. I believe I will be a better coach if I am open about being LGBTQ.
12. I want to be a role model for other LGBTQ coaches and student-athletes.
13. After I come out as a LGBTQ coach, I would never consider another coaching position in which I cannot be open about my sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Because discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression is real and because legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression is not available in most states, deciding whether to reveal one’s sexual orientation or gender identity is an individual decision that LGBTQ coaches need to make for themselves depending on their situation. LGBTQ coaches can use the following checklist to assist them as they make a decision about whether to come out at work. There is no formula for identifying the “correct” answers. Many factors can affect this decision, and their relative importance depends on each individual.
Transgender Student-Athletes and Coaches in the Locker Room

The locker room can be a vulnerable place. As teammates are showering and changing clothes whatever insecurities student-athletes might have about their own body’s size or shape can arise because people do notice other bodies in the locker room and are aware of their own bodies. This awareness is not necessarily sexual, but the team locker room and athletes’ physical rooms may come to the locker room more familiar with the same many people of the same sex spend time together in various stages of undress. In addition, there is a history of sexual violence in the locker room or anywhere else. If student-athletes are uncomfortable in the locker room because of inappropriate or unwanted sexual attention or inappropriate actions by any teammate or coach, including lesbian, gay or bisexual student-athletes or coaches, then this is a case of sexual harassment and should be addressed as such. Most schools have policies governing sexual harassment that should be applied regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the people involved. Check with your school administration to get a copy of the sexual harassment policy.

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

• Develop and enforce a sexual harassment policy that applies to all regardless of sexual orientation or gender.

• Educate student-athletes and coaches and other athletics staff about sexual harassment policy so that they know their rights and responsibilities.

• Educate student-athletes about LGBTQ issues – address fears or stereotypes about the presence of LGBTQ people in the locker room.

• Make a privacy area for changing clothes and showering for any student-athletes to use.

• Make parents who express concerns about LGBTQ people in the locker room aware of expectations of respectful treatment for all including nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
Managing Dating Relationships Among Teammates

Managing dating relationships on sports teams is one of the most sensitive topics among college coaches. Though the topic is currently of most interest to coaches of women's teams, as gay men continue to come out to coaches and teammates, it will be of interest to coaches of men's teams, as well.

Perhaps many coaches’ response to the possibility of dating teammates can be summed up in the following statement from a coach, “I don’t care if you date as long as you get together before the season starts and don’t end the relationship until after the season is over. That way it won’t affect the team.” This reasoning and one of dating relationships (whether same-sex or not) that have the most potential to cause drama and trauma on a team. No coach wants a team to be embroiled in interpersonal conflict during the season that threatens the team’s potential for success. Coaches are concerned that the potential to cause drama and trauma on a team. No coach wants a team to be embroiled in interpersonal conflict during the season that threatens the team’s potential for success. Coaches are concerned that team goals, such as: 

- Best friends on a team either being exclusive of others or having a big falling out during the season.
- Two women on a team dating the same guy on a men’s team.
- One teammate getting dumped by her boyfriend and she then starts dating one of her teammates.
- Heterosexual dating on a mixed team.
- Heterosexual dating on men’s and women’s teams that causes friction among players and not getting along.
- Conflicts between student-athletes of color and white teammates.
- Conflicts between athletes and non-Christian teammates.
- Develop policy that applies to all relationship issues regardless of whether same-sex or heterosexual relationships.
- Range of possible policies on intra-team dating: 
  - Prohibit intra-team dating (Not recommended).
  - Allow intra-team dating with proactive expectations (Recommended).

Some Pros and Cons of Different Policies on Intra-Team Dating

Prohibit Intra-Team Dating

The pros of having a policy or the existence of adopting of a policy prohibiting dating among teammates outweigh the positive outcomes of such a policy. First, it is questionable whether coaches have the legal or moral right to dictate personal behavior between team members. Second, prohibiting intra-team dating is an impractical policy that rarely works. It does nothing to ensure secrecy, dishonesty and fear as sitting dating teammates attempt to hide their relationship from coaches and teammates. Other teammates who know about the relationship are also caught in the web of secrecy and dishonesty and face the dilemma of whether to tell their coach. If the policy targets same-sex dating only, it would be discriminatory and the coach may be penalized for not honoring the policy. In addition, if the coach finds out about dating teammates, she or he may have no choice but to impose sanctions. Even if the dating teammates have violated a team rule. Moreover, the teammates who are dating are not the only ones who need to worry about how to handle their relationship. All of these consequences distract from the focus of the team and achieving competitive goals. For these reasons, prohibiting dating among teammates is not an effective or practical policy.

Ignore Intra-Team Dating

Some coaches choose to ignore dating among teammates. This strategy puts the entire team at risk of facing a crisis that has the potential to cause a major distraction from team goals. Coaches sometimes choose to ignore same-sex dating on teams because they are uncomfortable addressing the issue. Coaches may choose not to address how to address it without appearing to be prejudiced against lesbian, bisexual or gay members of their teams.

As with prohibiting dating among teammates, ignoring it has many negative consequences. Coaches are concerned that they lose when they ignore the possibility of intra-team dating. Dating teammates have no guidelines about what is and isn’t appropriate behavior. Their teammates have no guidance about how to respond to teammates who are dating. Homophobia always thrives in silence, and ignoring the possibility of dating teammates creates an opening for prejudice and fear to guide reactions. As with policies prohibiting intra-team dating, ignoring it is likely to interpret silence as nonacceptance. Finally, if there is no policy in place, the coach may not even think twice about how to respond to it when it comes to the coach’s attention and how to intercede management reactions that can threaten team potential for success.

Allow Intra-Team Dating With Proactive Expectations

Allowing intra-team dating while providing proactive expectations for how to approach it is the most effective way to handle this issue. This approach does require that coaches overcome their own discomfort with talking about same-sex dating on the team and encourages honesty, responsibility and maturity from the members of the team who are dating and their teammates. This policy provides clear behavioral expectations for dating teammates and consequences for failure to live up to these expectations. Such policies help to set the principles of respect for team members as well as sexual orientations.

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Sample Rules for Dating Teammates (LGBTQ and Straight):

- No PDAs (Public Displays of Affection). This includes: hand-holding, hugging, kissing, body contact, and anything else when on “team time.”
- No re: be excluded: With other teammates on the bus, eat with other teammates, share hotel rooms with other teammates, and sit with other teammates in team meetings.
- Respect Team Space. Avoid drama on team time. Leave relationship conflict at the locker room door. Resolve relationship issues on your own time, not the team’s time.
- Initiate conversations about dating conflict and consequences of not abiding by them.
- Dating teammates meet with the coaches; review expectations and consequences of not abiding by them.
- Communicate with coaches when dating teammates need to be addressed.
- Sample Rules for Dating Teammates (LGBTQ and Straight):

- Consent: It is the right of both people to consent to or refuse involvement in relationships.
- Communication: It is important for having healthy relationships.
- Good Faith Efforts: It is important for having healthy relationships.
- Respect: It is important for having healthy relationships.
- The team will establish policies to prevent any form of harassment based on gender identity or expression.
Coaching Behavioral Expectations
• Expect everyone to treat everyone else with respect. The locker room is part of team time, and all expectations for dating teammates apply.
• Rotate room assignments so all teammates share a room with everyone on the team during the season. This helps teammates get to know one another and discourages cliques of any kind.
What About Sharing Hotel Rooms?
• Expect all team members in dating relationships to respect teammates and the team space.
What About the Locker Room?
• Expect everyone to treat everyone else with respect. The locker room is part of team time, and all expectations for dating teammates apply. Provide private changing space in the locker room for anyone who wants it. Sexual harassment policies apply to everyone regardless of sexual orientation or gender.

Addressing LGBTQ Issues in Recruiting

Recruiting high school student-athletes is an important part of most coaches’ responsibilities. Both high school and college coaches play important roles in this process. College coaches are actively selling their programs to potential high school recruits and their families through a variety of personal and technological communications including home and campus visits, team media guides, team websites, email, text messages and phone calls.

A high school coach can play a key role in helping to bring a student-athlete to the attention of college coaches. High school coaches also communicate expectations to high school student-athletes and their families about the recruiting process and provide information about individual colleges and intercollegiate coaches.

The NCAA has rules and guidelines to regulate the recruitment process for the purpose of protecting the recruit and ensuring fairness. However, enforcement of these regulations is an ongoing challenge as the competition for top high school recruits intensifies in women’s and men’s sports. Unfortunately, some college coaches employ unethical tactics to land top recruits.

The purpose of this resource is to identify some aspects of the recruiting process that can lead to unethical coaching practices based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. The goal of these unethical practices in the recruiting process is to play on or respond to parents’ and their son’s or daughter’s fear of or prejudice about LGBTQ people.

The following list includes aspects of recruiting and ways that these unethical practices can intrude on the process. This list can be used by coaches, high school recruits and their families as a guide to ethical recruiting practices with regard to LGBTQ issues.

Team Media Guides, Contact Lists and Websites
• The coach’s bio should focus on his or her coaching accomplishments and professional qualifications and experience. When personal information such as marital status or family photos of husband, wives or children are included in the media guide or on websites, this places LGBTQ coaches at a disadvantage since it is likely that their bio will not include information about their families. A coach’s marital status is not a coaching qualification, and highlighting it is a subtle means of communicating that the coach is heterosexual.

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Champions of Respect is a blatantly discriminatory practice that places coaches at odds with the message that there are no lesbians or gay men in your program. This is a recruiting liability for the team. When looking at a recruit’s high school records, do not use her or his membership in a school Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club to discount her or his desirability as a member of your team. Focus on a recruit’s athletic ability and academic accomplishments and how she or he fits in with your team’s style of play and future needs. Do not judge a recruit by her or her gender expression or by any other criterion that is not directly related to her abilities and performance as an athlete. Selecting a recruit based on an assumption that lesbians and gay men should be barred from hosting recruits is a recruiting liability for the team. Do not bar lesbian or gay team members from hosting recruits. Plan activities that will not assume heterosexuality or require an escort of the opposite sex. Plan activities that you would be proud to see reported in the media.

In communications with recruits or their parents, focus on describing the positive aspects of your own program and avoid negative comments of any kind about other schools, coaches or players to take down room decoratings such as pride posters, rainbow flags or photos in order to hide their sexual orientation from recruits. If you are concerned about an officer, set a standard that applies equally to athletes of any sexual orientation. Asking or requiring lesbian and gay athletes to prove their sexual orientation is an unreasonable policy that is based on the assumption that lesbians and gay men should be characterized or categorized by factors other than their athletic ability and clearly not determine an athlete’s attractiveness as a recruit.

Make sure all coaches, athletes and other athletics staff involved in the recruiting process understand expectations for an ethical and inclusive recruiting process.

Responding to Questions About Lesbians, Bisexuals, Gay Men or Transgender People on the Team: Responding to Questions About LGBTQ Students on the Team or ask if the coach is LGBTQ. Though this might be a positive inquiry, in many cases questions reflect fears about playing on teams with LGBTQ people that are based on stereotypes and prejudices. Parents or recruits might ask coaches such direct questions as:

- Are you a lesbian/gay man on the team?
- Are there lesbians/gay men on the team?
- What is your perspective about lesbians/gay men on the team?
- Can you ever have lesbians/gay men on your team?
- Are there transgender members of the team?

Or the question might be asked in a more indirect way:

- What kind of moral or religious climate is there on your team?
- Are people not welcome?
- Are there any coaches affiliated with the team (for a women’s team)?

Here are some suggestions for how to respond to such questions in ways that will begin to address homophobia for inclusion, inclusion and play fair.

Responding to Questions About LGBTQ People on Sports Teams: This is an inappropriate question and should be answered without providing personal information. Do not lead up to the question:

- Don’t be apologetic about or lie about the possibility or actuality of LGBTQ coaches and athletes on the team.
- Responding to questions that parents or recruits ask about the sexual orientation is not the issue.iasco about room assignments. Once a recruit gets to know more about the team, coaches and campus, she will begin to address homophobia in a direct way.

Make it clear that if new recruits or students and schools that are seeking to recruit LGBTQ people, and clearly.

Tell them your athletics department supports and is responsible for abiding by these policies or laws. They need to lead with this question:

Tell them that there are all kinds of diversity on the team – race, religion, nationality and sexual orientation, for example. This changes from year to year. Each team has a different profile.

Focus on the importance of respect and fairness for everyone on the team. Tell them that your goal is to build a successful team that is unified in purpose in terms of athletic and academic goals and respectful of individual differences.

Emphasize that no matter where athletes go to school, they will meet people who are different from themselves, just as they will when they join the work world after school. Working as a team with people who are different prepares athletes for a future in a diverse world.

Responding to Questions About a Coach’s Sexual Orientation: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Religious Beliefs: There is no need to address this question for it if we expect to eliminate the effects of homophobia in sports. Put the onus on the asker to tell you why the person wants to know. Say you believe that coaches and athletics programs should be evaluated, not on the race, religion, sexual orientation, etc., of the coaches, but on their coaching credentials and professional conduct.

Parents or athletes who ask this question do so based on stereotypes and prejudicial beliefs about homosexuals and expect you to ask. Assume you will believe that parents or athletes who need help with their sexual identity or orientation. Parents, coaches or the coaching team will be happy on your team, how would they contribute to or detract from a team climate based on respect for everyone.

For Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Coaches: Responding to Questions About Your Sexual Orientation: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Respond: Resist the temptation to proclaim your heterosexuality or the presence of heterosexual assistant coaches. This buys into the stereotype that LGBTQ coaches are a threat or problem. This recruiting process is not about your sexual orientation. If your school has a nondiscrimination policy or your state has a state-level nondiscrimination law that covers students and schools: Cite that. If your school’s nondiscrimination policy or your state’s nondiscrimination law does not provide protections for sexual orientation or gender identity, the athletic program may not be subject to the policy or law. This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Gender Identity: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Gender or Sexual Identity: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Gender Expression: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Sex: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Gender: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Race: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

Responding to Questions About Coach’s Religion: This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.
Positive Recruiting Guidelines for Coaches, Administrators, Parents¹

Coaches

• Focus recruiting information on positive information about your own school.
• Relate from giving negative information of any kind about other schools, their athletics programs, personnel or student-athletes.
• Refrain from minimizing that another team has an undesirable, ineligible, unsportsmanlike record, because these are LBGTQ people there.
• If parents or recruits ask about other schools, coaches or players, invite them to ask their questions of that school for the best answers to their questions.
• Be proactive: Tell parents and recruits that your teams are diverse, made up of athletes from different religions, races, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, gender identities and sexual orientations and that the core value on your team is respect for one another. Tell them this is an integral part of the athletics experience at your school.
• Tell parents that your school has a nondiscrimination policy that protects all students.
• If parents or recruits tell you another coach has given them negative information about your program, report this to your athletics director. Call the coach directly. Ask if the parent or recruit is willing to talk to your AD about it.
• If another coach has another coach told them about LBGTQ people in your program, tell them that the bottom line in your program is respect for difference and respect. However, some people are uncomfortable talking to students about sexual orientation. You can also say that your team includes athletes of different religions, races, sexual orientations, etc. Every year is different. What is the same is the expectation that everyone works together for the benefit of the team and reaching goals.
• If you know your program has been targeted by negative recruiting, prepare recruits for hearing this and tell them it is an unethical practice. Encourage parents and athletes to talk to you about this.
• Prepare your program for potential conflicts in your program – focus on respect, fairness and team goals.
• Answer parents’ and recruits’ questions honestly and forthrightly. Don’t be afraid of answering the real questions on your team. Frame it as a strength.

Administrators

• Work with clear and public department policy on negative recruiting.
• Include a statement about negative recruiting in a “coaching ethics” statement.
• Develop procedures for addressing negative recruiting accusations made against your coaches and by your coaches with colleagues and the media.
• Have coaches read and sign a “coaching ethics” statement.
• Educate coaches about expectations during recruiting.
• Talk to administrators from other schools when an incident of negative recruiting happens to your staff members to come to your attention.
• Push for your athletics conference to develop guidelines on negative recruiting.

Parents

• Tell the coach that you do not appreciate negative recruiting and that you know that it is an unethical practice.
• Talk to your son or daughter about negative recruiting and tell him or her it is an unethical practice the student should be aware of in case it happens when he is not present.
• If a coach or a coach’s representative uses negative recruiting practices while interacting with you, report this to the athletics director.
• Cross that school off your list of possibilities and tell the coach and the athletics director you are doing so and why.
• Report negative recruiting to the university or college administration.

Religion and the Inclusion of LGBTQ People in Athletics

In accordance with constitutional protections for freedom of religion and conscience, public and secular private schools have a responsibility to ensure a neutral religious climate in which no particular religious faith or practice is promoted or penalized. This neutrality enables individual athletes and coaches to express their faith and, at the same time, protects the rights of those who do not share that faith or who choose not to participate in any religious activity.

Athletic programs in religious schools are a different case. For example, Christian schools are governed by a commitment to respect, safety and fairness to nonreligious members of the institutional religious perspective. However, athletes and coaches who choose to enroll in and participate in these schools do so with the understanding that particular religious activities and assumptions about religious belief may be part of the school culture.

This discussion focuses on religious expression in public and secular private schools. The challenge in religious schools is to find common ground where athletes and coaches of all spiritual and non-spiritual persuasions can compete together in a respectful, safe and fair climate despite differences in religious perspectives. Freedom of religion also means freedom from the restrictions of religious schools. Athletics programs in public schools or secular private schools are examples of such activities.

Coaches are responsible for ensuring that the climate for all team activities is neutral with regard to religion. According to U.S. government guidelines for religious expression in public schools, coaches or other school staff are not to engage in prayer or actively participating in religious activities with students when acting in their official capacity as “representatives of the state.” Coaches are acting as “representatives of the state” in their professional capacity under a coach’s leadership, such as practice sessions, games, travel, team activities outside competition, team written communications and any other required team activities should all be religion-neutral.

Even when religiously oriented team activities are not required, but suggested or offered as voluntary options by coaches or team captains, players may often feel pressure to participate. If religious activities are led by a coach, team captain or other team leader, these practices constitute a form of religious activity that can affect individual athletes and coaches. Many athletes (or assistant coaches) will not speak up to object to team prayers or other team religious activities even if they do not want to participate in them. This reluctance reflects all the reasons why low-pressure religious events are offered by schools and their religious activities are not imposed on participants in activities that are not in and of themselves religious in nature. In a neutral religious climate, coaches or other team leaders, these practices constitute a form of religious activity that can affect individual athletes and coaches.

Even nondenominational prayers assume all participants believe in a higher power and are an imposition on participants’ rights to be free of religious activities in the athletics setting.

Team captains also have leadership responsibility among their peers to make sure all teams are treated with respect and fairness, and protect the rights of all members of a team. Even in religious schools, team members have an opportunity.

Potential Problems in an Athletics Setting

For coaches, team captains and other team members who believe homosexuality or transgenderism is sin, the challenge in a public or secular private school is to reconcile their personal beliefs with their professional responsibility to find a common ground of respect for differences among coaches and teammates in a religiously neutral climate. Coaches and other athletics staff in particular have a professional responsibility to make sure all student-athletes are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their personal beliefs about sexual orientation.

• Coach-led team prayers.
• Team prayers led by student-athletes, while within governmental guidelines, could place pressure on all student-athletes to participate.
• Team attendance at Bible study, required or urged by coaches or captains.
• Attendance at prayer breakfasts, religious services or other religious events required or urged by coaches or team captains.
• Team attendance at religious club meetings required or urged by coaches or team captains.
• Teammates talking about faith or team members who share one religious faith or two or more religious faiths.
• Individual players talking about their faith, but not trying to recruit others who are not interested to their faith.
• Individual student-athletes trying to convert coaches or student-athletes who do not share their religious beliefs or who violates their religious beliefs.
• Individual student-athletes talking about their faith to media or others in the athletics setting.
• Individual student-athletes distributing written religious information unless an opt-out clause or an anti-conversion statement is consistent with uniform requirements for practice or games.
• Individual student-athletes seeking to research their faith or other symbols of their faith (as is consistent with religious expression in public or secular private school is to reconcile their personal beliefs with their professional responsibility to find a common ground of respect for differences among coaches and teammates in a religiously neutral climate. Coaches and other athletics staff in particular have a professional responsibility to make sure all student-athletes are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their personal beliefs about sexual orientation.

Practices or Policies That Promote a Respectful and Inclusive Athletics Climate

• Team of student-athletes volunteering to pray together on the team bus.
• Team members praying together before games.
• Individual student-athletes praying in private or in the locker room or attending Bible study or a religious service together.
• Team captains and assistant coaches assisting in team planning.
• Individual student-athletes trying to convert coaches or student-athletes who do not share their religious beliefs or who violates their religious beliefs.
• Individual student-athletes talking about their faith to media or others in the athletics setting.
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• Individual student-athletes talking about their faith to media or others in the athletics setting.
Objectives
are a proper focus for an athletics department's social media policy.

Whether a coach, student-athlete, or administrator chooses to create or media channels for all members of an athletics community. Because online collaboration platforms are fundamentally changing Social Media Guidelines and the Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes

Guiding Principles

• Each athletics department trusts and expects its student-athletes, coaches, and administrators to exercise personal responsibility whenever they use social media, which includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging.
• All members of an athletics program using social media should be conscious of their position as public role models and representatives of their school, department and team.
• Always avoid demeaning language when using social media. Words such as "faggot," "dyke," "trans," or other language used as taunts or expressions of hostility or disapproval reflect poorly on those who use them and their athletics departments and are offensive to LGBTQ people and straight allies.

Because of the intersections of these different identities, it is important not to assume that all LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches exercise the same level of awareness and experience of social identity or color in the same ways. A lesbian student-athlete whose family cannot afford to pay for her college education will be less likely to be open about being gay if she feels the need to hide it in order to secure her scholarship. Likewise, a gay athlete whose family values believing in homosexuality might feel more conflict or fear about openly identifying himself. The decision on coming out is a balancing act of identities affected by race, economic class and gender identity. Race, economic privilege or power can add to and complicate personal experiences of anxiety and distress.

Addressing discrimination and prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning student-athletes, staff and coaches requires an understanding of how other identities besides sexual orientation or gender identity affect LGBTQ experience. Individuals are more than LGBTQ, they are female, male, transgender or questioning. All student-athletes and staff and coaches different from one another.

For example, LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches often feel a greater sense of identity or color. If heterosexual teammates of color express anti-LGBTQ beliefs, LGBTQ student-athletes, coaches and staff of color may be reluctant to identify themselves. This reluctance on behalf of staff and coaches might be fueled by the fear of an understanding of how other identities besides sexual orientation or gender identity affect LGBTQ experience. Individuals are more than LGBTQ, they are female, male, transgender or questioning. All student-athletes and staff and coaches different from one another.

For example, LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches often feel a greater sense of identity or color. If heterosexual teammates of color express anti-LGBTQ beliefs, LGBTQ student-athletes, coaches and staff of color may be reluctant to identify themselves. This reluctance on behalf of staff and coaches might be fueled by the fear of an understanding of how other identities besides sexual orientation or gender identity affect LGBTQ experience. Individuals are more than LGBTQ, they are female, male, transgender or questioning. All student-athletes and staff and coaches different from one another.
coaches. However, many reasons related to racism and concerns about race and color make many LGBTQI individuals of color less likely to come out publicly. For example, religion often is an important and lifelong part of the lives of students of color as a personal and spiritual buffer to racism. If their religious community and family teach that homosexuality is a sin, this can pose a significant barrier to their sense of comfort and support can be devastating. Coping with fears of rejection and condemnation can make it difficult for LGBTQI student-athletes of color to find support and inner peace. Consequently, finding churches, mosques or synagogues where they feel accepted for who they are can be challenging. Though religion also plays an important part in the lives of white LGBTQI student-athletes, staff and coaches, the added complexities of racism are not a part of their experience. LGBTQI student-athletes of color are also at risk of feeling alienated from white LGBTQI teammates or LGBTQI school organizations. Some LGBTQI student-athletes of color prefer to refer to themselves as "same-gender loving" (Blacks) or "two-spirit" (Native American) as a way to differentiate their experiences from white LGBTQI people. LGBTQI student-athletes of color are faced with the racism often present in predominantly white LGBTQI school-based organizations and among white LGBTQI student-athletes. While LGBTQI students, whether consciously or not, exercise and receive advantages because they are white that can mediate some of the prejudice related to being LGBTQ, they often do not understand how the experiences of LGBTQI people of color are affected by racism or how their own identity provides them with advantages that can make it easier to openly claim their LGBTQI identity. Many of the gender and sexuality expectations placed on LGBTQI student-athletes determine good athletes of color are based on racial and also must negotiate between society's expectations of white feminism and their specific racial and/or ethnic community's expectations of femininity. For example, black women are not held to the same standards of staying home with children as white women. Historically, it was just not feasible to do so; thus, black women are provided with the opportunity, and sometimes the necessity, to work outside the home. Stereotypes of women athletes of color, especially black women, can lead to perceptions that they are "naturally" more athletic or masculine or sexual than their white teammates. These stereotypes are particularly demeaning for lesbian or bisexual black women athletes who are also subjected to stereotypes based on their sexual orientation. Likewise, gay and bisexual men of color may aspire to different standards of masculinity than white LGBTQI men do or have different expectations of gender and sexuality placed on them. Cloistered gay or bisexual male athletes of color often feel pressure to conform to more rigid stereotypes of masculinity to deflect suspicions about their sexuality among white teammates and coaches of color. All of these complexities call for coaches and athletics administrators to anticipate how race, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression affect the experiences of student-athletes. When sponsoring LGBTQI education programs for athletics department staff and student-athletes, make sure that the experiences of LGBTQI student-athletes, staff and coaches of color are specifically addressed. Invite a panel of LGBTQI athletes of color to talk about their experiences and describe how coaches and teammates can better address their needs. When people of color are isolated, depressed or have problems in classes, consider the possibility that questioning one's sexuality or dealing with an anti-LGBTQI climate might be among the issues with which individuals of color are wrestling. Make sure campus LGBTQI support and social groups address the needs of LGBTQI people of color and are aware of how racism and white privilege affect their programming. Ensure that campus support and social groups for students of color address the needs of LGBTQI people of color and are aware of the potential heterosexism in their programming. Athletics department staff should identify resources within the department and within campus counseling services so that student-athletes of color can get help that is supportive of their individual needs, whatever they may be, and that they do not need to fear repercussions in the athletics department.

- Coaches of all races should participate in education programs about how race, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression affect the experiences of student-athletes.
- When sponsoring LGBTQI education programs for athletics department staff and student-athletes, make sure that the experiences of LGBTQI student-athletes, staff and coaches of color are specifically addressed.
- Invite a panel of LGBTQI athletes of color to talk about their experiences and describe how coaches and teammates can better address their needs.
- When people of color are isolated, depressed or have problems in classes, consider the possibility that questioning one's sexuality or dealing with an anti-LGBTQI climate might be among the issues with which individuals of color are wrestling.
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Asian-American, Latino-American and Native American cultures' perceptions, language and expectations with regard to gender and sexual expression are not necessarily the same as those of the dominant white North American culture. Just as it is important not to assume that LGBTQI people of color have the same experience of their sexual orientation as white LGBTQI individuals, it is also important to understand that the experiences of LGBTQI individuals of color are also different from one another because of these cultural differences.

Lesbians and bisexual women of color face the combined effects of racism, sexism and heterosexism. Lesbian and bisexual women of color also must negotiate between society's expectations of white feminism and their specific racial and/or ethnic community's expectations of femininity. For example, black women are not held to the same standards of staying home with children as white women. Historically, it was just not feasible to do so; thus, black women are provided with the opportunity, and sometimes the necessity, to work outside the home. Stereotypes of women athletes of color, especially black women, can lead to perceptions that they are "naturally" more athletic or masculine or sexual than their white teammates. These stereotypes are particularly demeaning for lesbian or bisexual black women athletes who are also subjected to stereotypes based on their sexual orientation. Likewise, gay and bisexual men of color may aspire to different standards of masculinity than white LGBTQI men do or have different expectations of gender and sexuality placed on them. Cloistered gay or bisexual male athletes of color often feel pressure to conform to more rigid stereotypes of masculinity to deflect suspicions about their sexuality among white teammates and coaches of color.

All of these complexities call for coaches and athletics administrators to anticipate how race, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression affect the experiences of student-athletes. When sponsoring LGBTQI education programs for athletics department staff and student-athletes, make sure that the experiences of LGBTQI student-athletes, staff and coaches of color are specifically addressed. Invite a panel of LGBTQI athletes of color to talk about their experiences and describe how coaches and teammates can better address their needs. When people of color are isolated, depressed or have problems in classes, consider the possibility that questioning one's sexuality or dealing with an anti-LGBTQI climate might be among the issues with which individuals of color are wrestling. Make sure campus LGBTQI support and social groups address the needs of LGBTQI people of color and are aware of how racism and white privilege affect their programming. Ensure that campus support and social groups for students of color address the needs of LGBTQI people of color and are aware of the potential heterosexism in their programming. Athletics department staff should identify resources within the department and within campus counseling services so that student-athletes of color can get help that is supportive of their individual needs, whatever they may be, and that they do not need to fear repercussions in the athletics department.
Champions of Respect

The following policies clarify participation of transgender student-athletes. NCAA Policy on Transgender Student-Athlete Participation

In recent years, the participation of transgender student-athletes undergoing hormonal treatment for gender transition has gained attention. Research-based information needs to be re-evaluated to ensure that they reflect the most current understanding.

NCAA Policy on Transgender Student-Athlete Participation

The following additional guidelines will assist colleges, athletics departments, coaches, teams, and student-athletes in creating an environment in which all student-athletes are safe and fairly treated.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Student’s Responsibilities

1. In order to avoid challenges to a transgender student-athlete’s participation during a sport season, a student-athlete who has completed, plans to initiate, or is in the process of taking hormones as part of a gender transition should submit the request to participate on a sports team in writing to the director of athletics, in accordance with the institution’s policy for hormone treatment.

2. The request should include a letter from the student’s physician documenting the student-athlete’s intention to transition or the student’s status transition if the process has already been initiated. This letter should identify the prescribed hormonal treatment for the student’s gender transition and documentation of testosterone or estradiol levels, if relevant.

The School’s Responsibilities

The director of athletics should meet with the student to review eligibility requirements and procedure for approval of transgender participation.

If hormone treatment is involved in the student-athlete’s transition, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. The student-athlete should notify the NCAA of the student’s request to participate with a medical exception request.

2. To assist in educating and in development of institutional policy and practice, a Transgender Participation Committee should be established. Members of the committee should represent a cross section of the institution and be fully informed about student well-being issues.

3. Information about an individual student’s transgender identity and treatment related to gender transition may participate in sex-separated activities in accordance with the student’s assigned gender.

Facilities Access

1. Every locker room should have some private, enclosed changing or toilet facilities in accordance with the student’s gender identity. Transgender student-athletes should be able to use the locker room, shower, and toilet facilities for the student’s use, but transgender student-athletes should not be compelled to use them. When requested by a transgender student-athlete, schools should provide private, enclosed changing or toilet facilities for the student’s use, but transgender student-athletes should not be compelled to use them.

2. The NCAA Office of Inclusion would push athletics in the path of pursuing true equality and acceptance on the playing field.

3. Having an LGBTQ resource guide for students, coaches, teams, and athletics directors would not only be helpful, but it would push athletics in the path of pursuing true equality and acceptance on the playing field.

Launched in 2011, NCAA Office of Inclusion.

Kye Allums, Former Basketball Student-Athlete, George Washington University

“Whether being transgender in sports is easy to understand, and misunderstood.

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Instead of requiring a woman’s team to wear dresses or skirts, for example, ask that team members wear dresses or skirts that are clean, neat, well cared for and appropriately “dressy” for representing their school and team.

Medals

Training: All school or athletics representatives (conference leaders, sports information departments and personnel, school leaders, athletics administrators, team members and coaches) who are authorized to speak with the media shall receive training on appropriate terminology, use of names and pronouns, and expectations for creating a respectful team and school climate for all students, including transgender and gender-variant students.

Confidentiality: Protecting the privacy of transgender student-athletes must be a top priority for all athletics department and affiliated school personnel, particularly when in the presence of the media. All medical information shall be kept confidential in accordance with applicable state, local and federal privacy laws.

Enforcement and Nonretaliation

Any member of an athletics department who becomes aware of conduct that violates this policy should report the conduct to the appropriate remedial action to correct the situation. Any member of the athletics department who becomes aware of conduct that violates this policy should report the conduct to the appropriate enforcement and nonretaliation provisions of the athletics department and the school.

Retaliation: Retaliation is specifically forbidden against anyone who complains about discrimination based on gender identity or expression, even if the person was in error. Athletics departments should take steps to prevent any retaliation against any person who makes such a complaint.

Legal Resources

Laws Addressing Discrimination or Harassment Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression

Several federal, state and local laws can be used successfully in athletics to decrease the disparity in funding, staffing and programming between women’s and men’s programs. Title IX has been interpreted to apply also when students are discriminated against on the basis of gender stereotypes. For example, when male students are harassed because they are perceived as “feminine,” or female students are harassed because they are perceived as “masculine.” Often these students are assumed to be gay or lesbian because of nonconforming gender expression, for example, when coaches tell female athletes to dress or choose hairstyles that are more “feminine.” Title IX has been used successfully in several cases to challenge this kind of harassment or discrimination.

State Nondiscrimination Laws

In addition to these two federal laws, several states have passed laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. (As of January 2012). Most of these laws address discrimination in employment, public accommodations and housing. These state laws can be used to challenge discrimination against coaches or other staff members in athletics.


States prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation: Delaware, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York and Wisconsin.

State Student Rights Laws

In addition to state nondiscrimination laws, some states have enacted “student rights laws” that specifically protect students in schools from discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
Champions of Respect

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

States with student rights laws prohibiting discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity: California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont and Washington.

States with student rights laws prohibiting discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation only: Wisconsin.

Other State or Local Laws and Policies That Might Apply

For instance, it is illegal to fire a teacher for sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, the state constitution equal protection clause can be used to challenge discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Many municipal nondiscrimination laws include sexual orientation or gender identity/expression and can also be used to challenge unfair treatment.

In several court cases, Title IX has been successfully used in this way. In Thermo v. Tonganoxie Unified School District No. 425 (Kansas 2005), Title IX formed the basis for a ruling supporting a male student’s claim disclaimed discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, the courts ruled that, in another case, Schroeder v. Maumee Board of Education, 296 F. Supp. 2d 1165 (N.D. Cal. 2000), the ruling was based on a slightly different rationale: That it is reasonable to infer that harassment based on sex constitutes “sexual harassment” under Title IX. The court ruled that “the plaintiff was targeted by his classmates due to his perceived sexual orientation. The school district failed to protect a male student from harassment on the basis of his gender and perceived sexual orientation.”

Title IX and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Stereotyping

The purpose of Title IX is to address sex discrimination in education. However, this federal law has also been an effective tool in addressing discrimination or harassment in schools based on gender stereotypes associated with sexual orientation. Though Title IX does not directly address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, gender expectations linked with stereotypes of lesbian, bisexual, gay or transgender people often are related.

When gender stereotyping occurs in incidents of discrimination and harassment of lesbian, gay or bisexual students or students perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual, Title IX may provide legal grounds for challenging this discrimination.

In several court cases, Title IX has been successfully used in this way. In Thermo v. Tonganoxie Unified School District No. 425 (Kansas 2005), Title IX formed the basis for a ruling supporting a male student’s claim that the school district was deliberately indifferent to harassment which he was subjected by other students on the basis of his perceived gender and sexual orientation. He was teased, called offensive names and subjected to crude sexual gestures over a four-year period. The court ruled that “he had been subjected to sex discrimination based on the assertion that gender stereotyping is another ‘method of proving actionable harassment under Title IX.’” The court ruled that “the plaintiff was harassed because he failed to satisfy his peers’ stereotyped expectations for his gender because the primary objective of plaintiff’s harassers appears to have been to disparage his perceived lack of masculinity.” Similarly, in Montgomery v. Independent School District No. 709, 109 F. Supp. 2d 1081 (S. Minn. 2000) the court ruled that the school district failed to protect a male student from harassment on the basis of his gender and perceived sexual orientation. The court ruled that, although Title IX does not prohibit harassment or discrimination based on sexual orientation, it does prohibit harassment based on gender nonconformity. The court held that the facts supported the contention that the plaintiff was harassed “because he did not meet (the harassers’) stereotyped expectations of masculinity.”

In another case, Schenider v. Maumee Board of Education, 296 F. Supp. 2d 869 (N.D. Ohio 2003), the court ruled in favor of a student who used Title IX to claim that his school showed deliberate indifference to verbal and physical submissions to affectional harassment and to discrimination of tolerance for lesbian and gay people in school. In its ruling, the court cited a series of cases holding that targeting someone because of that person’s perceived sexual orientation was based on gender stereotypes and therefore a form of sex discrimination.

In Ray v. Antioch Unified School District, 107 F. Supp. 2d 1165 (N.D. Cal. 2000), the court cited a series of cases holding that targeting someone because of that person’s perceived sexual orientation can constitute “sexual harassment” under Title IX. The court said: “Plaintiff was targeted because of his asserted sexual status as a homosexual, and was harassed based on those perceptions. Thus, although complaint makes no specific characterization of the harassment conduct as ‘sexual’ in nature, it is reasonable to infer that the attack was a perceived belief about Plaintiff’s sexuality, i.e. that Plaintiff was harassed on the basis of sex.” (Emphasis in original).

In these cases Title IX was successfully used to address harassment, assault or discrimination targeting students whom their harassers perceived to be gay based on gender stereotyping. Most of the verbal harassment in these cases was focused on the harassers’ belief that the targeted students did not exhibit the masculine behavior expected of them. The courts ruled that discrimination or harassment based on gender nonconformity is a form of sex discrimination and, therefore, Title IX applies. In Ray v. Antioch Unified School District, 107 F. Supp. 2d 1165 (N.D. Cal. 2000), the ruling was based on a slightly different rationale: That it is reasonable to infer that harassment based on perceived beliefs about sexuality constitutes harassment based on sex.

These cases demonstrate the potential usefulness of Title IX in addressing incidents of peer harassment in schools based on perceived sexual orientation where school officials are “deliberately indifferent” to them. The courts ruled that discrimination or harassment based on perceived sexual status as a homosexual, and was harassed based on those perceptions. Thus, although complaint makes no specific characterization of the harassment conduct as ‘sexual’ in nature, it is reasonable to infer that the attack was a perceived belief about Plaintiff’s sexuality, i.e. that Plaintiff was harassed on the basis of sex.” (Emphasis in original).

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Title IX is typically used to address sex discrimination that disadvantages female students since they are more likely to have inferior athletics opportunities in schools. However, Title IX provides protection to both females and males who are subjected to sex discrimination in schools. In the cases cited here, for example, male students and their families successfully used Title IX to challenge discrimination and harassment based on gender stereotyping associated with sexual orientation. Title IX also can provide protection to female students harassed or discriminated against in similar ways.

All members of school communities should be aware of Title IX. School administrations and athletics directors need to be aware of the requirements of Title IX and their responsibilities to respond to individual incidents or patterns of discrimination or harassment prohibited by Title IX. Coaches and teachers should be aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities to prohibit discrimination and harassment on their teams and in their classes, as well. Parents and students should be aware of Title IX’s requirements and the procedures for using Title IX when discrimination or harassment based on sex or gender stereotyping occurs.

The intentions of all civil rights legislation, of which Title IX is one example, is to eliminate inequality and to provide a “level playing field” where all people, regardless of individual or group differences, have access to the resources and opportunities they need to achieve personal goals in a climate that is equitable, safe and respectful. A student’s sex, gender expression or sexual orientation should not be grounds for harassment or discrimination in any school programming. Title IX is an effective legal tool for helping schools assure that all students are treated fairly and respectfully. School athletics should provide equitable and safe competition for all participants, male and female, gay and straight. Title IX can be an effective legal resource for challenging discrimination that threatens this ideal.

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

Legal Resources

In addition to legal resources available in any community, several national and regional legal advocacy organizations can provide advice, informal assistance or legal representation for students or staff members who believe they have been discriminated against in athletics because of their perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) sponsors a Sports Project that focuses on discrimination in athletics and sport settings. The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) sponsors a Sports Project that focuses on discrimination in athletics and sport settings.

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) www.glad.org
American Civil Liberties Union www.aclu.org
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund www.lambdalegal.org

Legal Resources

What To Do If You Think You Have Been Discriminated Against on the Basis of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression

• If you are a student-athlete and you are out to your parents, tell them what is happening. Parents can be important advocates who support you in challenging discrimination.
• Keep a diary of everything that someone has said or done that you think is discriminatory. Include dates and times. If others were present when the incident occurred, ask them to support you if you challenge the discrimination or harassment.
• Find out what kind of legal protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (see previous sections) apply in your state. If your state has no legal protections, consider the federal laws that might apply (see previous sections).
• Identify applicable school policies that prohibit discrimination or harassment.
• If available, consult with legal resources or the ombudsperson on your campus for advice.
• Consult with legal resources in your community or with one of the national advocacy groups listed in this section.
• Look for ways to resolve the situation informally: Meet with coaches or administrators. If this fails, consider more formal steps to resolve the situation like talking to the dean of students, campus ombuds office or university president. Consider bringing an advocate to the meeting (a parent, faculty member, friend or teammate).
• If these actions fail to resolve the situation, consider filing a lawsuit in consultation with legal representation.

When you stand up and demand to be treated fairly, you will help to make athletics a safe, respectful and fair place for others, too.
Champions of Respect
(And What They Can Do To Stop It)

How Homophobia Affects Heterosexual Student-Athletes and Coaches

Resources for Allies

It is more apparent how anti-LGBTQ discrimination and prejudice affect directly by it. Some examples of anti-LGBTQ discrimination and harassment include the following:

- Pressure from coaches and teammates to hide their identities from the school community, media, potential recruits or fans.
- A teammates or coaches may pressure or be disinclined to allow sharing the locker room, showers or hotel rooms with them.
- Physical threats, violence or vandalism.
- Verbal or online harassment.
- Anti-LGBTQ slurs and anti-LGBTQ taunts from coaches, teammates or spectators.
- Dismissal from teams or coaching positions.
- Reduced playing time.

In addition to the costs of anti-LGBTQ prejudice to individual heterosexual student-athletes, staff and coaches, men's and women's sports in general suffer. Many people, including some sports fans, perceive athletics to be an unwelcoming place for LGBTQ people on campus. These negative assumptions about athletics, student-athletes and coaches are not accurate for most. What kind of assumptions do people make about athletics, student-athletes and coaches in your school?

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

Ways Homophobia Hurts Heterosexual Coaches and Student-Athletes

- Association of students with LGBTQ coaches or teams can be a deterrent to student-athletes, staff and coaches in your school.
- Feelings of the need to proscribe their heterosexuality, be consciously active to “prove” their heterosexuality and distance themselves from the possibility that someone might think they are LGBTQ.
- Limits the possibilities for expressing affection to same-sex teammates and friends, especially for men, out of the fear of being seen as gay.
- Feelings of shame or secrecy about LGBTQ family members.
- Fear that association with LGBTQ friends or teammates will cause others to think they are gay, too.
- Pressure to “go along” with the anti-LGBTQ actions of others to avoid becoming targeted by anti-LGBTQ slurs or slurs.

Self-imposed restrictions of career choices, sports, dress, hairstyles, hobbies to exclude anything thought to be “gay.”

Punishments or negative consequences for violation of discrimination or harassment policies (loss of job, bad publicity, public censure, benching).

Loss of respect of teammates, coaches and the public for anti-LGBTQ attitudes and actions.

Loss of relationships with LGBTQ family members, teammates, friends or colleagues.

Ignorance resulting from an inability to challenge their own anti-LGBTQ prejudices.

Inability to work effectively with LGBTQ teammates.

Dehumanization resulting from participation in anti-LGBTQ violence, taunting or bullying.

In addition to the costs of anti-LGBTQ prejudice to individual heterosexual student-athletes, staff and coaches, men's and women's sports in general suffer. Many people, including some sports fans, perceive athletics to be no gay” even in a joking manner.

Let teammates and friends know you don’t like to hear them use anti-LGBTQ slurs.

If you have teammates who are LGBTQ, let them know that you are OK with that.

If someone calls you gay because you object to anti-LGBTQ actions, don’t let this comment silence or intimidate you.

Join the school Gay-Straight Alliance and participate in events and activities to make your school a safer place for everyone.

Start an Athletic Ally campaign in your school.

Put Safe Zone stickers on your notebooks, car windows and locker.

Invite teammates to make a You Can Play video, take the Team Respect Challenge, or sign a pledge to be Athlete Allies for Respect.

Start an LGBTQ and Ally student-athlete group at your school.

What Can Straight Student-Athletes and Coaches Do To Make Sports Teams Inclusive and Respectful for Participants of All Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities/Expressions?

- Stop using words like “Faggot” or “Dyke” or phrases like “That’s so gay” even in a joking manner.
- Let teammates and friends know you don’t like to hear them use anti-LGBTQ slurs.
- If you have teammates who are LGBTQ, let them know that you are OK with that.
- If someone calls you gay because you object to anti-LGBTQ actions, don’t let this comment silence or intimidate you.
- Join the school Gay-Straight Alliance and participate in events and activities to make your school a safer place for everyone.
- Start an Athletic Ally campaign in your school.
- Put Safe Zone stickers on your notebooks, car windows and locker.
- Invite teammates to make a You Can Play video, take the Team Respect Challenge, or sign a pledge to be Athlete Allies for Respect.
- Start an LGBTQ and Ally student-athlete group at your school.

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Conversations about LGBTQ respect and inclusion in sport oftentimes exist outside the knowledge and comfort level of many college coaches, athletes and administrators for a multitude of reasons. This can especially be the case when a coach or athlete does not believe he or she knows anyone within the LGBTQ community. As such, the context necessary to get the athletics community as a whole to embrace and support LGBTQ diversity in sport, in part, relies on creating LGBTQ- or ally-inclusive honor codes.

In other words, to best curb the use of homophobic language within an athletics institution, what it means to be a representative of that institution must be synonymous with LGBTQ inclusivity. Most members of the athletics community would agree that competing for your college or university is only part of what it is to be a student-athlete. There are implicit standards of conduct expected of those who are the most visible ambassadors of our athletics institution, what it means to be a representative of that institution does not lie, cheat, steal or degrade others, nor tolerate those who do.

While these “honor codes” oftentimes go undefined for many athletics programs, undergoing the task of defining your team’s honor code can especially be the case when a coach or athlete does not believe he or she knows anyone within the LGBTQ community. As such, creating LGBTQ- or ally-inclusive honor codes can be a useful tool to creating an LGBTQ-inclusive environment.

Responding to Anti-LGBTQ Language

**Restorative Justice Policy**

It is recognized that not all instances of misconduct are serious enough to be dealt with at a level higher than coach. In such minor cases, resolution should be immediate, require no formal procedures, and involve relatively minor sanctions (that is, verbal correction). Such sanctions should be applied fairly and consistently using the guiding principles of restorative justice.

The concept of restorative justice holds that an offender incurs an obligation to restore the victim of the offense and, by extension, the community to the state of well-being that existed before the offense. In athletics institutions, the arbiter’s of all restorations must be the coaches, officials and administrators in positions of authority to hold student-athletes accountable to victims, and fostering reconciliation between the offender, victim and community, coaches, officials and administrators are able to connect the instances in which students use degrading or demeaning language that would otherwise not be deemed major in nature.

**Responsible for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable for their words and actions.**

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Within athletics, a student-athlete, coach or staff member who uses derogatory or demeaning language, even in jest, harms both those he or she intended to degrade or demean as well as the entire community. By virtue of that conduct, any words or actions are accountable to victims, and community, coaches, officials and administrators are able to connect the instances in which students use degrading or demeaning language that would otherwise not be deemed major in nature.

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When coaches, administrators, officials and other authority figures within the athletics community witness derogatory or demeaning language or actions, they shall:

- Ensure that the offender considers and understands the harm that lies or her words or actions inflicted upon the recipient and the community.
- Inform the victim of his or her rights as a member of the community to be treated with respect, dignity and equality.
- Enable the victim to converse with the offender as to why said language or behavior was offensive, insulting or oppressive.
- Ensure that the offender understands that derogatory and demeaning words and actions have consequences.
- Ensure that the offender specifically understands what impact his or her words and actions had on the victim and the community.
- Hold the offender accountable for restoration of the victim’s and community’s status before the offense, to the greatest possible extent.
LGBTQ Visibility Initiatives: Suggestions for Athletics Conferences, Athletics Departments, Student-Athlete Advisory Committees and Teams

An increasing number of options are available for athletics conferences, athletics departments, student-athlete advisory councils and teams to make public their commitment to a climate of inclusion and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. In addition to developing policy and providing education to ensure fair treatment and inclusion of LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches, these visibility initiatives are an opportunity to make these commitments known to the campus and local community, as well as a national audience. Participating in visibility initiatives makes a commitment to inclusion and respect public and sends this message to young student-athletes, their parents and others who support intercollegiate athletics.

Visibility Initiatives

• Athlete Ally Pledge: Sponsor a drive to invite athletics administrators, coaches and student-athletes to identify themselves as athlete allies committed to LGBTQ inclusion and respect. www.athleteally.org

• You Can Play Video: Make a team, athletics department or athletics conference video to be posted on the You Can Play website and YouTube sending the message, “If you can play, you can play.” www.youcanplayproject.org

• Campus-Based Safe Zone Campaign: Ask coaches to participate in your campus’ Safe Zone Campaign and place Safe Zone stickers on their office doors. Contact your campus Safe Zone Campaign for more information.

• StandUp Day: Participate in the annual Stand Up Against Bullying Day sponsored by the Stand Up Foundation. www.standupfoundation.com

• Break The Silence Pledge or Share Your Story: Sign the online pledge to be an active part of making athletics inclusive and respectful for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. You can also submit your story in writing or video to www.freedomsonsocks.org

• Campus Pride: Nominate your school for the Campus Pride List of Most LGBTQ-Friendly Collegiate Athletics Programs. www.campuspride.org/campuspride

• Community Service Projects: Organize student-athlete and coaches to go to K-12 schools in your community to talk with students and teachers about their commitments to stop bullying and name-calling in sports and in schools. sports.glsen.org

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Champions of Respect

Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs

“The America East Conference is really excited about its partnership with the You Can Play Project. A driving force in moving this forward was our America East SAAC, who engaged in a truly open, honest and productive conversation around LGBTQ issues during its October meeting following a presentation by Patrick Burke, co-founder of the You Can Play Project.

“Our student-athletes live these issues on a daily basis within campus environments that are increasingly diverse. They recognize the importance of inclusion in all aspects, but especially in the context of their sports teams. The team environment is a special and rare space in which each group creates a culture that contributes to their performance on the field, on the court, in the pool and on forth.

“The message of the You Can Play Project resonated with our student-athletes as a way to promote an inclusive and respectful team culture for their LGBTQ teammates and entire athletics programs. They know that in order for a team to achieve ultimate success, each team member should be without fear or worry, something LGBTQ student-athletes often carry around, which can distract from their sense of truly belonging to the team and have negative consequences on their performance.

“For obvious reasons, our administrators supported the recommendation of our SAAC to partner with this organization. They recognize the value of promoting an inclusive culture as a means towards an improved student-athlete experience and improved athletics performance. As the first conference partner of You Can Play, we’ll be exploring multiple ways in which we can harness the energy of all of our institutions, administrators, coaches, teams and student-athletes to build initiatives and programming that have a lasting impact across the conference.”

Amy Huchthausen, Commissioner, America East Conference
Champions of Respect

You should say and are respectful moving forward. A mistake so long as you take the time to educate yourself about what is OK to make a mistake. A gender identity is personal. If a member of the athletics community chooses to come out to you as transgender, this means that the person trusts you. Make sure to honor that trust by checking with the person before telling anyone else, as the person may not want others to know. Confidentiality is key to creating an inclusive culture.

Don’t Ask About “Real” Name

Asking someone’s “real” name implies that the person’s chosen name is in some way invalid or not “real.” In the same way, asking someone what his or her “real” gender is disrespects his or her gender identity.

Know the Difference Between Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

No matter how people identify their own gender, they may identify with any sexual orientation. Everyone has a sexual orientation and a gender identity, and they are separate and distinct from each other. Be mindful of uninformed assumptions in yourself and others.

Coming Out Is Confidential

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Five Steps To Being a Better Ally to the Transgender Community

1. Avoid Demeaning Language When Referring to Transgender People

Words that demean and trivialize the experiences of those who identify as transgender can often go unnoticed within athletics departments. By looking out for words like “tranny” or calling someone “too butch to date a guy,” you can begin to create a safe and welcoming environment for our transgender peers.

2. Ask About Preferred Pronouns

Respect the names and pronouns that people prefer. If you are unsure, simply ask, “What are your preferred pronouns?” It is OK to make a mistake as long as you take the time to educate yourself about what you should say and are respectful moving forward.

3. Coming Out Is Confidential

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Resources for LGBTQA Student-Athlete Groups

Start an LGBTQA Student-Athlete Group: GO! Athletes

The time has come when LGBTQA student-athletes and their straight allies are rising up and coming out. As a result, LGBTQA student-athlete groups will become increasingly important and beneficial to athletics departments and universities across the country. Here is why:

• More and more LGBTQA student-athletes are either coming out to teammates and coaches or entering their intercollegiate athletics experience already having been out in high school.

• These LGBTQA student-athletes expect to be treated with respect and are more comfortable with their sexuality and gender identities than previous generations of LGBT students.

• Athletic coaches show that LGBTQA student-athletes are more accepting and comfortable with LGBT friends and supportive of LGBT rights and liberation.

• More young people are identifying as transgender, and athletics departments need to clarify policies protecting their right to participate in athletics.

• The national media and grass-roots advocacy organizations have brought homophobia in sport to the forefront.

• More university and high school athletics programs are sponsoring education programs focused on LGBT issues in sport and more professional sports teams have participated in pro-LGBTQ initiatives than ever before.

• Increased support and resources for athletics are available from advocacy and education groups like the National Center for Lesbian Rights Sports Project, Athletes Ally, You Can Play, GO! Athletes and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network Sports Project.

A student-athlete group can take many different forms. The focus of this resource is to assist college student-athletes and athletics staff to determine how to organize an LGBTQA student-athlete group that best meets the needs and interests of student-athletes in their school.

What Should the Name of the Group Be?

The time has come when LGBTQA student-athletes and their straight allies are rising up and coming out. As a result, LGBTQA student-athlete groups will become increasingly important and beneficial to athletics departments and universities across the country. Here is why:

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Who Should Be Invited To Join the Group?

• Do you want to invite only athletes who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, same-gender loving, two-spirit or questioning?

• Do you want to invite heterosexual student-athlete allies to join?

• Do you want to invite only student-athletes or include athletics department staff and coaches?

Where Will the Group Meet?

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Where Will the Group Meet?

Think about the following criteria: accessibility, safety, visibility, and comfortableness/inviting/informal setting.

• A room in the athletics department: Would this make attending a meeting less safe for people who are concerned about being seen by teammates or coaches?

• A room somewhere else at school or on campus: Would this make...
Staff Advisors or Not: Sometimes having a staff advisor/member can work well, but it depends on administrative issues and the willingness to communicate with other staff, etc.

- Do you want a staff advisor or should the group be student-led?
- If you have a staff advisor, what role should the advisor play? A leader, facilitator, consultant, enabler, background supporter?
- If you have an advisor, who is the advisor identified as being LGBTQ?

How To Publicize the Group:

- Word of mouth: This always leaves out some folks who might be interested, but it is more personal.
- Fliers around campus: Not all athletes are interested in meetings or other group activities. Let the group decide this during its first meeting.
- Email: This is a great draw and invites people to relax and talk. Something simple like a video on LGBTQ issues in athletics can start the conversation.

Establishing Communication

Establishing Meeting Discussion Ground Rules:

- Determine when it is likely that most athletes will be available. This is always a challenge for athletes.
- Do you want the group to meet at least monthly or the group will lose momentum and interest. Here are some suggestions:
  - Weekly.
  - Monthly.
  - Off-campus: Would this create transportation problems for some students?
  - Personal information that is shared stays confidential (a person’s race, class, sex, religion). These identities affect our experience of the world and of one another.

Importance of Food:

- Provide food at meetings/events. This is a great way to relax and talk. Something simple like chips and dip and soda or something more substantial like pizza or sandwiches works fine. It can also be something as cheap as coffee or sandwiches. If you find those who like to bake, this can be a good bonding experience too!

Funding:

- What funding is available for group activities and get-togethers? How do you plan to get funding or financial support?

Suggestions for Activities

- Meet with the leadership of new student-athlete orientation programs to discuss how it can support safety and respect for LGBTQ student-athletes on the school’s teams.
- Meet with the student-athlete Advisory Committee to discuss how they can support students who are LGBTQ.
- Meet with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee to discuss how they can support students who are LGBTQ.
- Meet with the athletics director to tell her/him about your group.
- Meet with the leaders of other campus units that focus on LGBTQ issues or athletics training staff, academic advising staff, Life Skills classes, locker rooms, weight and strength training staff, etc.
- Discuss events in the media: Professional athletes coming out, homophobic comment by pro athlete, discrimination case in school athletics program, etc.
- Involve a speaker to the meeting: LGBTQ athlete alum, leaders/ members of different LGBTQ support groups on campus, etc.
- Read and talk about movies and books on LGBTQ issues in sport: Biographies, autobiographies about professional or Olympic athletes who are LGBTQ, etc.
- Learn about one another’s sports: Focus on a different sport each meeting:
  - Basketball
  - Soccer
  - Volleyball

Suggestions for Activities Outside the Meetings:

- Develop a Facebook page for communication between meetings.
  - Group outings to LGBTQ-related/LGBTQ sports-related events: Plays, movies, marches, talks, athletics contests.
  - Get a team together to compete in a local gay sports league or the Gay Games or the OUTGames.
  - Get a team together to compete in school intramurals. How are you doing in your sports? How are you doing in the LGBT community?
  - Go to someone’s apartment or to a local gathering place to watch televised sporting events.
  - Organize your own Pride Games (field-day competition).
Sample Constitution for LGBTQA Student-Athlete Groups

Over the past few years there have been a growing number of LGBTQ and ally student-athlete groups being created on campuses across the country. The very existence of these groups sends a strong statement to the closeted and openly LGBTQ athletes, coaches, administrators and fans that your campus is a safe and welcoming place for everyone.

To help facilitate the creation of these groups, below is a sample constitution that any member of an athletics community can use to start a university sanctioned LGBTQA student-athlete group.

Article I: Name and Purpose
1. The name of this organization is ____________________, hereafter abbreviated to _____.
2. The mission of ____ is:
   a. To create a safe environment for athletes, coaches, and fans of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.
   b. To support LGBTQ people in the athletics community.
   c. To educate athletes and coaches about LGBTQ issues, and;
   d. To build and maintain strong ties between the athletics and LGBTQ communities.


Suggestions for Education or Advocacy Activities: Do a climate survey of students and coaches about their attitudes toward LGBTQ athletes.

• Go to local middle and high schools to talk to athletes about the importance of being leaders for anti-bullying efforts in their school.
• Plan a safe space campaign to get coaches and other staff to put up safe space stickers on the office doors and commit to the principles of safe space.
• Post on your website a list of coaches in your athletics department who participate in the safe space campaign.
• Make a brochure or handout with information for coaches and other athletics staff on LGBTQ issues in athletics focused on nondiscrimination laws protecting LGBTQ people and practical strategies they can use to make sure LGBTQ athletes and coaches are treated with respect.
• Plan an event in athletics for National Coming Out Day – October 11: Invite athletes to come out as LGBTQ or as allies by wearing a symbol – rainbow ribbon, wristband, button.

You can do it! Most groups start out small, and membership will go up and down over the years. Remember, the most important part is “passing the baton” to the next generation of LGBTQ athletes and allies.

Some Ways To Make Your Group Sustainable: Develop traditions and annual events that people look forward to each year.

• Write a formal constitution to be recognized by your school as an official student group.
• Train younger leaders and recruit new members each year.
• Reach out to GO! directors when you need support.
• Write a formal constitution that any member of an athletics community can use to start a university sanctioned LGBTQA student-athlete group.

Article II: Membership
1. All undergraduate students of the _______________________ with an interest in LGBTQ issues in the athletics community are eligible to be members of _____.
2. All prospective members become members after attending at least one ____ event (or other event sponsored by an organizational member of the campus LGBTQ advocacy group) and one ____ general body meeting.
3. At the last meeting of the fall semester shall be the elections meeting.
4. All members who did not attend at least one general body meeting and at least one ____ event that semester shall no longer be members of _____.

Article III: The General Body
5. At the end of each semester, all members who did not attend at least one general body meeting and at least one ____ event that semester shall no longer be members of _____.

Article IV: The Executive Board
6. The duties of the Executive shall include:
   a. The coordination and supervision of the work of ____ as a whole.
   b. Ensuring all members act in accordance with the Constitution.
   c. Facilitating channels of communication between all elements of ______.
   d. Setting the agenda of each general body meeting.
   e. Authorizing all expenditures, BAC contingency requests and other fiscal applications.

7. All meetings of the general body shall be open to the public.

8. Meetings of the executive board shall be called by the chair or by a petition of at least one-fifth of the total number of members. Notice of the meeting must be provided to all members by no means less than emailing at least 72 hours before the scheduled start of the meeting.

9. Quorum shall consist of a majority of the Executive Board and half as many again plus one of other members.

10. The general body shall meet at least three times each semester. The last meeting of the fall semester shall be the elections meeting.

11. Between meetings, the Executive Board, the affairs of the ___ shall be conducted by the Executive Board, hereafter referred to as “the Executive,” composed of such officers as are provided in this article, and its fiscal applications.

12. The duties of the Executive shall include:
   a. The coordination and supervision of the work of ____ as a whole.
   b. Ensuring all members act in accordance with the Constitution.
   c. Facilitating channels of communication between all elements of ______.
   d. Setting the agenda of each general body meeting.
   e. Authorizing all expenditures, BAC contingency requests and other fiscal applications.

13. The officers of the Executive are:
   a. The chair;
   b. The vice chair;
   c. The treasurer;
   d. The advocacy director;
   e. The social director; and,
   f. The communications director.
These shall be the duties of the executive chair:

14. Call and preside over general body meetings.

15. Act as the chief administrative officer of _______.

16. These shall be the duties of the vice chair:

17. Serve as acting chair in the chair's absence or incapacity.

18. Work closely with to facilitate social events for _______ during both semesters of their term.

19. These shall be the duties of the communications director:

19. Take the minutes of all meetings of the general body and the Executive Board.

20. Prepare and publish the agendas of all Executive and general body meetings.

21. The term of the Executive Officers shall end at the fall elections meeting. The returning officer may not run or vote in the election for which he or she is the returning officer.

22. All decisions of the Executive shall, unless specified elsewhere in this Constitution, be taken by a majority vote. The chair may vote again to break any tie.

23. The general body shall elect all executive officers at the fall elections meeting. A majority of the Executive shall constitute quorum for all Executive Board meetings.

24. Members who will be full-time undergraduates and take classes at _______ during both semesters of their term may be elected executive officers.

25. The date of the fall elections meeting shall be set by the Executive Board in the first five weeks of the fall semester and shall be advertised to all members at least three times in the three weeks before the meeting.

26. Any election not conducted at the fall elections meeting shall nonetheless fall under the provisions of this article.

27. The Executive shall designate a member of _______ the campus LGBTQ advocacy group, or the Nominations and Elections Commission as the returning officer of the election at least two weeks before the fall election meeting or any meeting at which an election will be held. The returning officer may not run or vote in the election for which he or she is the returning officer.

28. The elections meeting procedure shall be as follows:

a. When the general body considers the election of members to office, the returning officer shall call and preside over the meeting. The returning officer shall count, scrutinize and certify all elections and shall have no vote or influence for election themselves.

b. Nominations shall either be lodged in writing with both the returning officer and secretary before the election, or shall be lodged with the returning officer at the meeting.

c. The officers shall be elected in the order in which they first appear in this Constitution.

29. Officers may resign their position in writing at any time to the Executive or on a petition of at least ten (10) members to the chair or the highest unimpeached officer, and shall be called within two weeks. The member subject to impeachment shall be instantly terminated.

30. This Constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a general body meeting. No amendment to the Constitution shall be presented by the Executive or on a petition of at least ten (10) members to the chair or the highest unimpeached officer, and shall be called within two weeks. The member subject to impeachment shall be given rights of natural justice.

66 67