



# CHAMPIONS OF RESPECT

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

This resource was commissioned by the LGBTQ Subcommittee of the NCAA association-wide Committee on Women's Athletics and the Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee in 2012. The subcommittee's charge is to *provide leadership and advocacy, raising awareness of and providing resources to address issues related to equitable opportunities, fair treatment and respect for LGBTQ student-athletes, coaches, administrators and all others associated with intercollegiate athletics.*

## Resource Authors

**Pat Griffin** - Pat Griffin is a nationally recognized speaker and professor emerita in the Social Justice Education Program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and former project director for Changing the Game: The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Sports Project. She wrote a book titled, "Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport," co-edited "Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice," and co-authored "On the Team: Equal Opportunity for Transgender Student-Athletes," 2010. In addition, she is the author of Pat Griffin's LGBT Sports Blog.

[www.ittakesateam.blogspot.com](http://www.ittakesateam.blogspot.com)

**Hudson Taylor** - Hudson Taylor is the Founder and Executive Director of Athlete Ally, a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness about and ending homophobia and transphobia in sports. Hudson is a three-time NCAA Division I All-American wrestler and Columbia University assistant wrestling coach. Hudson was the 2011 recipient of the Straight for Equality in Sports award and is a recurring blogger for the Huffington Post.

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

**Primary editor:** Karen Morrison, NCAA Director of Inclusion

## Acknowledgment

The NCAA thanks the Women's Sports Foundation It Takes a Team! project for years of resource development and advocacy on behalf of fair treatment in sports for LGBTQ athletes and professional staff. Several of the It Takes a Team! resources served as guides for the following topic discussions.

All photos from NCAA Photos.



As a core value, the NCAA believes in and is committed to diversity, inclusion and gender equity among its student-athletes, coaches and administrators. We seek to establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion improve the learning environment for all student-athletes and enhance excellence within the Association.

The Office of Inclusion will provide or enable programming and education, which sustains foundations of a diverse and inclusive culture across dimensions of diversity including, but not limited to **age, race, sex, class, national origin, creed, educational background, disability, gender expression, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation and work experiences.**

*Adopted by the NCAA Executive Committee, April 2010*

## NCAA Primary Contacts

Bernard Franklin – [bfranklin@ncaa.org](mailto:bfranklin@ncaa.org) (Executive Vice President, Chief Inclusion Officer)

Kimberly Ford - [kford@ncaa.org](mailto:kford@ncaa.org) (Minority Inclusion)

Karen Morrison - [kmorrison@ncaa.org](mailto:kmorrison@ncaa.org) (Gender Inclusion and LGBTQ)

**NCAA web page for this and other LGBTQ resources:** [www.ncaa.org/lgbt](http://www.ncaa.org/lgbt) (NCAA membership login required)

A close-up photograph of a dark wood trophy. The trophy features a large, circular gold medallion in the center. On the medallion, the letters "NCAA" are embossed in a bold, three-dimensional, blocky font. The background is a blurred crowd of people in a stadium, suggesting a sports event.

**NCAA**

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Part 1: Overview</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Why It Is Important To Address LGBTQ Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics.....	3
Key Misunderstandings in Addressing LGBTQ Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics .....	5
The Role of Straight Allies in Making Athletics Inclusive and Respectful for All Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities/Expressions .....	6
How LGBTQ Issues Are the Same and Different on Women’s and Men’s Teams.....	7
How LGBTQ Issues Are Manifested in Women’s and Men’s Athletics.....	8
How Issues Such as Race or Class Affect the Experiences of LGBTQ Student-Athletes .....	9
<b>Part 2: Policy/Best Practice Recommendations</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Overall Best Practices for Creating Inclusive Athletics Departments .....	12
Creating Inclusive Athletics Departments: Best Practices for Athletics Administrators .....	12
Creating Inclusive Teams: Best Practices for Coaches .....	14
Creating Inclusive Teams: Best Practices for Student-Athletes .....	15
Resources for Athletics Administrators.....	16
Talking to Coaches and Athletics Staff About LGBTQ Issues .....	16
Addressing LGBTQ Issues: A Guide for Athletics Administrators .....	18
The Role of Conferences in Creating LGBT-Inclusive Athletics Teams.....	21

Athletics Department Partnerships With Campus LGBTQ Resources .....	23
Specific Issue Discussions and Policy/Practice Recommendations for Coaches, Administrators and Student-Athletes .....	24
Anti-LGBTQ Language in Athletics .....	24
Responding to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Student-Athletes Coming Out: A Coach’s Guide.....	25
A Coming Out Guide for LGBTQ Coaches .....	28
Addressing Concerns About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Student-Athletes and Coaches in the Locker Room .....	30
Managing Dating Relationships Among Teammates .....	32
Addressing LGBTQ Issues in Recruiting.....	35
Positive Recruiting Guidelines for Coaches, Administrators, Parents .....	39
Religion and the Inclusion of LGBTQ People in Athletics.....	40
Social Media Guidelines and the Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes.....	42
Race, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression in Athletics.....	43
Policy and Best Practice Recommendations for the Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes.....	46
Legal Resources.....	49
Laws Addressing Discrimination or Harassment Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression .....	49
Title IX and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Stereotyping .....	51
Legal Resources .....	53
Resources for Allies.....	54
How Homophobia Affects Heterosexual Student-Athletes and Coaches (And What They Can Do To Stop It) .....	54
Creating LGBTQA-Inclusive Team Honor Codes.....	56
Responding to Anti-LGBTQ Language .....	57
LGBTQA Visibility Initiatives: Suggestions for Athletics Conferences, Athletics Departments, Student-Athlete Advisory Committees and Teams .....	58
Five Steps To Being a Better Ally to the Transgender Community .....	60
Resources for LGBTQA Student-Athlete Groups.....	61
Start an LGBTQA Student-Athlete Group: GO! Athletes .....	61
Sample Constitution for LGBTQA Student-Athlete Groups.....	65

**Part 3: Appendixes .....69**

Appendix 1: Sexual Orientation and Gender Definitions and Terminology .....71

Appendix 2: LGBTQ Issues in Athletics Organizational Resource List .....74

Appendix 3: LGBTQ Sports Books and Video Resources .....76

Appendix 4: Developing a Nondiscrimination Framework .....79

Appendix 5: Campus Pride Report Score Card .....80





# 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 hide their identities to avoid discrimination or harassment that can negatively affect athletics and academic achievement. 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 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 are responsible for upholding existing institutional nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies, as well as enforcing laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

In addition to this responsibility, coaches and student-athletes have opportunities to be visible advocates speaking out for diversity and inclusion and against bullying and other forms of harassment or discrimination. College sports teams compete in the public arena and coaches and student-athletes are highly visible members of the school

and local communities. They are role models for young people and their beliefs and actions can be an effective force for valuing diversity, respect and inclusion in their schools and communities. As such, 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, included sessions at NCAA-sponsored annual conferences for several years and, in 2011, provided policy guidance for the inclusion of transgender students on sports teams<sup>2</sup>. 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 the following topics: 1) Why it is important to address LGBTQ issues in intercollegiate athletics, 2) Key misunderstandings about addressing LGBTQ issues in college athletics, 3) The role of straight allies 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.

---

1 Rankin, S. and Merson, D. (2012). Campus Pride 2012 LGBTQ National College Athlete Report. Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride. See Campus Pride Report Score Card, Appendix 5.

2 Griffin, P. and Carroll, H. (2011). NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes. Indianapolis, IN: National Collegiate Athletic Association Office of Inclusion.

# Part 1: Overview

## Why It Is Important To Address LGBTQ Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics

All colleges and universities have an **ethical responsibility** to ensure that institutionally sponsored programs protect the rights of every student to participate in a safe and respectful climate in which she or he can achieve personal educational goals. Athletics is an integral part of the collegiate experience in which students participate as athletes and spectators. Every student on a team or in the stands should have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of college sports in an environment of respect and safety. Moreover, members of athletics teams and coaches are often the public faces of colleges and universities and their actions represent the institutional values of the schools they represent.

The NCAA is committed to an intercollegiate athletics experience in which **student-athlete health and well-being** are the highest priority. This commitment includes the physical, social and psychological health and well-being of students of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. When students feel the need to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity out of fear of rejection or discrimination, the athletics climate is unhealthy and does not promote well-being. Student-athletes who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity need a supportive environment in which they can come to a healthy and comfortable identity for themselves without fear or external pressures.

Colleges and universities are responsible to abide by **state laws and school policies** prohibiting discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. School athletics personnel are accountable for knowing and enforcing these laws and policies in all aspects of programming. Federal laws such as the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution and Title IX, though they do not directly address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, are also relevant in some instances and apply to schools in all states.

At its best, the collegiate experience is about more than completing a program of academic study and getting a degree. It is also about broadening one's experience and choosing and affirming personal values that will guide one's participation as a citizen, family member and worker. Intercollegiate athletics, even at the most intensely competitive levels, should be about more than winning. Athletics participation provides students with **educational opportunities** to learn about diverse groups of people and develop values that prepare them for work and life in an increasingly diverse world. The experience of competing with and against others of different races, cultures, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions provides student-

athletes with opportunities to broaden their understanding of their place in an increasingly diverse society.

Though participation in intercollegiate athletics is about more than winning, striving to win is central to athletics. Creating a team climate of respect that enables every team member to contribute his or her best effort toward the goal of winning makes **practical sense**. When team members or coaches must hide important parts of their identities, are treated disrespectfully, or are not included as a valued member of the team or school community, they are unable to bring their best effort to the team or to the classroom.

In addition to the responsibilities that coaches and other athletics leaders have to maintain a climate of respect, 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 **traditions long accepted in athletics** do not promote or reflect a



*“At Grinnell College, our goal is to create a culture of acceptance and inclusion for students of every type, so that all students can receive the best possible education. Rules and policies alone aren’t enough—they must be paired with a community-wide culture that internalizes our shared norms. It’s not about pretending that we’re all alike—because we’re not. It’s about understanding that beneath our differences is a set of common values that are more important than our differences. Education is about understanding the value of learning about those differences.”*

**Raynard S. Kington, President, Grinnell College**

culture of inclusion, diversity or respect. Practices such as LGBTQ or sexist name-calling as a way to taunt opponents or shame poorly performing team members, team hazing rituals, home spectator harassment of visiting teams or older athletes bullying younger team members all encourage student-athletes to view actions that promote humiliation and disrespect as part of the game rather than the divisive and destructive distractions that they are.

## Key Misunderstandings in Addressing LGBTQ Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics

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 together as 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.

Athletics teams are, like work teams, made up of people from different cultures, religions, genders, races, abilities, political perspectives and sexual orientations. Working together effectively does not require that one group or another receives special consideration, and, indeed, this would work against effective teamwork. It does not require every member of a team to agree with everyone else on the team about political points of view, sexual orientation, religion or anything else. It does not mean that every member of a team approves of how every other member of a team lives her or his life. The goal of inclusion and respect is that team members recognize and agree to work together respectfully across differences. These goals invite student-athletes and coaches to build a winning team and nurture a team climate in which all members are valued for their contributions to the team and for their individual character and commitment, regardless of their individual identities or philosophies.



*“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-Athlete Advisory Council and athletics department staff spearhead Allies pledging-signing efforts, that have culminated in nearly 2,000 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 nonreligious 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 for LGBTQ people in athletics does not require that people renounce their faith or act in ways that are contradictory to it. Every coach and 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 addressing 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 equity 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/expressions 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 in athletics 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<sup>1</sup> in men's and women's sports are expressed in many similar ways, the inclusion of LGBTQ athletes and coaches on sports team 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 muscularity, to name a few. As a result, athletic women who exhibit these characteristics are sometimes viewed as masculine and their accomplishments are sometimes denigrated as not as important, interesting or outstanding as those of male athletes and teams. Moreover, athletic women have historically been dismissed as lesbians because of assumptions made about their sexual orientation based on their gender expression or their interest in sports.

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 and coaches defensive about their athleticism as they attempt to disassociate themselves and their sports from the lesbian label by accentuating their feminine appearance and heterosexual interests. In this climate, lesbians and bisexual women are encouraged or forced to hide their identities out of fear of discrimination or harassment directed at them individually, their teams or their sport in general. As a result of these factors, homophobia and biphobia have historically

---

1 See Appendix 1 for definitions of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

been a more visible problem in women's sports, and women in sport are more sensitive to the potential damaging effects of homophobia or biphobia on their sports careers.

Despite the increase in support for and participation in women's athletics during the 40 years since the passage of Title IX, the continuing inequality in the provision of resources to women's and men's athletics programs adds to fears that support for women's sports will be jeopardized by an association with lesbians. These fears can intensify the effects of homophobia in women's athletics.

In contrast, athletics participation and achievement are culturally approved and supported expressions of masculinity. Boys and men who do not have an interest in athletics as spectators or participants are often viewed as less masculine. This perception, in combination with the stereotype that gay men are not athletic or masculine, reinforces the notion that gay men are not tough or competitive enough to excel in sports, particularly team sports. When taken to extremes, these stereotypical gender and sexual orientation stereotypes for women and men lead to the assumption that all women athletes are lesbians and no male athletes are gay.

As noted earlier, changes in the larger culture with regard to the perceptions of LGBTQ people and the provisions of legal protections against discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression are reflected in some positive changes in the athletics climate for LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches. Despite these positive changes, LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches continue to experience the negative impact of stereotypes based on gender or sexual orientation.

## How LGBTQ Issues Are Manifested in Women's and Men's Athletics

### Examples in Women's Sports

- Discrimination against lesbian or bisexual coaches and student-athletes or women who are perceived to be lesbian – coaches not hired or fired because of perceptions about their sexual orientation, student-athletes dismissed from teams, overlooked in the recruiting process or shunned by teammates because of perceptions about their sexual orientation.
- Harassment of lesbian or bisexual student-athletes or coaches in social media, with graffiti, destruction of property.
- Lesbian or bisexual coaches hide their sexual orientation and any details about their personal lives out of fear that it might negatively affect their employment, ability to recruit student-athletes to their programs, or relationships with administrators and colleagues in the athletics department.
- Lesbian or bisexual coaches alter their interactions with student-athletes or change their coaching practices out of fear of discrimination or misperception.
- Coaches use “negative recruiting” to discourage high school recruits and their parents from considering rival programs by insinuating that the coaches or athletes in that program are lesbians.
- Women athletes’ excessive emphasis on accentuating a feminine appearance (hairstyles, clothing, use of makeup in competition) to deflect lesbian assumptions about athletic women.
- Coaches abuse their power by intruding into the personal lives of athletes on their teams to forbid lesbian relationships or friendships or to impose negative religious beliefs about homosexuality.
- Coaches describe their team to parents and recruits in ways that suggest that lesbians and bisexual women are not welcome in the program (accentuating the marital and family status of heterosexual coaches, adopt “no lesbian” policies, adopt feminine dress codes for the team).
- Athletes taunt opposing team members with anti-lesbian or sexist language during competition.
- Team members are uncomfortable being around lesbian or bisexual teammates because of stereotypical assumptions that they are sexual threats to other women.

- Student-athletes insist that lesbian and bisexual teammates remain invisible out of fear that having openly lesbian or bisexual teammates will cause the entire team to be perceived as lesbian or bisexual.
- 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.
- Acceptance of the mistaken belief that homophobia and biphobia are no longer a problem in women's sports.
- Belief that transgender women should not be allowed to play on women's teams.

### Examples in Men's Sports

- Anti-LGBTQ actions and language accepted as a harmless, commonplace and longtime part of men's athletics culture (in competition, in the locker room, on the practice field).
- Assumption that if you are a male athlete, you cannot be gay or bisexual.
- Assumption that it is dangerous for a gay or bisexual male athlete to come out, that no teammates or coaches would accept or support him.
- Coaches’ use of anti-gay or female slurs to shame team members who are not performing up to expectations or to motivate and inspire team members to greater effort.
- Discrimination against gay or bisexual coaches or athletes in hiring, recruiting or retention.
- Straight student-athletes’ discomfort with gay or bisexual teammates, especially in the locker room or sharing hotel rooms.
- Straight student-athletes’ fear of association with gay or bisexual teammates: People will think I am gay if I speak out against homophobia and biphobia or befriend gay or bisexual teammates.
- Taunting opposing team members with anti-gay slurs during competition.
- Spectators use of anti-LGBTQ or sexist slurs to distract visiting teams.
- Belief that transgender men should not play on men's teams.



## 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 face 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 students 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 out of concerns that being openly LGBTQ could jeopardize needed 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.

---

### 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 practice 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.



## Part 2: Policy/Best Practice Recommendations



*“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 Br{ache the Silence Campaign; Former Women’s Basketball Student-Athlete, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Metropolitan Campus**

This section of the handbook includes several resources intended to provide guidance and recommendations to athletics administrators, coaches, student-athletes and athletics conference leaders. The resources in this section provide broad recommendations for creating and maintaining an LGBTQ-inclusive athletics climate, as well as recommendations to address specific topics that athletics administrators, coaches or student-athletes often identified as areas of concern.

# 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 competence, not sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- 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 to 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.



*“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.”*

*“Our country’s cultural attitudes toward the LGBTQ population continue to undergo a significant shift toward respect and celebration; it’s imperative that our athletics departments keep pace. In fact, many of our student-athletes are way ahead of us. From the GO! Athletes 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.”*

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

- Expect the same standards of behavior from all student-athletes, coaches and staff regardless of their sexual orientation or 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 coaching ethics policies.

- 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 administration associations, 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).

## 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 sports (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 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.
- Treat all student-athletes, staff and coaches fairly and respectfully regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- Post a Safe Zone sticker on your office door or in the team locker room.
- If LGBTQ student-athletes, staff or coaches identify themselves to you, respect their right to confidentiality and privacy.
- Expect the same standards of behavior from all student-athletes regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- Let LGBTQ student-athletes or colleagues know that you are an ally and that you support them.
- Attend or participate in LGBTQ-sponsored events on campus (speakers, workshops, programs).

### 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-LG-

BTQ actions or language will not be tolerated.

- Enlist the leadership of team captains and assistant coaches to set a climate of respect.
- Know campus resources for addressing LGBTQ issues (LGBTQ resource center, LGBTQ student group, counseling center).
- Set and make known team policies for such issues as:
  - Gender-neutral dress codes.
  - Intra-Team dating.
  - The appropriate and respectful expression of individual religious beliefs by team members.
  - Name-calling, taunting, bullying.
  - Negative recruiting based on sexual orientation.
- Prepare inclusive and respectful responses to questions from parents of recruits about sexual orientation or gender identity/expression on your team.

### 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.

### Educate

- Arrange 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.
- Help promote enthusiastic but respectful sports fan behavior at athletics 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.
- Understand the important role that allies can play in making athletics inclusive and respectful for everyone.
- Treat teammates as you would like to be treated: Be respectful.
- Respect the rights of all teammates to be safe and included.
- 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, tell 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 workshops 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 LGBTQA student-athlete group at your school.



Courtesy of Sonoma State University Safe Zone

# Resources for Athletics Administrators

## Talking to Coaches and Athletics Staff About LGBTQ Issues

### 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 staff and students. 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, questioning, straight ally or LGBTQ(A).
- 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 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:

- Include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in the departmental nondiscrimination policy. Place this policy in all athletics department publications and on the department website.
- Develop an athletics department policy for the inclusion of transgender athletes on sports teams. ([NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes policy and best practices](#) can be found at [www.ncaa.org/lgbt](http://www.ncaa.org/lgbt).)
- 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. All people



in the athletics department have a right to their own personal beliefs, but all staff also have a professional responsibility to ensure that all student-athletes and staff members are treated with respect and fairness regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

- Highlight the important leadership role that coaches and other athletics staff play as role models and mentors to student-athletes. This relationship with student-athletes provides coaches with an opportunity to influence attitudes and behaviors in making sports teams inclusive and respectful for all members.
- Remind coaches and other athletics staff that, as employees of an educational institution, they have obligations to educate student-athletes about more than excellence in athletics performance. They are also accountable for instilling values of respect and inclusion in the student-athletes with whom they work.
- Make clear that adherence to school and department policies about diversity and inclusion is a foundational expectation for all athletics department personnel.



## 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 resources.
- Educate athletics department members.
- Develop specific procedures for policy implementation.

**Assessment:** How can the department assess the climate for LGBTQ people?

- Conduct a department survey of the climate for LGBTQ people in athletics at your school.<sup>1</sup>
- Invite athletics department personnel and student-athletes to discuss their perceptions of team and athletics department climates for LGBTQ people.

**Policy:** What current institutional and departmental policies and expectations are related to creating a climate of respect, inclusion and safety?

*Guidelines for Making Policy Ensuring Fair Treatment for LGBTQ Student-Athletes and Coaches:*

- Be proactive. Anticipate issues that might arise and plan sound policy before a problem presents itself.
- Rather than responding to individual situations case by case, identify overall policy to apply in individual situations.
- Avoid treating LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches and the issues raised by their participation on sports teams as a “special” situation. Integrate policy applying to LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches into overall team or department policy.
- Make policy based on ethical principles and with 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 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender athletes, we aim to enlarge 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 and leadership in society.”*

*“As administrators and leaders on campus and in higher education, we have a responsibility to create and maintain environments that give all students and student-athletes the opportunity to pursue excellence. At George Washington University, we are proud of all of our student-athletes and the LGBTQ community’s role in all facets of our intercollegiate varsity athletics and campus health and wellness initiatives. We are committed to celebrating and supporting LGBTQ student-athletes, and will judge people by the spirit they bring to the game, their support of the teammates and their dedication to the university, not by sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. At George Washington University, if you can play, you can play.”*

**Patrick Nero, Director of Athletics and Recreation,  
George Washington University**

<sup>1</sup> A good resource for such athletics climate surveys is Rankin Consulting – [www.rankin-consulting.com](http://www.rankin-consulting.com)

*Suggested Institutional Policies and Practices To Protect LGBTQ Student-Athletes, Staff and Coaches From Discrimination and Harassment:*

- 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’ counsel” of team captains from all sports to address diversity and inclusion issues.
- Create an LGBTQA 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.
- Involve the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee in projects that promote inclusion and diversity and LGBTQ inclusion in particular.
- Include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in department nondiscrimination policies. Expect athletics department personnel to abide by local, state and federal nondiscrimination laws.
- Develop anti-harassment policies that address harassment based on perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender identity or expression as well as sex, race, or religion. If your school has an inclusive anti-harassment policy, expect athletics department personnel to abide by that policy.
- Develop domestic partnership policies for student-athletes and athletics department personnel.
- Develop ethics policies that address romantic and/or sexual relationships between coaches and student-athletes, between student-athletes, or between coaches without regard to the gender or sexual orientation of the people involved. (See the NCAA resource – [Staying in Bounds: An NCAA Model Policy To Prevent Inappropriate Relationships Between Student-Athletes and Athletics Department Personnel.](#))
- Develop policies for addressing verbal anti-LGBTQ, racist or sexist harassment of student-athletes, staff, officials or coaches 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.

- Develop policies and best practices governing the inclusion of transgender students on athletics teams. (See the [NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes](#) for more information.)
- Encourage coaching associations and other sport governing bodies to develop similar policies, and encourage your coaches to take leadership roles on diversity issues within their respective professional associations.

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

*Suggestions:*

- 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 campus and community educational services 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, other athletics personnel 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?

*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 development programs for all athletics staff about departmental and institutional nondiscrimination policies.
- Annually, provide all new athletics department staff, student-

athletes and parents with information about departmental and institutional nondiscrimination policies.

- Conduct regularly scheduled educational programs for student-athletes about departmental and institutional nondiscrimination policies and working in diverse team climates.
- Include a unit on LGBTQ issues in athletics as part of the CHAMPS Life Skills curriculum.
- Provide prospective student-athletes and their parents with information about departmental and institutional nondiscrimination policies policies.

**Procedure:** What procedures are in place for enacting department policy?

*Suggestions:*

- Develop clear procedures for implementing departmental and institutional non-discrimination.
- Make these procedures available to all athletics department personnel and student-athletes each year.
- Review all procedures on a regular basis to assess their accessibility and effectiveness.



## 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 students on sports teams?
- Have a policy on appropriate spectator behavior that specifically addresses anti-LGBTQ language or actions?
- Encourage member schools to include LGBTQ-inclusive policies in coaches' and student-athlete handbooks and orientation programs?



*“As a Division III commissioner, I have been really pleased with the active role the Division III Commissioners Association has played 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**

**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?

**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

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 LGBTQA 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.

# Specific Issue Discussions and Policy/Practice Recommendations for Coaches, Administrators and Student-Athletes

## Anti-LGBTQ Language in Athletics

The use of demeaning language as a casual put-down, a joke or an intentional insult contributes to a disrespectful and unsafe climate in athletics. Derogatory terms, such as those based on sexual, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, race, disability or religious stereotypes are never appropriate. Accepted in some athletics settings as “part of the game,” derogatory terms referring to sexual orientation or gender are sometimes used to taunt opponents, shame teammates, motivate greater athletics effort, tease a teammate or express 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 it as 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 often 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 student-athletes who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, the climate perpetuated by the acceptance of anti-LGBTQ language can be perceived as especially hostile. Straight student-athletes who have LGBTQ friends or family members also may 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 can benefit 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 for all team members. Expect the same of your 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 are role models for younger students and representatives of their school. Explain that you expect them to be 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 ethic of respect. Encourage all team members 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 part in some other team action to let the public know your team stands for respect and inclusion.



## 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 strictly to themselves. Unfortunately, these hostile climates still exist today in some athletics programs. In such programs, if an athlete or coach's heterosexuality 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. They are not free to talk about their personal lives among teammates or coaches or in public. If an athlete or coach violates this code of silence, he or she may jeopardize his or her career.

However, as social perceptions of LGBTQ people have become increasingly positive, more LGBTQ people are identifying themselves to supportive family, friends, teammates and coaches. As a result, it is less acceptable to discriminate against LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches. The shifts in cultural acceptance of LGBTQ people are also signaled by a decreasing tolerance for anti-LGBTQ comments or use of anti-LGBTQ slurs in athletics. More coaches and student-athletes are comfortable with and supportive of their LGBTQ teammates and coaches, and this is slowly changing the climate in athletics for LGBTQ coaches and student-athletes.

Consistent with these social 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 on sexual orientation in athletics and has a recommended policy for the inclusion of transgender students on college sports teams.

Research documents the negative effects of hiding or feeling shame about one's lesbian, gay or bisexual identity, especially among young people. Low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, social isolation, drug or



*“While competing as a student-athlete, I was fortunate enough to have many supportive teammates. Even with teammates that wanted to help, I didn’t have the resources that helped me cope with identifying as a gay man and an athlete. My athletics career, academic career and coaching career all suffered without access and knowledge of anyone that understood and could help me.”*

**Sean Smith, Former Swimming and Diving Student-Athlete and Coach, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick**

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 teammates and coaches.

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 have provided coaches and student-athletes with more awareness and practical tools to avoid or, where necessary, 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

takes a stand for respect, inclusion and openness, the team is more likely to follow this lead. When the coach reacts with prejudice, fear or discomfort, the team will probably react similarly. When an LGBTQ team member is open about his or her identity and is accepted and respected, this can have a positive effect on both team unity and performance. This experience often helps team members overcome stereotypes they have about LGBTQ people and encourages honesty and respect among everyone on the team. Also, keeping such an important secret, one's sexual orientation or gender identity, takes energy and vigilance. Being open and honest about one's sexual orientation or gender identity enables student-athletes (and coaches) to bring all of who they are to their athletic and academic challenges without the distractions of hiding and fearing the reactions of teammates and coaches.

Respecting an openly LGBTQ team member does not require acceptance of homosexuality or transgender identity. What is required is respect for difference and a belief that everyone on the team should be safe and treated with dignity and fairness. This standard should be the bottom line for addressing all issues of diversity on an athletics team, not only differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.

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 coach or teammates. When coaches forbid student-athletes to come out publicly or tell them not to participate in campus or community LGBTQ groups or events, this places unhealthy pressure on student-athletes and demands that they choose between their psychological health and their membership on the team. It also requires them to keep secrets, behave dishonestly, and isolate themselves from teammates; none of which supports team unity and performance or individual achievement, health and safety.

Teammates sometimes pressure LGBTQ student-athletes to keep their identities secret in an effort to avoid associating the team or themselves with homosexuality, bisexuality or transgender identity. This is a particular problem in women's sports where the lesbian label has been used to intimidate or malign all women student-athletes. The

coach's leadership in helping student-athletes to understand their own discomfort with LGBTQ teammates is an important 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.
- 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 Safe Zone sticker on your office door or locker room wall.
- 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 pat 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.
- Assure 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, ask 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 (exception: mandated 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).
- Identify LGBTQ-respectful support and counseling services in case the student-athlete wants to talk to someone and help the student-athlete make contact with that agency if she or he wants you to.
  - Identify web-based support or educational sites for the student-athlete.

### **Recommendations for Working With Teammates of an LGBTQ Student-Athlete Who Comes Out**

- Enlist the team captains' assistance in monitoring team reactions and helping to set a positive tone of acceptance and respect for all.
- If individual student-athletes are uncomfortable with an openly LGBTQ teammate, talk with them about their concerns.
- Provide information and resources for student-athletes who are

interested in learning more about LGBTQ issues in sports (books, websites, organizations).

- 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.

## 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 being open, it takes constant vigilance to keep one's identity, partner relationships and families a secret from colleagues and student-athletes who are a part of a coach's daily life. The energy that closeted coaches spend daily to protect their secret is draining, and some successful coaches leave the profession so that they can live more openly as LGBTQ.

Many coaches who have not disclosed 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 recruiting. 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



*"I was fortunate to be able to make my sexuality known to different people in my life both personally and professionally. Working in athletics, the fear of being judged by something that has nothing to do with my ability to coach or develop talent was overwhelming for much of my career. I chose to come out on my terms because I wanted my athletes to continue to view me with integrity and have a role model for living a life openly regardless of their sexuality."*

*"Afterwards, I realized I had diminished my own potential to be an effective leader by being closeted for so long. Since coming out, I have had so many positive interactions in the sports community that I am saddened that any athlete, coach or administrator would feel the need to hide this aspect of their lives."*

**Kirk Walker, Assistant Softball Coach, University of California, Los Angeles**

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 person also helps to dispel stereotypes and fears that others have about LGBTQ people and provides role models for other LGBTQ athletes and coaches.

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.

### **LGBTQ Coaches' Coming Out Checklist**

- I coach in a state with a law that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression.
  - I coach in a school with a nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression.
  - I would use LGBTQ nondiscrimination laws or policies to challenge discrimination against me.
  - My athletics department sponsors programs about LGBTQ issues in athletics.
  - I believe most of my colleagues in athletics will react positively to my coming out.
- My athletics director will support me if colleagues, parents of student-athletes, student-athletes or others object to an openly LGBTQ coach.
  - My team members respect me as an effective and ethical coach.
  - The parents and families of my team members respect me as a coach.
  - I have a record of success in coaching.
  - I have colleagues at my school not in athletics who will support my coming out.
  - I believe most of my colleagues, student-athletes and athletics administrators assume I am LGBTQ already.
  - I have discussed coming out as an LGBTQ coach with my partner and family, and they support my decision.
  - I have a personal support system of family and friends who love and care about me.
  - I believe I will be a better coach if I am open about being LGBTQ.
  - I want to be a role model for other LGBTQ coaches and student-athletes.
  - After I come out as LGBTQ, I would never consider another coaching position in which I cannot be open about my sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression.

## Addressing Concerns About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and 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 before or after a game or practice is a place where many people of the same sex spend time together in various stages of undress. In addition, some student-athletes bring a history of sexual abuse or violence to the locker room that might make them uncomfortable. Others may have religious beliefs that make changing clothes in the locker room uncomfortable.

For some student-athletes, particularly men, cultural conventions dictate that expressions of friendship for same-sex teammates must be carefully monitored to avoid assumptions of homosexuality or bisexuality. Being in the locker room with teammates sometimes requires men who are uncomfortable with the affection they feel for teammates to declare or reaffirm their heterosexuality by using anti-gay language or talking about their sexual interests in and activities with women. The same can be true in a women's locker room, though, in general, women are freer to express affection for other women without assumptions of homosexuality arising. However, in athletics, where lesbian stereotypes abound, some women are just as concerned about asserting their heterosexuality as men are.

Student-athletes and coaches sometimes express fear or discomfort about sharing a locker room or hotel room with openly gay, lesbian or bisexual team members. This discomfort is often based on the stereotype that lesbians and gay men pose a sexual threat to their heterosexual teammates or that they are looking at their teammates in a sexualized manner.

In reality, lesbian, gay and bisexual student-athletes and coaches in the locker room are thinking about the same things that their heterosexual teammates are: whether they had a good practice or game, a nagging injury, disappointment about a tough loss, elation about a big win.

Some lesbian, bisexual and gay student-athletes and coaches are uncomfortable in the locker room because they are concerned about how others perceive them and, given stereotypes of predatory lesbians and gay men, are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to avoid looking at others' bodies or making jokes in the locker room as ways to avoid the assumption that they are looking at teammates changing clothes or showering.

It is important to differentiate personal discomfort with the *presence* of lesbian, gay or bisexual student-athletes or coaches in the locker room from the occurrence of *inappropriate actions* by lesbian, gay or bisexual student-athletes or coaches (or anyone else) in the locker room. This difference is important in determining how to address this issue. If heterosexual student-athletes (or coaches) are uncomfortable with the *presence* of lesbian, gay or bisexual student-athletes or coaches in the locker room and this discomfort stems from their own fears or prejudices rather than any inappropriate *behavior* by lesbian, gay or bisexual teammates or coaches, then the situation should be addressed as an education or counseling issue for the heterosexual student-athletes involved.

Knowing a teammate is gay, bisexual or lesbian can trigger homophobic reactions in some student-athletes. Sometimes student-athletes become uncomfortable in the locker room only after a teammate has come out. If they were comfortable in the locker room before they knew a teammate was gay, bisexual or lesbian, what makes them uncomfortable now that they know? The source of their discomfort in this case can be easily attributed to their own assumptions rather than the actions of their gay, lesbian or bisexual teammate since nothing has changed except their knowledge that one of their teammates is LGBTQ. The truth is that most student-athletes have spent time in locker rooms with lesbian, gay and bisexual people. They just did not know it because their LGBTQ teammates did not choose to identify themselves.

Everyone affiliated with an athletics team has the right to feel safe and to be free of unwanted sexual attention and sexually explicit taunting

or teasing 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 and 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.

Ideally, all locker rooms should have some accommodations for student-athletes who want privacy for any reason. It is unrealistic to assume that all members of a team are comfortable with open shower areas and public nudity in locker rooms. Individual student-athletes have many reasons for wanting a private area in the locker room to change clothes or shower that are unrelated to fear of sexual attention. These reasons include religious beliefs, a history of being sexually abused or raped, personal modesty, inferiority about body image or being transgender.

### **Recommendations for Addressing Concerns About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender Student-Athletes or Coaches in the Locker Room**

- When developing policy governing locker room behavior, the key issue is to be sure that policy is based on broad principles of fairness and commitment to safety for all and not on fear or stereotypes about lesbian, gay or bisexual people.
- Develop and enforce 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 requested topics for discussion among college coaches. Though this 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 more 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 they date each other as long as they get together before the season starts and don't end the relationship until after the season ends." The concern expressed here is that it is the beginning and end 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 distracts from team goals, whatever the cause.

Identifying policies for dating teammates requires thoughtful consideration of what is best for the team as a whole, what is fair and workable for all individuals on the team and is based on broad principles of fairness, not homophobia. The following suggestions are intended to provide coaches with guidance in identifying fair and effective policy:

- Frame intra-team dating as part of broader relationship management issues that can distract a team from its competitive 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 who then starts dating one of her teammates.
  - Heterosexual dating on a mixed team.
  - Heterosexual dating on men's and women's teams that practice together and travel to competitions together.
  - Conflicts between student-athletes of color and white teammates.
  - Conflicts between gay and straight teammates.
  - Conflicts between Christian and non-Christian teammates.
- Develop policy that applies to all relationship management issues rather than focusing on same-sex teammates dating.

- Range of possible policies on intra-team dating:
  - Prohibit intra-team dating (Not recommended).
  - Ignore 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 potential negative consequences 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 authority to dictate the personal relationships of their team members. Second, prohibiting intra-team dating is an impractical policy that rarely is effective. It more often encourages secrecy, dishonesty and fear as 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 is discriminatory, and the coach may be perceived as homophobic. In addition, if the coach finds out about dating teammates, she or he has no choice but to impose some kind of punishment since the dating teammates have violated a team rule. Moreover, the teammates who are dating have no guidelines about how to manage 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 topic or because they do not know 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 have no control over the situation 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 promotes secrecy and dishonesty as team members are likely to interpret silence as nonacceptance. Finally, if there is no policy about intra-team dating, there is likely no well thought out policy for how to respond to it when it comes to the coach's attention and that can lead to crisis management reactions that can threaten team performance and team unity.

### **Allow Intra-Team Dating With Proactive Expectations**

Allowing intra-team dating while providing proactive expectations for this possibility is the most effective and fair team policy. It 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 a policy is based on principles of respect for team members of all sexual orientations.

This approach does require that coaches overcome their own discomfort with talking about same-sex dating on the team and enables coaches to set a positive tone for the team's response to lesbian, gay or bisexual teammates. This policy informs all team members about what is expected of them as members of a team who must work together for the good of the team.

Participation on a sports team is like a workplace for student-athletes. As with dating in the workplace, they have responsibilities to the team and a commitment to being a team member who is focused on contributing to achieving team goals. This focus on the team and what is good for the team should guide a policy allowing intra-team dating.

### **Sample Rules for Dating Teammates (LGBTQ and Straight): Describe Specific Behavior Expectations**

When with the team, the team comes first. Conduct yourselves as teammates, not dating partners. Being a member of a team requires responsible behavior; conduct yourself professionally when with the team. This includes at practice, during competition, on the team bus, in hotel rooms, in the training room, at team meetings, in the locker room, and anywhere else when you are "on team time."

Focus on the team and your role as a team member. You don't have to hide your dating relationship, but treat your partner as a teammate when on "team time":

- No PDAs (Public Displays of Affection): This includes hand-holding, kissing, hugging.
- Don't Be Exclusive: Sit 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.
- If you need help resolving a relationship issue with a teammate or teammates, dating or otherwise, ask for counseling assistance.

### **Possible Consequences for Failing To Meet These Expectations**

- Dating teammates meet with the coaches; review expectations and consequences of not abiding by them.
- Dating teammates meet with a relationship counselor.
- One or both dating teammates are dismissed from the team for failure to abide by expectations.

### **Team Captains Play an Important Role in Maintaining a Positive Team-Oriented Climate and Helping Dating Team Members Maintain Team Focus**

- Remind dating teammates about coach's expectations and why they are important.
- Communicate with coaches when team dating issues need to be addressed.

### Coach Behavioral Expectations

- Make expectations clear at the beginning of the season. Be proactive. Don't wait for a crisis.
- Treat all dating relationships the same way.
- Expect the same level of commitment to the team from gay and straight players in dating relationships.
- Expect all team members in dating relationships to respect teammates and the team space.
- Identify campus resources who can provide assistance or counseling to team members having relationship issues – dating or otherwise.

### What About Sharing Hotel Rooms?

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 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 to name a few.

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 legal, but 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 parents 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 her or his 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



*"I know firsthand how homophobic college sports can be. There is an underlying fear of being openly gay in college sports. I have had nothing but positive support from my team, my administration and my fellow coaches. They all have accepted me for who I am and treat me with the utmost respect. They value my honesty."*

*"To all of them, being an openly gay coach is not a big deal; being a successful and caring coach is. I hope my success as a coach and being the only publicly out women's basketball Division I coach continue to make a difference in the profession I love so much."*

**Sherri Murrell, Head Women's Basketball Coach,  
Portland State University**

their bios 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. Until coaches of all sexual orientations can openly describe their relationships and families without fearing discrimination based on their sexual orientation, no coaches should be able to describe their marital or family status in official athletics department materials.

- List all information about women coaches on athletics department contact lists equitably. Identifying married women coaches as "Mrs. Helen Jones" and unmarried heterosexual or lesbian coaches as "Miss or Ms. Marsha Stuart" is an unnecessary differentiation that indicates nothing about coaching abilities.
- Team and individual photos should focus on action shots and photos of team members and coaches in uniform or appropriate street clothes they prefer. For women's teams, avoid posed or contrived photos that are designed to highlight team members' femininity or sex appeal.

### Campus Visits

Campus visits are when the team gets to know the recruit and the recruit gets to know more about the team, coaches and campus.

- Choose team hosts based on team members' interest in hosting and ability to be enthusiastic, positive representatives of the program, not their physical attractiveness, sexual orientation or gender expression.
- For overnight stays with team members, do not selectively require lesbian or gay players to take down room decorations like pride posters, rainbow flags or photos in order to hide their sexual orientation from recruits. If you are concerned about room decorations, set a standard that applies equally to athletes of any sexual orientation. Asking or requiring lesbian and gay athletes to "straighten" up their rooms is an unreasonable policy that is based on the assumption that lesbians and gay men should be closeted and their presence is a recruiting liability for the team.
- Do not bar lesbian or gay team members from hosting recruits.
- Plan activities that do not assume heterosexuality or require an escort of the opposite sex.
- Plan activities that you would be proud to see reported in the local 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 another school, coach or program. Insinuating or stating directly that there are lesbians or gay men in another program with the intention of discouraging a recruit from attending that school is unethical and plays on stereotypes and prejudices. Though negative recruiting based on sexual orientation has traditionally been more of a problem in women's sports, it may be used against single male coaches or become more widespread as gay male coaches are more open with their teams.

In communications with recruits or their parents, avoid describing your program in ways that are intended to convey the direct or indirect message that there are no lesbians or gay men in your program. This is a blatantly discriminatory practice that places coaches at odds with

university nondiscrimination policies. Moreover, as social attitudes are changing, parents and recruits are more likely to see this practice for exactly what it is and decide that a program with this policy is not a place they want to be. Examples:

- We have "pro-family" environment on our team.
- We have a "Christian" or "moral" environment.
- We do not tolerate "alternative lifestyles" or lesbians or gay men on 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 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 his gender expression. Length of hair, clothing preferences, or feminine or masculine appearance should 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:

Parents or recruits might ask questions about LGBTQ students on the team or ask if the coach is LGBTQ. Though this might be a positive inquiry, in many cases these 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?
- Are there lesbians/gay men on the team?
- What is your perspective about lesbians/gay men on the team?
- Have you ever had lesbians/gay men on your teams?
- 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 you married?
- Are there any men coaches affiliated with the team (for a women's team)?

Here are some suggestions for how to respond to such questions in ways that reflect a commitment to respect for difference, inclusion and fair play.

**Responding to Questions About LGBTQ People on Sports Teams:** This is an inappropriate question and should be answered without playing into the fears or prejudices behind the question.

- Don't be apologetic about or lie about the possibility or actuality of LGBTQ coaches and athletes on the team.
- Respond in ways that convey a belief that fairness and respect are important values on your team.
- Be prepared for these questions so that you can respond calmly and clearly.
- Ask what prompts the concern/question? Deal with the root. Put the onus on the parents or recruit to explain what is behind the question.
- Do not tell them that LGBTQ students are not allowed on the team: This is unethical, discriminatory and probably not true.
- If your school has a nondiscrimination policy or your state has a nondiscrimination law that covers students and schools: Cite that. Tell them your athletics department supports and is responsible for abiding by these policies or laws.
- Tell them that there are all kinds of diversity on the team – race, religion, class, 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 is your goal: 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 many different kinds of people who are different from them, 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 should be dealt with as such. All coaches need to address this question for what it is 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 ethics, athletics accomplishments and experience.

- Parents or athletes who ask this question do so based on fears, stereotypes or prejudicial beliefs about homosexuality. Don't buy into this. Ask yourself if you believe that parents or athletes who need to lead with this question would be happy on your team, how would they contribute to or detract from a team climate based on respect for everyone.

**(For Heterosexual Coaches) Responding to Questions About Your Sexual Orientation:** This is an inappropriate question, and you do not need to respond to it.

- 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 may not be easy, but it is an important opportunity to educate and begin to address homophobia in a direct way.
- Make it clear that you believe that your coaching credentials and accomplishments and your ethical standards are most important and that you want to be judged on these criteria rather than your sexual orientation.
- Point out that successful, ethical and respected coaches include people of different sexual orientations (as do unethical ones).

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

- Resist the temptation to claim that you are heterosexual.
- Even if you are comfortable being open about your sexual orientation or if the climate is good and legal protections are in place for lesbian and gay employees in your school, your sexual orientation is not the issue.

- Make it clear that you believe that your coaching credentials and accomplishments and your ethical standards are most important and that you want to be judged on these criteria rather than your sexual orientation.

**For Men Coaches of Women's Teams (Heterosexual, Bisexual or Gay):** Parents might express a preference for male coaches either because they subscribe to the stereotype that men are better coaches or because they believe that having a male coach eliminates the possibility of their daughter playing for a lesbian coach.

- Tell them you believe that all coaches regardless of sexual orientation or gender have the same obligation to treat athletes ethically and professionally.
- You have an opportunity to educate parents and recruits by addressing fears and stereotypes. It is unethical to use your gender or heterosexuality as a recruiting tool. Focus on your coaching credentials, accomplishments and ethical standards and tell them that you want to be judged on these criteria.

**Subtle Ways To Declare Heterosexuality or Communicate That There Are No Lesbians on a Team:** Making offhand references to your husband or wife in conversations with a recruit and her or his parents.

- Prominently displaying family pictures in your office.
- Family pictures or descriptions of heterosexual spouse in team media guide or web page.
- Describing team climate as “family oriented,” “Christian-focused” or “traditional values” or using other language that could be construed as not welcoming to lesbian, gay or unmarried heterosexual coaches.
- Presence of male assistant coaches who are married (with family

pictures and description in media guide) (for women’s teams).

- Team or individual athlete pictures or descriptions in media guide that focus on projecting a feminine appearance rather than athletic or academic accomplishments and goals (for women’s teams).

Readers might ask what is wrong with describing a coach’s family or marital status. After all, it is a part of who you are. We all have families we want to share, and it shows that coaches have a life outside of their work. It is not necessary for heterosexual coaches to hide their families, but they can be sensitive to the privilege of openness they have that many lesbian and gay coaches do not.

The problem is that homophobia and the real threat of discrimination prevent many lesbian, bisexual and gay coaches from openly sharing *their* families with parents and recruits. Until all coaches can openly talk about their families and life partners without this threat, heterosexual coaches should be thoughtful about the privilege they have to be open about their life partners and families and avoid using their heterosexual status as a recruiting tool.

Fortunately, times are changing. More lesbian and gay coaches are open about themselves and their families with team members and their parents. More parents and team members believe that the coach’s sexual orientation is not a consideration when choosing an athletics program. However, some parents and athletes still judge coaches and teams based on the presence or absence of lesbian, bisexual or gay participants. Until this prejudice is eliminated, it is important for all coaches and administrators to understand how homophobia affects the recruiting process and address it forthrightly and honestly.

## Positive Recruiting Guidelines for Coaches, Administrators, Parents<sup>1</sup>

### Coaches

- Focus recruiting information on positive information about your own school.
- Refrain from giving negative information of any kind about other schools, their athletics programs, personnel or student-athletes.
- Refrain from insinuating that another team has an undesirable, immoral or threatening climate because there are LGBTQ 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, economic classes 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 would be willing to talk to your AD about it.
- If parents tell you another coach has told them about LGBTQ people in your program, tell them that the bottom line in your program is respect for difference and respectful treatment for all. 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 betterment of the team and reaching team 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 athletes for questions about LGBTQ people in your program – focus on respect, fairness and team goals.
- Answer parents' and recruits' questions honestly and forthrightly. Don't be afraid of acknowledging the diversity on your team. Frame it as a strength.

### Administrators

- Develop a clear and public department policy on negative recruiting.
- Include a statement about negative recruiting in a “coaching ethics” code.
- Develop procedures for addressing negative recruiting accusations made against your coaches and by your coaches with clear sanctions.
- 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 by one of their staff members comes to your attention.
- Push for your athletics conference to develop guidelines on negative recruiting.
- Ask for sessions at your national coaching association conference 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 you are not present.
- If a coach or a coach's representative uses negative recruiting practices while interacting with you, report this to the athletics director at the school.
- 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.

<sup>1</sup> Griffin, P. & Carroll, H. 2009. The Positive Approach: Recognizing, Challenging and Eliminating Negative Recruiting Based on Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation. National Center for Lesbian Rights & The Women's Sports Foundation.

## Religion and the Inclusion of LGBTQ People in Athletics

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

Athletics programs in religious schools are a different case. For example, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, or Protestant Christian schools may expect adherence to their faith as a condition of admission or at least assume that students and staff have an awareness of faith-based expectations and practices at the school. Most religious schools are governed by a commitment to respect, safety and fairness to members of the community who do not share the institutional religious perspective. However, athletes and coaches who choose to enroll or work in religious schools must 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 school athletics programs. The challenge in these schools is to find common ground where athletes and coaches of all spiritual and nonspiritual persuasions can compete together in a respectful, safe and fair climate despite differences in religious perspectives. Freedom of religion also means freedom from having the religions of others imposed on participants in activities that are not in and of themselves faith-based. 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 prohibited from encouraging or discouraging 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 as employees of schools. The activities in which athletes participate 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 often feel pressure to participate. If religious activities are led by a coach, team captain or other team leader, these practices constitute a particular problem for other 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 fear of negative consequences that might affect their opportunity to compete, a fear of creating dissension within the team or concerns about alienating themselves from coaches, team captains or teammates. 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 teammates are treated with respect and fairness, and that no one is singled out, made to feel uncomfortable or ostracized because of his or her identity or personal religious beliefs.

Religious belief about LGBTQ people is an area of potential conflict in athletics that can affect individual athletes and coaches as well as the entire team. Religious perspectives on LGBTQ people are varied. Some religions believe that homosexuality and transgenderism are sins, while others believe lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are simply part of a broad spectrum of sexuality and gender identity and expression welcomed into the faith community. Many religious groups have adopted anti-discrimination policies even if they believe that homosexuality is a sin. Others believe homosexuality and transgenderism are sins and engage in efforts to “save” LGBT people from their “lifestyle.” Some faiths take a “live and let live” stance toward homosexuality and transgenderism and preach tolerance, if not acceptance.



For coaches, team captains and other team members who believe homosexuality or transgenderism are sins, 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 ensure that ALL athletes are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their personal beliefs about sexual orientation or gender identity.

### Potential Problems in an Athletics Setting

- 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.
- Team 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 their faith to other team members who are not interested in discussing religion.
- Team members distributing written religious information unless an individual teammate expresses an interest in such information.
- Teammates condemning other teammates for not subscribing to their faith's beliefs about homosexuality or other faith-based beliefs.
- Coaches or captains including verses from particular religious texts on team materials or in team communications (verbal, emails or letters, office answering machines).
- Coaches or student-athletes discriminating against a player or coach who does not share their religious beliefs or who violates their religious beliefs (homosexuality or transgenderism, for example).
- Coaches or student-athletes trying to convert coaches or student-athletes who are gay or do not share their religious beliefs.
- Coaches promising recruits and their parents that the team has a religious-based ethos or values.

### Practices or Policies That Promote a Respectful and Inclusive Athletics Climate

- A team moment of silence before practice or games.
- Invite one team member before each game to say whatever that student-athlete would like (including a prayer) and make sure all team members have an opportunity.
- Coaches reading a nonreligious poem or quote, playing nonreligious music, giving a nonreligious inspirational talk.
- Individual student-athletes participating in faith-based groups or activities of their choosing outside required team activities.
- Individual student-athletes talking about their faith, but not trying to recruit others who are not interested to their faith.
- Individual student-athletes reading the Bible or other religious text to themselves on the team bus.
- Individual student-athletes praying on their own during practice, games or at any time in the athletics setting.
- A group of student-athletes voluntarily praying together in the locker room or attending Bible study or a religious service together as long as it is not assumed that these are team activities in which everyone must or should participate.
- Individual players wearing jewelry or other symbols of their faith (as is consistent with uniform requirements for practice or games).
- Individual players talking about their faith to media or others outside the team.

## Social Media Guidelines and the Inclusion of LGBTQ Student-Athletes

Because online collaboration platforms are fundamentally changing the way athletics departments communicate, these guidelines are designed to foster responsible, constructive communications via social media channels for all members of an athletics community.

Whether a coach, student-athlete, or administrator chooses to create or participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own decision. However, activities in or outside an athletics community that negatively affect job performance of coaches or administrators, athletic performance of student-athletes, a recruit's interest in a program, or public and alumni perception of the program are a proper focus for an athletics department's social media policy.

### Objectives

- Establish practical, reasonable and enforceable guidelines by which every athletics department member can conduct responsible, constructive social media engagement in both official and unofficial capacities.
- Promote a safe and informed environment for student-athletes, coaches, and administrators to participate appropriately in social media.
- Prepare athletics departments to use social media to help one another and the campuses they serve, particularly in the event of a crisis, disaster or emergency.
- Protect athletics departments from violating municipal, state or federal rules, regulations or laws through social media engagement.

### 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,” “tranny,” 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.
- Only those specifically designated to do so may use social media to speak on behalf of an athletics department or university in an official capacity, though individual student-athletes, coaches and administrators may use social media to speak for themselves.
- Members of an athletics community are responsible for making sure that their online activities do not interfere with their ability to fulfill their academic, athletic, or professional commitments or those of their peers.
- Athletics departments are responsible for ensuring that all student-athletes, coaches and administrators have received and agreed to abide by department social media guidelines in writing.

## Race, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression in Athletics<sup>1</sup>

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 their sexual orientation or gender identity. Race, economic class and religion are among the many other aspects of social identity that add to the complexities of addressing discrimination and prejudice in athletics. The interactions of these identities complicate the experiences of LGBTQ people in athletics and make the experiences of individual LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches different from one another.

Because of the intersections of these different identities, it is important not to assume that all LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches experience their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression in the same ways. A lesbian student-athlete whose family cannot afford to pay for college costs is dependent on her athletics scholarship for her college education and will be less likely to be open about being gay if she believes that openness would jeopardize her scholarship. Likewise, a gay athlete whose family religious beliefs condemn homosexuality might feel more conflict or fear about openly identifying himself.

Similarly, LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches of color must deal with prejudices related to race and sexual orientation or gender identity/expression in athletics. Furthermore, LGBTQ women of color must negotiate sexism, as well. For LGBTQ student-athletes of color, the decision on coming out is a balancing act of identities affected by the combined effects of racism, heterosexism and sexism (for women of color). These intersections of identities create conflicts and complications that white LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches do not face.

For example, LGBTQ student-athletes and coaches of color often feel a separation from heterosexual teammates of color. If heterosexual teammates of color express anti-LGBTQ beliefs, LGBTQ student-

athletes of color may be reluctant to identify themselves. This reluctance is based on the fear of isolating themselves from friends and teammates. They often fear religious judgment from faith-based communities of color and are concerned about losing their support network among community, family and friends of color.

This conflict is particularly pressing for student-athletes of color on teams in schools that are predominantly white. LGBTQ student-athletes of color get caught between pressure to be representatives of their race since there may be few students of color on campus and the pressure to pick one identity over another. This possibility of alienating other students of color has consequences that white LGBTQ students do not face in predominantly white schools. In schools where there are more athletes of color than there are students of color in the general student population, LGBTQ student-athletes of color often can develop support and friendship networks with other athletes of color. This support, however, is sometimes contingent on their willingness to hide their sexual orientation. In many communities of color, LGBTQ people are tolerated as long as they are not open about their sexual orientation. However, the psychological costs of keeping one's sexual orientation secret are high and require enormous energy that affects friendships, family relationships, athletic and academic performance and self-esteem.

Heterosexual people of color sometimes perceive LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches of color who are open about their sexuality as choosing their sexuality over their race. This is particularly so among heterosexual people of color who believe that identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual is primarily a white issue. In this instance, LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches of color may experience isolation from others of color who believe that LGBTQ people of color are "misrepresenting" their racial groups. Similarly, LGBTQ student-athletes of color who are first generation college students often feel pressure from their families to be heterosexual as an integral part of representing their ethnic communities in a positive way.

The decision to make one's sexual orientation known publicly is difficult enough for many white LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Nevin Caple, Jillian Ross, Camille O'Bryant, Lea Robinson, Alpha Alexander, Yolanda Jackson and Dora Dome for assistance in preparation of this resource.

coaches. However, many reasons related to racism and concerns about isolation from communities of color and family make many LGBTQ 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, the potential judgment and isolation from this source of comfort and support can be devastating. Coping with fears of rejection and condemnation can make it difficult for LGBTQ student-athletes of color to find support and inner peace. Consequently, finding churches, mosques or synagogues in which they feel accepted for who they are can be challenging. Though religion also plays an important part in the lives of white LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches, the added complexities of racism are not a part of their experience.

LGBTQ student-athletes of color are also at risk of feeling alienated from white LGBTQ teammates or LGBTQ school organizations. Some LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ people. LGBTQ student-athletes of color are faced with the racism often present in predominantly white LGBTQ school-based organizations and among white LGBTQ student-athletes. White LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ people of color are affected by racism or how their own white identity provides them with advantages that can make it easier to openly claim their LGBTQ identity.

Many of the gender and sexuality expectations placed on LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches of color are based on racial stereotypes. At the same time they are caught in the dominant culture’s expectations for masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality.

Cultural differences about perceptions of sexuality and gender affect how LGBTQ individuals of color see themselves and how their families and friends see them. Differences among African-American,

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 LGBTQ people of color have the same experience of their sexual orientation as white LGBTQ individuals, it is also important to understand that the experiences of LGBTQ 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) femininity 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 animalistic or athletic, 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 LGBTQ men do or have different expectations of gender and sexuality placed on them. Closeted 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 teammates of color.

All of these complexities call for coaches and athletics administrators to anticipate how race and other aspects of identity may differentiate the experiences of LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches of color from those of white LGBTQ athletes and coaches.

### Recommended Best Practices

- 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 LGBTQ education programs for athletics department staff and student-athletes, make sure that the experiences of LGBTQ student-athletes, staff and coaches of color are specifically addressed.
- Invite a panel of LGBTQ 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 having problems in classes, consider the possibility that questioning one's sexuality or dealing with an anti-LGBTQ climate might be among the issues

with which individuals of color are wrestling.

- Make sure campus LGBTQ support and social groups address the needs of LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ people of color and are aware of 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.

## Policy and Best Practice Recommendations for the Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes<sup>1</sup>

Policy development governing the inclusion of transgender student-athletes is an emerging endeavor. As new research on the participation of transgender athletes and the physiological effects of gender transition on athletics performance becomes available, policies may need to be re-evaluated to ensure that they reflect the most current research-based information.

### NCAA Policy on Transgender Student-Athlete Participation

The following policies clarify participation of transgender student-athletes undergoing hormonal treatment for gender transition:

- A trans male (FTM) student-athlete who has received a medical exception for treatment with testosterone for diagnosed gender dysphoria and/or transsexualism, for purposes of NCAA competition, may compete on a men's team, but is no longer eligible to compete on a women's team without changing that team status to a mixed team.
- A trans female (MTF) student-athlete being treated with testosterone suppression medication for gender dysphoria and/or transsexualism, for the purposes of NCAA competition, may continue to compete on a men's team but may not compete on a women's team without changing it to a mixed team status until completing one calendar year of testosterone suppression treatment.
- Any transgender student-athlete who is not taking hormone treatment related to gender transition may participate in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her assigned birth gender.
- A trans male (FTM) student-athlete who is not taking testosterone related to gender transition may participate on a men's or women's team.
- A trans female (MTF) transgender student-athlete who is not taking hormone treatments related to gender transition may not compete on a women's team.



*"When I came out at George Washington University, the athletics administration, staff and faculty all made a huge effort to respect the pronouns that I wanted to go by despite the team I was playing for. Being transgender in sports is often difficult to understand, and misunderstood. Having an LGBTQ resource guide for athletics would not only be helpful, but it would push athletics in the path of pursuing true equality and acceptance on the playing field."*

*"Whether being transgender in sports is easy to understand or not, there are many other transgender athletes out there who deserve an opportunity to play the sports that they love and not feel like they are less of a student, coach, athlete or person. We are just like anybody else!"*

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

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### The Student's Responsibilities

- In order to avoid challenges to a transgender student'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 upon matriculation or when the decision to undergo hormonal treatment is made.
- The request should include a letter from the student's physician documenting the student-athlete's intention to transition or the student's transition status if the process has already been initiated. This letter should identify the prescribed hormonal

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the inclusion of transgender student-athletes, see [NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes](#). August 2011. NCAA Office of Inclusion.

treatment for the student's gender transition and documentation of the student's testosterone 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 director of athletics should notify the NCAA of the student's request to participate with a medical exception request.
- 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 institutional staff with student well-being interests, and include representation from the following departments: office of general counsel, health and counseling, faculty/academic affairs, and athletics.
- All discussions among involved parties and required written supporting documentation should be kept confidential, unless the student-athlete makes a specific request otherwise. All information about an individual student's transgender identity and medical information, including physician's information provided pursuant to this policy, shall be maintained confidentially.

### ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENT-ATHLETE INCLUSION

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.

#### Facilities Access

- **Changing Areas, Toilets, Showers:** Transgender student-athletes should be able to use the locker room, shower, and toilet facilities in accordance with the student's gender identity. Every locker room should have some private, enclosed changing areas, showers and toilets for use by any athlete who desires

them. When requested by a transgender student-athlete, schools should provide private, separate changing, showering and toilet facilities for the student's use, but transgender students should not be required to use separate facilities.

- **Competition at Another School:** If a transgender student-athlete requires a particular accommodation to ensure access to appropriate changing, showering, or bathroom facilities, school leaders, athletics directors and coaches, in consultation with the transgender student-athlete, should notify their counterparts at other schools before competitions to ensure that the student has access to facilities that are comfortable and safe. This notification should maintain the student's confidentiality. Under no circumstances should a student-athlete's identity as a transgender person be disclosed without the student's express permission.
- **Hotel Rooms:** Transgender student-athletes generally should be assigned to share hotel rooms based on their gender identity, with a recognition that any student who needs extra privacy should be accommodated whenever possible.

#### Language

- **Preferred Names:** In all cases, teammates, coaches and others in the school should refer to transgender student-athletes by a student's preferred name.
- **Pronouns:** In all cases, pronoun references to transgender student-athletes should reflect the student's gender and pronoun preferences.

#### Dress Codes and Team Uniforms

- **Dress Codes:** Transgender student-athletes should be permitted to dress consistently with their gender identities. That is, a female-to-male transgender athlete should be permitted to dress as a male. A male-to-female should be permitted to dress as a female. For reasons unrelated to trans-inclusion, schools should evaluate the necessity of gendered dress codes and recognize that they tend to marginalize a range of students who may not feel comfortable with them. Dress codes for athletics teams when traveling or during a game day at school should be gender neutral.

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

- **Uniforms:** All team members should have access to uniforms that are appropriate for their sport and that they feel comfortable wearing. No student should be required to wear a gendered uniform that conflicts with the student’s gender identity.

### Education

- **Institutions:** All members of the university community should receive information and education about transgender identities, institutional and conference nondiscrimination policies, the use of preferred names and pronouns, and expectations for creating a respectful team and school climate for all students, including transgender and gender-variant students.
- **Athletics Conference Personnel:** Athletics conference leaders should be educated about the need for policies governing the participation of transgender student-athletes, develop such policies, and ensure that all schools in the conference understand and adopt the policies.
- **Opposing Teams/Universities:** Without violating a transgender student’s confidentiality or privacy, school leaders, athletics directors, and coaches should communicate with their counterparts at other schools before competitions in which a transgender athlete is participating about expectations for treatment of transgender student-athletes on and off the field. This does not require “outing” or otherwise identifying a particular student-athlete as transgender, but rather establishing general expectations for the treatment of all student-athletes, including those who may be transgender.

### Media

- **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 should receive information about appropriate terminology, use of names and pronouns, and school and athletics conference policies regarding the participation of transgender student-athletes on school sports teams.
- **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

- **Enforcement:** Any member of an athletics department who has been found to have violated this policy by threatening to withhold athletics opportunity or harassing any student on the basis of gender identity or expression, or by breaching medical confidentiality, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge or expulsion from the school. The athletics department should take 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 official such as the director of athletics.
- **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 to challenge discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. In addition, several legal advocacy groups focus specifically on this type of case and have been used successfully by coaches and student-athletes. The purpose of this discussion is to provide an introductory summary of these laws and resources and provide some suggestions for what to do if you believe you have been discriminated against.

#### Federal Protections

Currently, no federal laws specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is a proposed federal law that, if passed, would prohibit [discrimination](#) against employees by their employers on the basis of [sexual orientation](#) or gender identity. As currently written, ENDA would exempt small businesses, religious organizations and the military, and does not require benefits to the same-sex partners of employees.

In the absence of federal law specifically prohibiting this kind of discrimination, two other federal laws have been used successfully to challenge discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity: The Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Title IX of the Education Act of 1972.

The Equal Protection clause states that “no [state](#) shall ... deny to any person within its [jurisdiction](#) the equal protection of the [laws](#).” Several cases involving allegations of harassment and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and staff in schools have been based on the Equal Protection Clause including the 2005 Harris v. Penn State case. In this case, Jennifer Harris, a player on the Penn State women’s basketball team, claimed that she was discriminated against because her coach, Rene Portland, perceived her to be a lesbian.

Title IX is a federal law prohibiting discrimination in education on the basis of sex. Though Title IX applies to all aspects of education, it has

been used most 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 or gender identity/expression: California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.

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

#### State Student Rights Laws

In addition to these 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.

States with student rights laws prohibiting discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression: 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 states that do not have laws specifically prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, the state constitution equal protection clause can be used to challenge discriminatory treatment.

Many municipal nondiscrimination laws include sexual orientation or gender identity/expression and can also be used to challenge unfair treatment. In addition, many universities and local school districts have adopted inclusive nondiscrimination policies that protect students and staff from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.



## 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 who are 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 *Theno v. Tonganoxie Unified School District*, 377 F. Supp. 3d 952 (D. 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 to which he was subjected by other students on the basis of his perceived gender and sexual orientation. He was teased, called names and subjected to crude sexual gestures over a four-year period. The court ruling that he had been subjected to sex discrimination was 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 (D. 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, *Schroeder 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 harassment he endured because of his advocacy 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), a male student claimed that he was harassed and assaulted because of his perceived sexual orientation. The school district petitioned to have the Title IX claim dismissed. The court held that harassment due to the student's perceived sexual orientation can constitute "sexual harassment" under Title IX. The court said: "Plaintiff was targeted by his classmates due to his perceived sexual status as a homosexual, and was harassed based on those perceptions. Thus, although Plaintiff's complaint makes no specific characterization of the harassing conduct as 'sexual' in nature, it is reasonable to infer that the basis of the attacks 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 student and parental complaints of harassment. The link between gender

stereotyping and assumptions about gender and sexual orientation form the basis for the use of Title IX to address harassment and discrimination directed at students perceived to be lesbian, bisexual, gay or transgender.

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 administrators 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.

## 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) Sports Project  
Helen Carroll, Director  
[www.nclrights.org](http://www.nclrights.org)

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)  
[www.glad.org](http://www.glad.org)

American Civil Liberties Union  
[www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund  
[www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org)

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

- If you are an employee, do not resign. Challenging discrimination is much more difficult if you resign.
- Identify colleagues or teammates whom you can count on and who will provide emotional support to you.

- 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(s) 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.
- Remember you have a right to be treated with respect and fairness. 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.

## Resources for Allies

### How Homophobia Affects Heterosexual Student-Athletes and Coaches (And What They Can Do To Stop It)

It is more apparent how anti-LGBTQ discrimination and prejudice affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning people because they are directly affected 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.
- Teammates' fear or discomfort about 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 fans.
- Dismissal from teams or coaching positions.
- Reduced playing time.
- Discrimination in consideration for awards or recognition for athletics or coaching accomplishments.
- Pressure to change hairstyles or dress to avoid appearing "gay" (or to appear more feminine for female student-athletes).
- Religious proselytizing from coaches or teammates to renounce homosexuality.
- Exclusion from team social activities.
- Pressure to engage in heterosexual dating or sex to "prove" their heterosexuality.
- Estrangement from parents, friends and teammates.

It is less apparent how anti-LGBTQ prejudice affects heterosexual student-athletes and coaches. One of the most effective ways to make sport safe and respectful for everyone is for heterosexual coaches and student-athletes to understand how they are also negatively affected by homophobia. When straight student-athletes and coaches speak out as allies against homophobia in sport, it makes sports safer and more respectful for everyone, including heterosexual coaches and student-athletes.

#### Ways Homophobia Hurts Heterosexual Coaches and Student-Athletes

- Fear of association with LGBTQ teammates or coaches limits friendships, team relationships and communication.
- Feeling the need to proclaim their heterosexuality, be heterosexually 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 jokes or slurs.
- Self-imposed restriction 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

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 individual teams, student-athletes, staff or coaches in your school?

Student-athletes and coaches are often highly visible in the school and community. Their athletics accomplishments are reported in the local media and community members attend their games. As a result, they have many opportunities to set examples for others, not just with their athletic abilities, but also with their treatment of others. Student-athletes can be leaders and allies who help to make their schools safe and respectful for everyone.

**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 you have teammates who are LGBTQ and other team members talk about them behind their back, don’t participate and let those doing the talking know you don’t like it.
- 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 Athlete 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.

## Creating LGBTQA-Inclusive Team Honor Codes

Conversations about LGBTQ respect and inclusion in sport oftentimes exist outside the knowledge base 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 seek out 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 means to be a student-athlete. There are implicit standards of conduct expected of those who are the most visible ambassadors of our sports. Standards like respect, honesty and doing the right thing.

While these “honor codes” oftentimes go undefined for many athletics programs, undergoing the task of defining your team’s honor code can be a useful tool to creating an LGBTQ-inclusive environment.

Rather than correcting the homophobic language thrown around in the locker room because it is wrong, with a properly defined honor code, homophobic language can be addressed because it goes against the very identity of a team.

At the beginning of each season, coaches and administrators can charge the captains and team leaders with creating and defining this honor code. By doing so, athletes will take greater ownership of the athletics environment of which they are a part.

Below are sample honor codes from schools across the country. While none specifically mentions creating an LGBTQ-inclusive culture, all of them implicitly lay the foundation for it.

### Sample Honor Codes

- “As a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ community, I am responsible for upholding and promoting honesty, trust, respect, fairness, and justice in all venues of school life. To maintain personal integrity, I will not cheat, lie, steal, plagiarize, or diminish or degrade my peers. I will do my best to raise awareness of the importance of honor for the purpose of making \_\_\_\_\_ a better place to learn and work. I understand this honor code and will uphold my HONOR ABOVE ALL.”
- “A \_\_\_\_\_ does not lie, cheat, steal or degrade others, nor tolerate those who do.”
- “No member of the \_\_\_\_\_ community shall take unfair advantage of any other member of the \_\_\_\_\_ community.”
- “(School) (type of athlete) do not lie, cheat, steal or violate the rights of others. Therefore I pledge to uphold all standards of honorable conduct. I will report myself and others for any infraction of this pledge.”
- “I affirm that I will uphold the highest principles of honesty and integrity in all my endeavors at \_\_\_\_\_ and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect within and beyond the playing field.”



## 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 for their words and actions. By holding offenders accountable to victims, and fostering reconciliation between the offender, victim and community, coaches, officials and administrators are able to correct the instances in which students use degrading or demeaning language that would otherwise not be deemed major in nature.

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. An individual within athletics who attempts to diminish others by his or her words and actions incurs an obligation to repair that harm to the greatest possible extent.

### Guiding Principles

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 his 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.

## LGBTQA 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](http://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](http://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 StandUp Against Bullying Day sponsored by the Stand Up Foundation. [www.standupfoundation.com](http://www.standupfoundation.com)
- **Br{ache 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.freedomsounds.org](http://www.freedomsounds.org)
- **Campus Pride:** Nominate your school for the Campus Pride List of Most LGBTQ-Friendly Collegiate Athletics Programs. [www.campuspride.org/outtoplay](http://www.campuspride.org/outtoplay)
- **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](http://sports.glsen.org)



*“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 so 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**

## Five Steps To Being a Better Ally to the Transgender Community

Being a strong ally to the LGBTQ community necessitates educating yourself and others about how to be a better ally to the transgender community. The following are five easy things any member of an athletics community can do to help create a safe and welcoming environment for transgender student-athletes, coaches and administrators.

### **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 unaddressed within athletics departments. By looking out for words like “tranny” or calling someone “too butch to be a girl,” we 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 so long as you take the time to educate yourself about what you should say and are respectful moving forward.

### **3. Coming Out Is Confidential**

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.

### **4. Don’t Ask About “Real” Name**

Asking what someone’s “real” name is 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.

### **5. 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.

## Resources for LGBTQ Student-Athlete Groups

### Start an LGBTQ Student-Athlete Group: GO! Athletes

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

- More and more LGBTQ student-athletes are either coming out to teammates and coaches or entering their intercollegiate athletics experience already having been out in high school.
- These LGBTQ student-athletes expect to be treated with respect and are more comfortable with their sexuality and gender identities than previous generations of LGBTQ athletes.
- National polls show that heterosexual young people are more accepting and comfortable with LGBTQ friends and supportive of LGBTQ rights than elders.
- 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 LGBTQ 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, Athlete 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 LGBTQ student-athlete group that best meets the needs and interests of student-athletes in their school. What follows is a list of topics to consider, questions to think about and group activity suggestions for planners and leaders of LGBTQ student-athlete groups.

**What Is the Purpose of the Group?** Support, Advocate, Educate, Connect. Any or all of these purposes could be appropriate depending on the group.

- To provide support for LGBTQ student-athletes.
- To make the athletics department a safe and respectful place for LGBTQ people.
- To plan social activities for LGBTQ student-athletes and allies.
- To connect like-minded individuals and foster a network of LGBTQ student-athletes and allies.

**What Should the Name of the Group Be?** GO! Athletes supports collegiate and high school LGBTQ student-athletes and allies to start a GO! Athletes affiliate chapter at their school, but the group can of course be independent. Factors to consider when naming the group:

- How visible do you want the group to be?
- Do you want LGBTQ in the name? (LGBTQ Athlete Group, Gay-Straight Athlete Alliance).
- Do you want the name to be more generic? (Athletes for Social Justice, Jocks for Justice, Athletes for Diversity).
- Do you want to be an affiliate of GO! Athletes, national chapter?

**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?** Think about the following criteria: accessibility, safety/visibility, and comfortable/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

it safer for all athletes to come to meetings? How convenient is the location for athletes? LGBT center?

- Off-campus: Would this create transportation problems for some student-athletes?

**When Will the Group Meet?** This is always a challenge for athletes. Determine when it is likely that most athletes will be available.

- Evenings after dinner?
- During dinner with pizza served?
- On Sunday afternoon? (After religious services?)
- Lunchtime?

**How Often Will the Group Meet?** Let the group decide this during early meetings to determine the momentum and interest in the group. Meet at least monthly or the group will lose momentum and interest.

- Weekly.
- Every two weeks.
- Monthly.

**Establishing Meeting Discussion Ground Rules:** Establishing some shared expectations for meetings is helpful. Here are some suggestions to get started. Ask the group for other ground rules they'd like to have.

- Personal information that is shared stays confidential (a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, discussions about incidents on particular teams, etc.).
- No one is required to identify his or her sexual orientation or gender identity, but everyone is invited to do so.
- Speak from your own experience, avoid generalizing or speaking on behalf of others without consent (all heterosexuals or all gay people).
- Respect different perspectives, ideas and experiences.
- Make sure the group is welcoming to and acknowledges other differences besides sexual orientation and gender identity (race, class, sex, religion). These identities affect our experience of being LGBTQ.
- Have fun! Make sure to incorporate social time with meeting time!

**Staff Advisors or Not:** Sometimes having a staff advisor/member can help the group with administrative issues like reserving rooms and communication with other staff, etc.

- Do you want a staff advisor or should the group be student-led?
- If you have an advisor, what role should the advisor play: A leader, facilitator, consultant, enabler, background supporter?
- If you have an advisor, should the advisor be LGBT identified, a straight ally, one of each? Is it important to have a man and a woman as advisors?

**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 the athletics department, locker rooms, inside of toilet stall doors, cafeteria, etc.
- Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Instagram.
- Post on the athletics department website.
- Post in school LGBTQ Center.

**Importance of Food:** Provide food at meetings/events. This is a great draw and invites people 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 cookies. (If you find those who like to bake, this can be a good bonding experience too!)

**Gender and Racial Balance:** Be inclusive. The more diverse the group is, the more everyone will get out of meetings and other group-sponsored activities. Also, race and sex diversity helps the group meet the needs of all students-athletes and not just one race or sex.

- Think about racism and homophobia.
- Think about sexism and homophobia.
- Discuss ways that homophobia affects people of color and white people differently and the same.
- Discuss ways that homophobia affects men and women differently and the same.

**Funding:** Whether funding is only needed for providing refreshments at meetings or for sponsoring activities, think about how to get some financial support.

- Pass the hat at meetings for refreshments.
- Have a group fundraiser: Bake sale, doughnut and coffee sale mornings in the athletics department, T-shirt sale, etc.
- Seek individual donations from athletics department staff members who are allies.
- Get funding from the student government, athletics department, the school's LGBT Center, LGBTQ athlete alums, or from friends and family willing to donate.

#### **Build Communication and Support Within the Athletics Department**

- Meet with the athletics director to tell her/him about your group and see how she/he can support you (funding, staff development programs, public statement about her/his support of your group with athletics staff, etc.)
- Meet with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee to discuss how it can support safety and respect for LGBTQ student-athletes on the school's teams.
- Meet with the Life Skills instructors about addressing LGBTQ issues in their curriculum.
- Meet with the leaders of new student-athlete orientation programs (or editors for the new student-athlete handbook) to see how they can include department expectations for fair and respectful treatment of LGBTQ student-athletes.

**Build Communication Across School or Campus:** Establish relationships with other campus units that focus on LGBTQ issues or that could better serve the needs of LGBTQ student-athletes and allies.

- Contact the Campus LGBTQ Resource to let people there know about your group. Find out what resources or programs they have related to athletics.
- Contact the social justice/diversity/affirmative action office on campus.
- Contact the campus counseling center to see how people there are prepared to work with student-athletes who are questioning

their sexuality, experiencing harassment or isolation, or who are struggling with homophobia.

- Contact the school's gay straight alliance or any other LGBTQ staff or student groups on campus to see how you can work together.

#### **Suggestions for Meeting Activities**

- Find out what your members want to do.
- Watch and discuss a video on LGBTQ issues in athletics.
- Discuss perceptions of the climate for LGBTQ people in the athletics department: with teammates, coaches, administrators, 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.
- Invite 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.
- Learn about one another's sports: Focus on a different sport each meeting.
- Go bowling or play a sport together that no one knows much about (dogdeball, bowling or pingpong).

**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.
- Get together to watch one another's teams compete.
- Go to someone's apartment or to a local gathering place to watch televised sporting events.
- Organize your own Pride Games (field-day competition).

**Suggestions for Education or Advocacy Activities:** Do a climate survey of student-athletes and coaches at your school 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 athletes about LGBTQ sports resources on your campus, locally and online and distribute it to everyone in the athletics department.
- Ask the athletics director to organize staff development sessions 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 LGBT 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.

Be proud of yourselves for embarking on this journey to create an LGBTQ athletes group! It’s GO! Time! Remember that even reaching one new person is a win!

Contact GO! Athletes at [www.goathletes.org](http://www.goathletes.org).



## 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 the organization is \_\_\_\_\_, hereafter abbreviated to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The mission of \_\_\_\_\_ is:
  - a. To create a safe environment for athletes, coaches, administrators 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 LGBTQA communities.

### Article II: Membership

3. All undergraduate students of the \_\_\_\_\_ with an interest in LGBTQ issues in the athletics community are eligible to be members of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. 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.
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 III: The General Body

6. There shall be a general body of all members of \_\_\_\_\_, which shall

be the supreme decision-making organ of \_\_\_\_\_. It has sole authority to approve the \_\_\_\_\_'s annual budget submission to SAAC.

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

### Article IV: The Executive Board

11. Between meetings of the general body, 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,
12. The duties of the Executive shall include:
  - a. The co-ordination 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, SAC 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.

14. These shall be the duties of the executive chair:
    - a. Call and preside over general body meetings,
    - b. Coordinate and facilitate Executive Board meetings,
    - c. Assist in all the duties of other officers,
    - d. Exercise general supervision over all of the \_\_\_\_\_'s activities, ensuring that they are in line with the \_\_\_\_\_'s vision.
  15. These shall be the duties of the vice chair:
    - a. Serve as acting chair in the chair's absence or incapacity,
    - b. Outreach to the wider LGBTQA community,
    - c. Assist the chair in the execution of duties as required,
    - d. Act as the chief administrative officer of \_\_\_\_\_.
  16. These shall be the duties of the treasurer:
    - a. Prepare \_\_\_\_\_'s annual budget and all financial submissions to SAC and other entities;
    - b. Represent \_\_\_\_\_ on the Student Activities Council and coordinate all reimbursements;
    - c. Ensure the proper collection and appropriation of all revenue and the timely payment of all debts;
    - d. Maintain full and complete financial records, and present these for inspection by SAC, the university, the general body and the Executive Board upon demand.
  17. These shall be the duties of the social director:
    - a. Organization of social events for \_\_\_\_\_ members and the wider community,
    - b. Planning nonadvocacy events that celebrate diversity in the athletics community,
    - c. Working closely with \_\_\_\_\_ to facilitate social events as appropriate.
  18. These shall be the duties of the advocacy director:
    - a. Research and advocacy on behalf of LGBTQA athletes,
    - b. Conducting advocacy campaigns featuring openly LGBTQA athletes,
    - c. Research of NCAA diversity rules and monitoring the adherence of \_\_\_\_\_ teams to these rules, lobbying administrators as appropriate.
  19. These shall be the duties of the communications director:
    - a. Take the minutes of all meetings of the general body and the Executive Board,
    - b. Handle publicity for \_\_\_\_\_ events and activities,
    - c. Maintain all \_\_\_\_\_ contact lists and databases,
    - d. Prepare and publish the agendas of all Executive and general body meetings,
    - e. Prepare and publish a regular informative periodical for all members and other interested persons in the \_\_\_\_\_ community.
  20. A majority of the Executive shall constitute quorum for all Executive Board meetings.
  21. 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 ties.
  22. The term of the Executive Officers shall end at the fall elections meeting, and the terms of their successors shall then begin.
- Article V: Election and Scrutiny of Executive Officers**
23. The general body shall elect all executive officers at the fall elections meeting.
  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 Committee 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 offices, the returning officer shall hold the chair. The returning officer shall count, scrutinize and certify all elections and shall have no vote and be ineligible 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 itself.
  - c. The officers shall be elected in the order in which they first appear in this Constitution.
  - d. The general body may require written or oral depositions; of whatever nature it chooses, from candidates for each office.
  - e. After the general body is satisfied with the depositions of the candidates, it shall proceed to elect one of the candidates to the office.
  - f. The method of voting shall be as follows:
    - i. Votes shall be conducted by secret ballot,
    - ii. All members will indicate one (1) preferred candidate for the office,
    - iii. The candidate receiving an absolute majority of votes shall be deemed to be elected,
    - iv. If no candidate shall receive an absolute majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be discarded and the general body shall vote again, repeating this method until a candidate receives an absolute majority.
    - v. If a candidate is not elected to the office that the candidate sought, the candidate may run in subsequent elections held at

that elections meeting.

- vi. During the elections meeting, any five members present may demand and shall receive a recount of all votes cast for any election.
29. Officers may resign their position in writing at any time to the Executive. Should an officer make a binding decision to travel abroad during either semester of the officer's term, the officer's position shall be instantly terminated.
30. The Executive Board shall fill all casual vacancies of officers, save that of the executive chair. In the case of the resignation or impeachment of the chair, the Executive shall call a meeting of the general body within two weeks to elect a new chair, the vice chair acting as executive chair until that time.
31. The general body may impeach any officer for incompetence, reckless negligence, or behaving in a manner prejudicial to the interests of \_\_\_\_\_, by a two-thirds vote of members present at a meeting especially called for the purpose. Such a meeting shall be called upon the presentation of a petition signed by 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 all rights of natural justice.

#### **Article VI: Amendment**

This Constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a general body meeting. All amendments to the Constitution shall be presented by the Executive or on a petition of at least ten (10) members. No amendment to the Constitution may be considered without being presented to a general body meeting at least two weeks before the meeting at which it will be voted on.



## Part 3: Appendixes

This section of the resource guide includes additional information about addressing LGBTQ issues in athletics:

- 1) A list of definitions and terminology.
- 2) A list of additional education and advocacy organizations.
- 3) A list of books and videos.
- 4) Sample policies.
- 5) Campus Pride Report Score Card.



## Appendix 1: Sexual Orientation and Gender Definitions and Terminology

**Ally** — A person who is not a member of a targeted social group who takes action or speaks up to challenge discrimination or prejudice against a targeted social group. For example, straight allies speak and act against LGBTQ discrimination and prejudice or white allies speak and act against discrimination against people of color.

**Biological/Anatomical Sex** — The physical characteristics typically used to assign a person's gender at birth, such as chromosomes, hormones, internal and external genitalia and reproductive organs. Given the potential variation in all of these, biological sex must be seen as a spectrum or range of possibilities rather than a binary set of two options.

**Biphobia** — Describes a range of negative feelings toward bisexuality and bisexual people as a social group or as individuals. People of any sexual orientation can experience such feelings of aversion. Biphobia is based on negative bisexual stereotypes.

**Bisexual** — A sexual orientation toward women and men in which gender is not a determining factor in romantic or sexual feelings toward another person.

**Cisgender** — An adjective often used to refer to someone whose gender identity is the same as the gender assigned to them at birth.

**FTM (Female-to-Male)** — A person who was assigned to the female gender at birth but has a male gender identity.

**Gay** — An adjective describing sexual orientation toward others of the same sex. Gay is also used to refer exclusively to gay men.

**Gender** — The complex relationship between physical traits and one's internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither, as well as one's outward presentations and behaviors related to that perception. Biological sex and gender are different; gender is not inherently connected to one's physical anatomy.

**Gender Expression** — Refers to the ways in which people externally

communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice and other forms of presentation. Gender expression also works the other way as people assign gender to others based on their appearance, mannerisms and other gendered characteristics. Many transgender people seek to make their external appearance — their gender expression — congruent with their internal gender identity through clothing, pronouns, names, and, in some cases, hormones and surgical procedures. All people have gender expression, not just transgender people.

**Gender Fluidity** — Gender fluidity conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender expression, with interests and behaviors that may even change from day to day. Gender fluid individuals do not feel confined by restrictive boundaries of stereotypical expectations of girls or boys.

**Gender Identity** — One's inner concept of self as male, female, both or neither. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth. Most people become conscious of their gender identity between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. Most people have a gender identity that matches their assigned gender at birth. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their assigned gender. Some of these individuals choose to live socially as the other gender and may also hormonally and/or surgically change their bodies to more fully express their gender identity. All people have gender identity, not just transgender people.

**Gender Nonconforming/Gender Variant** — Refer to individuals whose behaviors and/or interests fall outside what is considered typical for their assigned gender at birth. Someone who identifies as "gender nonconforming" is not necessarily transgender. To the contrary, many people who are not transgender do not conform to gender stereotypes in their appearance, clothing, physical characteristics, interests or activities.

**Genderqueer** — This term represents a blurring of the lines around gender identity and sexual orientation. Genderqueer individuals typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and sexual orientation. This term is typically assigned an adult identifier and not used in reference to preadolescent children.

**Heteronormativity** — A cultural norm that assumes that heterosexuality is the only normal and acceptable sexual orientation.

**Heterosexism** — A social system of individual beliefs and actions, institutional rules and laws and cultural norms that privileges heterosexual relations and people and disadvantages same-sex relationships and lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

**Heterosexual** — Used as a noun or adjective to describe sexual orientation toward people of another sex, typically males toward females and vice versa. Heterosexual people are also referred to as “straight.”

**Homophobia** — Describes a range of negative feelings toward lesbian and gay people as individuals or as a group. Homophobia is manifested in hostile or derisive language or actions directed toward lesbian and gay people or those assumed to be gay or lesbian.

**Homosexual** — A 19th century medicalized description of same-sex behavior or attraction or people who are sexually attracted to others of the same sex.

**Intersex** — An estimated one in 2,000 babies is born with an “intersex” condition or disorders of sex development (DSD). People with intersex conditions (DSD) are born with physically mixed or atypical bodies with respect to sexual characteristics, that is, chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, and genitalia. These characteristics may not be visible and individuals may not be aware of the condition. Having an intersex condition does not necessarily affect a person’s gender identity. The NCAA Health and Safety/Sports Science Institute web page [www.ncaa.org/health-safety](http://www.ncaa.org/health-safety) has information about this topic.

**Lesbian** — An adjective or noun used to describe the sexual orientation of women who are sexually attracted to women.

**LGBTQ** — A shorthand description of sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions typically included when discussing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or queer issues.

**MTF (Male-to-Female)** — A person who was assigned to the male gender at birth but has a female gender identity.

**Queer** — An umbrella term that is sometimes used to refer to gender and sexual minorities. Because of its history as a negative description of lesbian and gay people and its association with radicalism, the use of queer is somewhat controversial.

**Questioning** — An adjective used to describe people, especially young people, who are in the process of defining their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Same-Gender Loving** — A term used by some African-American LGBT people to describe their sexual orientation in a way that differentiates their experiences and identity from those of white European American LGBT people.

**Sexual Orientation** — Refers to being romantically or sexually attracted to people of a specific gender, or in the case of bisexuals, any gender. Our sexual orientation and our gender identity are separate, distinct parts of our overall identity. Although children may not yet be aware of their sexual orientation, they usually have a strong sense of their gender identity.

**Straight (Heterosexual) Ally** — A heterosexual person who is committed in word and deed to counteracting homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and discrimination against or harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

**Transgender** — An “umbrella term” to describe anyone whose identity or behavior falls outside stereotypical gender norms. More narrowly defined, it refers to individuals whose gender identity does not match their assigned birth gender. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation (attraction to people of a specific gender). Therefore, transgender people may additionally identify as straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual.



**Transition** — The process by which a transgender individual lives consistently with his or her gender identity, and which may (but does not necessarily) include changing the person’s body through hormones and/or surgical procedures. Transition can occur in three ways: social transition through changes in clothing, hairstyle, name and/or pronouns; hormonal transition through the use of medicines such as hormone “blockers” or cross hormones to promote gender-based body changes; and/or surgical transition in which an individual’s body is modified through the addition or removal of gender-related physical traits. Based on current medical knowledge and practice, genital reconstructive surgery is not required in order to transition. Most transgender people in the United States do not have genital reconstructive surgery.

**Transsexual** — An individual whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth. This individual usually desires to physically

alter his or her body surgically and/or hormonally. This physical transition is a complicated, multistep process that may take years and may include, but is not limited to, cross-gender hormone therapy and a variety of surgical procedures. The precise treatments required vary from person to person.

**Transphobia** — Describes a range of negative feelings toward transgender or gender nonconforming people as individuals or as a group. Transphobia is manifested in hostile or derisive language or actions directed toward transgender or gender nonconforming people.

**Two Spirit** — A term chosen to distinctly express Native American/First Nations gender identity and gender variance. “Two-spirited” or “two-spirit” usually indicates a person whose body simultaneously manifests both a masculine and a feminine spirit.

## Appendix 2: LGBTQ Issues in Athletics Organizational Resource List

### **Athlete Ally** — Hudson Taylor

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

Athlete Ally is a nonprofit sports resource encouraging all individuals involved in sports to respect every member of their communities, regardless of perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, and to lead others in doing the same. Athlete Ally provides social advocacy campaigns, on-campus trainings and practical tools including resources to locate and learn about allied athletes, coaches, teams, athletics clubs and sports-based advocacy projects around the country.

### **Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation**

[www.standupfoundation.com](http://www.standupfoundation.com)

The Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation, Inc. is the world's first foundation dedicated to raising awareness of the long-term, damaging effects of bullying, and funding those doing real-world work to stop it. The foundation stands up against bullying regardless of to whom it happens. Because lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are often targeted by bullies, the foundation gives particular attention to this community. The foundation includes removing homophobia from sports as central to its mission.

### **Campus Pride Out To Play Project** — Shane Windmeyer

[www.campuspride.org/outtoplay](http://www.campuspride.org/outtoplay)

Out To Play is designed to address anti-LGBT slurs, bias and conduct in college sports. Out To Play also sponsors research on the climate for LGBT athletes in collegiate athletics. As part of the national project, Campus Pride published the first LGBT-Friendly Top 10 in college athletics in partnership with Compete Magazine.

### **Changing the Game** — The GLSEN Sports Project

[sports.glsen.org](http://sports.glsen.org)

Changing the Game: The GLSEN Sports Project is an education and advocacy initiative focused on addressing LGBT issues in K-12 school-based athletics and physical education programs. The Sports Project's mission is to assist K-12 schools in creating and maintaining an athletics and physical education climate that is based on the core

principles of respect, safety and equal access for all students, teachers and coaches regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression and integrating these efforts into overall school plans to ensure a safe, respectful school climate and culture.

### **Equality Coaching Alliance** — Roger Brigham

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

Equality Coaching Alliance is a virtual network to bring together LGBT sports coaches and their supporters. The alliance strives to represent all sports at all levels: youth, scholastic, adult recreational, professional and elite. ECA provides a [members-only online forum](#) for coaches, whether closeted or out, to interact with one another, sharing concerns, raising questions, and seeking and providing peer counseling and works on education and advocacy initiatives to improve awareness of LGBT coaching issues and encourage more inclusive and supportive sports environments for athletes and coaches.

### **Federation of Gay Games**

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

The Federation of Gay Games ensures that the Gay Games, the largest international sports and culture festival in the world open to all, take place every four years under the founding principles of participation, inclusion and personal best. The federation mission is to promote equality for all, and in particular for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people throughout the world. The federation believes that the Gay Games and the movement it created and nurtures are among the greatest forces for community empowerment and social change.

### **Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation**

[www.glaad.org/issues/sports](http://www.glaad.org/issues/sports)

GLAAD believes that what people see in the media has a huge impact, and GLAAD ensures images of LGBT people and allies grow acceptance, understanding and build support for equality. GLAAD has an impact on newspapers, magazines, blogs, radio, television, movies and more to transform attitudes and bring about real change by holding the media accountable for the words and images they produce. GLAAD works with organizations and individuals to increase LGBT visibility and secure equality.

**GO! Athletes** — Anna Aagenes[www.goathletes.org](http://www.goathletes.org)

Generation Out! Athletes is an outreach, education and support organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender high school and college student-athletes and allies. It serves as a network to connect LGBT student-athletes with other LGBT student-athletes. GO! Athletes is also dedicated to educating athletes, coaches, administrators and fans to foster a sports community that is accepting for all athletes, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

**IMEough** — Kye Allums[www.kyeallums.com](http://www.kyeallums.com)

Kye Allums, transgender athlete, speaks to college and high school audiences about his experiences and about transgender issues in athletics and in schools more generally.

**LGBT Issues in Sport Blog: Theory to Practice** — Ellen Staurowsky[www.LGBTinsport.com](http://www.LGBTinsport.com)

The purpose of the blog is to serve as the premier online location to share information and resources regarding LGBTQ issues in sport. Contributors come from the ranks of academe and the front lines of activism all working toward the greater goal of understanding the lives of LGBTQ individuals in sport through research and public policy.

**National Center for Lesbian Rights Sports Project** — Helen Carroll[www.nclrights.org](http://www.nclrights.org)

NCLR's Sports Project aims to level the playing field for LGBT players and coaches. More than 30 years ago, Title IX changed athletics forever by requiring that women and girls have equal access to sporting and athletics opportunities. Today NCLR's advocacy, public education and high-profile cases have the potential to equalize the treatment of LGBT athletes in this century. We seek nothing less than a world in which openly LGBT sports figures can be hailed as champions and role models at every level of competition.

**Outsports** — Cyd Zeigler and Jim Buzinski[www.outsports.com](http://www.outsports.com)

Outsports' mission is to build the broadest, deepest, most informative and most entertaining gay sports community. A mixture of breaking news, commentary, features, member profiles, photo galleries and discussion boards, Outsports is the place to go for sports fans and athletes.

**Pat Griffin's LGBT Sports Blog**[www.ittakesateam.blogspot.com](http://www.ittakesateam.blogspot.com)

Commentary on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues in sport from a longtime educator and advocate for social justice in sports. Griffin is also author of "Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport."

**Title IX Blog** — Erin Buzuvis and Kris Newhall[www.title-ix.blogspot.com](http://www.title-ix.blogspot.com)

An interdisciplinary resource for news, legal developments, commentary and scholarship about Title IX, the federal statute prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded schools. This blog often addresses intersections between sexism and homophobia in sports.

**You Can Play Project** — Patrick Burke[www.youcanplayproject.org](http://www.youcanplayproject.org)

You Can Play is dedicated to ensuring equality, respect and safety for all athletes, without regard to sexual orientation. You Can Play works to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete, judged by other athletes and fans alike, only by what they contribute to the sport or their team's success. You Can Play seeks to challenge the culture of locker rooms and spectator areas by focusing only on an athlete's skills, work ethic and competitive spirit.

## Appendix 3: LGBTQ Sports Books and Video Resources

### Nonfiction Books

- Anderson, E. (2005). *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*. Albany: SUNY.
- Birrell, S. & McDonald, M. (2000). *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representation*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Buzinski, J. & Zeigler, C. (2007). *The Outsports Revolution: Truth and Myth in the World of Gay Sports*. Alyson: New York.
- Cahn, S. (1994). *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Women's Sport*. Toronto: Free Press.
- Cayleff, S. (1995). *The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zaharias*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Crosset, T. (1995). *Outsiders in the Clubhouse: The World of Professional Women's Golf*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Festle, M. J. (1996). *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sports*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Messner, M. (1992). *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity*. Boston: Beacon.
- Messner, M. (2002). *Taking the Field: Women, Men and Sport*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.
- O'Reilly, J. & Cahn, S. (2007). *Women in Sports in the United States: A Documentary Reader*. Boston: Northeastern University.
- Rogers, S.F. (Ed.). (1999). *Women on the Verge: Lesbian Tales of Power and Play*. St. Martin's: NY.
- Sabo, D. & Messner, M. (Eds.). (1990). *Sport, Men and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Warren, P. N. (2007). *The Lavender Locker Room: 3000 Years of Great Athletes Whose Sexual Orientation Was Different*. Wildcat: Beverly Hills, CA.
- Woog, D. (1998). *Jocks: True Stories of America's Gay Athletes*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson.
- Woog, D. (2002). *Jocks2: Coming Out To Play*. Los Angeles: Alyson.
- Young, P. (1994). *Lesbians and Gays and Sports: Issues in Lesbian and Gay Life*. NY: Chelsea House.

### First-Person Accounts or Biographies

- Amaechi, J. (2007). *Man in the Middle*. ESPN.
- Anderson, E. (2000). *Trailblazing: The True Story of America's First Openly Gay Track Coach*. Los Angeles: Alyson.
- Bean, B. (2003). *Going the Other Way: Lessons from a Life In and Out of Major League Baseball*. NY: Marlowe.
- Galindo, R. (1997). *Icebreaker: An Autobiography of Rudy Galindo*. New York, Pocketbooks.
- Kinney-Hanson, S. (2004). *The Life of Helen Stephens: The Fulton Flash*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press.
- Kopay, D. & Young, P.D. (1977). *The David Kopay Story: An Extraordinary Revelation*. New York, Arbor House.
- Louganis, G. (1995). *Breaking the Surface*. New York, Random House.
- Pallone, D. (1990). *Behind the Mask: My Double Life in Baseball*. New York, Signet.
- Richards, R. (with John Ames). (1984). *Second Serve: The Renee Richards Story*. Stein and Day: NY.

- Richards, R. (with John Ames). (2007). *No Way Renee: The Second Half of My Notorious Life*. Simon & Shuster.
- Simmons, R. & Dimarco, D. (2006). *Out of Bounds*. NY: Carroll & Graf.
- Tuaolo, E. (2007). *Alone in the Trenches*. Sourcebooks, Inc.
- Waddell, T. & Schaap. (1996). *Gay Olympian: The Life and Death of Dr. Tom Waddell*. New York, Knopf.
- Yamaguchi, L. & Barber, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-do*. Los Angeles: Alyson.
- Zipter, Y. (1988). *Diamonds are a Dyke's Best Friend: Reflections, Reminiscences, and Reports from the Field on the Lesbian National Pastime*. NY: Firebrand.
- Zwerman, Z. (1995). *Martina Navratilova*. New York, Chelsea House.
- Fiction Books**
- Alguire, J. (1988). *All Out*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria.
- Alguire, J. (1995). *Iced*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria.
- Anshaw, C. (1992). *Aquamarine*. Boston: Mariner.
- Beck, P.V. (2009). *Sweet Turnaround J*. Fairfield, CA: Bedazzled Ink Publishing Co.
- Bledsoe, L. (1995). *Sweat*. Seattle: Seal
- Bright, J. (1988). *Sunday's Child*. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad.
- Brown, R. M. (1983). *Sudden Death*. NY: Bantam.
- Christie, K. (2010). *Solstice*. Tallahassee, FL: Bella Books.
- Cohen, C. (1994). *Smokey O*. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad.
- Crutcher, C. (1991). *Athletic Shorts: 6 Short Stories*. New York, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.
- Due, L. (1980). *High and Outside*. San Francisco: First Spinsters/Aunt Lute.
- Garrett, K. (1993). *Lady Lobo*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria
- Harris, E. L. (2009). *Basketball Jones*. Doubleday: NY.
- Kluger, S. (1984). *Changing Pitches*. Boston: Alyson.
- Konigsberg, B. (2008). *Out of the Pocket*. Dutton: NY.
- Lefcourt, P. (1992). *The Dreyfus Affair*. NY: HarperPerennial
- Levin, J. (1982). *Water Dancer*. NY: Pocketbooks.
- Levin, J. (1993). *The Sea of Light*. NY: Dutton.
- Meyer, W. (2009). *Rounding Third*. Levergne, TN: MaxM.
- Provenzano, J. (1999). *Pins: A Novel*. San Francisco, CA: Mymitude.
- Revoyr, N. (1997). *The Necessary Hunger*. NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Rogers, S. (Ed.). (1994). *Sportsdykes: Stories From On and Off the Field*. NY: St Martin's.
- Vermillion, M. (2006). *Murder by Mascot*. Alyson: NY
- Warren, P.N. (1994). *Harlan's Race*. Beverly Hills, CA: Wildcat Press.
- Warren, P.N. (1996). *The Front Runner*. Beverly Hills, CA: Wildcat Press.
- Warren, P.N. (1998). *Billy's Boy*. Beverly Hills, CA: Wildcat Press.

## Videos

### Playing UnFair: The Media Image of the Female Athlete

“Playing Unfair” is the first video to critically examine the post-Title IX media landscape in terms of the representation of female athletes. This video describes how media coverage of women’s sport focuses on female athletes’ femininity and sexuality. While female athleticism challenges gender norms, women athletes continue to be depicted in traditional roles that reaffirm their femininity—as wives and mothers or sex objects. The video looks at the persistence of heterosexism and homophobia in perpetuating gender stereotypes. Order from the Media Education Foundation at [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org) or by calling 800/897-0089.

### Tough Guise

A discussion and analysis of media representations of violent masculinity addressing the role of sport in men’s thinking about masculinity with a discussion guide available. Order from the Media Education Foundation: [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org) or by calling 800/897-0089.

### Training Rules — [www.trainingrules.com](http://www.trainingrules.com)

“Training Rules” examines how women’s intercollegiate sports, caught in a web of homophobic practices, collude in the destruction of the lives and dreams of many of its most talented athletes. Focuses on the women’s basketball program at Pennsylvania State University and former coach Rene Portland (60 minutes).

### No Look Pass — [www.nolookpassthemovie.com](http://www.nolookpassthemovie.com)

“No Look Pass” is the coming-of-age American dream story of Emily “Etay” Tay, a first generation Burmese immigrant from Chinatown, Los Angeles, who breaks all of the rules of tradition. After living a double life at Harvard University, she strives to play professional basketball in Germany while coming out as a lesbian. Emily’s dreams are no slam dunk — family, race, and “don’t ask, don’t tell” conspire against her, firing her passions on and off the court.

### Out. The Glenn Burke Story (Comcast) — [www.vimeo.com/16345717](http://www.vimeo.com/16345717)

A documentary about an African-American gay MLB player who played for the Los Angeles Dodgers and Oakland Athletics and the homophobia he encountered.

### Out for the Long Run — [www.tragoidia.com](http://www.tragoidia.com)

This documentary investigates the issue of homophobia in high school and college sports. Through interviews and video diaries, openly gay young athletes recount harrowing stories of the mockery, ostracism and abuse they have endured, and how this has affected their ability to compete. Even as the film powerfully reveals the disturbing prevalence of prejudice and bullying in the sports world, testimonies from gay professional athletes offer a message of hope for those struggling to be true to themselves.

### ESPN Outside the Lines — [www.espn.go.com/espn/otl](http://www.espn.go.com/espn/otl)

Several segments on transgender athletes, negative recruiting, lesbian and gay athletes, and coming out in professional sports.

## Appendix 4: Developing a Nondiscrimination Framework

In 2010, the NCAA Executive Committee passed a new framework for inclusion and diversity to further support the NCAA constitutional article prohibiting discrimination in the association and to define the expectations for the NCAA Inclusion Office. The applicable NCAA article (Constitution 2.6) states: *The Association shall promote an atmosphere of respect for and sensitivity to the dignity of every person. It is the policy of the Association to refrain from discrimination with respect to its governance policies, educational programs, activities and employment policies, including on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, creed or sexual orientation. It is the responsibility of each member institution to determine independently its own policy regarding nondiscrimination.* (Adopted: 1/16/93, Revised: 1/16/00)

The membership debated the list of possible discrimination triggers, not wanting to leave something out that should be included, but ultimately decided a list would be a helpful guide. The framework states:

*As a core value, the NCAA believes in and is committed to diversity, inclusion and gender equity among its student-athletes, coaches and administrators. We seek to establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion improve the learning environment for all student-athletes and enhance excellence within the Association.*

*The Office of Inclusion will provide or enable programming and education, which sustains foundations of a diverse and inclusive culture across dimensions of diversity including, but not limited to age, race, sex, class, national origin, creed, educational background, disability, gender expression, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation and work experiences.*

An athletics department seeking to develop nondiscrimination policy should first look to its campus policies and mission statement. The department should consult with the campus authorities to ensure its own policy aligns with campus policy and state and federal

law. Conference offices can facilitate conference policy and assist institutions in developing fair policy and practices.

Nondiscrimination policies should go hand-in-hand with education, accountability, consistent enforcement and no-retaliation practices. Policy statements should emphasize the value of diversity and respect for differences as an element of the educational experience and a strength for effective organizations.

This cannot be a one-time training issue. Expectations for nondiscrimination must be regularly discussed and supported with leadership from the top of the organization. Job performance evaluations and position descriptions should include nondiscrimination as an element of performance and leadership. Clear communication expectations must be described to avoid concerns going unreported and fear of retaliation preventing institutional knowledge and response.

The NCAA has published resources that assist institutions in the assessment of their diversity and inclusion policies and practice.

- [NCAA Best Practices: Achieving Excellence Through Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Diversity in Athletics: An Assessment of Exemplars and Institutional Best Practices](#)

The NCAA recommends the establishment of a standing campus committee, charged by the university president or chancellor, and staffed by a broad range of campus and athletics department staff, faculty and students. The committee should engage in meaningful evaluation of the athletics department's inclusion policy and efforts. It should review student-athlete experience survey and interview responses and work with the student-athlete advisory committee to educate and support inclusive efforts. Use this collaboration to measure performance on the institution's plan for inclusion and take action to demonstrate that the athletics department coaches, staff and student-athletes are Champions of Respect and inclusion of the LGBTQ community.

## Appendix 5: Campus Pride Report Score Card

Campus Pride  
2012 LGBTQ National College Athlete Report

# Score Card

## DEMOGRAPHICS:

**394**

Out of 8,481 NCAA athletes, **394** individuals in the study identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning.

**7** individuals identify as transgender student athletes.

None of them is part of a featured collegiate sport and most compete in NCAA Division III.



There are more women student-athletes who identify as LGBTQ than men who identify as LGBTQ in the study.



First year student-athletes are less likely to identify as LGBTQ...

...than are student-athletes who are sophomores, juniors, and seniors\*.

LGBTQ athletes are more likely than heterosexual athletes to have other marginalized identities, including:

- Being a woman
- Being a person of color
- Having a disability
- Not being Christian
- Playing in a non-featured collegiate sport

## LGBTQ REPRESENTATION BY SPORT:

Men's Sports



Women's Sports



# ONLY 18%

of LGBTQ student-athletes compete in a featured collegiate sport (as defined by each campus) compared to the 27% of heterosexual athletes.



## EFFECTS OF CAMPUS CLIMATE ON LGBTQ STUDENT-ATHLETES:



One in four LGBTQ student-athletes are pressured to be silent about their sexual identity among teammates & in playing collegiate sports.



LGBTQ student-athletes experience a more negative campus climate than their heterosexual teammates. They also have lower perceptions of respect from coaches and teammates.



Negative perceptions of campus climate and respect adversely influence LGBTQ student-athletes' athletic identities and academic success.



LGBTQ student-athletes are less likely to believe that their athletic department addresses discrimination among coaches & teammates, leading to lower levels of academic success.



21% of LGBTQ student-athletes are targets of derogatory remarks via email, Facebook, social media & other electronic means—almost double that of heterosexual teammates on campus

## IMPACT OF HARASSMENT ON LGBTQ STUDENT-ATHLETES:

### LGBTQ STUDENT-ATHLETES are:

**2X** more likely to experience harassment than heterosexual teammates

**39%** report harassment was based on sexual identity, something almost no heterosexual student-athletes reported

**3X** more likely to experience harassment in housing than heterosexual teammates on campus

**NEARLY 6X** more likely to be singled out as the resident authority due to their identity compared to heterosexual teammates

**51%** of LGBTQ student-athletes report feeling deliberately ignored or excluded compared to only 41% of their heterosexual teammates

**2-3X** more likely to be harassed in on-campus housing, general off-campus settings and at an opponent's venue than their heterosexual teammates

### LGBTQ STUDENT ATHLETES ARE ALSO...

**2X** more likely than heterosexual teammates to make a formal complaint to a university official about harassment

**LGBTQ student-athletes are less likely to consider leaving the university and more likely to speak with their coach about harassment than are their heterosexual teammates.**

Campus Pride  
**2012 LGBTQ College Athlete Report**

©2012. All rights reserved.



## Notes



The NCAA salutes the more than  
**400,000** student-athletes  
participating in **23 sports** at  
more than **1,100** member institutions



NCAA is a trademark of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.