

Homophobia

Homophobia is an irrational fear, hatred, or disapproval of homosexuality, its culture, or people who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, queer, or transgendered. The British Columbia Human Rights Code has deemed it illegal to harass, insult, or treat people differently because of their sexual orientation.

How does homophobic discrimination occur?

Discrimination is the act of treating someone unfairly due to some actual or perceived personal characteristic. Homophobic discrimination occurs when someone acts with contempt, hatred, fear, prejudice, aversion, or fear toward another based on non heterosexual orientation. Homophobic discrimination may involve verbal abuse, unwelcome remarks, insulting jokes, name calling, denial of services, not hiring or promoting someone, and/or displaying publications and displays that judge people based on sexual orientation. It is not uncommon for homophobic slurs to also be aimed at individuals whether or not they are of a homosexual orientation.

What is homophobic bullying?

Homophobic bullying can be mental or physical abuse that often involves derogatory remarks aimed at someone's perceived or actual sexual orientation. Research has found that 30-50% of all gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people have experienced homophobic harassment at school. Most incidents go unreported.

Why is it important to address?

Bullying, harassing, or insulting others can create debilitating long-term emotional, physical, and educational harm. The 2005 Youth Risk Behaviour Survey found sexual-minority students to be 2.5 times more likely to hurt themselves on purpose, 3 times more likely to have seriously considered suicide, and 4 times more likely to have actually attempted suicide.

BC Centre for Safe Schools & Communities
2007 Safe School Social Responsibility Survey for Secondary Students:

-5% of students identified as being gay, bisexual, or lesbian

-45% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students were male and 55% were female

- 41% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students feared being left out of social activities because of their sexual orientation

-62% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students had been called gay, fag, lesbian, or something similar, while 40% of the general student population were also called similar terms



Community Groups and Services to Support Youth in B.C.

BC Human Rights Coalition:

604.660.6811 or
1.800.663.0876
www.bchrcoalition.org

Prideline BC:
1.800.556.1170

Trans Alliance Society:
604.684.9872
www.transalliancesociety.org

Trans Youth Drop-In:
1.866.999.1514
www.vch.ca/transhealth

BC Centre for Safe Schools and Communities

33844 King Road
Abbotsford, BC
V2S 7M8

604.870.5936
1.888.224.7233
Fax: 604.870.5927

www.bccssc.ca

What can be done to prevent homophobia?

Homophobia at school or in the community should be taken very seriously. Schools can protect youth from this form of abuse by:

- Providing curriculum that discusses information about homosexuality in a non-judgmental manner;
- Equipping staff to recognize and deal effectively with homophobic slurs, bullying, or other incidents;
- Ensuring schools accept teachers who are homosexual. This can allow adults to become resources for students and staff.

How do you prevent and report discrimination?

As a basic prevention measure, it is important for schools to raise awareness of their codes of conduct, including bullying and harassment policies. Teachers should be trained and prepared to intervene immediately when homophobic remarks are made. If discrimination or harassment persists, and particularly if it is directed toward an individual, the incident should be reported and recorded consistently. Schools should deal with all incidents in a sensitive manner to ensure the problem is not neglected or get worse.

It is important for both students and staff to know their rights under the Human Rights code: <http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/human-rights-protection/> In addition, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child contains specific articles on safety and inclusion for children and youth. <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

CSSC Resources

- Call for assistance, referral or research services 1-888-224-7233
- CSSC Library On-line Catalogue - for ordering resources, [click here](#)
- CSSC Speakers Bureau – for training and workshops, [click here](#)

Resources

- BC Centre for Safe Schools and Communities: <http://www.bccssc.ca/>
- BC School District Policies <http://www.bcsta.org/districtPolicies>
- BC Teachers Federation Homophobia Action Group www.bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=6106
- Pride Education Network: www.pridenet.ca
- Ministry of Attorney General: www.gov.bc.ca/ag/