

# **LGBTQ Youth Commission Report**

To The

**MAINE GOVERNOR'S  
CHILDREN'S CABINET**

June 2008

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Governor’s Children’s Cabinet  
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# LGBTQ Youth Commission Report to the Governor's Children's Cabinet June 2008

## I. Background

***“Maine’s Children’s Cabinet is committed to ensuring that all youth and young adults have equitable opportunities to participate in their schools and communities and to lead safe and healthy lives. All youth and young adults in Maine should be free of any discriminatory actions, harassment, and/or violence, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.***

***“Therefore, the Children’s Cabinet recommends the establishment of a Commission to review, study, and address the challenges experienced by the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and questioning youth and young adults in Maine. The Commission will recommend practical, actionable strategies which can be implemented by individuals and systems that interact with children, youth and young adults, to reduce and eliminate anti-LGBTQ discrimination, harassment and violence.”***

*-- From the Maine Children’s Cabinet’s Charge to the LGBTQ Youth Commission*

The passage of LD 564 in 2005 by the Maine State Legislature—an act to establish policies and procedures to address bullying, harassment and sexual harassment— led to the creation of a “Climate Design Team” to implement this legislation. This Climate Design Team created the “Best Practice Guide to Bullying and Harassment Prevention,” now available through the Maine Department of Education’s web site.

In the course of reviewing research for the preparation of the Guide, it became apparent to members of the Climate Design Team that young people who identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgender are at significantly increased risk of suicide and self-harming behaviors. This awareness led to a recommendation to the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet to create a Commission that would fully review the research and best practices in relation to this valued population of youth in Maine. In response, the Children’s Cabinet decided to create the LGBTQ Youth Commission.

***There is a substantial body of evidence that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth and young adults are experiencing discrimination, harassment and/or violence in schools and communities. Research and data available both nationally and within Maine indicate:***

- ***Significant health disparities impacting LGBTQ youth and young adults (Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Health Disparities Report).***
- ***Sexual minority youth are disproportionately affected by suicide (1999 Surgeon General’s Call to Action, and Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program).***
- ***Second only to negative comments about appearance, anti-gay slurs are the most frequent hostile comments in middle and high schools. Students hear anti-gay slurs on average more than 25 times a day in school – once every 15 minutes.***

To address these issues, the Children’s Cabinet charged the LGBTQ Youth Commission with reviewing, studying and addressing the challenges experienced by LGBTQ youth and young adults in Maine. The composition of the membership was to be comprised of 30% representation from LGBTQ youth and young adults. A listing of Commission membership is included in Section V.

## **II. Commission Process**

The LGBTQ Youth Commission was formed in August, 2007, and began meeting in September, 2007. The leadership team is comprised of Commission Co-Chairs, Theodora J. Kalikow, President of the University of Maine at Farmington, Thom Harnett, Assistant Attorney General for Maine Civil Rights Education and Enforcement and Susan Savell, Executive Director, Communities for Children & Youth, representing the Children’s Cabinet, with the assistance of Nancy Findlan, Director of Prevention at the Greater Waterville Communities for Children and Youth. A process plan was developed by the commission leadership team with Gary J. Stern, Stern Consulting International, who provided guidance and facilitation for the Commission.

The full Commission met six times between September 2007 and June of 2008 in order to achieve the purposes mandated by the Children’s Cabinet. Early on in the process it was determined that teams would be formed to address the primary purposes of the Commission outlined by the Children’s Cabinet. The 5 teams assigned these responsibilities included: 1) Policy Review 2) Research and Evidence 3) Codes of Conduct 4) State Policies, Activities and Professional Development and 5) Best Practices.

To assist the Commission and teams, a private website was developed and utilized to post all meeting minutes and member contact information as well as to provide a site to download all pertinent documents for the Commission. This provided an online resource accessible to all members which now contains hundreds of files of resource material.

Based on the work completed by the Commission, draft recommendations were developed and shared by Commission members at a Stakeholder meeting held in May, 2008, to acquire feedback prior to the submission of the final recommendations to the Children’s Cabinet. The May Stakeholder meeting was attended by 120 individuals, demonstrating the importance of this issue in the state of Maine and the overwhelming interest of people to be engaged in the process. A list of participants is included in Appendix A.

## **III. Commission Purpose**

The LGBTQ Youth Commission was charged with recommending “practical, actionable strategies which can be implemented by individuals and systems that interact with children, youth, and young adults, to reduce and eliminate anti-LGBTQ discrimination, harassment and violence.” Specifically, the Commission was asked to develop recommendations to be considered by all branches of State government; and identify specific, sustainable means to assure implementation of the Commission’s recommendations based on the following:

***1) The review of public policy to include statutory and regulatory provisions, public and private policies and practices.***

Maine is among other leading states in the development of civil and human rights laws. We are one of 13 states to have a non-discrimination law that includes sexual orientation *and* gender identity. This means that all state and private agencies, and their programs, must be in compliance with this basic law. The passage of the Maine Human Rights law therefore raised the grade given Maine by GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) from an F in 2004 to a B in 2005.

In addition to this basic law, the State of Maine has developed policies that include domestic partner benefits (including family medical leave), adoption and inheritance rights, next of kin status, and absentee ballot privileges. Same sex couples are also allowed to serve as foster parents. In comparison to states that allow civil unions or marriage, however, young people in Maine are still in need of certain equal rights and protections. And there is still the question of whether domestic partnership policies that fall under the jurisdiction of municipalities apply to both private and public employees. GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders) has compiled information about policies related to GLBTQ youth; a PDF format of their work is posted on their website at [http://www.glad.org/rights/Rights\\_of\\_LGBTQ\\_Youth%20in\\_ME.pdf](http://www.glad.org/rights/Rights_of_LGBTQ_Youth%20in_ME.pdf).

***2) The review of research and evidence regarding the extent to which this section of minority youth and young adults experience discrimination, harassment and violence.***

The Research and Evidence Team has consolidated volumes of research into the following findings, making a very strong case for why we need to stay focused on the prevention of harassment and violence against LGBTQ youth<sup>1</sup>:

- *The great majority of LGBTQ people navigate the challenging times of their youth in ways that are healthy and reasonably happy, and that lead to satisfying and productive adulthood. Nevertheless, the proportion who do not is unacceptably high in comparison to their peers.* Just as we do not accept the existence of sexual abuse or domestic violence even though the majority of people do not experience those things, so we must not accept the existence of the emotional and sometimes physical abuse that LGBTQ youth too often receive in their communities, schools, churches and homes.
- *About 5% of high school students, or about 750,000 in the U.S., identify themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual. About 5% of Maine high school students (about 3,300) acknowledge same-sex sexual experience.* It is likely that more than

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<sup>1</sup> There are numerous sources of strong research data to support these findings, including the following: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network; Human Rights Watch; American Association of University Women; Washington State Safe Schools Coalition; National Gay & Lesbian Task Force; Rich Savin-Williams; Maine Dept. of Health; Jordon Bosse, Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders; American Psychological Association. *See Appendix B on page 36 for a more complete source list.*

5% experience same-sex erotic or romantic attraction without labeling themselves. Increasing numbers of youth whom we refer to as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender reject such a limited list of orientation and gender identifications, some preferring terms such as “queer”, “gender-queer”, “pansexual”, “fluid”, “boi”, “gurl”; or refusing to accept any label for their gender or orientation. The binary categories of “gay or straight” and “male or female” do not represent reality well.

- *LGBTQ youth all over the country are at seriously increased risk of numerous regrettable things, compared with non-LGBTQ peers. These include harassment, threats, violence, school absence, unwise drug use, other risk-taking, suicide and homelessness.* Similar patterns of increased risk exist among other groups and individuals who experience oppression and discrimination. It is not the characteristics of the targeted populations that result in the heightened risks – those are rather the predictable responses to oppression and discrimination. It is of particular concern that LGBTQ youth are perhaps three times as likely as other youth to attempt suicide. Again, we should stress that while suicide is the second or third greatest cause of adolescent death, the great majority of adolescents thrive and become adults.
- *Second only to negative comments about appearance, anti-gay slurs are the most frequent hostile comments in middle and high schools.* Students hear anti-gay slurs on average more than 25 times a day in school – once every 15 minutes. This creates a toxic environment, and violates Maine’s Human Rights Act. Teachers too seldom intervene, and are sometimes the source of such slurs.
- *Maine LGBTQ youth do not appear to differ significantly from national samples, aside from some being more isolated due to rural residence. That isolation creates a significant challenge. Though Maine-specific data are rather slim, they are consistent with national data and thus are troubling.* Academic research by some individuals, and general data gathered by State departments via Youth Risk Behavior Surveys constitute our sources. We hope to have more specific questions included in the next Integrated Youth Health Survey.
- *Adults, even those responsible for the safety of youth, too seldom stand up for their rights and safety.* Some do not notice, some consider the abuse to be normal, others fear to confront the abuse, especially if they do not have clear support from their administrators. Still others blame LGBTQ youth for being who they are and thereby “attracting” abuse.
- *Youth (particularly boys) who do not identify as gay are troubled at least equally when targeted (as often happens) by anti-gay language.* Anti-gay slurs are widely used to attack individuals regardless of actual or even perceived sexual orientation. Most often they are used to demean youth who do not adhere to narrow gender-specific roles – e.g. boys who are not “manly enough.” Not only are those targeted by slurs affected, but also those who overhear. The “collateral damage” of slurs degrades those who know the slur applies to them or their loved ones.
- *Research has revealed some of the personal, family, school and community features that help LGBTQ youth cope with the stressors mentioned above, explaining to some degree why it is that many LGBTQ youth cope better than*

*others*. Good self-esteem, adequate personal coping skills, good family functioning, and accepting school environments are among those protective factors.

- *LGBTQ youth who view their victimization as something wrong with themselves report significantly more victimization at home and in school than do LGBTQ youth who recognize that the problem is society's*. It is not just that they cope less well with the stressors, but also that they appear to receive more mistreatment and/or to be more easily distressed by that treatment.
- *States that have laws specific to LGBTQ safety, and schools that have LGBTQ-specific support (such as gay-straight alliances) and anti-harassment policies that specify LGBT, tend to be significantly safer places for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression*. It is not yet clear what is cause and what is effect. Nationally, about half of schools have harassment policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation. Students in the seven states that forbid gay-positive policies (“no promo homo”) experience less school safety for all students. Students in the nine states that have laws inclusive of sexual orientation experience greater school safety. But, anti-harassment policies that do not include specific mention of sexual orientation create no more safety than no anti-harassment policies at all. Explicit leadership by school administrators is a crucial necessity.
- *Students whose parents are LGBT have more parent involvement in school on average, but both they and their parents experience less respect and inclusion, compared with other families*.
- *Data for bisexual and for transgender youth are relatively sparse compared to data for lesbian and gay youth*. These categories were largely ignored until recent years, just as gay and lesbian youth were ignored earlier. Some people still deny the existence of bisexuality, and many are unsettled when transgender people come to their attention. Ignorance of these issues appears common even among many who have some understanding of homosexuality.
- *College campuses, with some exceptions, do not appear to be significantly safer environments than are high schools, though we have not yet found Maine-specific data*. Many LGBT youth choose to “come out” only after they have left home, and this may create greater exposure to prejudice than before. Also there is less active staff monitoring of student behavior in college than in primary and secondary schools.
- *LGBT teachers who can safely be “out” at work are more likely to feel respected and secure in their roles, are more likely to be effective as teachers, and their students are more likely to learn well*. Students need to feel safe and accepted in order to take the risks associated with academic and social development. Educators also need to feel safe and accepted in order to provide the best education to these students. There is evidence that teachers who feel safe have a higher level of professional efficacy, which in turn contributes to increased student achievement.

- *LGBTQ youth are at risk of maltreatment not only in schools, but also in many of their homes, churches and communities, as well as foster care, homeless shelters and corrections facilities. Again, no Maine-specific random data aside from the high proportion of LGBTQ youth in homeless shelters. National and state estimates suggest that between 20% and 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ – a disproportionate number. Although “coming out” at home is often highly stressful both for LGBT youth and for their parents, the great majority of families do negotiate the situation satisfactorily. Three of the twenty complaints of unlawful anti-LGBT discrimination have been made on behalf of Maine youth to the Maine Human Rights Commission – all occurring in schools.*
- *LGBTQ youth often have difficulty finding suitable medical care. That appears especially true for transgender youth. Again, no Maine-specific data. By “suitable” we mean knowledgeable providers who convey open attitudes and assure confidentiality.*
- *There is clear connection between experiences of harassment and both school achievement and aspirations. Targeted LGBTQ students have significantly lower grades on average, and are much less likely than their peers to aspire to attend college.*
- *Although research samples vary as to whether they are random (all students including LGBTQ) or “convenience” (invited from supportive organizations for LGBTQ youth), or including staff such as teachers, the resulting figures are largely consistent. LGBTQ youth are more likely than other youth to say they experience mistreatment; teachers are more likely to be aware of school policies; and students are more likely to be aware of infractions of those policies. Data are not easily comparable among the numerous studies that we have discovered – there are different definitions, samples, sample sizes, questions, etc.. Nevertheless, the patterns are disquieting.*

**3) *The review of school administrative units’ student codes of conduct.***

The state mandates that all school districts in Maine have a code of conduct. But a review of many of them revealed that the focus appears to be primarily on prohibited behaviors, and does not specifically address issues related to sexual orientation, gender expression or LGBTQ youth. Nor do many articulate positive strategies for the affirmation of diversity in order to create a caring school climate.

**4) *The review of State of Maine government personnel policies and practices.***

The Department of Administrative and Financial Services has translated the Maine Human Rights Act into supportive personnel policies and practices, as referenced earlier. For example, all state employees are required to have harassment training, including issues related to sexual orientation, and domestic partnership policies cover health benefits for both partners. *It has been suggested that training regarding cultural competency on LGBTQ issues could be incorporated into the state’s ongoing training curricula.*

**5) *An analysis of professional development opportunities for school and institutions for higher education staff and community members.***

This study revealed that more is being done at the post-secondary level than other levels, particularly for educators. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension has developed a publication entitled “Creating Safe Spaces for All Youth” in their *Family Issues* series that was sent to all school counselors several years ago. And a survey of directors of student life at colleges received a variety of responses from “we don’t really do anything,” to “we do a ton.”

Best practices exist nationally for the training of K-12 educators and school staff, but it was difficult to determine whether many schools are using these resources. If addressed at all, some LGBTQ youth issues are mentioned in the context of HIV/AIDS education, suicide prevention, or the support of Civil Rights Teams. Not all Civil Rights Teams, however, focus on LGBTQ youth or their issues, and only 221 schools have Civil Rights Teams among the 721 schools throughout the state. Likewise, there are only 40 Gay Straight Alliances out of 160 middle and high schools.

**6) *An assessment of the Children’s Cabinet activities involving youth, assessing participation of sexual minority youth.***

Many state agency programs have been addressing the issues facing LGBTQ youth in the last several years. For example, within the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Substance Abuse commissioned a study of the risks facing this population; the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention held a Summit on LGBTI Health Disparities; and the Office of Child and Family Services is in the process of developing policies for LGBTQ foster families and youth in care. Within the Department of Education, staff are assigned to work on HIV/AIDS education, which includes the LGBTQ youth population in Maine.

Most of the departments do not have specific training for their staff regarding LGBTQ cultural competency, even though their employees interact, at least occasionally, with LGBTQ youth, including public safety officials (such as police, firefighters, and ambulance teams), as well as juvenile corrections officers, career center counselors and child protective workers.

**7) *The review of best practices for supporting and improving the lives of LGBTQ youth.***

The Best Practices Team identified many resources for the prevention of discrimination, harassment and violence against LGBTQ youth. They examined workshops, bibliographies, screenings, service delivery, and general awareness/knowledge/skills training. There is best practice information relating to parents & families, mental health and health care practices, schools, public safety, social work, pediatrics, labor, corrections, universities, campus religious organizations, and others. Sources include national organizations like GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), counselor organizations, safe schools coalitions, LGBTQ support groups, major healthcare groups,

several states and particular cities that seemed to be leaders in awareness and competency training.

*Basically the “big three” best practices identified are the enforcement of non-discrimination laws and policies, professional development, and advocacy groups supporting and empowering students, such as Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs).* These groups allow students to be leaders and agents of change on their own behalf. Additionally, there is evidence that contact with “out” gay and lesbian adults is correlated to reductions in homophobia and improved attitudes toward LGBT people in general. The leading “on the ground” advocacy groups with significant LGBTQ youth engagement in Maine include Outright in Lewiston/Auburn, PRYSM in Portland, and Out As I Want To Be in Rockland.

#### **IV. Recommendations for Actionable Strategies**

- A. Give Maine schools priority attention.**
- B. Create and promote a *Rainbow Star System* of achievement for schools, state agencies and community organizations that ensure their environments are fully supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.**
- C. Establish a permanent Commission on LGBTQ Youth to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of this Commission that are accepted by the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet.**
- D. Develop a web-based resource library that will provide ongoing guidance for the Commission and all organizations striving to attain *Rainbow Stars*.**

#### **Recommendation A:**

#### **Give Maine schools priority attention.**

The Commission spent a great deal of time focusing on the quality of life within Maine schools for LGBTQ youth—the place where most children and youth spend much of their young lives, often in a hostile and unsafe environment. Specifics include:

- 1) 0-5 early care and education:
  - a) Special training for child care providers on the recognition and support of LGBTQ families and children’s gender identity and expression.
  - b) The inclusion of LGBT family-friendly books for young children in head start centers and other day care facilities.
  - c) Information to parents about positive parenting in relation to gender expression and diverse family configurations.
- 2) Pre-K-12 schools:
  - a) Provide comprehensive sexuality education.
  - b) Encourage continued funding of the Civil Rights Teams.
  - c) Encourage the formation of Gay Straight Alliances in all secondary schools, and support GSA Advisors with the pay comparable to other student activity advisors.
  - d) Provide support for LBGT educators, school staff, volunteers and parents to be “out” in an atmosphere of safety in order to serve as role models for the youth they serve.
  - e) Ensure the inclusion of LGBTQ language and issues in the statewide initiative for “Safe, Fair and Responsive Schools.”
  - f) Identify an “LGBTQ Youth Advocate” in every school building, following the model of the “Keeping Maine’s Children Connected” regional and statewide system, in order to keep Maine’s LGBTQ youth connected *and safe*.
  - g) Ensure inclusion of LGBTQ youth issues and concerns in school climate surveys, including the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey.
  - h) Assure that school boards and hiring teams expect cultural competency regarding LGBTQ youth topics and issues among their applicants.
  - i) Review educator certification policies and include language about LGBTQ cultural competency.

- j) Encourage the Maine School Management Association, the Maine School Boards Association, the Maine School Superintendents Association, the Maine Education Association, the Maine Principals Association and Maine home school associations to provide leadership and support for LGBTQ students.
  - k) Encourage the creation of a “Maine Safe Schools Coalition” affiliated with an existing organization (such as Equality Maine) or standing alone as an independent 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization (see Appendix C for a copy of the draft proposal).
- 3) Colleges and Universities:
- a) Conduct and publish a study of how Maine’s colleges rate in relation to the “*Campus Pride* friendly campus climate index.”
  - b) Facilitate peer support among colleges and universities to identify and implement effective follow-up strategies.
  - c) Integrate information about working with and supporting LGBTQ youth into teacher training curricula.

### **Recommendation B:**

**Create and promote a *Rainbow Star System* of achievement for schools, state agencies and community organizations that ensure their environments are fully supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.**

In the process of fulfilling the mandate of the Commission to review and study policies and programs affecting LGBTQ youth, we discovered that an enormous amount of useful research has already been done and effective practices identified. A suggested reading list is attached to this report in Section VI, page 20.

The critical issue seems to be the *disconnect* between what we know and what is done. While many educators, policy makers and community leaders have access to this knowledge and research, institutionalized homophobia, combined with fear of negative community reaction, prevents many well-intentioned leaders from speaking words and taking actions that openly support our LGBTQ youth and adults.

Therefore the Commission examined a variety of strategies that will provide opportunities and incentives for schools, state agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, communities of faith, families and individuals to reduce and eliminate discrimination, harassment and violence directed at LGBTQ youth and adults. Perhaps the most imaginative strategy that emerged is the creation of a *Rainbow Star System*, through which schools, state agencies and all other organizations that interact with children and youth can attain *Rainbow Stars* by moving steadily from legal compliance to exemplary practice.

The *Rainbow Star System* is a colorful, visible way to provide guidance for courageous action by individuals and organizations, and is defined according the following five levels, which build on one another.



## **Public Compliance with Law and Policy**

**One Rainbow Star** will be attained by those institutions that have done an assessment of their written policies, are in full compliance with the Maine Human Rights and Civil Rights Acts, and implement procedures to address incidents of discrimination. These actions would include:

- 1) Citing the Maine Human Rights Act as a basis for all related organizational policies.
- 2) Understanding the Maine Human Rights Act and its implications for legal compliance and institutional liability.
- 3) Understanding the Maine Civil Rights Act and its implications in an organizational setting for legal compliance and individual liability.
- 4) Adopting and communicating model policies and procedures that protect the rights and safety of all students, employees and consumers.
- 5) Including the language “sexual orientation” and “gender identity and expression” in all non-discrimination documents.
- 6) Implementing procedures to immediately address any incidents of discrimination, harassment or violence that may occur.



## **Training for All Staff and Volunteers**

**Two Rainbow Stars** will be attained by those institutions that have provided training for all of their members, employees and volunteers on the unique needs, strengths and issues facing LGBTQ youth, and continue to do so as staff changes occur. Downloadable modules and resources—many of which already exist— will be available for use by all sectors, as well as training resources specific to such disciplines as law enforcement, juvenile corrections and child welfare. Topics and resources addressed by the training might include:

- 1) “Understanding and Supporting LGBTQ Youth” (curriculum developed by Stephen Russell, PhD, University of Arizona).
- 2) Creating welcoming questions and processes for obtaining useful information on intake forms, interviews, and applications (such as foster parent questionnaires and mental health agency forms).
- 3) Intervening to stop harassment and modeling supportive behavior (with resources such as the “Maine’s Best Practices in Bullying and Harassment Prevention” online guide).
- 4) Employing effective strategies for youth suicide prevention (such as the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s “Lifelines” and “Gatekeeper” trainings).
- 5) Honoring decisions about the disclosure of personal information and ensuring safety when persons are “coming out,” particularly in schools (through the resources provided by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network—GLSEN).
- 6) Utilizing best practices in the fields of physical and mental health, including comprehensive standards of practice (from the Boston GLBT Health Access Project and San Francisco Transgender HIV Health Services).

- 7) Overcoming health disparities among the LGBTQ population and providing full and equal access to services (using guidance such as the American Academy of Pediatrics “Sexual Orientation and Pediatrics”).
- 8) Addressing the needs of out-of-school and homeless youth.
- 9) Utilizing the “responsible citizen learning result” to provide content for teacher in-service training opportunities.
- 10) Providing in-service training for employees on how to make Maine workplaces safe and empowering environments for LGBTQ youth (by a professional for-profit such as “Common Ground” or non-profit such as “Out and Equal”).
- 11) Honoring the unique needs of transgender youth in school and custodial situations, such as the implementation of safe bathroom policies.
- 12) Creating and sustaining Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in schools and LGBT affinity groups in workplaces.
- 13) Supporting the work of Civil Rights Teams in Maine schools to explicitly address issues and concerns of LGBTQ youth.
- 14) Changing community attitudes by speaking out (through resources provided by the Maine Speakout Project, the Ugly Ducklings Community Action Kit developed by Hardy Girls Healthy Women, and a variety of articles on LGBTQ realities and priorities).
- 15) Engaging parents and guardians in the process of learning about their LGBTQ children and youth.
- 16) Promoting awareness of the limited domestic partnership law in Maine, which offers some security to gay or lesbian parents.
- 17) Accessing organizations that support gay and lesbian families, such as PFLAG, COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), and the Gay Lesbian Parenting Association, as well as LGBTQ youth, such as Outright, PRYSM, and Out As I Want To Be.
- 18) Using resources for faith-based organizations such as “Our Whole Lives,” available from by the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- 19) Highlighting positive, online opportunities for LGBTQ youth to find voice and a sense of community.
- 20) Responding to “push back” by individuals and groups who are concerned or hostile about the inclusion and support of LGBTQ youth.

For example, the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, colleges that confer teaching degrees, the State of Maine employee training system, the Maine Youth Centers, Maine public and private K-12 schools, Maine state agencies, the foster care system, youth serving organizations (libraries, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Youth Athletic Leagues), could attain two stars by training all staff and volunteers on relevant areas identified above. One of the creative ideas generated by the stakeholders attending the Commission’s meeting on May 20 was to create an online “LGBTQ Cultural Competency” certificate through the University of Maine system.



## **Inclusion and Visibility**

**Three Rainbow Stars** will be attained by those institutions that have taken steps to begin creating safety for the genuine inclusion and visibility of LGBTQ youth and adults. This could mean:

- 1) Civil Rights Teams in all schools.
- 2) Gay Straight Alliances in middle and high schools—welcomed and supported.
- 3) Affinity Groups in workplaces.
- 4) Campus Pride organizations in colleges and universities.
- 5) Books and films in libraries that reflect LGBTQ lives and families.
- 6) “Open and Affirming” or “Welcoming” signs on religious institutions.
- 7) LGBTQ authors and history identified in educational curricula.
- 8) Rainbow flags or stars displayed to indicate an LGBTQ friendly home, establishment or event.
- 9) LGBTQ-friendly magazines and articles in medical, professional and state agency office waiting areas.
- 10) Marketing that portrays Maine as an LGBTQ-friendly destination.
- 11) Positive images of LGBTQ couples and families in institutional marketing materials and in the media.



## **Active Support**

**Four Rainbow Stars** will be attained by institutions that celebrate LGBTQ youth by prominently displaying their *Rainbow Stars* in a public place and:

- 1) Supporting same sex couples’ participation in officially sponsored school and community events, such as dances and proms.
- 2) “Out” adults in positions of leadership demonstrating that “coming out” is safe and encouraged, with visible support from “allies.”
- 3) Giving attention and affirmation to significant events and relationships in the lives of LGBTQ youth.
- 4) Supporting LGBTQ youth who attend regional and national conferences with recognition commensurate to other youth leadership activities.



## **Leadership and Celebration**

- 1) Presenting LGBTQ youth-themed art, poetry and performances.
- 2) Organization leaders serving as public advocates for LGBTQ youth.
- 3) Honoring “*Rainbow Heroes*” who take courageous steps to support LGBTQ youth.
- 4) Participating in Gay Pride parades and events.
- 5) Publicly advocating for advancements in public policy that protect and recognize LGBT families and relationships.



## Rainbow Star System Implementation Strategies



The 120 stakeholders who attended the Commission's meeting on May 20, 2008 made many recommendations for effective ways to promote this star system:

- 1) Clearly articulate and publicize the many benefits of attaining *Rainbow Stars*, including greater safety and inclusion for *all* people, as well as the prevention of lawsuits, social service costs, school dropout, and homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- 2) Create a "*Guide to the Stars --and How to Attain Them*" to help organizations understand the opportunities and outcome measures, especially providing clear guidance for GSAs and other youth-led organizations.
- 3) Before going public, recruit a large number of organizations who genuinely want to become *Five Star* institutions in order to create "*Rainbow Champions*" and models for others to follow.
- 4) Empower the Maine Youth Action Network, THRIVE, and the Maine Youth Leadership Advisory Team to promote the *Rainbow Star* system within youth networks committed to health and social change.
- 5) Following the lead of the Maine Healthcare Access Foundation, encourage grant-making organizations to deny funding to any institution that has not attained one *Rainbow Star*.
- 6) Utilize the new Healthy Maine Partnerships, the Public Health Districts and their District Coordinating Councils to disseminate information about the *Rainbow Star* system, particularly in relation to overcoming LGBTQ youth health disparities.
- 7) Ask the Department of Education to support the *Rainbow Star* system in a variety of ways:
  - a) Tying department funding and contracts to the attainment of at least one *Rainbow Star*.
  - b) Providing resources and training for school leadership who need help with the requirements of legal compliance.
  - c) Embedding the *Rainbow Star* effort in the Coordinated School Health Program.
  - d) Connecting the "Bridging the Achievement Gap" initiative to the unique stressors experienced by LGBTQ youth.
  - e) Creating a "human rights" section on the MEA, testing knowledge of LGBT inclusion in the Human Rights Law.
  - f) Mandating positions within the new school districts for "safe school compliance officers."
  - g) Utilizing the "Safe, Fair and Responsive Schools Survey" as a pre and post assessment of *Rainbow Star* Status.
  - h) Including questions about LGBTQ youth in the new "Integrated Maine Youth Health Survey" administered in schools.
  - i) Encouraging the formation of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in every school district.

Youth attending the stakeholder meeting said "because the state said so" is a huge support to the young people advocating for the creation and support of a local GSA. They were particularly enthusiastic about the potential of the *Rainbow Star* system to provide specific goals for GSAs to work on within their schools and communities.

## **Recommendation C:**

### **Establish a permanent Commission on LGBTQ Youth to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of this Commission that are accepted by the Governor's Children's Cabinet.**

It was clear to all members that the amount of work necessary to implement these recommendations will take us far beyond the current Commission charter to complete work in June, 2008. Therefore, we recommend that a permanent Commission be created that will include broad representation from the full range of stakeholders. This permanent LGBTQ Youth Commission could look like one of the following options:

1. A Legislative Commission on LGBTQ Youth, authorized by the Maine State Legislature.
2. An Executive Order by the Governor to create an LGBTQ Youth Commission that will be managed by the Governor's Children's Cabinet.

The structure and responsibilities of the permanent Commission will include:

- 1) Representation from each of the Governor's Children's Cabinet agencies, the Attorney General's Office, the Maine State Legislature, the Maine Judiciary, Maine education associations, health providers (including mental health), law enforcement, youth-serving organizations, businesses and faith-based organizations. 30% of the members will be youth and young adults.
- 2) Commission sub-committees or task forces will be established to focus on priority areas such as K-12 schools, colleges and universities, state government policies and programs, workplace policies, physical and mental health practices and youth-serving organizations, which will refine the detailed and specific guidelines and strategies generated by this Commission for each sector. For example, see Appendix D for an example of the kind of strategies identified by the Policy and Review and Best Practices Teams in the areas of family dynamics, law enforcement, and physical and mental health services.
- 3) The Commission will identify specific challenges Maine needs to address and measure success in relation to established benchmarks on the Maine Marks dashboard, such as "increase in personal safety, decrease in verbal insults and safer school climate."
- 4) The Commission may choose to document the financial and other costs of *not* creating an effective prevention strategy for LGBTQ youth, asking the questions: what are the costs to society of sustaining the status quo, with LGBTQ youth dropping out of school, leaving the state, not attending college, becoming homeless, coping with mental health issues and completing suicide? And, what is the cost to our schools and other institutions of the liability incurred by *not* taking positive actions to prevent violations of the Maine Civil and Human Rights Laws?
- 5) The Commission will oversee the adoption or creation of model policies and procedures, as well as training elements that will support the attainment of *Rainbow Stars*. This will include generic modules that can be used by any organization as well as specific modules for agencies that deal with unique LGBTQ issues— such as LGBTQ youth within the juvenile justice system — and can be included in the ongoing training practices of each agency or organization.
- 6) The Commission will establish a "Liaison System" in which:
  - a) Each Children's Cabinet agency (including appropriate divisions), the Attorney General's Office, the Maine Judiciary, and each School District will appoint an "LGBTQ Youth Liaison" who will be responsible for helping their respective organization achieve *Five*

- Rainbow Stars* through compliance, training, inclusion, support and leadership.
- b) These Liaisons will provide leadership for the development of assessments, plans, peer support, training materials, and annual data collection.
  - c) The Liaisons will meet regularly to share ideas for the implementation of effective practices.
  - d) The Liaisons will make an annual report of progress and achievements to the Maine State Legislature and/or the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet.
- 7) The Commission will appoint an independent citizen-based “*Rainbow Star Panel*,” including youth, responsible for the full constellation of *Rainbow Star* system implementation issues. Activities of the panel will include the development of criteria and performance measures; review of an online application process; and recommendations to the Commission for the acknowledgment of *Rainbow Stars*.
  - 8) The Commission will hold an annual statewide conference on LGBTQ Youth, including a *Rainbow Stars* awards ceremony, led by the Governor, for organizations that wish to be publicly recognized for their achievements. The conference will advance strategies for the successful attainment of *Rainbow Stars*.
  - 9) The Commission will apply to private and public Maine and national funders of initiatives related to LGBTQ youth to:
    - a) Enhance support for existing organizations and initiatives working to support LGBTQ youth.
    - b) Provide incentives for organizations to attain *Five Rainbow Stars*.
    - c) Encourage the development of models and promising practices that can be evaluated and replicated.

**Recommendation D:**

**Develop a web-based resource library that will provide ongoing guidance for the Commission and all organizations striving to attain *Rainbow Stars*.**

The review and study teams within the Commission discovered over 500 resources that provide important information for all of the organizations working toward *Rainbow Star* attainment. These resources need to be organized and made thoroughly accessible to the general public. Therefore we need to:

- 1) Create a continuously updated web-based system to enable people to search for information easily, including samples of inclusive forms.
- 2) Contract with a library bibliographer and web expert to design and organize the system, utilizing the skills of LGBTQ youth and young adults, and the availability of newer technologies, such as social networking.
- 3) Establish a permanent home for Commission resources and an organized network of links to such sites as the existing “Best Practices for Safe, Fair, Healthy and Responsive Schools” site on the Department of Education’s website; the Healthy Maine Partnership site on the Maine State Library web system; and the Maine Community Foundation’s Equity Fund website currently under development.

## V. Commission Membership

<b>Commission Co-Chairs</b>		
Thom Harnett	Assistant. Attorney General	Civil Rights Education & Enforcement
Theodora (Theo) J. Kalikow	President	University of Maine at Farmington
<b>Commission Members</b>		
Charlotte Bates	Director Policy	Maine School Management Association
Grace Batsford	Youth	
Andrea Bechen	Youth	
Franklin Brooks, Ph.D	Representative	National Association of Social Workers
Pentheia Burns	Policy Associate.	Muskie School of Public Service
Paula Callan	Assistant Principal	Messalonskee High School
Crystal Castro	Youth	
Beth Edmonds	President	Maine Senate
Linda Elias	Director	Child Care Connections
Neal Flynn	Representative	MEA
Laura Gottfried	Counselor	Community Counseling Center
Ariel Grosvenor	Youth	Mt Ararat High School
Andrew Jones	Young Adult	Portland Public Health
Paul Knowles	Superintendent	Maine S.A.D. #11
Gemma Laser	Young Adult/ Outreach Coordinator.	C4CY Americorps *VISTA, Hardy Girls Healthy Women
Tiffany Maiuri	Webmaster	University of Maine at Farmington
Hillary Orr	Youth	
Betsy Parsons	Teacher	Deering High School
Peter Rees	Retired Psychologist	GLSEN
Pat Ryan	Executive Director	Human Rights Commission
Patrick Sanders	Young Adult	Colby College
Susan Sanders	Director, Guidance	Wiscasset High School
Penny Sargent	Advisor	Outright LA
Rev. Jill Saxby	Executive Director	Maine Council of Churches
Betsy Smith	Executive Director	Equality Maine
Harriet Smith	Parent	PFLAG
Joanna Testa	Program Manager/Case Manager	PRYSM
Howard M. Solomon	Consultant	University of Southern Maine Maine Community Foundation Equity Fund
Kenneth W. Town	Board Member	Maine House of Representatives, Office of the Speaker of the House
Kaylene Waindle	Special Assistant, Communications & Policy	
Liz Winfeld	Owner	Common Ground Consulting

<b>Staff to the Commission</b>		
Susan Savell	Executive Director	Communities for Children & Youth/ Maine Governor's Children's Cabinet
Gary J. Stern	President	Stern Consulting International, Inc.
Nancy Findlan	Consultant/Project Coordinator	Greater Waterville Communities for Children and Youth

## VI. Suggested Reading Lists

### Suggested Reading for Parents, Families and Friends

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## **VII. Appendix A: Commission Stakeholders**

Name	Agency
Gabriella do Amaral	Old Town High School
Pamela Anderson, Esq.	University of Maine Law School
Chris Bartlett, MD	Mercy Primary Care
Nancy Birkhimer	DHHS Adolescent Health
Barbara Blazej	University of Maine at Orono Peace Studies
Jim Beougher	DHHS Child and Family Services
Denise Bickford	Hampden Academy
Mary Bonauto	GLAD
Andy Bossie	Maine AIDS Network
Rev. Shirley Bowen	Episcopal Diocese of Maine
Mary Callaway	Old Town High School
Magie Campbell	Old Town High School
Mike Clifford	Portland Safe & Drug Free Schools
Ryan Conrad	Outright Lewiston
Andy Cook	DHHS Children's Behavioral Services
Dylan Cook	Citizen
Angela DellaPorta	Nokomis High School
Cheryl DiCara	DHHS Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program
Sally Dobres	University of Maine
Morgan Easler	
Andrew Ethier	Nokomis High School
Jaki Ellis	DHHS Coordinated School Health
Stephen Farrand	
Collen Fitzgerald	Old Town High School
Tony Giampetruzzi	Marketing
Jane L. Gilbert	Department of Labor
Jody Pierce-Glover	New Beginnings, Inc.
Samantha Godin	Hampden Academy
Leslie Goode	
Lin Gould	Mt. Desert Island High School
Richard Harrison	University of Maine at Presque Isle
Lucky Hollander	DHHS Legislative Director
Sarah Parker-Holmes	USM
Jen Hodgdon	

Jayson Hunt	DHHS Maine CDC, HIV Prevention
Bobbie Jordan	Augusta Public Schools
Robert Kellerman	University of Maine at Augusta
Doug Kimmel	
Rita Kissen	USM College of Education
Lois-Ann Kuntz	University of Maine at Machias
Ken Kurin	Deering H.S.
Dulcey Laberge	
Sue Lieberman	Keeping Maine Children Connected
Emily Littlefield	Hampden Academy
Sandy Lovell	Family Planning Association
Sierran Lucey	GLBT Services: University of Maine
Chris Lyman	DHHS Office of Local Public Health
Virginia Marriner	DHHS Child Welfare Services
Jan McClintock	
Kathryn McGloin	Juvenile Justice Advisory Group
Randy May	Peabody House
Geoff Miller	DHHS Office of Substance Abuse
Ansley Newton	Department of Education Student Assistance Teams
Martha Palmer	Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
Ellen Pariser	Hampden Academy
Kate Perkins	Medical Care Development
Cory Phelps	
Lisa Phelps	University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Buddy Pinkham	Maine Education Association
Cathy Plourde	Add Verb Productions
Shelley Reed	Maine Department of Education
Aaron Rice	Nokomis High School
Janet Richards	Maine Department of Public Safety
Joseph Riddick	DHHS Maine CDC
Alex Roan	
SammieTammie Robinson	Colby College
Mary Ruchinskas	New Beginnings, Inc.
Joe Sargent	Eastern Maine AIDS Network
Ron Schwizer	John Bapst Memorial H.S.
Joan Smyrski	DHHS Office of Children's Behavioral Health
Eric Smith	Maine Council of Churches

Kaylee Smith	Nokomis High School
Lauren Sterling	Children's Cabinet
David Stockford	Department of Education
Betsy Sweet	Moose Ridge Associates
Mark Tappan	Colby College
Mea Tavares	Maine Youth Action Network
Jennie Todd	Nokomis High School
Jean Vermette	Family Affairs Newsletter
Nancy Wanderer	University of Southern Maine, Law School
Tawnee Walling	Seacoast Outright
Jill Watson	Maranacook High School
Beth Yvonne	Maine Youth Action Network
Jean Zimmerman	Department of Education HIV Prevention

## VIII. Appendix B: Policy Review Team Sources

### National data:

*Hatred in the Hallways* – Human Rights Watch 2001

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/>

*Hostile Hallways* – American Association of University Women 1993 & 2001

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

*Drawing the Line* – (college campuses) AAUW

*School Climate Survey* – GLSEN 2005 <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/research/index.html>

*From Teasing to Torment* – GLSEN 2005 <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1859.html>

*Tackling LGBT Issues in School* – GLSEN 2007

*Dealing With Legal Matters* – GLSEN

*Inside Michigan Schools* – GLSEN 2005 [http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN\\_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/000/759-1.pdf](http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/000/759-1.pdf)

*Gay-Straight Alliances: Creating Safer Schools for LGBT Students and Their Allies*  
[http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN\\_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/000/930-1.pdf](http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/000/930-1.pdf)

*Ohio Guide to GLBTQ Resources* – GLSEN 2007 <http://chapters.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/northeastoh/resources/article-330.html>

*Safe Place to Learn* – California Safe Schools Coalition <http://www.casafeschools.org/>

*They Don't Even Know Me* – Washington State Safe Schools Coalition  
<http://safeschoolscoalition.org/>

*No Longer Alone* – [www.RuralGayYouth.com](http://www.RuralGayYouth.com)

*Campus Climate* – National Lesbian & Gay Task Force [www.nlgtf.org](http://www.nlgtf.org)

*An Epidemic of Homelessness* – NLGTF & National Coalition for the Homeless

*Prohibiting Sexual Orientation Discrimination...* - National School Boards Association

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*Going Beyond Gay-Straight Alliances to Make Schools Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students* – Institute for Gay & Lesbian Strategic Studies  
[www.iglss.org](http://www.iglss.org)

Nineteen documents regarding best practices for various professions dealing with LGBT youth – Lambda Legal <http://www.lambdalegal.org/>

*Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth* – National Education Assoc., American Psychological Association, etc..  
<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbcp/publications/justthefacts.html>

*Mom, Dad – I'm Gay* – Rich Savin-Williams  
<http://books.apa.org/books.cfm?id=431766A>

*A National Study of LGBT Educators' Perceptions of Their Workplace Climate* – Smith, Wright, Reilly & Esposito, 2008

**Maine data:**

Maine Homeless Youth Risk Behavior Survey – 2005

Maine Youth Risk Behavior Surveys – 2001 & 2005

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Doctoral Dissertation – Paul Knowles, superintendent, Gardiner schools, 2005

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*Predictors of Suicidality Among Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Youth* – Diane Elze 1999

*Surviving the Fire* – Jordon Bosse 2007

*Rights of LGBTQ Youth in Maine* – Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders 2007

[http://glad.org/rights/Rights\\_of\\_LGBTQ\\_Youth%20in\\_ME.pdf](http://glad.org/rights/Rights_of_LGBTQ_Youth%20in_ME.pdf)

Complaints to the Human Rights Commission since the enactment of the amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act.

## **IX. Appendix C: Proposal for a “Maine Safe Schools Coalition”**

### **PROBLEM**

Since December 2005, discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression has been unlawful in Maine schools. However, at the present time, such discrimination is pervasive, widespread and tolerated in our state’s K-12 schools. Anti-gay language permeates school learning environments, and the threat of psychological and physical violence based on sexual orientation and gender/identity/expression is a daily reality for Maine students at all levels.

These conditions, which negatively affect the learning climate for **all** students, educators and families, are documented nationally in many studies, including reports like the GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) biennial *National School Climate Survey* and 2005 report *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America....*

In recent years, Maine high school students conducting school climate surveys in their own schools have consistently found that anti-gay epithets like *faggot*, *dyke*, and “*That’s so gay*” or “*You’re so gay*” (*gay* meaning, in these expressions, “worthless, contemptible, deserving of scorn”) are heard by students about 50 times a day on an ordinary school day (data collection and analysis supervised by school faculty members and reported to GLSEN-Southern Maine).

The intensity of this hate language is even worse in some middle schools, where school climates can be particularly harsh and terrifying for students because of widespread tacit permission to use abusive language based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

The problem also exists extensively in elementary schools, where some students use the language they frequently hear without even fully understanding the meaning of their words.

Unfortunately, in too many cases, school staff do not intervene to prevent this toxic language, and sometimes they even use it themselves when speaking directly to students in classrooms, hallways and playing fields. Tacit permission for students to use such language is widespread, and those adults and students who challenge it do so at continuing risk.

The Civil Rights Division of Maine’s Office of the Attorney General holds extensive documentation of episodes in which this kind of language has escalated into violent student-on-student attacks based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

General anti-bullying policies and trainings have proven mostly ineffective at reducing

this particular form of bias and harassment because it is so entrenched and the silent permission for it is so powerfully communicated and understood.

Only policies and programs that specifically name and directly address sexual orientation and gender identity/expression show effectiveness in reducing these problems (see *GLSEN 2005 NSCS* and *From Teasing to Torment*).

**Maine needs a targeted, organized educational effort to bring the daily climate, policies and practices in its K-12 schools into compliance with state law.** Mandates are ineffective when unsupported by opportunities to learn.

We are living in a time of learning and change as the LGBTQ civil rights movement continues to unfold. Ordinary citizens are becoming more aware of LGBTQ people and the ways that LGBTQ lives and families are affected by a variety of inequalities. This growing societal awareness cannot be ignored in school life if our schools are to be safe learning environments for all.

Our K-12 schools are overburdened with unfunded mandates and need well-informed, accessible, user-friendly, economical assistance in learning how to comply with state laws that prohibit discriminatory and harassing treatment of LGBTQ people.

The states of Washington, California and Oregon have addressed these challenges through creation of educational nonprofit organizations called *Safe Schools Coalitions*. These teaching/learning organizations gather community resources and support, collect and share information, provide trainings, support Gay-Straight Alliances and provide a host of resources for addressing school climate issues for LGBTQ people.

These Safe Schools Coalitions stand outside of government to assist state Departments of Education and also to press for needed initiatives. Washington's Safe Schools Coalition is more than twenty years old, while California and Oregon have established theirs in the last decade.

The following draft proposal for a Maine Safe Schools Coalition draws on the work in these Pacific states.

# Maine Safe Schools Coalition

a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

## **PROPOSED MISSION**

The Maine Safe Schools Coalition (MSSC) seeks to create safe K-12 school communities where every student can learn, every educator can teach and lead, and every family can belong, regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Since December 2005, discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression has been unlawful in Maine schools. MSSC works to develop and support safe, peaceful and respectful school environments, focusing specifically on reducing bias and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and building positive appreciation for the enrichment of our society that LGBT people provide, thereby contributing to equal educational opportunity for all.

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**To create safe, healthy and respectful Maine K-12 school communities for LGBTQ people, the Maine Safe Schools Coalition (MSSC) will work in three ways:**

### **1. Policy, Research and Public Advocacy**

- Work with elected and appointed officials in state and local governments to achieve laws, regulations and policies that support MSSC's mission
- Conduct ongoing data collection and reporting of anti-LGBTQ harassment and violence in Maine schools to raise public awareness and improve the climate for everyone in our schools.
- Speak out on behalf of LGBTQ youth, staff and families in Maine's K-12 schools.

### **2. Professional Development**

- Prepare and sustain a cadre of well-qualified trainers to work with schools.
- Develop flexible training programs that can be tailored to the needs of a school or region.
- Conduct K-12 safe schools trainings.
- Develop, adapt and share curriculum materials that enhance the visibility of LGBT people in schools and illustrate the contributions of LGBT people to Maine, the United States and the world.

- Support LGBTQ-and-allied educators through monthly professional development groups.

### **3. Gay-Straight Alliance Network**

- Nurture and sustain student groups that lead in making their own school climates safer for LGBTQ people: **in middle schools and high schools, Gay-Straight Alliances, and in K-5 schools, peaceful school community groups that directly and specifically address anti-LGBT language and behavior.**
- Network the Gay-Straight Alliances in Maine’s secondary schools, hosting regular regional gatherings and annual summits to promote their learning.
- Train and support faculty advisors of these K-12 student organizations.
- Inform and support school administrators and school boards as they supervise these K-12 student organizations.
- Promote active partnership of these K-12 student organizations with Civil Rights Teams at every school level.

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### **Governing and Sustaining the Maine Safe Schools Coalition**

- Board
  - Staff
  - Development
  - Relationships with Maine K-12 schools
  - Relationships with member organizations
- 
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# Maine Safe Schools Coalition

## Proposed Membership

### ANCHORS

Anchor organizations would sustain a significant portion of MSSC's work through sharing resources (staff time, expertise, space, communications networks, publishing capacity etc.). Organizations might serve as anchors if they have two or more of these characteristics:

- are demonstrating commitment by already doing MSSC work
- have safe K-12 schools for LGBTQ people as a central part of their mission
- have organizational capacity to reach K-12 schools, educators, parents effectively
- will not disappear (i.e., are long-term sustainable organizations)

The states of Washington and Massachusetts have found state government agencies are inadvisable as anchors or permanent bases for this work because of the fluid nature of politics and power. They have learned that one election or even one powerful person's political aspirations can wipe out or severely undercut efforts to reduce anti-LGBTQ bias and harassment in a state's schools.

So this work needs a home outside state government, but in close partnership with government and regulatory agencies. A non-governmental organization can partner effectively with arms of government to press for laws, policies, regulations and programs to make the schools safer. Such an outside organization can also press elected and appointed officials to take courageous actions on behalf of safe schools.

A non-governmental organization can also draw on the energy and commitment of members of faith communities whose teachings promote justice and equality for all people and who wish to contribute to the safe, respectful and peaceful schools in the communities they serve.

### POSSIBLE ANCHORS

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)  
Hardy Girls Healthy Women  
Boys to Men  
Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence (CPHV)  
Equality Maine  
Maine Education Association (MEA) (*Professional Development; Human/Civil Rights Committee*)  
Maine Association of School Based Health Centers  
Maine Conference, United Church of Christ (UCC) or Maine Council of Churches  
Youth Anchor (Maine Youth Action Network, PRYSM, Outrights)

Foundation Anchor (Maine Community Foundation, other)  
Corporate Anchor  
University of Maine School of Law

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## **MEMBERS**

Members will support MSSC by paying dues to sustain the work and helping to spread awareness of the work. Organizational members might be any organization with a stake in safe K-12 schools. Individuals might also be MSSC members.

Maine Safe Schools Coalition members could include a wide range (and some of these might be possible anchor organizations):

- Government departments (e.g., Maine Dept. of Education and Maine Dept. of Health and Human Services and the Office of the Attorney General). MSSC's work must be structured to prove sustainable regardless of the sitting Governor or Cabinet.
- Professional organizations (e.g, Maine School Boards Association, Maine School Superintendents Association, Maine Principals' Association, subject-matter professional organizations, etc.)
- Nonprofit organizations (PFLAG, Rainbow Business and Professional Association etc.)
- Faith communities
- Other community organizations and agencies concerned with the well-being of children, youth, families and equal educational opportunity

## **X. Appendix D : Examples of Specific Strategies Identified**

### **Family Dynamics:**

#### Strategy:

Promote PFLAG to all families, as a resource for education, support, and advocacy  
Encourage parent/child dialogues about sexual orientation, bullying, harassment and suicide risks

Learn to create safe environments for youth to come out

Create partnerships with religious communities to provide support for LGBTQ youth

References (words in " " indicate how the article is listed on Commission web site under Best Practices):

1. "Annotated bibliography: Sari Dworkin, ed.: Families." A bibliography relevant to families of LGBTQ youth and to gay parents.

2. "Services to out-of-home GLBTQ youth." REACH OUT: Enhancing services to out-of-home gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and questioning youth. Evaluation 2004 -2006, a publication of New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services, 2007.

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

3. "Homeless LGBT Youth and LGBT Youth in Foster Care." A list of Resources including literature, videos, shelters and services.

4. "Mental Health Services for GLBTQ Youth." Summary of the Special Forum on Services for GLBTQ Youth and their Families, held at the 2006 Georgetown University Training Institutes.

5. [www.PFLAG.org](http://www.PFLAG.org)

### **Law Enforcement:**

Strategy: To ensure that LGBT youth in the juvenile delinquency courts are treated with dignity, respect and fairness

Activities:

- Gathering information from stakeholders about LGBT youth in delinquency courts
- Identifying obstacles to fair treatment
- Reporting findings
- Crafting recommendations for juvenile justice professionals
- Education

References:

1. "Ensuring Equity for LGBT Youth in Detention." Workshop presented at WA Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI): 2006

2. "Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care." CWLA Best Practice Guidelines: 2006

3. "LGBTQ youth in foster care and juvenile justice." Workshop entitled "Creating safe spaces for LGBTQ youth" presented by Family Institute of Cambridge, 2007.

## **Physical and Mental Health Systems:**

### Strategy:

1. Use models of comprehensive standards of practice (Boston GLBT Health Access Project and San Francisco Transgender HIV health Services) to provide quality service to LGBTQ clients in areas of personnel, clients' rights, intake and assessment, service planning and delivery, confidentiality, community relations and health promotion and to evaluate implementation
2. To encourage the LGBTQ community to seek care and feel safe receiving care and disclosing information, eliminate discrimination and stigmatization on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in all health care service systems
3. Promote and provide full and equal access to services
4. Expand appropriate data collection and LGBTQ-specific health-related research
5. Practice cultural and linguistic competence, including use of inclusive and gender neutral language
6. Acknowledge when culture and sexual orientation cause conflicts for LGBTQ youth
7. Advocate for culturally competent services and supports for youth and families
8. Include LGBTQ protection in system of care and family organization policies
9. Practitioners should be familiar with appropriate LGBTQ community referrals
10. Ensure provider awareness of specific transgender health issues and needs
11. Incorporate use of inclusive and gender neutral agency forms
12. Ensure confidentiality of client information
13. Implement non-discrimination policies and procedures
14. Ensure staff diversity

### References:

1. "Mental Health Services for GLBTQ Youth." Summary of the Special Forum on Services for GLBTQ Youth and their Families, held at the 2006 Georgetown University Training Institutes.
2. "Culturally competent care for GLBT people." Recommendations for health care providers, compiled by King Co. (WA) Dept of Public Health
3. "Best Practices Guidelines trans health." A Best Practices guide for providing health and social services to transgender people living with HIV/AIDS, developed for the San Francisco Dept of Public Health, HIV Health Services.
4. "Quality health care services for GLBT clients." *Community Standards of Practice for Provision of Quality Health Care Services for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Clients*, a framework developed by the GLBT Health Access Project in Boston to improve GLBT access to quality care and to assist clinicians and their facilities in creating responsive environments.
5. "GLBT health access project." A summary of the 14 *Community Standards of Practice for Provision of Quality Health Care Services for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Clients*.
6. "Bibliog for health care providers." A bibliography related to LGBTQ clients, prepared in June 2003 for health care provider training.
7. "Bibliography for counselors working with GLBT clients." Prepared by the Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling, a sub-division of the American Counseling Association.

