

Quick Facts on Families With LGBT Parents

- Millions of children in the U.S. are growing up in homes with LGBT parents.
- According to the 2000 Census, California has more gay and lesbian couples with children than any other state, and these families live in every county in California.
- Families with LGBT parents come in many shapes and family arrangements. They include families of all races, ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, and religions; and families living in all kinds of communities.

“My son has been told many times by teachers and peers that ‘there is no such thing’ as having two moms.”

—Mom of a 7 year old

- According to the American Association of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association, research shows that children of LGBT parents do just as well in emotional, cognitive, and social development as children whose parents are heterosexual.

- Many schools are unsafe and unwelcoming for students with LGBT parents. In the California Safe Schools Coalition’s 2003 Preventing School Harassment Survey, 91 percent of students reported hearing anti-LGBT slurs at school. 39 percent of students surveyed said their school was unsafe for students with LGBT parents.



Photo Courtesy of The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center’s Family Services Program

What California Law Says

- Students with LGBT parents have the right to attend school in safety, free of any form of harassment or discrimination.
- Students and school staff are protected from harassment and discrimination on the basis of association with LGBT people, as well as actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. (Education Code Section 200 and 220)

“In middle school when I made my family tree, my teacher told me it couldn’t have two moms. I was told it could either have one of my moms’ sides, or I could ‘make up a father.’”

—Marina, daughter of lesbian moms

- Schools have an “affirmative obligation” to combat bias, including bias based on sexual orientation and gender identity. (Education Code Section 201)
- LGBT parents have the right to participate on an equal basis with all parents in their school community and to be recognized equally in all school policies, forms, and documents.

- LGBT parents have the same right as other parents to designate a person to act on their behalf at school.

Find Out More

FOR INFORMATION, SUPPORT, CURRICULA, LOCAL CHAPTERS, AND OTHER RESOURCES ON LGBT FAMILIES, CONTACT:

California Safe Schools Coalition
www.casafeschools.org
415-626-1680

COLAGE
(Children of Lesbians And Gays Everywhere)
www.colage.org
415-861-KIDS

Family Pride Coalition
www.familypride.org
202-331-5015

GLSEN
(Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network)
www.glsen.org
212-727-0135

Gay-Straight Alliance Network
www.gsanetwork.org
415-552-4229

Human Rights Campaign
www.hrc.org
800-777-4723

The L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center’s Family Services Program
www.laglc.org
323-860-7397

PFLAG
(Parent, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
www.pflag.org
202-467-8180

Women’s Educational Media
www.womedia.org
415-641-4616

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Photo Courtesy of The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center’s Family Services Program

MAKING YOUR SCHOOL
All
SAFE FOR STUDENTS WITH
Families
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &
Welcome
TRANSGENDER PARENTS

“I felt like I couldn’t tell anyone in my school about my mom.”

—Landon, 18 year old son of a lesbian mom and a straight dad



www.casafeschools.org

Steps for School Administrators

- Update all school forms and documents to use the words “Parent or Guardian” instead of “Mother” or “Father”.
- Examine school policies such as signature requirements for permission slips, procedures for picking up children in emergencies, and disciplinary policies, to ensure that they are inclusive of LGBT parents.
- Establish a safe school climate free from slurs, harassment, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. For example:
 - ✦ Establish an anti-harassment policy that explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity;
 - ✦ Train teachers and staff to respond to harassment and to utilize curriculum with information about sexual orientation and gender identity.
 - ✦ Welcome and actively support Gay-Straight Alliance clubs on campus.

“It hurts to deal with form after form, each of which repeats, as a drumbeat, ‘your family is not normal.’”

— Dad of a 22 year old

- Discuss the need to include LGBT families with all teachers and staff, and support the use of activities and curricula that are inclusive of all family types.
- Acknowledge and include LGBT parents in school events, parent-teacher conferences, volunteer opportunities, and all activities that include parents.



Photo courtesy of COLAGE

Classroom Strategies for Teachers

- Make your classroom accessible to LGBT families. Welcome LGBT parents to parent-teacher conferences, school open houses, classroom volunteering, and school events.
- Ask about your students’ families instead of making assumptions, and respect the terms students choose to describe their families. Don’t ask “which one is your real mom/dad?”
- Always intervene when you witness slurs or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Use these incidents as “teachable moments” in your classroom.
- Show your support. Display posters that include diverse families, support the Gay-Straight Alliance club at your school, find out about school policies for responding to harassment, and request training for faculty and staff.
- Include LGBT people and families in your curriculum. For example, update your family tree project to include LGBT families, or use an LGBT family in a story problem in math class. When your class studies a writer or scientist who is LGBT, mention that fact.
- Don’t assume that a student who has LGBT parents will also identify as LGBT.
- Never “out” a student with LGBT parents. Only the student should decide when they feel safe to talk to peers about their family.

“In foreign language classes, every time I had a new teacher and we were describing our families, I was told that I was not doing it right because I said I had two mothers instead of a mother and father.”

— Quinn, son of gay dads and lesbian moms

Adapted from COLAGE publication “Tips for Making Classrooms Safer for Students with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Parents.” The full resource is available at www.colage.org/pubs/safe_classrooms.html.

Strategies for Students and Parents

Stand up for your rights as a full member of the school community, and be proactive about making your school environment safe.

- Introduce your family to your teachers and administrators at the beginning of every school year, and give them this brochure.
- Join the Gay-Straight Alliance club at your school, or the COLAGE chapter in your area – or start new ones if they don’t already exist.



Photo - Jenny Laden

If you experience harassment or discrimination:

- Document each incident in writing.
- Talk to your teacher or principal about what happened and what they will do about it.
- File a formal complaint with your school or school district.
- Contact the California Safe Schools Coalition at www.casafeschools.org for help.

“When I was a freshman in high school, one of my mothers died. Every day for two weeks the principal would pull me out of class to see how I was doing. He acknowledged that she was a parent and not just my mother’s partner.”

— Kate, daughter of lesbian moms

“One nice thing has been that our child’s teachers have always given her extra time to prepare a second Mother’s Day card on Mother’s Day.”—Mom of an 8 year old



Photo courtesy of COLAGE