



U.S. Student Association Foundation 2008

Queer Inclusive Nondiscrimination Policy

A nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression as protected categories send a message to university communities that harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people is unacceptable and will not be tolerated on campus. Inclusive nondiscrimination policies are an important step to making universities accessible to LGBT students.

At this time about 400 colleges and universities include sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination policies and only 68 include gender identity/expression. Although this may seem like a large number, given that there are over 6,000 institutions of higher learning in the United States, the numbers that are provided

Changing Your School's Policy...

Research

What Does your State and Local Policy Say?

Universities must abide by the nondiscrimination policy of their jurisdiction. Remember that schools can improve this language to make it stronger and the policies more inclusive.

How have the Courts Interpreted the Local Policy?

Some jurisdictions' policies may not explicitly state sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories, but the courts may have interpreted the language to be inclusive of LGBT people. What is the history of rulings in your jurisdiction?

What Do Other Schools' Policies Say?

Look at policies of schools that are similar to yours in size, population, and location. What language do they use? When did sexual orientation and gender identity get added? What strategies were used to get the policy changed? Who spearheaded this campaign and what organizations worked with them?

States that Don't Discriminate

As of 2004, 14 states & DC have the laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. An additional 11 states have laws against discrimination of public employees.

Six states and DC have antidiscrimination laws protecting transgender individuals in the public domain. 5 of those states also protect in the private sector.

Action

Create a Strong Reporting System for Hate Incidences

How are hate incidences reported on your campus? What happens after someone has reported a hate incidence? Make sure that a definite system is set up for reporting and tracking hate crimes. Use the data from this system as evidence for the need for an inclusive policy. If your school is unwilling to set up a system of reporting, then use your resource center's or student organization's web page and/or mailing address to collect information.

Organize an LGBT Commission

Work with your administration on establishing a commission that will study the issues and needs of queer students on campus. This commission can then make recommendations to the university, including the need for an inclusive nondiscrimination policy.

Work in Coalition

There are many student organizations on campus that are concerned about hate crimes on campus and about the safety of underrepresented students. Work in coalition with these organizations to increase your power and strengthen your voice on campus. Contact USSA for more information on building coalitions.

Participate in a Campus Climate Survey

Campus climate surveys are a great way to get a feel for the issues and needs of queer students on campus. You can create your own survey or use a model from another campus.

Campus Climate Surveys provide a method for evaluation of the campus environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.

Campus Climate Surveys are Useful Because They...

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify what percentage of LGBT students, staff, and faculty on campus are experiencing harassment, discrimination, and/or intimidation.• Identify what percentage of LGBT students, staff, and faculty feel unsafe and fearful on campus.• Identify where on campus LGBT people feel the most unsafe and/or face the most harassment.• Identify the perception LGBT people have of how hard the university works to be accessible for queer people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the perception of LGBT people have of the campus climate.• Identify the major concerns of LGBT people in the university.• Identify how well the university deals with anti-LGBT hate incidents.• Identify concrete steps the university can take to improve the campus climate for LGBT students, staff, and faculty.• Provide a document to use as proof of the needs for concrete change to happen on campus which improves the lives of LGBT people. |
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