

California Association of School Counselors Inc.
Board Statement on LGBTQ+ Rights
(Adopted March 26, 2022)

The California Association of School Counselor's (CASC) Board of Directors firmly stands with the LGBTQ+ ([Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, +](#)) community and denounces any acts of violence, legislation, policies, or initiatives that infringe on their human rights. The recent introduction of bills and legislation reducing LGBTQ+ rights undermine existing protections for LGBTQ+ persons that have long been fought for and maintained. State and local stipulations aimed at reducing LGBTQ+ student rights are consequential- affecting LGBTQ+ students demonstrated through increases in isolation, bullying, suicidal ideation, mental health issues, and homelessness. Research shows that any type of bullying is detrimental, inciting fear in students, leading to truancy, dropouts and poor grades *LGBTQ bullying: a qualitative investigation of student and school health professional perspectives*, ([Earnshaw, et al, 2020](#)).

LGBTQ+ students have been historically marginalized, including transgender and nonbinary students reporting experiences with a hostile school climate and lack of access to school supports ([GLSEN](#), 2021). A 2019 study of California's secondary students demonstrate that California schools were not safe for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students. In particular 89% of students reported hearing "gay" used in a negative way (e.g. "that's so gay") and 65% heard negative remarks about transgender people ([GLSEN](#), 2019). Furthermore, 50% of LGBTQ+ students in California have been teased or bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and 82% of LGBTQ+ youth of color have experienced racism and racial prejudice, ([Human Rights Campaign Foundation](#), 2019).

[The School Counselor and the LGBTQ Youth Position Statement](#), (American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (2016), outlines school counselors' functions in protecting LGBTQ students, including fostering environments where all students feel safe, valued, and respected within each of their unique identities and eliminating barriers that impede LGBTQ+ development, equity, inclusion, and achievement. In 2020, the California Association of School Counselors (CASC), issued a statement, [CASC Board Statement Addressing Equity, Social Justice and Anti-Racism](#) condemning acts of violence and injustice against the Black community, writing, "All lives can't matter until all Black lives matter, which also includes the Black trans and LGBTQ+ community as a whole who face greater marginalization from their intersectional identities."

Furthermore, CASC acknowledges the injustice and developmental harm of so-called "reparative" or "conversion" therapies, which promotes therapeutic techniques to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity (SAMHSA, 2015). We advocate to protect LGBTQ+ students from this practice that has been well-documented as ineffective and we applaud the California legislators and Governor Brown who in 2012 passed [Senate Bill 1172](#) (Lieu), *Sexual Orientation Change Efforts* for protecting students from this practice.

As a result of aforementioned factors and the continued injustice and marginalization of LGBTQ students, the CASC Board of Directors has issued the following recommendations:

California PreK-12 school counselors and school staff:

- Continue to examine and enact policies and procedures to eliminate practices that have historically marginalized and oppressed groups practices, resulting in injustice, bias, & institutionalized oppression of LGBTQ+ students at the school and district level.
- Support families and staff by providing them with tools to integrate topics of gender, sexual orientation, equity and social justice into their everyday practice and provide support to caregivers on supporting their LGBTQ+ child.
- Take steps to foster inclusivity in schools such as: creating safe and affirming spaces, introducing yourself with your personal pronouns, steering away from making assumptions about students' gender identity, and practice using gender-neutral language to promote gender inclusive environments.
- Validate and affirm the students' sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and honor a student's chosen name and pronouns.
- Support the alignment of the [ASCA Ethical Standards](#) (CASC adopted), including:
 - Contributing to and nurturing a safe and respectful learning environment where respect is valued and shared amongst all members of the school community
 - Understanding and promoting that students be treated in a manner consistent with their gender identity and expression, free from discrimination
- Ensure that confidentiality with LGBTQ+ students is honored including not "outing" students without the student(s) explicit consent while respecting the LGBTQ+ student's unique and personal "coming out" experiences ([ACLU confidentiality and privacy](#)) ([California Code, Education Code - EDC § 49602](#))
- Uphold CA [PPS Standards](#) (2019) which include:
 - Develop, implement, and monitor prevention, education, and intervention programs, such as: cyber-bullying, restorative practices, self-harm, social media literacy, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs (ATOD), suicide, school truancy, sex trafficking, retention rates, pregnancy, LGBTQ+ awareness and empowerment (p. 11).
 - Demonstrate knowledge of federal and state laws, county ordinances, and district policies related to the rights and treatment of historically marginalized populations, including but not limited to special needs population, English learner, undocumented youth, racial and ethnic minorities, foster youth, homeless youth, social & economically disadvantaged, LGBTQ+, and gender identity (p. 13).
- Have the opportunity for professional development and personal growth to examine internal biases, blind spots, and conscious and unconscious factors towards becoming more inclusive, understanding, and accepting of individuals identifying as LGBTQ+.
- Serve as change agents for social justice as we are uniquely positioned to address and prevent inequities experienced by students throughout their formative educational journey.
- Remain informed and engaged in issues of injustice, oppression, and violations of human rights.

CASC commits time and resources to:

- support school counselors to equally support ALL students, including LGBTQ+ students.
- advocate for state and federal laws and policies that promote equitable practices in schools.
- recruit leaders who are representative of a diverse population.

- provide professional development that includes trainers who are representative of California's rich diversity.
- provide our members resources on LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- host professional developments on LGBTQ+ students
- collaborate with organizations and professional associations to support LGBTQ+ students.

CASC's current resources that support LGBTQ+ students include:

- [Best Practice Guidelines for California School Counselors](#) (2019)
- [State of California Student Wellness](#) (2022)
- Website dedicated to mental health resources <http://covid19k12counseling.org>
- [Covid-19 Planning Considerations and Resources: Addressing Staff and Student Mental Health for School Re-entry](#)
- [School-Based Mental Health: School and Community Partnerships JOINT POSITION STATEMENT](#)

CASC welcomes feedback from members to contribute to the collective voice on these matters. If you are interested in sharing your input around issues of social justice, equity, and anti-racism, or would like to provide suggestions on how CASC can work collaboratively towards ensuring safe and supportive schools for LGBTQ+ student, please contribute [HERE](#).