

# Transphobic Bullying

Transphobia and homophobia often exist hand-in-hand. Transphobic and anti-gay slurs, and trans-bashing are all forms of bullying. Such discrimination is a violation of human rights. In fact, the police may consider transphobic bullying to be a hate incident, which is against the law.

If you're being bullied or if you've witnessed such transphobic bullying and didn't know how to respond, then this fact sheet is for you.

## Who experiences transphobic bullying?

People who:

- Are a gender minority
- Are perceived to be a gender minority
- Are in the process of a gender transition (changing their name, pronouns, dress, etc. to align with their gender identity, including hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery)
- Don't conform to conventional gender stereotypes
- Have gender minority family members, friends or relatives

## Transphobic bullying may include:

- Mean-spirited name-calling
- Obscene and/or sexualized gestures
- Sexualized harassment, teasing, frothing, hazing or threats

- Spreading rumors or gossip
- Unwanted disclosure or someone's gender identity
- Physical aggression like hitting, pushing, kicking, choking, or stalking
- Isolating or excluding someone from their friends or peers
- Using text, messaging or social networking sites to intimidate, put down, gossip about, make fun of, threaten or exclude someone

## If you are the target of homophobic bullying, you may feel:

- Alone
- Embarrassed or ashamed
- Pressured to fit into stereotypical gender norms (e.g. to act more masculine or feminine)
- Depressed and uncertain about yourself or your future
- Angry (you may want to turn the tables and become a bully yourself)
- Unsafe
- Stressed (you may think about skipping school or activities to avoid bullies)
- Isolated (you may want to withdraw from social activities and hide away)

**These are all normal and natural feelings. But remember – you can always reach out for help.**

## **If you are being bullied:**

**Tell someone you trust** – Talk to a friend or trusted adult who respects your confidentiality. This may be a teacher, parent, relative, youth worker, police officer, counsellor, coach or faith leader. Remember, you don't have to suffer in silence. Keep telling until someone helps you. No one deserves to be bullied.

**Know your rights** – Check out your school's bullying prevention guidelines, anti-harassment policies or student code of conduct. Your school is responsible for protecting you from bullying, discrimination and abuse. You have the right to be respected and feel safe at your school and in your community, regardless of your actual or perceived gender identity or gender expression.

**Stay safe** – Don't fight back. Bullies want attention and fighting back gives them what they want. If you fight back, you may get hurt or make the situation worse. If you are a bystander or witness, become an ally. Go for help and provide moral and emotional support to the person being bullied.

**Write down everything** – Keep a record about the incident including the date, time, location, and what was said or done. If you are being bullied online or in a text, don't delete this message. You don't have to read it, but keep it. It's your evidence. The police, your parents/guardians, or school authorities can use this information to help protect you from further abuse.

**Remain calm** – You do not have to reveal your gender identity to seek help. Unless you are at risk of harming yourself, your teacher or school counsellor does not have to tell your family or caregiver that you are transgender, transsexual or two-spirited. Remember, you don't have to deal with bullying on your own. Caring and trusted adults are available to help and support you.

**Find support in your community** – See if there is a local LGBTQ youth group where you can meet like-minded youth.

With the passing of the *Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children* all Alberta Schools are required to set up a Gay-Straight Alliance, if requested by a student. If your school doesn't have a GSA, speak with a trusted teacher about starting one. For more information on setting up a GSA, please visit [education.alberta.ca](http://education.alberta.ca)

Schools can be welcoming spaces for sexual and gender minority, questioning and allied youth.

## **Help Break the Silence: Take a stand against transphobia!**

Students experience transphobic and homophobic bullying every day. Yet this kind of bullying is the least responded to by adults and youth. If such bullying is not addressed appropriately, it reinforces to everyone affected that it's okay to discriminate. These behaviours and words can have devastating results for everyone involved. By speaking out, or intervening, you send a message: you don't tolerate transphobia or transphobic bullying in our society.