

How to Support Students Victimized by Anti-Gay* Slurs

*The term *anti-gay* refers to slurs that demean anyone regardless of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Remember: **ANYONE** can be targeted by these slurs at school or outside of school.

Some of the following suggestions may also support a student experiencing other forms of social cruelty, harassment or discrimination.

Students and educators suggest:

- Be a supportive adult
- Provide safe havens for students (i.e. Gay Straight Alliance Clubs)
- Educate self and school community about homophobia and hetero-sexism
- Acknowledge ALL students
- Be inclusive in actions and language
- Teach lessons on diversity as an integral part of daily curriculum

How to respond after hearing an *anti-gay slur*?

- Seize the teachable moment
- React immediately - refuse to allow even '*small*' slurs
- Always address any slurs
- Stay calm and learn how to control your emotions
- Be clear that this is offensive, hurtful and hateful
- Refuse to let comments go
- Deal with any slurs consistently and refuse to give up
- Refuse to tolerate any unsafe behaviours
- Talk to the name-caller in private.
- Reconnect and provide ongoing support to the targeted person
- Tell the targeted person: "I'm here to listen, if you need me. What you say is confidential. If you are being threatened with death, physical or sexual harm, I need to report this to people who can help you to stay safe."

How to educate your school about the harm of anti-gay slurs?

- Educate about the root of the slurs being used, e.g. the word *faggot*
- Communicate clearly these anti-gay slurs are unacceptable, hateful, and against Ontario Human Rights Code
- Be open to discussing issues with students and staff
- Intervene when you hear anti-gay slurs
- Draw analogies between and among different forms of oppression (e.g. racial, sexist, homophobic forms of discrimination and harassment)
- Model comebacks that will help students and other staff members
- Challenge stereotypes in personal actions. Explain: "may start off as fun but someone **always** gets hurt. They may not tell you because you are friends."
- Follow up with concrete actions to educate the whole school community

How to broaden response to anti-gay slurs beyond scene of an incident?

- Find support with administration and colleagues
- Educate staff with a workshop on Homophobia/Hetero-sexism in schools
- Encourage students to ask friends/peers for support
- Teach bystanders about how the 'code of silence' perpetuates anti-gay harassment and homophobia in the school
- Teach remaining silent empowers the homophobic oppressor
- Educate parent community about the harm of anti-gay slurs and how it relates to other forms of name-calling
- Bring in community partners to educate

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Source: Pride Education Network - www.pridenet.ca