

How to Support Students *Who Are Victims of Anti-Gay* Slurs*

* The term anti-gay is used throughout this document to refer to slurs that demean anyone regardless of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Remember that **ANYONE** can be the target of these slurs at school.

Students and educators generated the following ideas:

- ◆ Be a supportive adult
- ◆ Provide safe havens for students (i.e. Gay Straight Alliance Clubs)
- ◆ Educate yourself about homophobia and heterosexism
- ◆ Acknowledge ALL students
- ◆ Be inclusive in your actions and language
- ◆ Teach lessons on diversity

How can adults and students respond after hearing an anti-gay slur?

- ◆ Seize the teachable moment
- ◆ React immediately- don't allow even "small" slurs
- ◆ Always address it
- ◆ Learn to control your emotions
- ◆ Tell students/peers that this is offensive
- ◆ Don't let comments go
- ◆ Deal with it consistently and don't give up
- ◆ Refuse to tolerate unsafe behaviour
- ◆ Talk to the students in private-
Ask the name caller- "What're you so afraid?"
- ◆ Reconnect with the victim after the event to provide ongoing support
- ◆ Tell the victim "I'm here to listen if you need me."

How can teachers educate youth and staff about the harm of anti-gay slurs?

- ◆ Educate about the true meanings of the slurs being used (i.e. the word faggot)
- ◆ Communicate to students/staff that it isn't acceptable
- ◆ Be open to discussing issues with students and staff
- ◆ Intervene when you hear anti-gay slurs and draw analogies between different forms of oppression (i.e racial slurs, sexist comments, homophobia etc.)
- ◆ Model the comebacks you want students/colleagues to use
- ◆ Challenge stereotypes in personal actions. Explain that "It may start off fun but someone always gets hurt and they may not tell you because they're your friend."
- ◆ Follow up events with concrete actions to educate the school community

How can we broaden the school's response to anti-gay slurs beyond the scene of an incident?

- ◆ Find support with administration and colleagues
- ◆ Educate staff by an OSSTF workshop (eg. Pain to Pride, EQUIP)
- ◆ Encourage students to ask their friends/peers for support
- ◆ Teach bystanders their role in perpetuating the "code of silence" around antigay harassment and homophobia in schools. They cannot side with the oppressor by remaining silent when homophobic harassment happens.
- ◆ Work with the parent community to educate them about the harm of anti-gay slurs and how it relates to other forms of name calling
- ◆ Bring in youth organizations to educate students
- ◆ Get the students to step forward to challenge slurs and not just remember a slogan as a quick comeback to an incident
- ◆ Encourage students to always tell an adult when they hear or are victim of an anti-gay slur
- ◆ Correct bad comments with positives- i.e. "You're better than that."
- ◆ Get more information about what is really going on in your school
- ◆ Have an anonymous drop box or email so that students can tell you what is really going on
- ◆ Encourage the students to deal with it themselves and allow them to (i.e. Don't punish victims who stand up to the name caller)
- ◆ One student said, "If teachers aren't going to stand up for kids who are being made fun of, the least they can do is allow us to stand up for ourselves."

Who can students turn to for support if they are victims of anti-gay slurs?

- ◆ Teachers (especially those who are openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender)
- ◆ Counsellors
- ◆ Role Models- i.e. parents, friends and siblings
- ◆ Support groups- i.e. Gay Straight Alliance
- ◆ School Boards that specifically support youth through anti-homophobia education and policies to protect students from anti-gay harassment
- ◆ Police and School Liaison Officers
- ◆ Media coverage