

ALLY GUIDE FOR SPORTS LEADERS

CHAMPION RESPECT

As leaders in sports – whether you are a coach, athletic director, athletic trainer, or other key part of the community – you play a major role in creating inclusive team spaces by setting an expectation of and modeling respect for everyone. A leader's attitudes and values are often mimicked by players. As such, your attitudes and actions matter. Championing respect and inclusion starts with your own inclusive philosophy. Be mindful and intentional. For examples of LGBTQI+-inclusive team codes of conduct, see [Athlete Ally's 10 Policies for LGBTQI+ Inclusion](#).

WORDS MATTER

Homophobic, transphobic, sexist, and any kind of discriminatory language should be banned on and off the field. Be mindful of the language you use when working with players, parents and coaches, and/or other leaders in and around the team environment. If you hear homophobic, transphobic or sexist language, jokes, or innuendos on or off the field, immediately address it with players and explain why it won't be tolerated. Expressing that you will not tolerate such language establishes a clear boundary of respect and fosters an inclusive atmosphere.

GET TRAINED

In sports, you can't improve unless you're willing to acknowledge and work on your weaknesses. Not sure what to do if a player, coach or staff member comes out? Want to know how to create safe, LGBTQI+-inclusive spaces? Ask those hard questions and get trained. LGBTQI+ inclusion training helps create spaces where all players can thrive, and where teams/organizations can flesh out their values. For more information about LGBTQI+ inclusion trainings, contact us or visit athleteally.org/coi for our free online curriculum.

STAY INFORMED

Traveling to a new venue, program, or city to compete? Make sure you are informed of the area's LGBTQI+-related laws and policies (or lack thereof). For example, will your players and colleagues be able to use bathrooms and locker rooms consistent with their gender identity? Will your LGBTQI+ athletes or their family members have equal access to restaurants without facing discrimination? This knowledge allows you to help curate an inclusive experience for all players, and helps you, your players, your colleagues, and their families to make informed decisions when traveling and competing.

CHAMPION CHANGE

Change comes from within. Organizations, schools and leagues become more inclusive when leaders support positive change on team and administrative levels. If your school or organization lacks LGBTQI+-inclusive policies or practices, speak up and advocate for change. Inclusive policies can spark a chain reaction. Your commitment to diversity and inclusion for LGBTQI+ athletes, fans, coaches and athletic staff can extend far beyond just your team or league. For examples of best practices and policies, see [Athlete Ally's 10 Policies for LGBTQI+ Inclusion](#).

10 POLICIES FOR LGBTQI+ INCLUSION

Want to make your athletic department more LGBTQI+-inclusive?
Here are the 10 policies every program should have.

(1) LGBTQI+-INCLUSIVE NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Teams should have a written nondiscrimination policy that explicitly covers “sexual orientation,” “gender identity,” “gender expression,” and “sex characteristics.” This can be accomplished by adding these classes to existing nondiscrimination protections or inserting a stand-alone clause to existing policy materials.

(2) LEAGUE LGBTQI+- INCLUSIVE CODE OF CONDUCT

The league or organization to which your team belongs should explicitly ban or condemn homophobic, transphobic, and/or anti-LGBTQI+ conduct by players, coaches and any staff involved in athletic activities. This can be accomplished by a stand-alone clause or by including LGBTQI+ protections in existing harassment policies. These codes of conduct should outline potential consequences for engaging in behaviors that violate the code of conduct, including clear, safe, and perhaps anonymous mechanisms to report and address the violation.

(3) TEAM LGBTQI+-INCLUSIVE CODE OF CONDUCT

Individual teams should be encouraged to create Codes of Conduct that clearly state an expectation to promote respect towards LGBTQI+ people. These Codes of Conduct should clearly outline potential consequences for engaging in behaviors that violate the code of conduct and be directly communicated to all team members at the start of the season.

(4) INCLUSIVE FAN CODE OF CONDUCT

The league/organization's commitment to inclusion, respect and safety should extend to members of their fan community. Fans, like players and coaches, should not be subjected to discriminatory language and behavior by those on the field or in the stands. These values and expectations should be communicated to fans via the league's official fan code of conduct. In addition, the fan code of conduct should outline potential consequences for engaging in behaviors that violate the code of conduct, including clear mechanisms to report and address the violation.

(5) LGBTQI+-INCLUSIVE MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

Leagues and teams should ensure all media communications and recruiting materials (media guides, community outreach, team camp brochures, etc.) include nondiscrimination language. Members of the organization or team who are in most frequent touch with the media should have LGBTQI+-specific media training. For an example of LGBTQI+-inclusive media materials, see [**Athlete Ally and GLAAD's Guide to Covering LGBTQ+ Athletes at the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics.**](#)

(6) INCLUSIVE TRANSGENDER & NONBINARY ATHLETE POLICIES

Leagues should have a clear and well-written policy regarding the participation of transgender and non-binary athletes. Many sport leagues and teams across the country have adopted trans inclusive policies and guidelines, including the NCAA and International Olympic Committee. USports, the national sport governing body of university sport in Canada, released a groundbreaking policy in 2018 allowing transgender athletes to self-identify and participate on the sports team consistent with their gender identity without restriction. For model policies or to learn more about the history of trans and non-binary athlete participation in sport, please reach out to Athlete Ally and visit Chris Mosier's website [TransAthlete.com](https://www.transathlete.com) for a comprehensive list of all K-12 policies.

(7) INCLUSIVE DRESS CODES

All dress code policies should be gender neutral to allow for different forms of gender expression. An example of a non-inclusive dress code is one that would require people on a women's team to wear skirts or dresses to events where professional dress is required. A best practice is to simply outline the type or style of clothing that will not be accepted as professional attire rather than dictate which clothes people should wear based on sex assigned at birth.

Excellent LGBTQI+ inclusion policies will be ineffective if these policies are not adequately communicated to the people they impact. Therefore, having timely trainings is essential for creating LGBTQI+ inclusive environments.

(8) TEAM LGBTQI+-INCLUSIVE CODE OF CONDUCT

As a best practice, these trainings should:

- Be held at least once a school year;
- Be mandatory for all coaches, players, and staff;
- Review all LGBTQI+ harassment policies and team Codes of Conduct;
- Cover allyship best practices.

Athletic departments should also maintain up-to-date LGBTQI+ inclusion resources that are readily available to coaches, players, and staff throughout the year, in between training sessions.

(9) REPORTING

Have a clear and visible reporting mechanism for reporting incidences of racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and other harmful conduct and harassment. These policies should allow for anonymous reporting, have clearly stated timelines for action, outline a non-exhaustive list of disciplinary actions, be visible, published in student-athlete handbooks, and distributed during orientation.

(10) FACILITIES

Schools should make every effort to allow athletes to use the bathrooms and changing facilities in which they feel most comfortable and safe. At a minimum, schools should provide private changing spaces and showers in the men's and women's locker rooms to accommodate transgender, nonbinary, and other individuals who desire privacy. Players, coaches, and staff also should be permitted to use the facilities consistent with their gender identity. These policies should be communicated clearly in the student handbook.