

# **A Coach's Guide:**

L B G T Q I 2 S   S p o r t   I n c l u s i o n



# IN THIS GUIDE

This resource will focus on how to foster inclusive environments by introducing strategies, best practices and tips for working with LGBTQI2S athletes and coaches.

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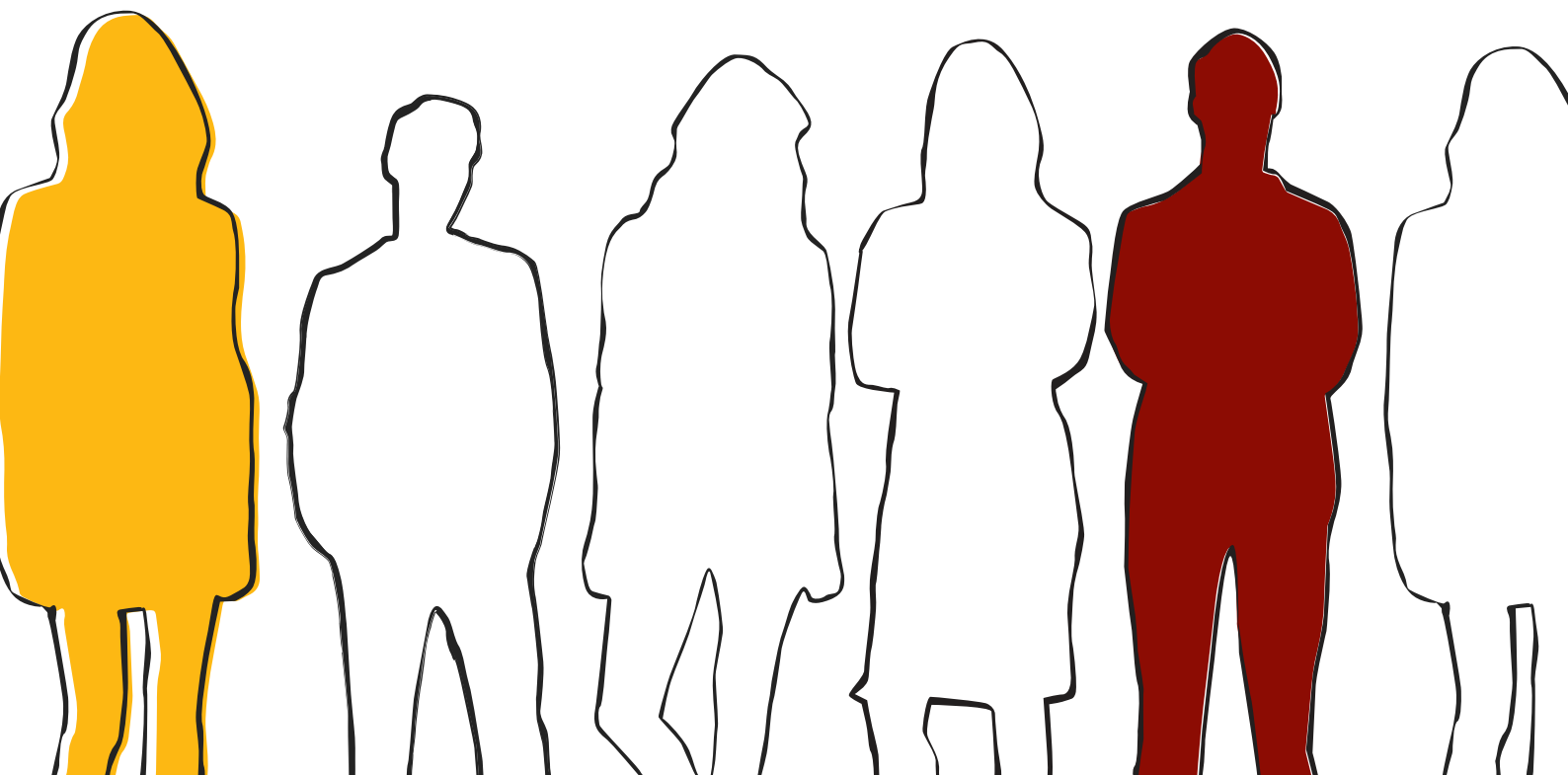
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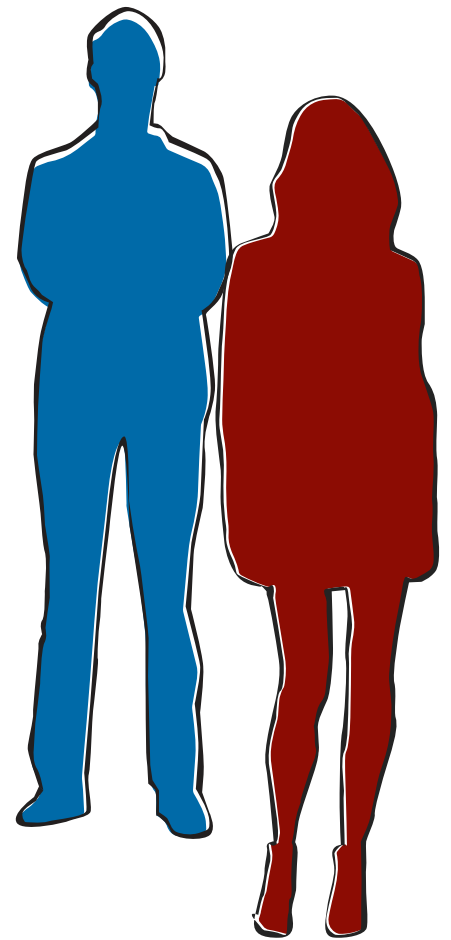
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# ABOUT

Coach New Brunswick's (NB) Mission: To lead, promote, support, and deliver coach education and ongoing learning through collaborative partnerships in all stages of life. Coach NB's Vision: Everyone has access to quality coaching and enjoys a positive sporting experience through all stages of life.

Coach NB's objective with this resource is to provide guiding principles to help coaches create more inclusive environments, practices and policies in their sport organizations for LGBTQI2S athletes, administrators, coaches, officials and volunteers. This guide is designed to support organizations interested in becoming more inclusive to all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.



# WHY

In 2015, an international study (Out on the Fields), was conducted and the following results, specific to Canada, were published:

- 70% believe that youth sports are not welcoming or safe for LGB people
- 1 in 4 (25%) of gay men did not play youth team sports, many citing negative PE class experiences (45%) as the reason, and many others saying they feared they would be rejected because of their sexuality (36%)
- 81% of Canadian participants witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports
- 29% of all participants and 36% of gay men believe that LGB people are 'not accepted at all' or only 'accepted a little' in sports culture
- 65% of all participants and 75% of gay men believe homophobia is more common in Canadian sports than the rest of society

Homophobia is very prominent in Canadian sports. Inclusivity and positive sporting experiences start with coaches. Providing coaches with the tools to combat homophobia in sports will help provide a positive sporting experience and quality coaching to all athletes. Little research has been done on transphobia and homophobia in sports and therefore highlights a great need for it to be pursued further.



## Policies

**Creating inclusive policies is the first step to making an organization have an environment that is welcoming to everyone.**

Your organization's policies should include aspects from all of the subsequent sections of this resource (language, facilities, and addressing phobia in sports).

Some policies that help promote inclusion are:

- Non-discrimination statement
- Code of Conduct
- Employee policies
- Equity and Access policies
- Gender Equity policies
- Confidentiality policies
- Privacy policies
- Workplace Bullying and Harassment policies
- Trans Athlete Inclusion policies

These policies can help protect your athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and administrators and make sure that they are able to be themselves without fear of discrimination while participating in your organization. Policies provide clear practices and procedures for your organization in times when you have a LGBTQI2S athlete.

Example:

Swimming Canada, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

**Policy Statement:** Swimming Canada is committed to developing, maintaining and supporting a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion in its workforce and in the delivery of its programs.

**Purpose:** Equity is the belief and the practice of treating persons in ways that are fair, equitable and just. Swimming Canada is an inclusive organization and welcomes full participation of all individuals in our programs and activities, irrespective of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability.

Swimming Canada. (2017). Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Retrieved from [https://swimming.ca/content/uploads/2015/06/2017\\_equity-diversity-inclusion-policy-procedures\\_20170801\\_en.pdf](https://swimming.ca/content/uploads/2015/06/2017_equity-diversity-inclusion-policy-procedures_20170801_en.pdf)

# Language

Language is an important aspect to fostering inclusive environments because the words we use can hurt other people, they can make the team environment hostile and unwelcoming.

All written materials and websites should use inclusive languages and images, as well as your day-to-day interactions with athletes.

## Terms

### Lesbian

An adjective describing sexual orientation toward others of the same sex and/or gender. The term is also used exclusively to describe women who are sexually attracted to women.

### Gay

An adjective describing sexual orientation toward others of the same sex and/or gender. The term is also used exclusively to describe men who are sexually attracted to men.

### Bisexual

A sexual orientation toward women and men in which gender is not a determining factor in romantic or sexual feelings towards another person.

### Transgender

An umbrella term to describe anyone whose identity or behaviour falls outside stereotypical gender norms. Transgender refers more specifically to individuals whose gender identity does not match their assigned birth gender. Being trans does not imply any specific sexual orientation or attraction to people of a specific gender. Therefore, trans people may additionally identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual.

### Queer

A term used to refer to sexual and gender minorities. In the past, it was used as a homophobic slur, but has been reclaimed by some of the LGBTQ+ community as an identifier.

### Intersex

When the sex chromosomes, genitalia and/or secondary sex characteristics are neither exclusively male or female

## Two Spirited

A term used to express distinctly Indigenous gender identity and gender variance. "Two-spirited" or "Two-spirit" usually indicates a person whose body simultaneously manifests both a masculine and feminine spirit.

## Ally

A person who believes in the respect of all people and takes action by supporting and advocating with groups being targeted by social injustice.

## Gender Identity

The complex relationship between physical traits and one's internal sense of self as male, female, or both, or neither. Biological/assigned sex and gender are different; gender is not inherently connected to one's physical anatomy.

## Gender Expression

How a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can be done in a variety of ways such as through our hair or the clothes we wear.

## Cisgender

Most people are cisgender, their gender identity "matches" the sex they were assigned at birth.

## Non-binary

Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

## Transitioning

Refers to a host of activities that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include change to their name, sex designation, and dress.

## LGBTQphobia

An umbrella term used to describe a number of phobias, including homophobia, bi-phobia and transphobia.

Use these tips to make the language you use at practices and competitions more inclusive:

- Make sure you learn the preferred names and pronouns of the athlete. All individuals have the right to go by the name and pronouns they choose (examples of pronouns: him/her/them/ze).
- Make it clear that jokes and causal banter that ridicule or put down LGBTQI2S people are inappropriate and unacceptable on your team.
- Avoid using gendered phrases such as "don't be a sissy" or "you're playing like a bunch of girls".
- Use gender neutral language such as "hello everyone" instead of "hello boys and girls" or "hey guys".
- Avoid "boys vs girls" activities (ie relays during practice, or team building exercises) get athletes to divide up based on other criteria (ex: divide into two groups, one group has birthdays between January-June, and the second July - December).



## Facilities

**Facilities are more challenging to address because teams do not control the facilities that are available, but they can choose which ones to use. Wherever possible, ensuring that your team's facilities can accommodate Trans and non-binary athletes will go a long way in making your organization's environment more inclusive. The following tips for home facilities, and accommodations when you are travelling can help make your organization more inclusive.**

### Home

Every locker room should have private, enclosed changing areas, showers, and toilets available for everyone. If your organization has jurisdiction over the signage used on washrooms, and locker rooms, use alternative signage on single user-washrooms to help create a more inclusive environment.

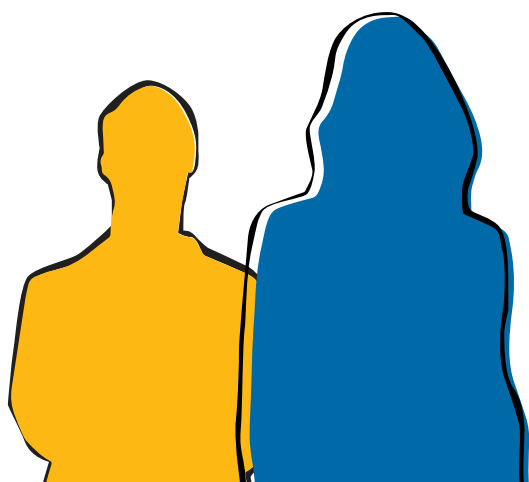
If you have a team uniform or dress code, ensure that it respects an individual's gender identity and gender expression.

### Travel

As a coach you need to ensure that international destinations are safe for all team members. Being LGBTQI2S is still a criminal offence in over 70 countries, in some it is still punishable by death. You can work with all members of the team to ensure that everyone feels safe while travelling.

If a Trans athlete requests to ensure appropriate changing, showering or bathroom facilities at the location of competition, administrators and coaches, should work with the athlete, to notify the competition coordinator prior to the competition to ensure that the athlete has access to facilities that are comfortable and safe. This request should maintain the athlete's privacy and under no circumstances should their identification be revealed without the athlete's permission.

Trans athletes generally should be assigned to share hotel rooms based on their gender identity, with a recognition that any athlete who needs extra privacy should be accommodated wherever possible (at no extra cost to them).

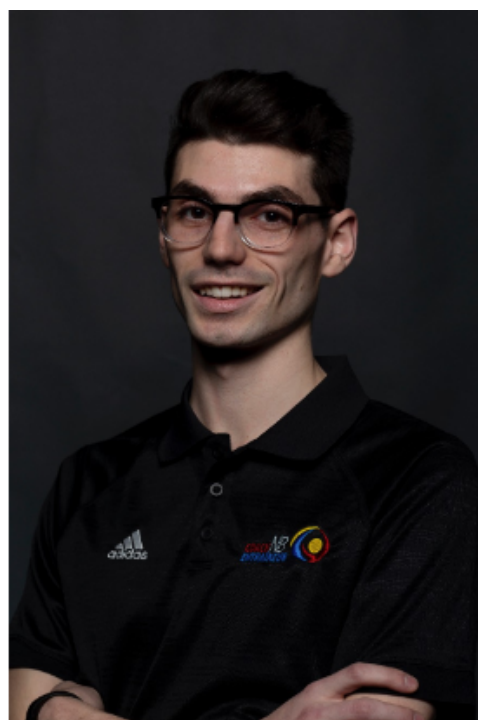


# Visibility

**LGBTQphobia hurts everyone. When parents pick sports based on gender-appropriateness or when athletes quit sports they love because of gender-based stigma, everyone loses. Increasing visibility of LGBTQI2S athletes and coaches can help support younger athletes by giving them role models and inspiration. Increasing visibility can including things like:**

- Contact LGBTQI2S organizations for help or to bring in speakers
- Coaches can demonstrate leadership through vocal support of and participation in LGBTQI2S initiatives (example: marching in pride parades)
- Become more familiar with LGBTQI2S issues in sports. Know what resources are available to assist those who are LGBTQI2S and may be struggling
- Policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Ensure policies are inclusive and non-discriminatory
- Educate staff, team members, and volunteers on responsibilities
- If you are a LGBTQI2S coach, takes steps to live your sport life more openly as an “out” coach
- Be open to speaking with athletes, coaches or other support staff who have questions or express concerns

These tips can shine a light on LGBTQphobia in sports. The more visibility these issues get, the more it will help create a safe space in sports. Increased visibility shows that you are working towards inclusion. You are taking steps to change your organization’s environment for the better. Visibility is key.



*"I didn't think that I could be both an athlete and gay. For a long time as I struggled and thought that who I was couldn't be compatible with who I was becoming. Because of this I quit my sport. I really thought that I was alone, there weren't that many gay athletes or coaches that I knew of. I felt that I couldn't be what I was if no one else was like me."*

- David Thibodeau,  
Team NB Canada Games 2013





# ADDRESSING PHOBIA

When athletes are forced to conceal their sexual orientation, gender identification or gender expression, it diverts their attention away from training and being able to commit to the sport. Ultimately, it leads to a decrease in performance.

## LANGUAGE

The language we use in everyday settings like practices and competitions have a big impact on how inclusive your organization's environment is.

### What is homophobic language?

Homophobic language includes explicit verbal abuse as calling someone "Fag", "Dyke" or saying, "that's so gay".

Some tips for responding to homophobic language:

- Address each situation consistently
- Instead of calling someone out for being homophobic, say that their language is hurtful
- Use the situation as a teaching opportunity, explain why the comment is unacceptable rather than simply saying "don't say that"
- Don't ignore it. Take action. Ignoring it will make it seem that it is acceptable, and it will continue

## LOCKER ROOMS

The locker room can be a vulnerable place. Societal conventions dictate that LGBTQI2S athletes must act a certain way around teammates and behaviour must be carefully monitored to avoid any hints of homosexuality or gender non-conformity. Being in the locker room with teammates who identify as LGBTQI2S makes some feel uncomfortable and declare or reaffirm their heterosexuality by using homophobic or transphobic language or talking about their sexual interests and activities. This is often referred to as "locker room talk".

Some tips for addressing concerns about LGBTQI2S peoples in locker rooms:

- Ensure that policies are based on general principles of fairness and commitment to safety for all members of the team
- Develop sexual harassment policies and enforce them
- Address fears about LGBTQI2S presence in locker rooms through education
- Make parents who express concerns about LGBTQI2S people in the locker room aware of sexual harassment policies and expectations of respectful treatment for all including non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity. The policies in place ensure safety for all athletes

# LGBTQI2S SPORT ORGANIZATIONS



You Can Play works to ensure the safety and inclusion of all in sports - including LGBTQ athletes, coaches and fans. You Can Play works to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete, judged by other athletes and fans alike, only by what they contribute to the sport or their team's success. You Can Play seeks to challenge the culture of locker rooms and spectator areas by focusing only on an athlete's skills, work ethic and competitive spirit.

<http://www.youcanplayproject.org/>

Athlete Ally believes that everyone should have equal access, opportunity, and experience in sports - regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Our mission is to end the rampant homophobia and transphobia in sport and to activate the athletic community to exercise their leadership to champion LGBTQ equality.

<https://www.athleteally.org/>



**AthleteAlly**  
Victory Through Unity.



Pride Tape is a badge of support from teammates, coaches, parents and pros to young LGBTQ hockey players. By participating in the NHL's "hockey is for everyone" month, our collective goal is to make sport a more inclusive environment for players, their families and fans of every race, colour, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and those with disabilities.

<http://pridetape.com/>

TRANSATHLETE.com is a resource for students, athletes, coaches, and administrators to find information about Trans inclusion in athletics at various levels of play. This site pulls together existing information in one central location and breaks down information into easy to reference areas to help you find what you need.

<https://www.transathlete.com/>

**transathlete**



NCAA Common Ground Program was created to provide individuals at public and private colleges and universities, faith-based organizations and LGBTQ affiliations with an opportunity to discuss what makes them similar and different and how they can work more cohesively within athletics populations. The main goal of Common Ground is to foster environments in athletics that respect dignity and support the well-being of student-athletes and those who teach and lead them.

<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/common-ground>



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## LEADING THE WAY:

Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport: Leading the Way

This resource is designed for use primarily by coaches, and highlights current lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (transgender), and two-spirited (LGBT) issues taking place in Canadian sport.

[http://www.caaws.ca/e/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CAAWS\\_LeadingtheWay.pdf](http://www.caaws.ca/e/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CAAWS_LeadingtheWay.pdf)

To see when webinars are available please see here: <http://www.caaws.ca/leading-the-way-webinar-2/>

For more resources and publications please see: <https://www.caaws.ca/publications/all-publications/>

## One Team Program

Canadian Olympic Committee: One Team

One Team: Creating a Safer School and Sport Environment Resources. The goal of these resources is to promote LGBTQ inclusion and respect in schools and sport throughout the country.

<https://olympic.ca/education/resources/oneteam/>

An Introduction to One Team Program.

This resource introduces the research and current problems for LGBTQ children and youth in the education and sport landscape.

<https://cdnolympic.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/yellow-oneteam-introduction.pdf>

Fostering Mental Fitness in LGBTQ Students.

Designed to introduce the concept of mental fitness and the basic mental fitness needs of acceptance, competence and relatedness <https://olympic.ca/education/resources/one-team-mental-fitness/>

Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ Students.

Designed to provide educators a quick reference/reminder of what their role is and how they can support LGBTQ participants within the classroom and in sport.

<https://olympic.ca/education/resources/one-team-creating-safer-spaces/>



ViaSport BC

This resource includes guides on; the LGBTQI2S Policy Readiness, Adopting Inclusive Policy Language, Trans Athlete Inclusion Guidelines, Creating Inclusive Environments, and Collecting Gender Identity Information

<https://www.viasport.ca/inclusion/lgbtqi2s>

<https://www.viasport.ca/sites/default/files/Documents/LGBTQI2S%20Resources.pdf>

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



## Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports

In 2016, the CCES released a policy guidance document designed to help sport organizations develop their own trans inclusion policies. "Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport - Guidance for Sport Organizations" provides policy guidance and best practices for sport at recreational and developmental and high-performance levels.

<https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/pdf/cces-transinclusionpolicyguidance-e.pdf>

To further assist sport organizations with the development and implementation of a trans inclusion policy, the CCES published a practice and policy template in 2018 titled "Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport - Policy and Practice Template for Sport Organizations." The template document is designed to help sport organizations create their own policy and practice for all trans inclusion, for all involved including athletes, staff and volunteers.

[https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/pdf/creating\\_inclusive\\_environments\\_for\\_trans\\_participants\\_in\\_canadian\\_sport\\_practice\\_and\\_policy\\_template\\_final\\_e.pdf](https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/pdf/creating_inclusive_environments_for_trans_participants_in_canadian_sport_practice_and_policy_template_final_e.pdf)



## Egale - Corporate Training

Egale offers reliable, high-quality training and development on both a local and national scale. We aim to help clients develop the strategy, motivation and accountability required to foster LGBT inclusion and safer space. Grounded in anti-racism and anti-oppression principles and practices, the Egale training & facilitation includes an evidenced-based, intersectional systemic, organizational and human rights based approach to training design and delivery in LGBTQ inclusion.

<https://egale.ca/corporate-equity-training/>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Thibodeau is the primary author of this guide. David is an advocate for better inclusion of LGBTQ peoples in sports. Having completed a summer internship with Coach NB, he learned the importance of coaching education and advocating for better inclusion in sports. He is currently in his 8th season of coaching competitive swimming, and a Trained Age Group Coach. David was a competitive swimmer for 10 years, competing at Canada Games for Team NB in 2013.

Additional support for this guide was provided by Ashleigh Milani, Manager of Coaching Education at Coach New Brunswick.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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