

For Immediate Release

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NEW YORK, June 17, 2009 – Ohio schools are unsafe places for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) youth, according to a research brief released today by GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

Inside Ohio Schools: The Experiences of LGBT Students, a report based on findings from 244 Ohio students who participated in GLSEN's 2007 National School Climate Survey, shows that Ohio LGBT students face extreme levels of harassment and assault and skip school at alarming rates because of feeling unsafe.

Ohio is one of the 39 states that does not explicitly protect students from bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

"Inside Ohio Schools shows how much work needs to be done to make sure LGBT students in Ohio are safe in school," GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard said. "Ohio has lagged behind other states in taking the simple and effective steps to begin addressing anti-LGBT bullying and harassment. The state and all of its schools need to commit to making sure that schools are safe for all students."

Nearly nine out of 10 (87%) Ohio LGBT students experienced verbal harassment based on sexual orientation in the past year, 48% said they had been physically harassed and nearly a quarter (24%) said they had been physically assaulted.

GLSEN's work in Ohio is supported by its GLSEN Greater Cincinnati and GLSEN Northeast Ohio chapters.

Major Findings

97% of Ohio LGBT students regularly (sometimes, often or frequently) heard the word "gay" used in a negative way in school, such as "that's so gay." 78% regularly heard homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke," from other students in school.

87% of LGBT students were verbally harassed, 48% were physically harassed and 24% were physically assaulted in the past year because of their sexual orientation.

67% of LGBT students were verbally harassed, 36% were physically harassed and 16% were physically assaulted because of their gender expression.

65% of LGBT students who were harassed or assaulted in school never reported it to school staff. Only 30% of students who did report incidents said that reporting resulted in effective intervention by school staff.

35% of LGBT students had skipped class at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe, and 31% had missed at least one entire day of school for this reason. Students who were more frequently verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation were two times more likely to miss days of school because they felt unsafe than students who were less frequently harassed (47% vs. 23%, respectively).

Ohio is one of the 39 states that does not explicitly protect students from bullying and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Only 14% of LGBT students reported that their school had this type of comprehensive anti-bullying policy.

About the National School Climate Survey

The National School Climate Survey is a biennial survey examining the experiences of LGBT middle and high school students in U.S. schools. The survey, which was first conducted in 1999 and is the only national survey of its kind, documents the anti-LGBT bias and behaviors that make schools unsafe for many of these youth. The full 2007 sample consisted of 6,209 LGBT secondary school students, from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, between the ages of 13 and 21.

About GLSEN

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.