

Four Step Guide for Anti-2SLGBTQI Hate in Schools

FOR PARENTS



Egale's *Still in Every Class in Every School* report revealed that despite important improvements in the last decade, there is still a long way to go in creating safer, more inclusive schools for 2SLGBTQI youth.¹ From 2020 to 2021, there was a **64% increase in hate-motivated violence targeting 2SLGBTQI communities**. This increased violence is accompanied by 2SLGBTQI book bans, Pride flags being torn down at schools, protests at drag events and at school board meetings, efforts to roll back inclusive school curricula, and an overall rise in anti-2SLGBTQI hate in schools.²

If a young person you care about is experiencing anti-2SLGBTQI related hate in school, use these four steps to help guide you in supporting their needs and advocating for a safer and more inclusive school environment. Remember that you are not alone in your advocacy efforts. Egale is available for consultation at any stage along the way.

¹ Peter, T., Campbell, C.P., & Taylor, C. (2021). *Still in every class in every school: Final report on the second climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools*. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

² Act4QueerSafety open letter. (2023, May 25). Momentum. <https://www.momentumcanada.net/openletter>

1) Acknowledge your feelings

As a parent or caregiver, you may have your own emotions and reactions to hearing about negative experiences affecting your young person. It can be upsetting to watch someone you care about face injustice and your feelings deserve to be validated.

Ask Yourself

- ❓ What feelings do I have after hearing about the experiences of my young person or a young person I am supporting?
- ❓ How can I acknowledge my feelings and support myself so that I can best show up to advocate for my young person?
- ❓ What strategies have helped me get through challenging events in the past- are they useful to me now?

Remember:

You are not alone in your feelings. Many parents and caregivers of 2SLGBTQI children share common experiences. Through building a network of support, you can find a community to speak candidly about your experiences with. You may also get ideas for further advocacy after learning from others and their experiences.

2) Listen and support

It's important to validate your young person's feelings and reactions to their experiences. You can do this by listening and offering supportive statements like "Being upset is understandable considering..." or "I appreciate you sharing that with me. I am here for you." Depending on the age of the child, the way you show support can adapt. For older children, focus on validating their experiences and using affirming language.

Ask Yourself

- ? How can I hold space for this young person and listen with intention?
- ? What feelings are being described to me?
- ? How does my young person want me to handle the situation?
- ? How can I avoid dismissing or minimizing the situation to ensure my support is appropriate and meets the needs being asked of me?

Remember:

In more extreme cases, when a young person shares experiences of anti-2SLGBTQI hate, they may be in distress. If your young person is in distress or immediate crisis, your response needs to shift accordingly. There are also levels of 'distress'- use your best judgement to assess what the young person might need in that moment. It could be space to express themselves, support navigating conversations with their community, or access to external supports including emergency professional supports.

3) Meet with administration

After validating your young person's feelings, look toward next steps. This can look like meeting with the school administration team. You might consider suggesting inclusivity training, policy revision, and participating in community consultations, among other solutions.

Ask Yourself

- ❓ What outcomes am I looking for? Who do I need to talk to at the school to achieve my desired change?
- ❓ What do I need to prepare?
- ❓ Does my young person want to be involved in this conversation?
- ❓ Who else needs to be a part of these conversations?
- ❓ What do educators need to be better equipped to support students in this situation?
- ❓ What suggestions can I bring forward that would satisfy my young person's safety needs?

Remember:

When meeting with school administration, focus on using action-oriented language. Approaching conversations in a constructive way that encourages action may be more effective in advocating for change than approaching conversations using shame-based language. Be sure to hold administration accountable and be proactive in your proposed solutions to ensure the situation does not happen again.

4) Take further action if needed

It can be devastating for you and your young person when your advocacy efforts are unsuccessful. Remain hopeful. If you are unsatisfied with the school administration's response, seek out alternative routes to getting your young person's needs heard and addressed. Some considerations might be contacting the board office or reaching out to Egale for support, among others.

Ask Yourself

- ? What was the biggest point of hesitation from school administration?
- ? Did the administration team present me with a plan for moving forward?
- ? What other options are available to me to support my young person?
- ? Where did I hear willingness to compromise or take next steps?
- ? How can I support that moving forward?

Remember:

When school administration is unable to support you in achieving desired change, there are many other sources of support available. Remember that everyone within the school community has a part to play in building safer and more inclusive spaces. Non-administration channels of support within the school can include teachers, school counsellors, other support staff, etc.

Additional Resources

- **Egale Canada- Supporting Your Gender Diverse Child**

<https://egale.ca/awareness/supporting-gender-diverse-child/>

- **Canadian Parents of Trans and Gender Creative Kids**

<https://gendercreativekids.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/canadianparentsoftranskids>

- **It Gets Better Canada**

<https://itgetsbettercanada.org/stories/>

- **Good2Talk**

<https://good2talk.ca/>

1-866-925-5454

- **Hope for Wellness Help Line**

<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

1-855-242-3310

- **Kids Help Phone**

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

1-800-668-6868

- **PFLAG Canada**

<https://pflagcanada.ca/>

Local Chapters List:

<https://pflagcanada.ca/get-help/>

- **Talk Suicide**

<https://talksuicide.ca>

1-833-456-4566

- **Trans Lifeline**

<https://translifeline.org/>

1-877-330-6366

- **Trans Parent Canada**

<https://transparentcanada.ca/?file=welcome>

- **Youthspace.ca**

<http://www.youthspace.ca>

778-783-0177