



June 13, 2016

Addressing the Orlando Shooting at Your School

Dear Educators,

Today, as shocking news of the horrific attack in Orlando filtered through my timelines, feeds and inbox, I paused to think about what it will be like for you to return to your students tomorrow.

In the coming days and weeks, as we all struggle to understand the depth of this tragedy, many students will have questions and face a range of emotions.

The fact that you are connected to GLSEN means that you care about the wellbeing and success of LGBT students, and I bet you are among those educators whom students may turn to tomorrow. Having a supportive educator to turn to can make all of the difference in the world to students who need a haven to discuss their feelings and responses to the events that occurred. This is particularly important for LGBT, Latino and Muslim students who may be feeling especially vulnerable because of the identities of the victims and the perpetrator in today's horrific events.

Below is a short list of crisis response and emotional support resources that we hope complement your school-based support services and provide you with the guidance and reassurance you need as you navigate your way through the coming days.

Need Someone to Talk To (or know someone who does)?

For those needing additional support, there are several agencies and hotlines offering their services:

1. The Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990. The Helpline can provide immediate counseling to anyone who needs help in dealing with the tragic event in Orlando Florida. The Helpline is a 24 hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week resource that responds to people who need crisis counseling after experiencing a natural or man-made disaster or tragedy. The helpline can also be accessed at <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov> ^[1] and TTY for deaf and hearing impaired: 1-800-846-8517.
2. You can also contact the English/Spanish hotline of the New York City Anti-Violence Project at 212-714-1141.
3. The Trevor Project is also providing support at 866-488-7386 and thetrevorproject.org ^[2]. They are particularly good at working with youth.

Wondering How to Address the Topic with Students?

Your school or district may have specific guidelines to follow after traumatic events. There are also organizations who have developed resources for schools to use in the wake of any crisis:

1. Download the [NEA Healthy Futures School Crisis Guide](#) ^[3] (Parts 2 and 3 will be the most useful)
2. Visit American School Counselor Association website for a [comprehensive list](#) ^[4] of crisis response and mental health resources for educators. There you will find best practices and tools to help your school community respond immediately to the needs of students and continue the healing in the coming weeks and months.

3. Of course, information on LGBT-affirming practices as part of your everyday work is available from GLSEN in our [Ready, Set, Respect!](#) ^[5](Grades K-5) and [Safe Space Kit](#) ^[6] (Grades 6-12) toolkits, which can be downloaded at [glsen.org](#) ^[7].

Looking for Community?

Vigils across the country are being held in remembrance of the victims of the shooting and can be found, or submitted, to [weareorlando.org](#) ^[8]. You can also find current information about how best to help those directly impacted by the shooting.

With great sadness, we offer our most heartfelt condolences to the friends and loved ones of the many people affected by such a senseless act of violence. Amid our collective grief we are also reminded of the urgent need to continue our work together in schools to eliminate anti-LGBT bias and violence.

As always, we appreciate the meaningful and challenging work you do each day to support students and provide them with safe, caring and respectful places to learn. Thank you for providing that absolutely essential support. Our thoughts are with you as you navigate this difficult time.

Warmest regards,

Jenny Betz
GLSEN Director of Education & Youth Programs