



# How LGBTQ Residential Programs Can Work to Prevent Bullying

## Do's and don'ts

---

### Do...

1. **Advocate for and participate in training** to increase understanding of the dynamics of peer-to-peer aggression. Staff teams report that increased understanding of the dynamics and warning signs make it easier to recognize this form of relationship violence.
2. **Conduct an environmental and program scan** to identify factors that may create opportunities for peer-to-peer aggression in your setting. Review the “hot spot” locations and activities that are most likely to enable bullying.
3. **Implement an anonymous feedback system** (e.g. suggestion box, opportunities to confidentially and anonymously complete sentence stems – Staff should know that...The think I worry about most in this residence is...).
4. **Inform residents of internal procedure for concerns and complaints**, and take steps to ensure that access to procedures are private and safe for residents.
5. **Enhance programming to increase structured time** and decrease boredom and frustration. Free time, recreation time, quiet time, chore time, bathroom hygiene time, meal times and bed times tend to hold the highest incidents of bullying and aggression.
6. **Create consistent staff supervision** by
  - a. ensuring an adequate youth/staff ratio
  - b. being mindful of supervision during shift change
  - c. ensure that staff are able to stay alert to environment even if engaged in activity or conversation with other young people. Perhaps one staff is “roaming” while another is engaged in activity and then they rotate.

7. **Minimal youth per bedroom.** More than one youth per bedroom is a financial reality for most settings. However, it is repeatedly featured in examples of peer victimization as the most common scene of bullying, harassment, and even assault.
8. **Communicate explicit norms against aggression and for respectful behavior.** See the LGBTQ Center's "Within These Walls" statement or the ADL's [Resolution of Respect](#) for setting the tone. Translate this into youth-friendly language for your setting.
9. **Teach youth about the bullying and bystander dynamic.** The bully gets "approval" by having bystanders who do nothing. See the Bystander Continuum for a tool to prompt discussion about alternatives.

## Don't...

1. **Never ignore a youth who reports being victimized by peers.** Victims of peer bullying are often reluctant to tell anyone about their experiences because they fear retaliation. Many staff report feeling hampered by lack of evidence to confront the aggressor. It is okay to inquire even if aggressive behavior seems mild! It sets a tone of safety.
2. **Do not rely too heavily on a zero-tolerance approach to disciplining bullies.** Zero tolerance approaches that advocate suspension or expulsion of bullies are sometimes preferred because they presumably send a message to the other youth that bullying will not be tolerated. However, research suggests that these policies do not always work as intended and can sometimes backfire. Before deciding on a discipline strategy, give careful thought to the scope of the problem, where change should be targeted, who will be affected by those changes, the fairness of the strategy, and the kinds of messages that are being communicated to residents.
3. **Do not let the peer group off the hook.** Bullying involves more than perpetrators and victims. Other youth are often witnesses to bullying incidents and may take on roles of bystanders or reinforcers who encourage bullies. Peers need to learn how their group behavior can indirectly encourage bullies.
4. **Don't do a conflict mediation between bully and victim.** Conflict mediation works when there's a fairly even power balance. The bully/victim relationship often involves a serious power difference between the two parties. The victim will not be able to safely partake in mediation.

Adapted by Center for Anti-Violence Education from *Safe from Bullying in Children's Homes*.  
[http://www.abatoolsforschools.org.uk/pdf/Safe\\_from\\_Bullying-Childrens\\_Homes.pdf](http://www.abatoolsforschools.org.uk/pdf/Safe_from_Bullying-Childrens_Homes.pdf) and

*Peer to Peer Agression in Residential Settings*. <http://www.lfcc.on.ca/peerviolence.pdf>