

As a parent or guardian of a gender expansive student, you may be interested in advocating within your child's school or district for professional development and transgender inclusive policies. Below are some helpful tips, resources and steps to consider when beginning your advocacy. If you would like further guidance or would like to know if your school has an ongoing relationship with the organizations in Illinois who provide trainings to schools, we encourage you to reach out to the organizations listed below.

As of January 2017, we know that about 27% of students in Illinois go to school in a district with a specific policy that supports the inclusion of transgender and gender expansive students. Those policies vary from district to district and do not necessarily include training time for teachers, administrators and support staff.

When advocating for training in your school, a good place to start is by asking your primary contact person in the school who is already an identified ally (teacher, social worker, administrator, etc.) what the climate of your school is like, what staff training has happened in the past and about any existing non-discrimination or trans-specific policies exist within the school and district. They might be able to help schedule a training for you, or they may connect you with someone in the school district who schedules district trainings. Often, schools have professional development days already scheduled in the calendar and a Gender Inclusion training could be offered during that time.

Some questions to consider when making an "ask" for your school to train its staff are:

- What is your personal goal in a school training?
 - This may help you advocate for the training to be required as opposed to optional, for specific staff to attend such as all 1st grade teachers, for the training to happen one-time or regularly, etc.

- Does the school administration support gender affirming schools?
 - If leadership doesn't support moving towards inclusive schools (or is an active barrier to gender inclusion) it may be a good idea to start with an ask for a higher level administrator training first and a larger staff training once there is district leadership support.

- What is the culture of the school?
 - Have you found school staff responds best to experiential learning such as hearing directly from students and families? Have you found school staff responds best to arguments grounded in medicine and/or statistics? Legal arguments? (This will help determine which training it might make the most sense to recommend).

Sample Email:

Dear Principal _____,

I am the parent of _____, a transgender student in your school and was referred to you by _____ (school staff contact). I am writing to request that _____ (all school staff, admin, etc.) is trained on tools for creating gender inclusive schools.

There are several organizations that regularly provide these trainings and have trained individual schools, school districts all across the state, and organizations such as the Illinois High School Association and the Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents. Trainings can be tailored to the specific needs in our school and I would recommend a training that focuses on _____ (legal rights, violence prevention, identity development, basic terminology, etc.) Organizations who provide trainings on gender inclusive schools are:

Illinois Safe Schools Alliance

Contact: AJ Jennings, aj@illinoissafeschools.org

The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance provides research-based, educationally centered professional development that focus on supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) students in school. All professional development offerings emphasize what students need to be available to learn, healthy identity development, and the professional responsibility of teachers, administrators, and staff in creating safe and affirming environments for all students. The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance also consults school districts in development of gender inclusion policy and has successfully supported implementation of guidance in districts of all sizes including [Chicago Public Schools](#), [Harlem D122](#), and [Berwyn South SD 100](#).

Youth Outlook

Contact: Carolyn Wahlskog, carolyn.wahlskog@youth-outlook.org

Youth Outlook provides educational workshops to healthcare, mental health, and educational professionals exploring the developmental needs of LGBTQ+ youth, how to best support them and make positive changes in schools and/or agencies in the western suburbs of Illinois. The goal of this work is to foster a safe and inclusive atmosphere in area schools and community organizations. Additionally, schools and youth-serving organizations may join the [Community Networks: Professionals Serving LGBTQ+ youth](#) for additional professional development and collaboration.

Ann & Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

Contact: Jennifer Leininger, JLeininger@luriechildrens.org

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago's [Gender & Sex Development Program](#) supports schools as they strive to create inclusive environments celebrating different types of diversity, including gender diversity. Lurie's program has long been a national leader in supporting schools and transgender and gender expansive youth. In collaboration with others, Lurie Children's issued a [Model Policy and Administrative](#)

[Procedure](#) to guide schools as they navigate how to support gender inclusion, something that is important for all students.

While training your staff will highly benefit my child, I am certain it will also benefit other students in your district and prevent violence against students who are gender expansive.

I look forward to your strong leadership!

With Appreciation,

NAME