



**STARTING
A GSA
FAQ**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This is the spot where your questions may get answered about all things GSA Advising related. If your question isn't answered here, please feel free to reach out to the LGBTQ2SIA+ Program Supports Manager.



Q: Do I/we need to fill out a form to start a GSA?

A: Yes. You can find the registration form on the Gender and Sexuality Alliance tab of the LGBTQ+ Supports website.

Q: What does GSA mean?

A: GSA is an abbreviation for a type of affinity group or club called Genders and Sexualities Alliance. There are other names for groups that serve the same function like Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA) and Queer Student Alliance (QSA). Of course, your group can come up with a name and fun acronym that better encapsulates your personality, needs, and/or mission.

Q: What is an affinity group?

A: An affinity group is a designated safer space where everyone in the group shares a particular aspect of identity. Affinity groups can be groups based on race, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, language, class, religion, etc. Only people with the shared identity are able to join an affinity group. GSAs are an affinity group for students with non-dominant systemic sexual orientations and gender identities. So for GSAs, only students with non-dominant systemic sexual orientations and gender identities or students who are questioning can join. For more questions about affinity groups, read this FAQ from Children's Day School in San Francisco. We encourage schools to create a student group, in addition to their GSA, where allies and LGBTQ2SIA+ students can be in community together.

Q: What if the principal and/or vice principal aren't supportive of a GSA at my school?

A: There is an Administrative Directive, [4.40.050-AD Student Clubs](#), that outlines how student clubs operate. Contact the LGBTQ2SIA+ Program Manager to get support with starting your GSA.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What do I say if a school employee discourages starting a GSA?

A: If you feel comfortable, you can start a conversation with them about the many reasons why such a space is necessary.

Forming/providing a GSA space is protected under the Federal Access Act. All GSA clubs must be treated just like every other school club on campus.

Q: Is a GSA a club that parents, guardians, or family members have to opt-in or opt-out of?

A: No. As long as a club meets during non-instructional time during the school day, parents, guardians, and family members do not have to opt-in or opt-out. Students get to decide how they spend their recess and lunch time. If the group meets at a time when students would have to miss class to attend or is before/after school, then students must get permission to attend.

Q: What can our GSA do as a club?

A: It depends on what your GSA members want the focus of your club to be. The three main types of GSAs are social, support, and activism. A social GSA is going to focus mainly on being a space for community and connection among peers. A support GSA is mainly focused on providing support to those that may be struggling with their sexual or gender identity. And an activism GSA is focused on educating students and staff, raising awareness and improving the culture within the school for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.



Q: What do we do if our advisor needs to change or if one of the student leaders steps down or graduates?

A: Great question! There is a GSA Advisor Change Form that needs to be filled out by the group. This ensures that the LGBTQ2SIA+ Program Manager is informed of any changes whether they are at the end of the year or any other point during the year.

Q: Our GSA has an exciting idea for an event, but we have questions about putting the plans into action. What do we do?

A: Awesome! We love supporting new ideas or programs. Have someone from your group reach out to the LGBTQ2SIA+ Program Manager to see how they can support you in putting your plans into action!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Be sure to inform the student leaders in the GSA about these national opportunities for LGBTQ2SIA+ leadership!

GENDER JUSTICE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The [Gender Justice Leadership Programs](#) (GJLP) are youth-led programs for trans and gender nonconforming young people to build public understanding, empathy, and a movement for liberation through storytelling and media organizing.

[TRUTH](#) is a youth-led program for trans and gender- nonconforming young people to build public understanding, empathy, and a movement for liberation through storytelling and media organizing.



Illustration and descriptions from Gender Justice Leadership Program.

GLSEN NATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL

The [National Student Council](#) is a GLSEN-sponsored youth leadership and engagement program. It is open to all youth currently enrolled in high school in the United States. Members of the National Student Council dedicate their time, passion, and commitment to the safer schools mission while also elevating the voices of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ community, including (but not limited to) youth of color, youth with different abilities, immigrant and undocumented youth, youth who are HIV positive, youth in rural communities, and transgender, non binary, intersex, and gender nonconforming youth.



Illustration and description from GLSEN.