

I'm Being Harassed at School... What Can I Do?

(Reviewed: February 2012)

If you have been harassed because you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or just because people think you are, you are not alone!! You don't deserve to be harassed and the law is on your side. Below are some steps you can take to assess the situation and try to get the harassment to stop. It can be scary to deal with harassment, but help is available.

Keep notes about what is going on

- Write down who is harassing you, what they said and did, the date and time, and who else saw or heard it.
- If a harasser is writing you harassing or obscene notes, texts, emails, chats or Facebook messages, keep copies or screenshots of these as records of the harassment.
- Also write down who you have told about the harassment and what they did (if anything) to help you.
- Keep your notes in a notebook or datebook. If your notes are in a diary or journal and you ever need another person to look over them, the privacy of your other entries may be jeopardized.
- NEVER give away your only copy of your notes, even to someone you trust.

Try to get a copy of your school's policies on student conduct, harassment, bullying and discipline

- Is there an anti-bullying policy or a student handbook about how students are supposed to behave and what happens if they don't follow the rules?
- If they don't have guidelines about sexual orientation harassment, see if they have guidelines for sexual harassment or harassment or bullying in general.
- Try to follow the guidelines set out in the policy, filing complaints and keeping copies of everything.

Talk to Someone About The Problem

- Find a trusted friend, counselor, family member or youth group. It's hard to deal with this kind of treatment alone.
- You can also contact GLAD at 1-800-455-GLAD Monday through Friday from 1:30-4:30 pm or at www.glad.org/rights/infoline-contact anytime. All calls to GLAD are confidential. GLAD Legal InfoLine workers can help you think through what your options are.
- A GLAD Infoline worker can refer you to GLBTQ youth groups and support services throughout New England.

Notify the Administration About the Situation and Ask Them to Stop the Harassment

- Your school has a legal obligation to investigate the harassment, but they may not know there is a problem unless you tell them.
- They are supposed to keep the investigation as confidential as possible, but they may have to talk to witnesses and other people involved.
- It is important to report harassment to the principal of your school, first verbally, and if the harassment continues in writing.
- If you are not comfortable going alone, think about finding a supportive parent, guidance counselor or friend to go with you.
- Remember to keep notes of the people you have talked to at the school about the problem, what you told them, when you talked to them and how they responded.

If your school does not investigate the harassment or if they do not take steps to stop the harassment, it may be they are not taking your complaint seriously and you need outside help.

If your school doesn't take care of the problem, contact GLAD or your state's Department of Education. GLAD can tell you how to do this. Call 1-800-455-GLAD (4523) between 1:30 and 4:30 pm weekdays or www.glad.org/rights/infoline-contact anytime.

This document contains legal information, not legal advice. For legal advice about a specific situation you must consult an attorney.