

Back to School Know Your Rights: LGBTQIA+ Students in Colorado Public Schools

The legal landscape around LGBTQIA+ rights in public schools is changing quickly. While the U.S. Department of Education's 2024 Title IX regulations clarified that protections include LGBTQIA+ students, ongoing federal litigation and recent executive actions have created uncertainty about the status of these rights. This confusion is intentional.

It is important to remember that Colorado schools are still bound by state law, which provides explicit and enforceable protections for LGBTQIA+ students, regardless of federal disputes. We have included a review of the applicable civil rights of LGBTQ+ students under Colorado law below. This is not legal advice.

- **No discrimination:** Colorado law protects students from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in schools and other places of public accommodation. ([C.R.S. 24-34-601](#))*
- **Chosen names and pronouns must be used:** It is discrimination for school employees to knowingly or intentionally refuse to use a student's **chosen name**; districts must have a written policy to honor requests. ([C.R.S. 22-1-145](#))
- **Facilities that match your gender identity:** Covered entities in Colorado must allow use of restrooms, locker rooms, and other gender-segregated facilities consistent with a person's gender identity. ([C.R.S. 708-1-81.9](#))
- **Clubs and GSAs:** If a public secondary school allows any non-curricular clubs, it must allow and treat GSAs equally under the federal Equal Access Act, ([glsen.org](#)) and Colorado nondiscrimination law (C.R.S. 24-24-601), and schools must treat them equally in terms of meeting space, announcements, and posters ([ACLU.org](#)).

- Bullying and harassment are prohibited: State law requires every district to adopt and enforce anti-bullying policies, including protections linked to legally protected identities([C.R.S. 22-32-109.1](#), [Colorado Department of Education](#)). Protections apply regardless of whether parents are supportive, and that outing a student without consent may violate privacy laws and cause harm ([ACLU.org](#)).
- Athletics: Under the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA, C.R.S 24-34-601), schools cannot force a student to play on a team that doesn't match their gender identity. While some districts like D49 and D11 have passed bans and joined lawsuits challenging these protections ([Colorado Public Radio](#)), state law and CHSAA recognize the right of transgender students to participate in athletics consistent with their gender identity unless overridden by a court([CHSAA](#))
- No conversion therapy by school-based licensed providers: Colorado bans conversion therapy on minors by licensed mental health professionals. ([C.R.S. 12-36-102.5](#))

What To Do If Your Rights Are Violated

- **Document what happened.** Write down the date, time, names of people involved, and what was said or done. Keep screenshots of emails, messages, or policies.
- **Talk to a trusted adult.** This could be a teacher, counselor, GSA advisor, or family member who can help advocate for you.
- **Request support in writing.** If a school refuses to use your chosen name or denies access to facilities, submit a written request referencing the Colorado laws listed above. Keep a copy.
- **File a complaint with your school district.** Every district has an equity or Title IX coordinator. They must investigate reports of discrimination and harassment.
- **Seek outside help.** If your school doesn't resolve the issue, you can:
 - File a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Division (CCRD).
 - Reach out to organizations like One Colorado, ACLU of Colorado, GLSEN, or PFLAG.

Proactive Steps You Can Take

- Know your school's policies. Ask for copies of your district's nondiscrimination, bullying, and club policies.
- Join or start a GSA. This helps build peer support and creates a visible presence for LGBTQ+ students.
- Educate allies. Share this Know Your Rights resource with friends, parents, and teachers.
- Build a support team. Identify adults in your school who will affirm you and stand up for your rights.

Resources & Hotlines

- See the [Colorado Department of Education's Title IX page](#) for process basics.
- Review the [ACLU guidance: "Reaffirming Privacy Obligations While Facing New Challenges."](#)
- Review [What Schools need to know about Mahmoud v Taylor](#) for information about the latest supreme court decision and its impacts on schools
- The Trevor Project – Crisis support for LGBTQ youth: 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678
- Trans Lifeline – Trans-led peer support: 1-877-565-8860
- Colorado Crisis Services – 24/7 statewide support: 1-844-493-TALK (8255) or text TALK to 38255

How to understand these resource citations: We have added the Colorado Revised Statute (State Law) or Colorado Code of Colorado Regulations (administrative law) number so you can reference it in communications with administration. When applicable, we have linked the bill that made this law.