

What Parent, Student, Education and Community Leaders Say About the **Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ Students Program**

A Silent Crisis shone a light on the issues that my friends and I have faced going through middle and high school. Many school counselors across my county were unaware of how troubled many LGBT+ teens are in our schools. If all schools offered this resource, it would be a leap towards protecting teens in our schools.

Austin Carter

11th Grader and GSA Founder
Brandywine Community Schools, Niles, MI

All students deserve the equal opportunity to a great education. The first step for our LGBTQ students, as with all students, is to welcome them, and acknowledge and accept them for who they are. The Michigan State Board of Education's Guidance, and MDE's LGBTQ resource guide, trainings and technical assistance, give schools the practical, common-sense "how-to's" to create safe and supportive school environments. By reducing the fear, violence and bullying LGBTQ students experience, that too often results in disengagement from school or self-harm, LGBTQ students thrive and can go about the important business of learning.

John Austin

Former President
Michigan State Board of Education

My transgender son knows that his school is a safe place for him, and that the educators in his school respect him for who he is. His school is filled with compassion. In addition, they have knowledge, resources and confidence to support him, because of the *Silent Crisis* training and resource guide. It has equipped them with the tools they need to support my son, so that he may flourish academically, socially and emotionally. As an educator myself, I know the importance of having the right resources available to you right when you need them.

Sarah and Pete Tchoryk

Parents of a Transgender Child
Members of Human Rights Campaign's Parents
for Transgender Equality Council
Dexter, MI

A Silent Crisis gave a remarkable look into the issues specifically facing the educational system and LGBTQ youth. It also provided a useful insight into the general issues that face any institution, such as law enforcement, that works within the educational setting.

Martin Underhill, MA

Chief of Police
Grand Ledge, MI

A Silent Crisis is an excellent training that not only offers practical tools, resources and guides for supporting students in schools, but also pushes participants to explore their biases and how those play out in daily practice. As an Equity Director and diversity trainer, as well as supporting all student identities in our community, I highly recommend this comprehensive learning opportunity for educators and community leaders looking to sharpen their toolkit. Whether new to supporting this population or an active practitioner, this training offers the ability for all participants to deepen their knowledge and practice and help foster safe and supportive environments for our LGBTQ students.

Naomi Khalil, EdS

Director of Instructional Equity
Farmington Public Schools, Farmington, MI

Living in a small, rural, conservative area gives a much different perspective. Throw in some variables like low income, single parent household and being transgender, and surviving adolescence resembles a scene out of *Lord of the Flies* with a little *Mean Girls* thrown in for good measure. We were honored to be a part of passing the State Board of Education Guidelines for Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBT Students. We are also ever so thankful for supportive educators, including our district Superintendent, who did the right thing and supported us before there WAS a guidance. We hope that there comes a day when all LGBT students can feel that supported.

Stella and Shane Shananaquet

Parent and Transgender Teen
Adrian Public Schools, Adrian, MI

As school leaders, superintendents bear the responsibility to ensure that our classrooms, hallways, and schools are safe for all of our students. Anything less poses a significant barrier to learning. The *Silent Crisis* training and resource guide provide useful tools and strategies for providing safe, respectful and supportive learning environments for each of our students.

Christopher A. Wigent

Executive Director
Michigan Association of School Administrators,
Lansing, MI

As a pediatrician who works in school-based clinics, I have witnessed how safe and supportive schools can positively impact the physical and emotional health of LGBTQ students. In the journey towards improving our educational and healthcare institutions to better serve these young people, *A Silent Crisis* provides us with the needed resources and guidance to help LGBTQ students grow into healthy adults.

Maureen D. Connolly, MD

Associate Medical Director
School-Based and Community Health Program,
Department of Pediatrics
Henry Ford Health System, Detroit, MI

As an elementary principal, I value the time spent in the *A Silent Crisis* workshop, and the accompanying resource guide provides many teaching and learning opportunities. It solidified my desire to ensure school policies and procedures are in place to support all members of our school community and most certainly those in the LGBTQ community. We must educate our youngest learners to be advocates for themselves and for others. It is the responsibility of all school staff to be proactive and supportive of all students to ensure that they are safe, supported, and feel loved.

Craig McCalla

Elementary Principal
Dexter, MI

As a parent and advocate, I believe the Creating Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ Students Program is essential to ensuring not only the safety of all of our students, but it also forwards the important work of ongoing growth of school communities. The resource guide, trainings and technical assistance provide both the framework and the resources needed by staff, families and youth to navigate the path of creating inclusive and supportive environments for all. Because of this program, our district was able to integrate curriculum that gave my sons both the language and the practices that have moved them and their peers toward creating community where all youth are safe and supported.

Poppy Sias Hernandez

Parent
Muskegon Public Schools, Muskegon, MI

Michigan has long been a national leader in working to make their schools safe and supportive places for gender and sexual orientation diverse children and adolescents. We are thankful that they make this valuable resource guide available to everyone else, and that it gets better and better with each edition.

Lacey Rosenbaum, PhD

Director, Safe and Supportive Schools Project
American Psychological Association,
Washington, DC

As a district administrator in Michigan's largest school district, I think the *A Silent Crisis* trainings and resource guide are critical for all school personnel from the bus driver, to the classroom teacher, to the social worker, principal, and parents. Sexual orientation and gender identity are often not talked about openly in our schools, and there are many students who struggle because they have no allies. The training raised my own consciousness about these issues and my commitment to educate others.

Dr. Arlene Richardson

Office of Health, Physical Education and Safety
Detroit Public Schools Community District,
Detroit, MI

As a classroom teacher, I found the *A Silent Crisis* training extremely enlightening, and I incorporated many of the strategies immediately into the classroom. Teachers are often the trusted adult that students turn to when they need support. The training is a must for all teachers, regardless of the subject they teach. Now that I have been to a Training-of-Trainers, I have presented to other staff in my district. We are seeing concrete changes in Northwest CS and students are thriving!

Dede Rush

Family and Consumer Science Teacher
Northwest Community Schools, Jackson, MI

The *A Silent Crisis* information is a must for school district administrators and staff! The presence of supportive school staff has a positive effect on a students' education experience, particularly for those who are marginalized. Becoming an ally to LGBT students can help decrease their feelings of isolation and improve their overall academic achievement. Allies can challenge anti-LGBT behavior and work proactively to ensure safer, more inclusive schools for all students.

Julie Mushing

Diversity Coordinator
Kent ISD, Grand Rapids, MI

Participating in the *Silent Crisis* training has been very helpful to our school community. Taking it to rural areas, like the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, is so important. GLBTQ youth struggle everywhere—kids in rural areas are no different. Many of our students are very isolated, and part of this is due to geography. Our students need representation, information, and advocacy. This training program was open to adults and to our youth, and it is one more way that solid information, shared resources, and giving a voice to our young people is critically important while we advocate for them—and more importantly, they learn how to advocate for themselves and their peers.

Patti Karwoski, LMSW

Guidance Counselor
Marquette Senior High School, Marquette, MI