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## **U.S. Department of Education Instructs Schools to Stop Bullying**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **U.S. Department of Education Instructs Schools to Stop Bullying Gay-Straight Alliance Network Responds**

San Francisco, CA, October 27, 2010 ? *The U.S. Department of Education released a [statement](#)<sup>[2]</sup> yesterday that addresses bullying and discrimination in our nation?s schools. The guidance provided to schools clarifies when bullying violates students? rights under federal anti-discrimination laws. Gay-Straight Alliance Network?s Executive Director, Carolyn Laub, issued the following response:*

?Gay-Straight Alliance Network applauds the U.S. Department of Education for issuing strong guidelines to schools across the country on how they must take action to stop bullying, particularly that which violates federal anti-discrimination laws. In the letter to schools sent yesterday, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Russlynn Ali specifically calls on schools to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender nonconforming students from bullying and harassment that is based on gender expression or gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes and gender expression are so often at the root of the harassment and bullying that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming students face in our nation?s schools.

Today?s letter sends a clear message to schools that they must take action to stop anti-LGBT bullying when it is based on gender expression. Short of Congress passing the federal Student Non-Discrimination Act, which will protect students from harassment based on their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, this is a key step in addressing the epidemic of

anti-LGBT bullying that has led to a tragic number of teen suicides in recent months.

The guidelines illuminate schools' legal obligations under Title IX to protect students who are targeted because they do not conform to gender stereotypes in appearance or behavior. The example given in the letter describes a gay male student who is "called names (including anti-gay slurs and sexual comments) both to his face and on social networking sites, physically assaulted, threatened, and ridiculed because he did not conform to stereotypical notions of how teenage boys are expected to act and appear (e.g., effeminate mannerisms, nontraditional choice of extracurricular activities, apparel, and personal grooming choices)." According to the letter, schools must take action to stop bullying of this nature because it violates Title IX, which prohibits discrimination and harassment based on sex.

Gay-Straight Alliance Network applauds the Department of Education for its leadership in addressing bullying that is based on bias, whether that bias is related to race, nationality, disability, gender or gender stereotypes. This is especially important for the young people who experience bullying based on multiple parts of their identities, which puts them at greater risk of negative health outcomes and affects their academic achievement. Anti-bullying programs that specifically tackle issues of bias are significantly more effective than programs that don't. The Department of Education's letter is a key step in eradicating bias-based harassment and bullying from our nation's schools, and making sure all young people are safe and able to learn in school.

The Department of Education's letter signals a commitment from the Obama Administration to stop the anti-LGBT bullying that has led to a tragic number of teen suicides in recent months. While the letter focuses on responding to bullying and harassment once they have taken place, an upcoming conference announced by the Department of Education promises to focus on prevention.

Instructing schools on how to respond to bullying is an important step, but we must actively work to create safe educational environments where every student can attend school free from harassment and discrimination of any kind.

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<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/guidance-targeting-har...> <sup>[2]</sup>

Press Release  
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#### Links

[1] <mailto:jackie@gsanetwork.org>

[2] <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/guidance-targeting-harassment-outlines-local-and-federal-responsibility>