FACT SHEET ON BULLYING OF 2SLGBTQ YOUTH

KEY FACTS ABOUT 2SLGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCES

The following findings are taken from Still Every Class in Every School, a national Canadian survey of 4,000 high school youth published in 2021. The report uses the acronym 2SLGBTQ for Two Spirit (2S), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Questioning. (Note: the authors of the report have not included intersex/"I" in this acronym because none of the survey participants identified as such and they did not want to misrepresent participants or intersex experiences in their report.)

1. **Every day, youth hear language that insults 2SLGBTQ people.**
   - **64%** of all youth say they hear homophobic comments on a daily or weekly basis at school;
   - **93%** of 2SLGBTQ youth and **59%** of cisgender heterosexual (CH) youth say they are upset by these homophobic comments.

2. **Bullying, discrimination, harassment and other abuse are experienced at high rates for 2SLGBTQ youth**:
   - **19%** of 2SLGBTQ youth versus **7%** of CH youth are. physically harassed or assaulted because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression.
   - **42%** of 2SLGBTQ youth versus **8%** of CH youth are verbally harassed about their sexual orientation.
   - **20%** of 2SLGBTQ youth are sexually harassed becausethey are or are perceived to be 2SLGBTQ, compared to **4%** of CH youth.

3. **Most 2SLGBTQ youth do not feel safe at school:**
   - **62%** of 2SLGBTQ youth say they feel unsafe at school compared to **11%** of CH students.

4. **Youth with 2SLGBTQ parents suffer high rates of bullying and harassment:**
   - For example, **12%** of youth with one or more 2SLGBTQ parents are verbally harassed versus **3%** of youth without 2SLGBTQ parents.
   - **60%** of youth with one or more 2SLGBTQ parents feel unsafe at school versus **32%** of youth without 2SLGBTQ parents.
   - Students with one or more 2SLGBTQ parents were the most likely to report having skipped school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to school (**52%** versus **25%**).

5. Transgender youth are particularly vulnerable to bullying and in need of support at school.
- Trans youth are frequent targets of harassment and discrimination, even from other 2SLGBTQ youth.
- Transphobia is not commonly discussed and is frequently overlooked even within the 2SLGBTQ community.

- **83%** of trans youth feel unsafe in some way at school.
- **63%** of trans youth are verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- **52%** of trans youth indicate that washrooms are an unsafe space at school.
- **48%** of trans youth report skipping school because they feel unsafe.
- **39%** of trans youth have been bullied or picked on through the internet in the past year.
- **29%** of trans youth hear other youth use transphobic language daily or weekly.
- **26%** of trans youth say that teachers never intervene when students make inappropriate remarks about gender and sexual identity.
- **19%** of trans youth have had property stolen or damaged in the past year.
- **15%** of trans youth have experienced physical harassment due to their gender identity in the past year.

HOW CAN TEACHERS REDUCE VICTIMIZATION OF 2SLGBTQ YOUTH?

1. Make your classroom a safe and respectful space.
- Make it clear that you're an ally to 2SLGBTQ youth by using inclusive language (e.g., "parents", rather than "mother and father" and "partner" instead of "boyfriend or girlfriend"). Provide a mix of both 2SLGBTQIA+ and non-2SLGBTQ examples in classroom discussions (e.g., transgender figures in history and popular culture).
- Ensure 2SLGBTQ curricular content is a regular feature of classroom teaching (e.g., regularly use gender neutral pronouns, include same-sex relationships in examples, etc.). Provide a mix of both 2SLGBTQIA+ and non-2SLGBTQ examples in classroom discussions (e.g., transgender figures in history and popular culture).
- Ensure that there is 2SLGBTQ visibility in classrooms (e.g., positive or affirming space stickers, posters, 2SLGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, etc.)
- Remind all youth that everyone is entitled to full respect, safety and acceptance in the classroom. Emphasize that "everyone" includes 2SLGBTQ youth. Youth may agree to this commitment as part of a Classroom Code of Conduct.
- Avoid unintentionally divisive procedures like composing teams on the basis of assigned sex. One alternative is to separate youth using birth month.
- Explain to all youth that it is very important not to make assumptions about individuals' sexual orientation, gender or gender expression based on stereotypes about their assigned sex. Emphasize that heterosexual cisgender identities are not suitable for everyone. Sexual orientation and gender are fluid and fall on a continuum rather than being fixed.
- Discuss various forms of gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation whenever relevant. For example, in:
  - **English Language Arts:** Discuss writers and characters who challenge gender restrictions.
  - **History:** Discuss the positive recognition of 2SLGBTQ identities in pre-contact North America and the oppression of 2SLGBTQ individuals in Nazi Germany.
  - **Social Studies:** Discuss the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and same-sex marriage.
  - **Health:** Ensure sexual health discussions are inclusive and comprehensive of 2SLGBTQ identities.
  - **Guidance:** Discuss healthy same-sex relationships.
- Challenge normative ideas of gender and gender roles. Deconstruct gender categories and ask youth to question gender stereotypes. Promote a respectful, inclusive and open discussion.

2. Address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language immediately.
- Be respectful, consistent and patient in reminding youth that this type of language is disrespectful and hurtful. Be careful not to single out any particular youth as victims.
- If disrespectful language is used in the classroom, refer back to the Classroom Code of Conduct.
- Turn current events and classroom incidents into learning opportunities. Generate a discussion about what negative comments mean, what they imply, and how this language impacts people. For example, see NoHomophobes.com. Caution: This site streams re-tweets with homophobic and offensive language.

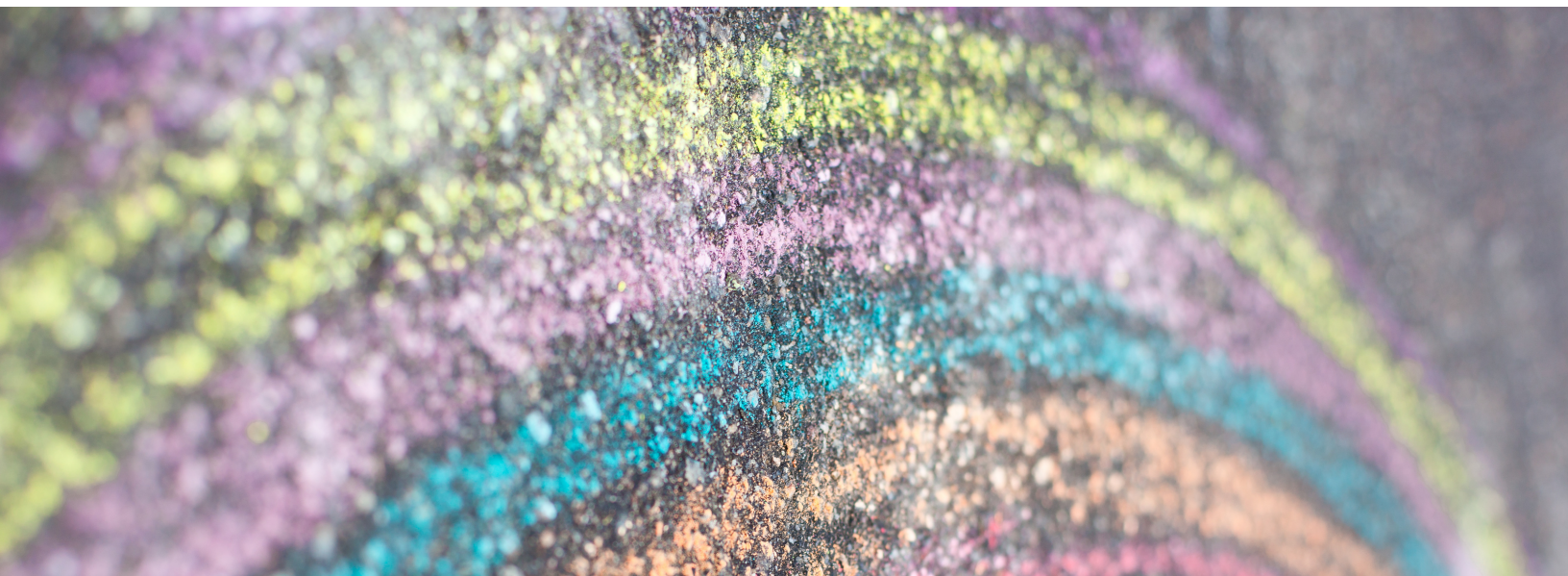**3. Support youth efforts to build an 2SLGBTQ inclusive school environment.**
- 2SLGBTQ youth may feel isolated from the rest of the school community.
- The majority of youth find bullying of 2SLGBTQ youth unacceptable. However, they may not stand up   for 2SLGBTQ youth because they don't know what to do or fear becoming targets of bullying themselves.
- Youth may need help from adults to support both 2SLGBTQ and non-2SLGBTQ peers.
- Teachers can directly support the development of friendships and important connections that help 2SLGBTQ youth find social support and inclusion among their peers.
- Examples of 2SLGBTQ groups include Gay-Straight Alliances, Queer-Straight Alliances, Gender and Sexuality Alliances.

4. Encourage your school to implement inclusive and comprehensive sexual orientation and gender identity policies and initiatives.
- When inclusive policies and initiatives are in place, 2SLGBTQ youth:
  - Feel safer at school and are less likely to be bullied.
  - Are exposed to fewer anti-2SLGBTQ comments.
  - Are more likely to receive support from teachers when such comments are made.
  - Are more likely to report harassment or assault.
  - Are more likely to talk to teachers, principals, counselors, coaches and classmates.
- **64%** of 2SLGBTQ youth from schools with inclusive policies agree that they can be themselves at school, compared to **42%** of youth from schools without these policies.

5. Become aware of 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive legislation and school district policies.
- Public funded school systems across Canada strongly support 2SLGBTQ-inclusive education. Many teacher organizations can provide relevant information and resources for teachers.

DEFINITIONS

It is important to be familiar with and understand the definitions of terms commonly used in the 2SLGBTQ community. Remember that terms, definitions, and preferred language are always evolving. The most important thing is to be respectful and to use the terms that people prefer.

Asexual
A person who does not experience sexual attraction, or who has little to no interest in sexual activity.

Bisexual
A person who experiences physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to the same, other, or more than one gender.

Cisgender
A term used to refer to someone whose gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth (e.g., a male who identifies as a man).

Gay
A person who experiences attraction to the same gender as themselves. May be used by individuals of any gender, but is most often used to describe male-identified people who are attracted to other male- identified people.

Gender Expression
The way that a person shows their gender identity through clothing, speech, body language, use of makeup, accessories, and so forth to display masculinity, femininity, or androgyny.

Gender Fluid
A person whose gender identity is experienced on a spectrum that varies over time.

Gender Identity
A person's internal sense or feeling of their own gender. A person's gender identity may align with their biological sex assigned at birth. If not, they may identify as transgender, non-binary, genderfluid, gender non-conforming, or more.

Gender Roles
Societal and cultural expectations of what it means to act appropriately for one's assigned sex (e.g., behaviours that are considered to be feminine or masculine). Gender roles are often associated with gender expression and the display of gendered behaviour. These roles are driven by stereotypical ideas rather than any connection between assigned sex and gender roles.

Homophobia/Biphobia/Transphobia
Any type of bullying, intolerance or harm directed toward people because they are or are thought to be 2SLGBTQ.

Intersex
A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside of the conventional classifications of male or female.

Lesbian

The adjective used to describe female-identified people who are physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to other female-identified people.

Pansexual

A person who experiences physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to someone regardless of gender.

Pronouns

Pronouns used in everyday speech and writing often imply gender, and so using someone's correct gender pronouns is one of the easiest ways to show your respect for their identity. She/Her, He/Him, and They/Them are the most commonly used pronouns, although there are more options. If you're unsure which pronouns to use, you can politely ask.

Queer

An umbrella term which encompasses a variety of sexual orientations and gender expressions. Queer has been reclaimed by some 2SLGBTQ people to describe themselves, however it is not a universally accepted term even within the 2SLGBTQ community.

Sex

A person's perceived biological status typically categorized as male, female or intersex. The sex assigned at birth, based on external genitalia, may or may not correspond to their internal sexual characteristics or to their sense of self. It is important to refrain from making assumptions about someone's gender or sexual orientation based on their biological sex.

Sexual Identity

A person's identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual or another sexual orientation category.

Sexual Orientation

A person's emotional and sexual attraction to another person. This attraction may be toward people of the same gender, the opposite gender, or more than one gender. Other sexual orientations include asexual, pansexual, and more.

Transgender

A person whose gender identity or gender expression does not correspond with their assigned sex at birth. Being transgender is not dependent upon medical procedures.

Two Spirit

Two Spirit is used by some Indigenous peoples to describe their gender, sexual, and spiritual identity.

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