

Supporting LGBTQ2S+ Youth During COVID-19



Image source: iStock.com/Viktorii Hnatiuk



The BCTF is a strong supporter and partner of SOGI 1 2 3, a provincial program that helps educators make schools inclusive and safe for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI). Within the context of COVID-19, critical social distancing measures have distanced teachers and students from their physical school communities. We asked **Scout Gray**, SOGI 1 2 3 Program Lead for BC and Alberta, to share what impact the pandemic is having on youth who identify as LGBTQ2S+, and what teachers can do to support them.

What are some of the key challenges facing LGBTQ2S+ youth during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The pandemic has really highlighted the importance of community for LGBTQ2S+ youth. Most LGBTQ2S+ youth don't have people at home who share their identity. Now, more than ever, it is important that they can connect with others who share their perspectives and identities, and to see themselves reflected in the world around them. This is especially important for LGBTQ2S+ youth who only have these connections at school, and who may not have the most supportive homes.



How can teachers support LGBTQ2S+ youth during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **Find a way to meet as a GSA online.** The three key things to keep in mind are: (1) maintain safety and confidentiality, (2) maintain accessibility, and (3) maintain engagement. On April 8, we conducted a webinar on running online GSAs with educators from across BC. You can find recommendations and tips [here](#).
- **Connect youth with local youth groups that are now meeting online.** Many youth groups across the province are moving online, so reach out to your local organizations. You can also check out [this list](#) from Trans Care BC if you don't know about your local offerings. However, since they're all meeting online, groups may allow youth to call in from anywhere in the province.
- **Continue to reflect SOGI in your lesson plans.** Remember that this does not need to mean doing a lesson specifically on the history of pride, for example. It can also mean just swapping in a singular they/them pronoun to a word problem, including a picture of a family with same-sex parents or having a SOGI-inclusive online story time (see [this post](#) for ideas). If you are interested in a lesson plan, our [website](#) has materials developed specifically for BC teachers.
- **Support families.** This is always important, and even more so if students are home more of the time. When it comes to SOGI-inclusion during COVID-19, some parents and families may be seeking guidance on how to support their children at home. See [here](#) for tips on how to lead with empathy, focus on the student and offer resources. [Pflag Canada](#), a national organization for families of LGBTQ2S+ children, has opportunities for families to connect virtually.
- **Celebrate.** Pride month, in June, is an opportunity to organize or promote an event that celebrates people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

What other supports are available for LGBTQ2S+ youth?

Every time a student reaches out for support, it's an opportunity not only to personally respond but also to expand the network that the student can turn to when needed. [Here](#) are some amazing organizations/services that you may want to share with students and other educators, many of which have been available remotely for some time.