



## Gay - Straight Alliances

### What is a GSA?

A gay-straight alliance (GSA), also sometimes called a GSM, is a student run group which allows students, staff and allies to meet, network, discuss problems, get educated and eliminate biphobia / homophobia /transphobia. GSAs provide a safe, respectful environment for all members of the group. Some GSAs act as a support group, activist club, or social group. It is up to the members to decide what the GSA will be.

### Who Can Join a GSA?

**Any student** can join a GSA, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or age.

### The Department of Education Safe Schools Policy:

This policy “**embraces the diversity of all peoples**, regardless of economic status, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, language group, religion, **gender, sexual orientation**, age or ability.” This ensures that every student shares the same rights.

### Do You Have to Be 2SLGBTQ+ to Join?

**No!** This is the most common misconception and is one that deters many people from joining. You do **not** have to be 2SLGBTQ+ to join a GSA. Members of a GSA are **not** required to state their sexual orientation. One of the main purposes of a GSA is to unite youth, 2SLGBTQ+ and straight alike.

One of the main objectives of a GSA is to promote diversity, acceptance, and understanding. As such, some students prefer to initiate “Diversity Clubs” or “Human Rights Groups” which celebrate and advocate for all human rights.

## Why is a GSA important?

GSA meetings may be the only opportunity available for some students to be themselves in a non-judgmental environment. This freedom can help 2SLGBTQ+ youth get through high school. For some, the GSA group can be the only support available.

<sup>1</sup> 2SLGBTQ+ is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual, heteronormative, or gender-binary.

## How Can a GSA Benefit My School?

- It allows 2SLGBTQ+ and straight students to come together and do things as a group.
  - It promotes diversity and inclusion.
- It is an effective tool for educating youth on 2SLGBTQ+ issues.
  - It can provide positive activities and opportunities.

## What Kind of Activities Do GSAs Take Part In?

A GSA can host almost any activity, as long as the activity complies with the school's policies and is approved by administration. Usually activities are related to 2SLGBTQ+ activism.

- The GSA can host a “**Day of Silence**” ([dayofsilence.org](http://dayofsilence.org)).
- The GSA may wish to host an event to commemorate the **International Day Against Homophobia** ([homophobiaday.org](http://homophobiaday.org)).
- The GSA can host an event to mark the **International Transgender Day of Remembrance** ([transgenderdor.org](http://transgenderdor.org)).
- The GSA can also host movie and pizza nights, bowling outings, hikes, etc. These events allow students to interact in a fun and safe environment

## How Can I Start a GSA?

- 1) Find supportive staff.
- 2) Research policies.
- 3) Pick a meeting place.
- 4) Advertise.
- 5) Establish ground rules and guidelines.
- 6) Host your first meeting.

## Where Can I Get More Information?

www.gsanetwork.org  
www.schools-out.org.uk  
www.egale.ca  
[www.nlsexualhealthcentre.org](http://www.nlsexualhealthcentre.org)

### Is a Gay-Straight Alliance Right for Your School?

- If you have students who like to make a change.....YES!
- If you have students who like to belong.....YES!
- If you want your school to be a more accepting place.....YES!
- If you have students who support diversity.....YES!
- If you have students who like to have fun.....YES!

## Planned Parenthood Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!

### Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue  
St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

### Hours:

Monday: 9am - 4:30pm  
Tuesday: 9am - 4:30pm  
Wednesday: 9 am - 4:30pm  
Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm  
Friday: 9am - 4:30pm

### Phone:

579-1009  
Toll Free 1-877-NO MYTHS  
(1-877-666-9847)

### Website:

[www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com](http://www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com)

### Email:

pp.nlshc@gmail.com

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