Athlete Ally and the Center for Black Equity have partnered to bring you this guide about LGBTQ inclusion in athletics. Our hope in creating this resource is to help place it in the hands of as many educators, coaches, parents, pastors, and other leaders as possible. The Center for Black Equity will be distributing this guide to its membership to help learn more about inclusion and allyship for LGBTQ individuals in sports.

We encourage you to share this resource with your colleagues and peers. Also, if you have suggestions for this resource or ideas for additional materials, please contact The Center for Black Equity or Athlete Ally. We appreciate your input and support!

The sources and research for this guide, which are listed on page 5, include significant thought leadership in the LGBTQ sports movement. Having said that, both Athlete Ally and the Center for Black Equity feel strongly that the primary sources for information about LGBTQ inclusion in sports are athletes, coaches, educators, other sports participants and activists who identify as LGBTQ or who work closely with LGBTQ inclusive programming. To that end, we encourage you to discuss these issues with folks you know with experience in this space to learn about their perspectives and insight. We are also happy to help connect you to other organizations and leaders working for LGBTQ inclusion in sports.

We would also like to thank Athlete Ally Advisory Board Member and Program Leader Akil Patterson for his leadership in supporting the content of this guide. Check out our profile of Akil on Page 2 of this guide!
INTRODUCING LGBTQ INCLUSION

✓ **THE PURPOSE**

This guide is intended to help improve LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or queer) inclusion and foster support for and affirmation of LGBTQ individuals in sports at all levels of competition around the world. It is centered on the simple ideas that athletes are leaders and that sports provide meaningful opportunities to empower diversity, collaboration and respect.

**CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS**

- LGBTQ inclusion in sports is not just for the benefit of participants who identify as LGBTQ. Inclusive sports cultures benefit everyone by encouraging all members to cooperate as part of diverse teams and incorporate values of inclusion into their interactions outside of sports.

- By becoming more inclusive, a sports culture does not promote or approve particular belief systems or values. Instead, LGBTQ inclusion and allyship simply help engender effective team collaboration and sportsmanship.

- Inclusion and respect for LGBTQ individuals do not mean that one person or group of people will receive special consideration or that every participant on a team approves of the lives or views of their teammates.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALLY?

- **DEFINING ALLYSHIP**

  Allyship is the act or philosophy of taking a stand against homophobia and transphobia. Allies spread a message of inclusion, respect and diversity to their communities and do their parts to lead against discrimination.

LEADER PROFILES

When we asked leading activist Kye Allums, Founder of Project I Am Enough and the first Division I openly Trans* athlete in NCAA history, what he thinks is the most important part of any resource on LGBTQ inclusion in sports, he said: personal experience. According to Kye and other thought leaders in the space, the best way to understand the nuances related to the LGBTQ sports movement is to hear personal stories and narratives first hand. So, let’s take a moment to learn about two LGBT leaders in sports: Akil Patterson and Megan Moulton-Levy.

AKIL PATTERSON

Akil Patterson is a LGBT leader in communities of color and in sports. He is changing the perception of what it means to be a member of the LGBTQ community as well as a member of an athletic program. Akil is a former University of Maryland football player, wrestler and current wrestling coach, along with being an elite-level Greco-Roman wrestler. Akil says of his activism: "My mission in life has never been about fame or fortunes but rather the betterment of all people, regardless of sexual identity or sexual orientation. My sexuality was a big issue ... a really big issue, I tried to squash it and move on. Athletes just need to know it's OK to be whatever they want to be."

MEGAN MOULTON-LEVY

Megan Moulton-Levy is an American professional tennis player. She is also openly lesbian and recently began speaking out about why LGBTQ advocacy in sports is important to her. According to Megan: “As an openly gay athlete am in a unique position to speak out about LGBT issues. After getting married in December to my partner of 7 years, I have become more passionate and dedicated to the LGBT community’s fight for equal rights. My hope is that by stepping forward I will give a voice to those who may not have a voice at all.”
LGBTQ Discrimination in Youth Sports

GLSEN has found that nearly a quarter of LGBT individuals have participated in interscholastic sports in the United States. Yet, many LGBTQ students experienced discrimination and harassment in school sports.

Harassment in Sports

A recent study by the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that more than a quarter of LGBT student athletes in the U.S. reported having been harassed or assaulted while playing on a school sports team because of their sexual orientation (27.8%) or gender expression (50.9%).

Harassment in P.E.

The same GLSEN study found that more than half of LGBT students who took a physical education (P.E.) class were bullied or harassed during P.E. because of their sexual orientation (52.8%) or gender expression (50.9%).

Harassment in School

GLSEN reports also show that staggering 90% of youth in the United States report hearing the term “gay” used in a derogatory manner nearly every day; with 81% of LGBT youth finding themselves subject to anti-LGBT peer harassment.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Athletics are a vital component of societal fabric. Participation in sports improves health, builds character, and creates unique personal, social and professional opportunities. Sports are their most productive and unifying when they celebrate diversity and empower all participants to be effective contributors to sports and to societies. Athletics are also uniquely able to provide neutral platforms where people of all nations, races, ethnicities, religions, politics, statuses, genders and sexual orientations can come together and play together.

When LGBTQ people are forced to feel uncomfortable or disrespected playing sports, teams and athletic communities lose skilled and passionate competitors, betray the values of sportsmanship and camaraderie and miss out on important opportunities to stand up as leaders and role models. Remember, victory is best achieved through unity.

IDENTITY INTERSECTIONS AT PLAY

Preliminary results from a blockbuster survey of black gay youth, conducted by the National Strategy for Black Gay Youth in America, reveals that 43 percent of black gay youth have thought about or attempted suicide as a result of issues related to their sexual orientation. Over half of those surveyed have experienced family disownment as a result of coming out of the closet.

Other important findings show that:

- 22 percent of black gay youth experienced mental abuse related to their sexual orientation and 26 percent of black gay youth experienced anti-gay bullying.
- 11 percent of black gay youth are HIV positive; 7 percent do not know their status.
- 8 percent of black gay youth have been homeless due to their sexual orientation.
- One in five transgender individuals have experienced homelessness because of discrimination and rejection by family and 29 percent of homeless transgender people report being turned away from shelters because of their gender status.
- 9 percent of black gay youth have been sexually abused and 10 percent physically abused as a result of their sexual orientation.
- The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) recently reported that people who identify as transgender were 28% more likely to experience physical violence than those who are “gender normative”.
- Transgender people of color face 26% unemployment.
- When black gay youth were recently asked to list items that would make life as a black gay youth more bearable; 90 percent listed “family acceptance,” making it the most popular item in the survey.
Creating Inclusion

RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Simple best practices are easily undertaken to help maintain LGBTQ-inclusive athletic climates. These best practices also help navigate areas of concern that sports participants frequently identify. Do your best to follow these best practices and contact local organizations, including those provided in this guide, with questions or concerns:

- Learn more about prejudice based race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, especially as they operate in your region and community.
- Understand the laws in your region impacting the LGBTQ community, including the penalties for identifying or being perceived as LGBTQ or for publically supporting the LGBTQ community.
- Assume that LGBTQ people are on your athletic teams and in your communities even if they have not identified themselves.
- Understand the core values of your team or athletic community and consider how those values are consistent with inclusivity and allyship.
- Monitor your beliefs and assumptions about LGBTQ people and commit yourself to evaluating others on the basis of their character and competence, not sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- Continue to learn about LGBTQ issues in sport, particularly the sports in which you most engage, and how those issues can impact people and teams.
- Know what resources are available in your community for LGBTQ coaches, athletes, parents, staff, fans and other participants.
- Regardless of your role in an athletic community, try to be a visible and active leader of respect and fairness for fans, coaches and athletes.
- Use language that is inclusive of LGBTQ athletes and coaches and express disproval when others use slurs or anti-LGBTQ remarks.
- Treat all athletes, coaches, fans and parents fairly and respectfully regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- If LGBTQ peers identify themselves to you, respect their privacy with confidentiality.
- Help promote enthusiasm for respect and inclusion among your sports community.
- Try to find other allies in your community who can also act as leaders, advocates and educators on these issues. There is strength in numbers.

A derogatory slur insults or criticizes someone by degrading a group of people. A slur doesn't just hurt the person being directly insulted, it hurts the community referenced through the insult. Anti-LGBTQ language and conduct can make LGBTQ people and their allies feel insulted and degraded. There are simple best practices to support inclusion in all media and social media communications.

Do...

- Be respectful.
- Retweet @AthleteAlly, @Ctr4BlackEquity and other LGBTQ organizations.
- Use Hashtags like #Pride and #BeAnAlly
- Call out your followers making derogatory posts.
  
  Example: @SampleUser: Not cool to say ‘gay’ as an insult. Think before you speak.

Don’t...

- Retweet homophobic or other insensitive posts.
- Make jokes at the expense of others, like the LGBTQ community, women or persons with disabilities.
- React to posts without thinking carefully about your words.
- Stand by while your followers use derogatory posts without calling them out in a productive and respectful way.

Note that it is especially important for individuals to be careful about the content they retweet, including song lyrics or quotes, because friends, teammates or colleagues may see that action as an endorsement of an idea or belief.

As LGBTQ inclusion in sports becomes a heightened topic in the media and in everyday conversation, athletes and coaches should be equipped to answer related questions from their fans and peers. These questions may reference an individual's personal experience with or views on the LGBTQ community. It is important that an athlete or coach always be honest, but remembers that his or her answers could affect whether an LGBTQ peer feels comfortable playing sports. So, staying positive and responding with a welcoming and inclusive tone is important.
Recommended Readings

GUIDE SOURCES

This Guide to LGBTQ Inclusion and Allyship was created with the help of several important sources cited below. These sources are recommended as additional readings and are listed in alphabetical order with footnotes and annotations of their specific uses provided.

   - This source is referenced in the section entitled “LGBTQ Discrimination in Youth Sports” in the subsection “Harassment in School”.

   - This source is referenced in the section entitled “LGBTQ Discrimination in Youth Sports” in subsections “Harassment in Sports” and “Harassment in PE”.

   - This source was used in the compilation of assumptions listed on page 1, under the section entitled “Challenging Assumptions”. Several of the assumptions listed are modified from pages 5 of “Champions of Respect”. This source was also used in the compilation of best practices listed under the section entitled “Creating Inclusion”. Several of the best practices listed are directly excerpted or modified from pages 12 through 15 of “Champions of Respect”.

   - This source, cited in section “Identity Intersections at Play”, provides specific findings of the survey, quoted from the link cited above.

   - This source is cited in the section entitled “Identity Intersections at Play” addressing discrimination against the transgender community.

   - This source is cited in the section entitled “Identity Intersections at Play” addressing discrimination against the transgender community.