

Iowa has 19,000 LGBTQI+ youth aged 13-17, including 800 transgender youth.¹ Most LGBTQI+ students in Iowa experienced anti-LGBTQI+ bullying, including 69% who were verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and 31% who were physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender identity.² 59% of victimized LGBTQI+ youth never reported harassment to school authorities. In addition, 61% experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination in schools, which disproportionately impacts transgender and nonbinary students.

GLSEN recommends **Four Supports** to foster safer schools where all students can thrive: comprehensive policies to address harassment and discrimination, inclusive learning, supportive school staff, and GSAs and LGBTQI+ Youth Leadership. This resource assesses how state policies impact access to the Four Supports.

Last Updated: 12/18/2024

Overall Grade for Inclusive K-12 Education Policies:

D

Departing From Expectations

GLSEN recommends: Comprehensive Policies	Restrictive Policies (If Any)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Law prohibits sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in schools: IA SF427 (2007). ✓ Law prohibits bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity: IA SF61 (2007). ■ Law or regulation affirms equal opportunity and access for trans students ■ Interscholastic athletics policy affirms equal opportunity for trans students <p><i>Federal laws prohibit anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination and bullying in schools.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Iowa excludes trans youth from school facilities: IA SF482 (2023). ✗ Iowa excludes trans youth from school sports: IA SF2416 (2022). ✗ Iowa requires forced outing of students who ask to be addressed by an affirmed name/pronoun: IA SF496 (2023).
GLSEN recommends: Inclusive Learning	Restrictive Policies (If Any)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ LGBTQI+ inclusive core curricular standard ■ LGBTQI+ inclusive sex education standard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Iowa law requires sex ed free of racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender biases: IA HF611 (2007). ■ LGBTQI+ inclusive instructional materials standard ■ Proactively protect against discriminatory book bans/removals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Iowa censors learning about structural inequality: IA HF802 (2021); IA HF2545 (2024). ✗ Iowa censors LGBTQI+ inclusive instruction: IA SF496 (2023). ✗ Iowa bans LGBTQI+ inclusive school books: IA SF496 (2023).
GLSEN recommends: Supportive School Staff	Restrictive Policies (If Any)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Educator prep standards address LGBTQI+ inclusion ■ School staff training requirements address LGBTQI+ inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Iowa restricts inclusive training: IA HF802 (2021). ✗ Iowa restricts inclusive educator prep programming: IA HF2435 (2024).
GLSEN recommends: GSAs and LGBTQI+ Youth Leadership	Restrictive Policies (If Any)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Proactively support GSAs and other LGBTQI+ inclusive student-led clubs ■ LGBTQI+ youth inform education policies and programs <p><i>The federal Equal Access Act protects LGBTQI+ affirming secondary student clubs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Iowa prohibits student input on education programs: IA SF496 (2023).

How To Read This Table:

- ✓ An adopted LGBTQI+ supportive state policy that GLSEN recommends
- A LGBTQI+ supportive policy the state can adopt that GLSEN recommends
- * An adopted, partially supportive state policy (e.g., policy encourages, but does not set a standard for LGBTQI+ supportive local policies or practices)
- ! An adopted state policy that partially restricts local LGBTQI+ supportive policies or practices
- ✗ An adopted state policy that fully restricts local LGBTQI+ supportive policies or practices



About this State Report Card

GLSEN analyzes state policies,³ including laws and regulations that impact LGBTQI+ youth in K-12 schools based on available research, including the National School Climate Survey (NSCS) of LGBTQI+ students.⁴ GLSEN recommends state policies that set a standard for LGBTQI+ supportive local policies or practices. LGBTQI+ youths' experiences in schools ultimately reflect local practices, but state policies shape what is possible, encouraged, and prioritized locally. School boards adopt curriculum and policies that implement local priorities and applicable state policies. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff implement curriculum and state and local policies in classrooms, hallways, playing fields, and beyond. In every state, [federal laws](#), including Title IX and the U.S. Constitution's Equal Protection Clause, protect LGBTQI+ students.

See [GLSEN State Report Card Appendix](#) for full methodology and related resources, including model policies. For questions or to report a missing policy, email GLSENresearch@glsen.org.

Rubric	
<p>A</p> <p>Meets Expectations</p>	<p>A state meets GLSEN's expectations when the state has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted recommended policies (✓) in at least 3 of GLSEN's Four Supports; AND No policies that restrict LGBTQI+ inclusive and supportive K-12 schools (✗ or !). <p>Meeting expectations indicates that state policies set a standard for schools that are both affirming as well as safe and nondiscriminatory for LGBTQI+ youth. This is an accomplishment, but ongoing work is needed to ensure supportive policies are implemented and improve conditions for LGBTQI+ youth.</p> <p><i>+/- Considerations: States will be evaluated annually for their ongoing efforts to implement supportive policies and/or to advance new, affirming policies.</i></p>
<p>B</p> <p>Arriving at Expectations</p>	<p>A state is arriving at GLSEN's expectations when the state has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted recommended policies (✓) in only 1 or 2 of GLSEN's Four Supports and/or the state has any partially restrictive policies (!); AND No policies that fully restrict access to LGBTQI+ inclusive and supportive K-12 schools (✗). <p>Arriving at expectations indicates that state policies set a standard of safe, nondiscriminatory schools for LGBTQI+ youth, but additional steps are needed for schools to be proactively affirming.</p> <p><i>+/- Considerations: States are evaluated for the spread of supportive policies across GLSEN's Four Supports. States with supportive policies in 3+ of the Four Supports receive a B+. States with supportive policies in 2 of the Four Supports receive a B. States with supportive policies in 1 of the Four Supports receive a B-.</i></p>
<p>C</p> <p>Does Not Meet Expectations</p>	<p>A state does not meet GLSEN's expectations when the state has either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both recommended policies (✓) and fully restrictive policies (✗) and the number of recommended supportive policies (✓) is greater than or equal to the number of fully restrictive policies (✗); OR Neither recommended supportive policies (✓) nor fully restrictive policies (✗). <p>Not meeting expectations indicates state policies fail to set a standard for safe, nondiscriminatory schools for LGBTQI+ youth and thus provide no or minimal guidance to individual school districts, educators, and families in supporting their LGBTQI+ students.</p> <p><i>+/- Considerations: States are evaluated for all steps taken towards more-or less-safe, inclusive schools. Policies are assigned points as follows: +2 for each recommended policy, +1 for each partially supportive policy, -1 for each partially restrictive policy, and -2 for each fully restrictive policy. A positive point total earns a C+, 0 earns a C, and a negative point total earns a C-.</i></p>
<p>D</p> <p>Departing From Expectations</p>	<p>A state is departing from GLSEN's expectations when it has fully restrictive policies (✗) and either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has some supportive policies (✓ or ✱), but the number of fully restrictive policies (✗) is greater than the number of recommended supportive policies (✓); OR No more than 2 policies that fully restrict access to LGBTQI+ inclusive and supportive K-12 schools (✗). <p>Departing from expectations indicates that a state's policies discourage safe, nondiscriminatory K-12 schools for LGBTQI+ youth, creating substantial challenges for individual school districts, educators, and families in supporting LGBTQI+ students.</p>
<p>F</p> <p>Opposing Expectations</p>	<p>A state is opposing GLSEN's expectations when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has no supportive policies for LGBTQI+ youth (✓ or ✱) AND It has more than 2 policies that fully restrict equal educational opportunity for LGBTQI+ youth (✗). <p>Opposing expectations indicates that state policies are actively hostile towards the goal of safe, nondiscriminatory schools for LGBTQI+ youth, greatly burdening individual school districts, educators, and families working towards this goal.</p>

¹ Estimate from a [2020 Williams Institute](#) LGBTQ youth population study, which also shows that a majority of transgender youth identify as LGB. These numbers likely underestimate the LGBTQ youth population in Iowa today. A [2022 Williams Institute](#) study of the transgender population in the U.S. resulted in higher estimates for trans youth nationally and in almost every state.

² GLSEN. (2023). School Climate for LGBTQ+ Students in Iowa. Available at: <https://maps.glsen.org/state-research-snapshots>. % physically harassed or assaulted includes% pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, or threatened with a weapon. % who did not report harassment includes all forms of harassment, including anti-LGBTQ+ harassment. Findings refer to students' experiences during the 2020-21 school year.

³State policy data collected by [GLSEN, Movement Advancement Project, SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change, TransAthlete.com](#).

⁴ GLSEN. National School Climate Survey Report Archive. <https://www.glsen.org/learn/research/nscs-archive>.