



## A Pupil's Guide To Surviving Anti-Gay Harassment And Physical Or Sexual Assault

The following has been adapted for use by GALYIC (UK) <http://www.galyic.org.uk>  
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### ***The first thing is to get safe. You can:***

- tell the person to back off (You can say something like, "Maybe you didn't mean anything by it, but ..." or, something more angry than educational, such as, "Cut it out! Get your hands off me!"). But **don't escalate** the situation by calling the offender names or threatening to get physical.
- defuse the situation, if it seems to be getting physical ("Never mind; let's forget it."), and go to a safe place.

### ***Think about your possible choices:***

- Is there a safe place nearby? Are there people close by who could help you?
- Is there more than one assailant? Does the assailant have a weapon? Could you use your voice and your body to protect yourself by yelling, running away, fighting back, or attracting someone's attention?
- Sometimes people decide that not resisting is the best way to minimise physical injury or further danger.
- **However you respond, remember that the assault is not your fault.**

### ***After you are safe:***

- Talk with someone you trust, someone you feel safe and comfortable with, such as a good friend.
- Tell an adult. Maybe there's an adult *at school* whom you trust ... a particular teacher, youth worker, the nurse, the deputy-head, or whomever you trust most. If that doesn't work, ask to see the head teacher for help. Go to the school board if necessary.
- Maybe you feel you need to go outside the school for help, to a parent or guardian or a family friend. Whomever seems safest, do tell an adult. As understanding as a friend your own age may be, there are some times when only an adult can provide protection or legal advice or that sort of thing.
- Write down everything that happened (who said and did what, the time and place, and who was involved, including witnesses).

### ***Treat the assault seriously.***

Even if other people minimise what happened by acting as if it doesn't matter or by saying that it's not "that bad," physical and sexual assault are very serious. And verbal harassment can feel like torture. **You deserve to be safe.**

## ***Understand that you may have many different kinds of reactions to the assault.***

Sometimes people who are assaulted feel upset, angry, scared, ashamed, or hopeless. Other people don't feel anything. **There is no "right" way to feel after an assault.**

## ***The law may be able to help.***

Sexually assaulting somebody or beating somebody up is a crime. You have the right to report the attack to the police or Child Protection Services. If you decide to call the police:

- Call as soon as possible after the incident. (You can make a report months or even years afterward, but it might be harder for the police to act on your case the longer you wait.) If the assault was sexual and you do report immediately, it's best not to shower or change your clothes so that you don't lose any physical evidence that might help the police.
- If anti-gay slurs were used in the course of the incident, you could contact the Hate Crime Officer (P.C. Ian Firth): **01422.318152**. Stress that the crime was motivated by hate based on perceived sexual orientation. **You don't have to say whether you are actually gay and you shouldn't be asked.**
- Describe *in detail* the hate or prejudice that was expressed and what caused you to fear harm. For example, "They called me 'faggot' and said they would 'kick my butt'." Or, "They asked me why 'dykes' liked other girls and said they would, 'teach me to like boys'." If you have any physical pain, make sure it is written down in the police report. Get the incident number from the officer and ask how to get a copy of the police report. Ensure you have the officer's name and number.
- Child Protection Services: contact Social Services **01422.353279** and ask to speak to a Customer Service Adviser or Child Protection Unit (West Yorkshire Police) **01422.337042** or contact the Education Welfare Service **01422.392503**.

## ***If that doesn't work or you are scared to try those things, you are still not alone. Community agencies may be able to help.***

- You can call a local or national organisation for information and support:
- GALYIC (Gay and Lesbian Youth in Calderdale): **01422.320099** to speak to a support worker or to report what happened as a hate incident. Website: [www.galyic.org.uk](http://www.galyic.org.uk) or email: [getintouch@galyic.org.uk](mailto:getintouch@galyic.org.uk)
- Victim Support: **01422.344742** for emotional and practical support to victims of crime, including murder, rape, homophobic and racist incidents and indirect victims, e.g. family members, supporting children, etc.
- STAR (Surviving Trauma After Rape): **01924.298954** A free support service for females and males aged 14 and over who have been raped or seriously sexually assaulted.
- GALOP: **0207.704.2040**: a helpline for lesbian, gay and bisexual victims of homophobia.
- CHILDLINE: **0800.1111**.

## ***If necessary, you can also:***

- Make a complaint about the way your school is responding: first contact your head of year, if you are not happy with the response, contact the head teacher, next, contact the Chair of the Board of Governors, next the Group Director, Schools and Children's Service and finally, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Of course, you can also contact your local M.P.
- Contact a lawyer about bringing a "civil case" against the offenders: Victimisation and harassment are illegal (The Prevention of Harassment Act 1997). The local authority may be taken to court for not doing "all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area." (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 17). The school and local authority may also be liable to prosecution under the Human Rights Act 1998, Article 2, Protocol 1 - the right to education (failure to provide the right to education to LGBT young people). And the teacher might be liable to prosecution under the 1974 Health and Safety Act if it can be proven the teacher was negligent (insurance will not cover cases of negligence). If the Equality Bill is passed in Parliament, attacking or threatening a person or damaging their property because of their sexual orientation, race, religion, gender, disabilities, etc., will become illegal.

***In the end, your safety is what matters.***

Leaving is **not** the same as failing. Sometimes your only alternative may be transferring to a safer learning environment.

- It isn't legal to just drop out if you are under the age of sixteen, and, besides, you deserve an education! So contact Schools and Children's Services (**01422.357257**) if you need help making arrangements for a safer place to learn ... a different school or home-schooling, or to see what other alternatives there might be.

***Remember, it is not your fault!***

- If you were attacked "because" you were gay or lesbian – or somebody thought you were – it is their prejudice and hatred, **not** your sexuality, that caused the assault.
- If you were attacked when you were in a dangerous place (like a party with no adults, or a hitchhiking situation), it may be a good idea not to go there again, but that does **not** mean you are to blame. The offender is the only one to blame.
- If you are a guy and you think this kind of thing only happens to women, think again. Guys get beaten up and raped, too. Sometimes the offenders are male; sometimes, they are female. Either way, it does **not** mean you are any less a man.
- If you were attacked and decided not to fight back, that is **not** the same as consent. That may have been the smart – or only – thing to do. It does **not** mean you "wanted" it and it does **not** make the attack your fault.

***The bottom line is ...***

You deserve to be able to be yourself, without having to face verbal or physical violence ... and to be able to get an education without having to lie about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender or about having gay friends or family members or about believing in civil rights for gay people. **And no matter how alone you may sometimes feel, you deserve help and support.**

The original Safe Schools Coalition version of this handout is online at:  
[http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/guide\\_student\\_surviveharass.pdf](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/guide_student_surviveharass.pdf)