



# The Safe Schools Coalition

10501 Meridian Ave N, Seattle, WA 98133

[www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)

American Friends Service Committee  
Charles Wright Academy  
Comprehensive Health Education Foundation  
Diversity Productions  
Gay Parent Support Group (Honolulu)  
GLSEN: The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (national office)  
Greater Seattle Business Association  
Hate Free Zone Washington  
Ingersoll Gender Center  
Kalaheo High School Gay Straight Alliance  
King County Sexual Assault Resource Center  
Kitsap County Health District  
Kitsap Safe Schools Network  
Lake Washington Education Association  
Lake Washington Technical Academy in Lake WA Technical College  
Lambert House  
Lifelong AIDS Alliance  
Multifaith Alliance of Reconciling Communities  
National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC)  
Norup School (Michigan)  
Oregon Safe Schools and Community Coalition  
OSPI, The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG national) and five local chapters: Bellevue, Everett/Snohomish, Olympia, Seattle, Yakima/Yakima Valley  
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Washington  
Power of Hope  
Pride Foundation  
Public Health - Seattle & King County  
Rainbow Families of Puget Sound  
Safe Schools of Wyoming  
School Nurse Organization of Washington  
Seattle Academy of Arts & Sciences  
Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities  
Seattle Education Association  
Seattle LGBT Community Center  
Shorewood High School  
Snohomish County GLOBE Youth Program  
Spokane Public Schools  
Stonewall Youth  
Teaching Tolerance (a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center)  
Turning Institute  
University of Puget Sound - Multicultural Student Services  
Verbena  
Washington Association of Churches  
Washington Association of School Social Workers  
Washington Education Association and its Women's Caucus  
Washington State University's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Allies Program  
Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Women's Educational Media  
Youth Guardian Services

## Safe Schools Coalition warns the community about

Focus on the Family's "Love Won Out" events and Exodus International's "Groundswell" events

These conferences promote what they call "re-orientation therapy" and religious ministries that teach that heterosexuality is better and can be "chosen." They frame it as a matter of rights - that we all have a *right* to choose our sexual orientations and gender identities. But they don't teach teachers to support the right of happily gay-identified youth to a safe education. "Choice" is a smokescreen. They believe – and they teach – that it's wrong to be gay.

We believe these conferences are potentially very dangerous. They reinforce the beliefs and fears of parents and youth workers who see gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT-identified) youth as mentally ill or sinful and destined for a lonely, self-destructive life. They may increase the chances a family will forcibly subject a youth to reprogramming efforts.

Such efforts are not supported by credible research. Mainstream health and mental health organizations representing nearly half a million professionals -- The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the National Association of Social Workers -- consider it unethical for a helping professional to attempt such psychotherapy. It can increase a person's internalized homophobia and their likelihood of engaging in self-harm.

When groups like Exodus and Focus on the Family say they want to affirm gay-identified kids as valuable people without affirming their behavior, maybe they are assuming that all GLBT youth are having sex. That's nonsense. Besides, those who are, just like heterosexually active teens, should be helped to make safe, respectful choices, not shamed for who they happen to like. Maybe it's not sex so much as same-sex dating that they find troubling – taking your boyfriend or girlfriend to a dance or a football game. We find that attitude wholly offensive and inappropriate to a public school that's supposed to serve *all* our children.

And we believe that:

- **GLBT people can be perfectly healthy and happy.**
- **GLBT people do not need to *change*** (even if there were a magic pill that *did* change your sexuality) **in order to be mentally healthy, moral human beings.**
- **Whether a public school makes you feel safe and affirms your presence shouldn't depend** upon how masculine or feminine you are or who you want to go out with or grow up and fall in love with.
- **Religious beliefs should be taught at home and in church**, not in our public schools.

**We think young people need to hear that their teachers and counselors; ministers, rabbis, imams and other spiritual leaders; and especially their parents love and support them *just the way they are.***

Helping schools become safe places, where every family can belong,  
where every educator can teach and where every child can learn,  
regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.