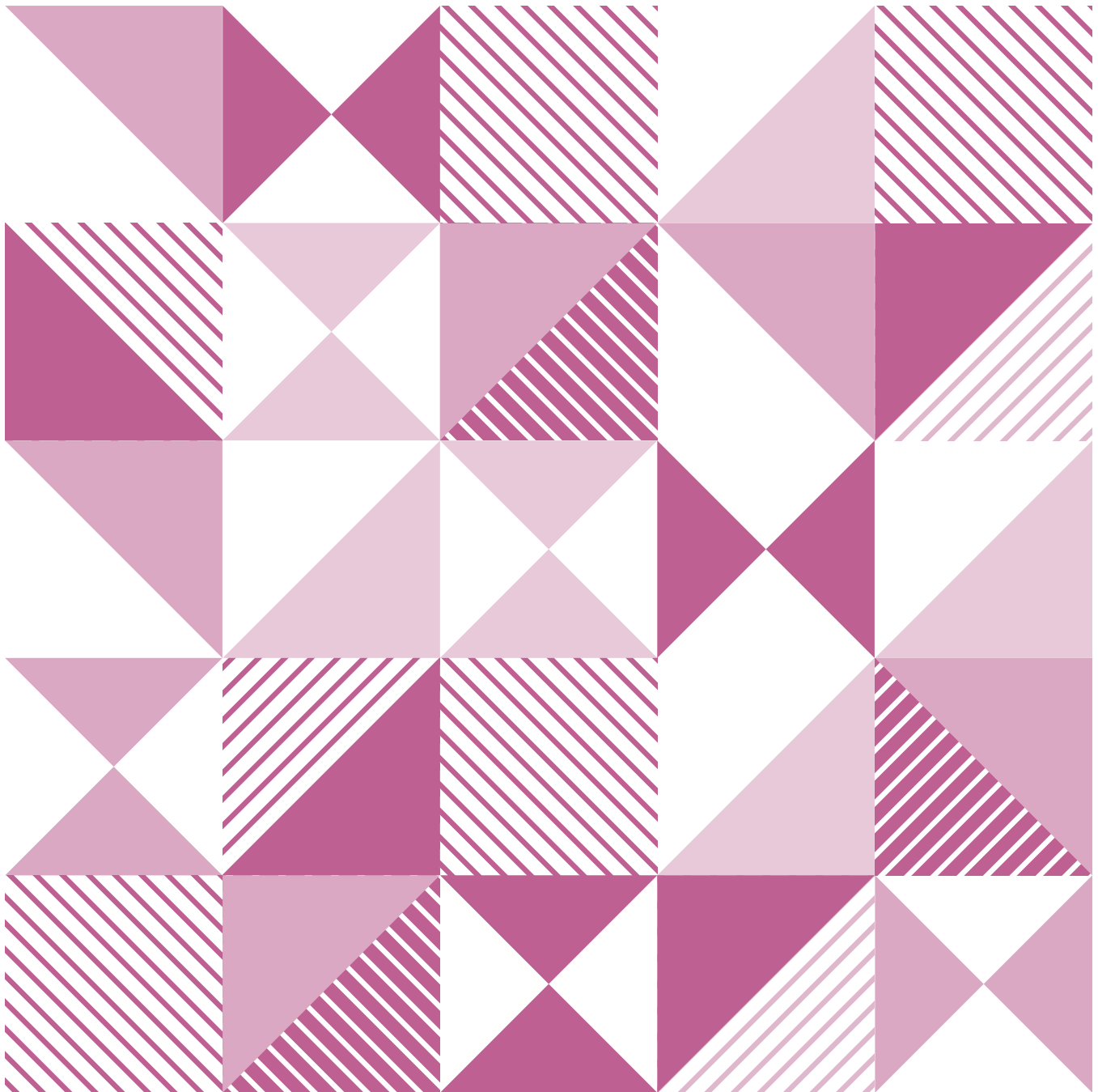


# Inclusion in Sport Coaching Resource



*This resource is designed to help coaches create safe spaces for their participants, specifically those who identify as LGBTQI2S.*



It is important to realize that language is a tool for empowerment and can foster a sense of belonging and affirmation of underrepresented and marginalized identities and experiences. You don't have to be an expert on terminology, but you do need to have a basic understanding of the key terms which follow.<sup>1</sup>

Identity labels exist for self-identification, i.e., by the individual, and are not to be used on others based on your own perceptions of how you may think they identify. Let the participant lead with personal information about their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

*"Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists, it is making a new space, a better space for everyone."*

- GEORGE DEI, EQUITY ADVOCATE<sup>2</sup>

**Gender Identity:** Each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being male, female, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Expression:** How a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, makeup, body language and voice.

**Sexual Orientation:** Each person's pattern of emotional, romantic or sexual attraction. Sexual orientation may include attraction to the same gender (homosexuality), a gender different than your own (heterosexuality), both men and women (bisexuality), all genders (pansexual), or neither (asexuality). gender identity (who you are) and sexual orientation (who you are attracted to).

*Gender identity is who you are; sexual orientation is who you're attracted to.*

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions are derived from Challenge Accepted. [Insert hyperlink] <https://www.challenge-accepted.ca>

<sup>2</sup> Dei, G.S.N. (2006). Meeting equity fair and square. Keynote address to the Leadership Conference of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, held on September 28, 2006, in Mississauga, Ontario. Cited in; Government of Ontario. Realizing the Promise of Diversity - Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. Access at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf>

**Lesbian:** A person who identifies as a woman and experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender.

**Gay:** A person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. Gay may be used by individuals of a diversity of genders; for example, some women attracted to other women may identify as gay but the term also refers to men who are attracted to other men.

**Bisexual:** A person who experiences attraction to both men and women. It may also describe the experience of attraction to individuals of the same sex and/or gender and individuals of different sexes and/or genders.

**Trans:** A person whose sex assigned at birth does not correspond to their gender identity. It can also be used as an umbrella term to refer to transgender, transsexual, and/or gender diverse identities and experiences.

**Non-binary** can sometimes fall under the category of trans for those who identify outside of the conventional men and women categories of gender; not all nonbinary people identify as trans, but some trans people identify as non-binary.

**Queer:** Can be used to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to sex, gender, and attraction, or by an individual to reflect the interrelatedness of these aspects of their identity. Q can also stand for questioning.

**Intersex:** A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside of the conventional classifications of male (XY chromosome, high level of testosterone, development of broader shoulders and facial hair, etc.) or female (XX chromosome, existing uterus, high levels of estrogen, development of hips and breasts, etc.)

**Two-Spirit:** An umbrella term used by some Indigenous people rather than, or in addition to, identifying as LGBTQI2S. This term affirms the idea that all aspects of identity - including gender, sexuality, community, culture, spirituality, and indigeneity - are related.

**Cisgender:** A person whose gender identity is the same as their sex as assigned at birth, i.e., someone who identifies as a man and was assigned male at birth.

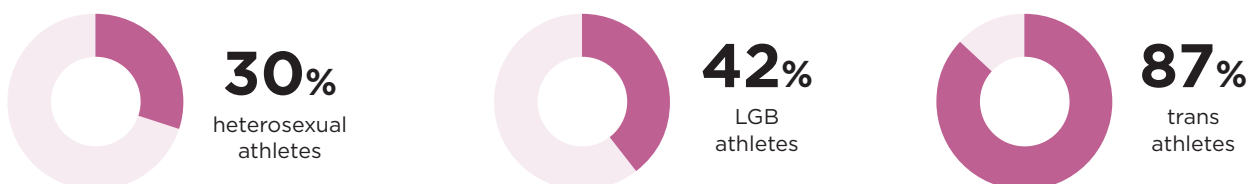
## Why is this Important to Me as a Coach?

As a coach, you are largely responsible for creating and maintaining a culture in which all participants will thrive. In creating a safe and welcoming space for your LGBTQI2S participants, you will be making a significant impact on their lives, as well as benefiting the other participants you coach.

Some important considerations follow.

1. The numbers of LGBTQI2S participants are growing due to changing of climates as youth start to “come out” within the spectrum at younger ages.
  - Heterosexual athletes are feeling more comfortable about having an LGB teammate, with 73 per cent very comfortable and 24 per cent comfortable.<sup>3</sup>
2. Canadian sport remains an unsafe place for many participants who identify as LGBTQI2S:
  - Demers and Michon (2018) confirmed that 30 per cent of heterosexual athletes, 42 per cent of LGB athletes and 87 per cent of trans athletes experienced at least one homophobic or transphobic episode (Figure 1)
3. LGBTQI2S participants drop out at higher rates than their cisgender and/or heterosexual teammates.
  - The most frequent forms of LGBT-phobia that were reported were verbal insults, disparagement and offensive remarks. LGBT athletes who are subject to this treatment say they feel pressured to stay in the closet (not reveal or talk about their sexual orientation), are verbally insulted and are ignored or excluded by their peers
  - A study of BC youth published in 2016 comparing sport participation since 1988 in Grade 7-12 students found that in every year measured, LGB youth were about half as likely, or even less, to participate in coached sports than straight youth were, a gap which has persisted and even widened over time.<sup>4</sup>
4. Creating safer places in sport for diverse participants benefits everyone:
  - Safe sport can contribute significantly to physical, mental, and social wellness and help improve life experiences of LGBTQI2S kids and youth who face higher rates of anxiety, depression, suicide, and homelessness.
  - Inclusive practices ensure individuals are able to perform at their best without fear of their safety; this is especially true for LGBTQI2S athletes when they are able to be their true, authentic self.

**Figure 1:** Athletes who have experienced at least one homophobic or transphobic episode



<sup>3</sup> Demers, G. and Michon, C. (2018). LGBT-phobia in Sport - Is It Better Than It Was?

<sup>4</sup> Are we leveling the playing field? Trends and disparities in sports participation among sexual minority youth in Canada. Doull, M., Watson, R, Smith, A., Hommad, Y, and Saewyca, E. Journal of Sport and Health Science, Volume 7, Issue 2, April 2018, Pages 218-2264.

## What Can I Do?

The five guiding principles which follow will help you as a coach to develop actions specific to your team/sport to make it more inclusive to LGBTQ+ participants:



### RESPECT

Model respectful interactions on and off the field



### SAFETY

Ensure that all athletes have access to a safe environment, in all aspects of emotional, physical, and psychological safety



### LEADERSHIP

Be an ally by listening and leading by example



### FAIRNESS

Apply the same standards and options to all participants



### PRIVACY

Treat communication around gender and sexuality as each participant's story to tell

ACTION	PRINCIPLE(S)	ORIENTATION / IDENTITY
<p>Reflect on who you are and how you are socially positioned in society, recognize what perspectives you may not have personally, and seek to learn about those perspectives.</p>	<p>Respect Leadership</p>	<p>Orientation / Identity</p>
<p>Model respectful language and speech.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use gender neutral language (partner, parent/guardian)</li> <li>Avoid the use of gendered language such as “ladies” or “guys” and shift to “folks” or “team mates” even on a single-gender team</li> <li>Discuss homophobic, biphobic or misogynistic language and appropriate alternatives (Instead of that’s so say use that’s ridiculous)</li> </ul>	<p>Respect Leadership</p>	<p>Orientation / Identity</p>

<p>Question your assumptions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid assumptions that LGBTQI2S people don't exist in your sport; it is more likely that the environment is not yet safe or welcoming enough for coming out as LGBTQI2S.</li> <li>• Avoid assumptions about anyone's gender based on their gender expression - many spaces are not safe for people to express their gender authentically.</li> <li>• Avoid assumptions about families consisting only of women together with men. For example: "Tell your mom and your dad to drop you off at the far side of the field."</li> </ul>	Respect	Orientation / Identity
<p>Help dispel myths and negative stereotypes.</p> <p>For example, trans women have more a competitive advantage than cisgendered women.</p>	Respect Leadership	Orientation / Identity
<p>Be aware that there are unique and potentially different needs for everyone, especially between trans women, trans men, and non-binary participants.</p>	Respect	Orientation / Identity
<p>Get to know participant's needs and interests and be sensitive to and understanding of them.</p>	Leadership	Orientation / Identity
<p>Take the time to listen and learn about the experiences of LGBTQI2S people in your sport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring in LGBTQI2S athletes, coaches and leaders to talk about their lived experiences and educate others on unique issues facing LGBTQ participants</li> <li>• Invite participants to share ongoing feedback on their experiences with you in a meeting or a focus group.</li> </ul>	Leadership	

<p>Listen and ask individuals what their preferred pronouns are.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the language or terms that people use to describe themselves</li> <li>• Model how to ask and provide pronouns. For example: “My name is Tom and my pronouns are he/him ”</li> <li>• If someone is confused why you provided your pronouns, this becomes a teachable moment “I don’t assume people’s pronouns based on their gender expression.”</li> <li>• Consider adding voluntary disclosure of pronouns as part of introductions, especially if a group is meeting for the first time.</li> <li>• If you make mistakes, hold yourself accountable, apologize and avoid making the same mistake in the future.</li> </ul>	Leadership	Orientation / Identity
<p>Don’t assume that LGBTQI2S youth know you are an ally; be verbal and visible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put a rainbow flag / trans flag in prominent place</li> <li>• Add your pronouns to email signature and/or name tag or use <b>pronouns pins</b> or stickers</li> </ul>	Leadership	Orientation / Identity
<p>Participate in or host awareness events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pink Shirt Day</b></li> <li>• <b>International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia</b></li> <li>• National Coming Out Day (October 11)</li> <li>• Trans Day of Remembrance (November 20)</li> <li>• Trans Day of Visibility (March 31)</li> </ul>	Leadership	Orientation / Identity
<p>Let the participant lead with personal information about their gender identity or sexual orientation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid asking invasive and personal information.</li> <li>• Do not ask about a person’s anatomy.</li> <li>• Avoid questioning or contesting someone’s sexual orientation.</li> </ul>	Privacy	Orientation / Identity

<p>Do not disclose someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity to other participants, coaches, or club leaders, unless you have participant’s express (preferably written) prior consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit access to records that contain gender or legal name</li> <li>• Address “whisper campaigns” about someone’s suspected or actual sexual orientation or gender identity</li> <li>• Check in with the person to confirm on what is shareable and respect participant’s timelines for sharing with others (if at all)</li> </ul>	<p>Privacy</p>	<p>Orientation / Identity</p>
<p>Work with trans or non-binary participants to access the team or category of their choice. Help them to navigate eligibility requirements.</p>	<p>Fairness</p>	<p>Identity</p>
<p>Support participation based on standards of body features (height, weight, strength, etc) rather than gender.</p>	<p>Fairness</p>	<p>Identity</p>
<p>Allow participants to self-select washroom or change room options that are right for them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly communicate the options for privacy (e.g., showers with curtains/doors and dry change spaces).</li> <li>• Address individuals discomfort but avoid requiring LGBTQI2S participants to use these private spaces for the comfort of others</li> </ul>	<p>Fairness Safety</p>	<p>Orientation</p>
<p>Support participants to talk about or show public affection towards their partner.</p>	<p>Fairness</p>	<p>Orientation</p>
<p>Allow participants to choose the uniform that is most gender affirming or can best meet their safety needs.</p>	<p>Fairness Safety</p>	
<p>If playing sport in different city or facility, call ahead to ensure understand the options are available (including single-occupancy washrooms/change rooms).</p>	<p>Fairness</p>	



<p>Be aware that non-binary participants are met with challenges within binary sports as they are often forced to choose between participating in men's vs women's categories (neither aligning with their gender identity). Often existing trans policies reinforce binary and restrictive parameters that erase experiences of non-binary people, and do further harm.</p>	<p>Fairness</p>	
<p>Investigate and intervene in instances of homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic statements made by participants, coaches, or officials in person or on social media.</p>	<p>Safety Leadership</p>	<p>Orientation / Identity</p>
<p>As with all participants, promptly report or handle instances of assault against participants.</p>	<p>Safety</p>	<p>Orientation / Identity</p>
<p>If travelling to other countries, understand the laws that may affect LGBTQI2S individuals and prepare a safety plan with the athlete.</p>	<p>Safety</p>	<p>Orientation / Identity</p>

## Learning More

This resource is intended to be both motivating and practical, giving a better understanding of both the importance of being a coach who is LGBTQI2S inclusive and the concrete actions that can be taken today to make you a more inclusive coach.