

## ACTIVELY ENGAGING WOMEN AND GIRLS

# Recommendations to Make Sport and Physical Activity More Welcoming to Sexual and Gender Diversity

The powerful potential of sport and physical activity is undermined by intolerance of sexual and gender diversity, and homophobic and transphobic attitudes. Sexual and gender diversity refers to the full range of human sexual experience and gender identity, and includes one's perceived or actual sexual orientation as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered/transitioned, queer or questioning, or heterosexual. Taking steps to reduce intolerance, homophobia and transphobia is consistent with Canada's efforts to foster safe and welcoming environments in sport and physical activity, and with Canadian values of diversity, acceptance and fairness.

Actions to make sport and physical activity environments more welcoming to sexual and gender diversity include:

- 1. EDUCATE YOURSELF** – Invest time to learn about sexual and gender diversity generally, and in sport and physical activity specifically. Encourage and provide opportunities for others to learn more, including coaches, officials, administrators, volunteers, participants and athletes. For resources and workshops visit [www.caaws.ca/homophobia/e/](http://www.caaws.ca/homophobia/e/).
- 2. IMPLEMENT POLICY** – Develop and implement policies that support and protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ) participants and leaders, including anti-harassment policies and same-sex partnership policies. Avoid treating LGBTQ athletes and the issues raised by their participation in sport as a “special” situation; integrate policy applying to LGBTQ athletes into overall team, department or organization policy.
- 3. EXAMINE YOUR BELIEFS** – Monitor your own stereotyped beliefs about LGBTQ people and commit yourself to challenging them. Do not assume all athletes, coaches, instructors, officials, educators, volunteers and others involved with your organization are heterosexual. Assume there are LGBTQ persons (or family members who are LGBTQ), but don't speculate about who may or may not be heterosexual or LGBTQ.
- 4. VALUE DIVERSITY** – Judge teammates, other participants, and coaches on the basis of their character and personality, not their sexual orientation or gender expression. Make it clear to the people around you that you are open to diversity in all members of your team, program, class or organization. If you have LGBTQ friends, ask them how you can help make sport and physical activity more welcoming for them.
- 5. PRACTICE INCLUSION** – Use inclusive language. Do not tolerate disparaging remarks about LGBTQ people, even if they are said in jest or not intended to be hurtful. Speak out against anti-gay harassment directed at individuals or teams from spectators, opponents, coaches, or teammates. Your silence supports prejudice.
- 6. PROMOTE ACCEPTANCE** – Post a positive space symbol to visibly signal your organization is open and welcoming, as well as equitable and accessible, to all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification. Educate staff so their actions support their commitment.
- 7. BE PREPARED** – If people who are LGBTQ feel the environment is welcoming, they may choose to come out in their sport or physical activity environment. Be prepared. How you and your organization react will send strong signals to everyone, not just those who are LGBTQ, about how welcoming your organization is to diversity.
- 8. CONNECT WITH LOCAL RESOURCES** – Find out about local LGBTQ support groups and resources, such as peer help groups or telephone help lines for LGBTQ people, parents and allies.
- 9. BE AWARE** – When traveling internationally with teams or for professional development events, be aware that other countries may have strict laws and/or beliefs about homosexuality and being transgendered that may make it unsafe for those who are LGBTQ.
- 10. BECOME AN ALLY OR CHAMPION** – Join the Step Up! Speak Out! Ally Campaign for Inclusive Sport, which aims to eliminate homophobia in sport by asking athletes, coaches, officials, sport administrators, parents, fans and other members of the Canadian sport and physical activity community to publicly commit to bring the message of inclusion, respect and equality to their sport. Visit [www.stepupsspeakout.com](http://www.stepupsspeakout.com).

*This resource was adapted from *Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors – A Supplement to Canadian Sport for Life*. Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) is a movement to improve the quality of sport and physical activity in Canada. To download the full publication visit [www.caaws.ca](http://www.caaws.ca) or contact CAAWS to request a hardcopy.*

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Advancement of Women  
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Association canadienne pour  
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