



# LEADING THE WAY:

## Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches

### A PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR COACHES

Written by Jennifer Birch-Jones



Canadian Association for the  
Advancement of Women  
and Sport and Physical Activity

Association canadienne pour  
l'avancement des femmes  
du sport et de l'activité physique



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Jennifer Birch-Jones is the volunteer program lead for CAAWS's **LGBTQ Sport Inclusion Initiative**. She has been involved extensively in sport as an athlete, board member, national referee and assessor. She served as Commonwealth Games Mission staff for the 2002 and 2006 Commonwealth Games. Jennifer was on the Organizing Committee for the first ever Pride House held at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver. Jennifer has delivered CAAWS's Leading the Way workshop on LGBTQ inclusion in sport throughout Canada and continues to work with organizations to make sport more welcoming.*

## ABOUT CAAWS

*CAAWS is a national non-profit organization dedicated to creating an equitable sport and physical activity system in which girls and women are actively engaged as participants and leaders. CAAWS provides a number of services, programs and resources to a variety of clients, including sport and physical activity organizations, teachers, coaches, athletes, volunteers, health professionals and recreation leaders. Since 1981, CAAWS has worked in close cooperation with government and non-government organizations on activities and initiatives that advocate for positive change for girls and women in sport and physical activity.*

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For more resources and tools, visit CAAWS's dedicated site on LGBTQ sport inclusion:  
[www.caaws-homophobiansport.ca](http://www.caaws-homophobiansport.ca)

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# LEADING THE WAY:

## Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches

### A PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR COACHES

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Leading the Way: Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches* is a comprehensive resource designed for coaches, and is based on the lived experiences of Canadian athletes and coaches. The resource highlights current issues in Canadian sport, from playground to podium, and aims to make sport a more welcoming place for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (transgender), two-spirited, queer or questioning (LGBTQ). *Leading the Way* provides information to help coaches understand LGBTQphobia and the negative impact it has on everyone in their sport. It suggests best practices for creating a sport environment that is safe and respectful for all.

#### LGBTQphobia

An umbrella term to describe a number of phobias, including homophobia, bi-phobia, and transphobia that encompass a range of negative feelings toward those who are (or assumed to be) LGBTQ. LGBTQphobia can be manifested in hostile or derisive language, or other negative actions directed toward those who are (or assumed to be) LGBTQ.

*“Athletics teams are, like work teams, made up of people from different cultures, religions, genders, races, abilities, political perspectives and sexual orientations ... It does not require every member of a team to agree with everyone else on the team about political points of view, sexual orientation, religion or anything else. It does not mean that every member of a team approves of how every other member of a team lives her or his life. The goal of inclusion and respect is that team members recognize and agree to work together respectfully across differences. These goals invite student-athletes and coaches to build a winning team and nurture a team climate in which all members are valued for their contributions to the team and for their individual character and commitment, regardless of their individual identities or philosophies.”*

NATIONAL COLLEGE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA)  
Champions of Respect

### Strategies for Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches

1. Establish an *inclusive environment of openness and respect* for everyone, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, religion, class, size, or sexual or gender identity:
  - a. Understand your own beliefs and feelings about LGBTQphobia, and recognize and act upon the important leadership role you play as a coach.
  - b. Assess how welcoming your team environment is to those who are LGBTQ.
  - c. Describe acceptable behaviours, clarify disrespectful behaviours, and highlight behaviours that demonstrate an inclusive environment of openness and respect.
  - d. Act quickly to address LGBTQphobic language, jokes and actions that ridicule or put down LGBTQ people, women or any minority groups.
  - e. Deal with any discrimination or problems that the athlete or coach encounters from teammates, training staff, parents, supporters or other coaching staff.
  - f. Ensure the team locker room is a safe place, free of unwanted sexual attention, taunting or teasing.

- g. Use language and images inclusive of diverse families, friendships, and sexual and gender identities; for example, extend invitations to include boyfriends and girlfriends, husbands, wives and partners or significant others.
  - h. Be aware that many other countries still have strict laws about being LGBTQ. Take the time to know whether a country or city is safe for all team members.
- 2.** Provide *strong, positive leadership* that models fair and respectful behaviour:
- a. Be mindful of your own attitudes and beliefs.
  - b. Avoid assumptions or judgements based on stereotypes or rumour. Assume there are LGBTQ members involved with your team - either directly as athletes, coaches or training staff, or indirectly as family members or friends.
  - c. Never ask someone about their sexual orientation or gender identity.
  - d. Be ready for when someone who is LGBTQ comes out to you.
  - e. Make your support for LGBTQ team members visible and intentional, using LGBTQ inclusive language.
  - f. Be open to speaking with athletes, coaches or other support staff who have questions or express concerns.
  - g. Become a visible ally, show your support by wearing a positive space pin or sticker or taking part in other ally initiatives.
  - h. Become more familiar with LGBTQ issues in sport. Know what resources are available to assist those who are LGBTQ and may be struggling.
  - i. If you are LGBTQ yourself, consider taking steps to live your sport life more openly as an "out" coach.
- 3.** Put in place the necessary organizational frameworks to assist you in working with LGBTQ athletes and coaches:
- a. Ensure your organization has an equity policy and/or code of conduct that prohibits discrimination on the basis of perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
  - b. Ensure your policies and processes are inclusive and non-discriminatory (e.g., selection criteria, playing time, dating policies, leadership nominations).
  - c. Educate staff, team members and volunteers on their responsibilities for being respectful and non-discriminatory to all, regardless of their own personal beliefs.

*"As a coach of both male and females in my sport, I see a general pervasive and negative attitude at all levels around those who are gay. This is largely conveyed through the use of inappropriate language. Homophobic and often sexist language is not restricted to one gender, age group, or ability level. It starts with young children and persists throughout our sport. We need to clean up the talk because it perpetuates a negative stereotype about those who are LGBTQ and women."*  
Male Coach, 2013

*"In order for an athlete to compete at their highest level, I believe it's important to have a high level of self-worth and confidence. When you are in an environment that accepts you regardless of race, age, religious affiliation or sexual orientation, then and only then can an athlete really push the limits in competition. I realize there is a separation between what we do and who we are but the second we feel as though we have something to hide, our performance suffers. This is the best I have ever played and I think it's a direct reflection of being proud of who I am, on and off the field."*

ERIN MCLEOD, GOALKEEPER AND OLYMPIC BRONZE MEDALLIST  
CANADA'S WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM IN LONDON 2012

## INTRODUCTION

Although there has been progress in making sport more welcoming to those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (transgender), two-spirited, queer or questioning (LGBTQ), much more work needs to be done. Coaches play a critical role in creating a sport environment that is safe and respectful for all, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. *Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches: Leading the Way* is aimed at coaches to help them to ensure a sport environment that is welcoming for all.

The need for this resource has been demonstrated many times, including through the following recent experiences in Canadian sport:

- > Common use of negative labels and slurs associated with LGBTQ, such as lesbians called “dyke”, “lesbo” or “butch”, and gays called “faggot”; homophobic and sexist language, such as “don’t play like a puss”, “sissy” or “that is so gay”; and inappropriate jokes.
- > Non-supportive teammates and coaches who trivialized, talked negatively and gossiped behind the back of an athlete who had come out to the team.
- > Spectators yelling homophobic taunts at a lesbian on the visiting team and neither the home coach nor officials taking action to address the incident. Afterwards the league convenor telling the athlete to “get a thicker skin”.
- > A coach of a ten-year old girl who has a non-traditional hair cut is asked by another coach to not allow that “little boy” to play in their league.
- > A sport organization considering not selecting a technically qualified coach as manager for their Canada Games team based on the perception of her being gay and the potential for a negative reaction from parents.
- > Negative recruiting tactics by other coaches whereby a coach’s sexual orientation is used against her to gain a recruiting advantage.
- > A potential Olympian concealing his sexual orientation for fear it would reduce his chances of selection.
- > An International Federation (IF) launching a promotional campaign using images of beautiful female athletes that are hyper-feminine and assumed to be heterosexual.
- > Gender identity remaining explicitly excluded from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Charter when defining the prohibitions against discrimination, and continued efforts to re-introduce gender testing by the IOC for “suspicious” looking female athletes.

This resource contains best practices, reinforced by the experiences and advice of Canadian athletes and coaches dealing with LGBTQphobia, to ensure that experiences like these are no longer present in a sporting (or other) environment.

## UNDERSTANDING LGBTQPHOBIA IN SPORT

### The Canadian Landscape

An increasing number of Canadians, and at a younger age than in the past, are identifying as LGBTQ. According to a survey conducted by Egale Canada (2009), 26% of students identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning.<sup>1</sup> For a youth-based team of 15-20 players, this could translate into five or more athletes. For the adult population, an estimated five to 15% identifies as LGBTQ.

Younger athletes and younger coaches are feeling more comfortable with sexual and gender diversity. This is evidenced by the fact that more LGBTQ athletes and coaches are coming out during their career, rather than waiting until they retire.

Same-sex parents expect their children to experience all of the benefits of sport, free from any discrimination associated with their parents' sexual orientation.

Today, Canadian sport has more allies<sup>2</sup> stepping up and speaking out. Allies are people committed in words and actions to counteracting LGBTQphobia, discrimination or harassment of their LGBTQ family members, friends, coworkers and teammates.

An increasing number of sport organizations recognize the need to provide supportive environments for all athletes, coaches, volunteers, staff and other members. As a result, there is a need to have a better understanding of LGBTQ issues in sport.

CAAWS has delivered a number of Leading the Way workshops, which provide education on LGBTQ for leaders in Canadian sport. CAAWS also developed an earlier discussion paper on homophobia in sport, which along with more recent resources, are available at [www.caaws-homophobiainsport.ca](http://www.caaws-homophobiainsport.ca) dedicated website on LGBTQ sport inclusion.

In Egale Canada's 2009 high school survey:

71% identified as heterosexual  
26% as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning,  
3% as trans or two-spirit.

### LGBTQphobia

An umbrella term to describe a number of phobias, including homophobia, bi-phobia, and transphobia that encompass a range of negative feelings toward those who are (or assumed to be) LGBTQ. LGBTQphobia can be manifested in hostile or derisive language, or other negative actions directed toward those who are (or assumed to be) LGBTQ.

Recent results from the first Out on the Fields international study on homophobia in sport reinforce the need for much more work. Here are some highlights from the 1,123 lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight Canadian voices captured in Out on the Fields (2015):<sup>3</sup>

- > 29% of all Canadian participants and 36% of gay men believe homophobia is more common in Canadian sport than the rest of society.
- > 81% of Canadian participants witnessed or experienced homophobia in sport; more than half (57%) of gay men, nearly half (45%) of lesbians and 41% of straight men said they had personally experienced homophobia.
- > 84% of Canadian gay men and 88% of lesbians have received verbal slurs such as “faggot:” or “dyke”.
- > 70% of Canadian respondents believe youth (under 22) team sports are not welcoming for LGB people.
- > 86% of gay Canadian youth and 89% of lesbian Canadian youth said they were at least partially in the closet, keeping their sexuality secret from all or some of their teammates.
- > These Canadian youth said they stayed in the closet because they feared multiple forms of discrimination, for example 42% of gay youth and 16% of lesbians feared they would be bullied and 30% of gay youth and 20% of lesbians were worried about discrimination from coaches and officials. Meanwhile, 44% of gay Canadian youth and 48% were worried about being rejected by teammates.
- > 66% of Canadian participants believe an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual person would not be very safe as a spectator at a sporting event.
- > Spectator stands (28%) followed by school PE class (28%) were chosen as the most likely locations for homophobia to occur in Canadian sport.
- > Compared to other countries, lesbian youth were more likely to be in the closet than in any of the other countries (UK, USA, New Zealand, Australia and Ireland), and were the second most likely to report physical assaults.
- > Canadian gay men also reported the highest rates of physical assaults and bullying (bullying was tied with the UK) and the highest number of straight men who said they received homophobic slurs.



Out on the Fields is the first international study and largest conducted on homophobia in sports. Nearly 9,500 people took part including 1,123 lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight Canadians. The study focused on team sports, English speaking countries and sexuality. Repucom conducted the research on behalf of the 2014 Bingham Cup and a coalition of sporting organisations. The study methodology and results were reviewed by a panel of seven academics from six universities from Victoria University (Australia), Penn State University, University of Massachusetts (USA); Brunel University (UK); University of Winnipeg, and Laval University (Canada).

## Some Definitions

A good starting point on addressing this issue is ensuring a basic understanding of some of the various terms used in relation to sexuality and gender identity and expression. Key definitions below are supplemented with additional definitions in Appendix A.<sup>4</sup> It is important to remember that each of these terms imply self-identification. In other words, each individual should decide which term works best for her/himself, rather than being labelled by other people. Familiarity with these basic terms may be helpful for the coach.

TERM	DEFINITION
Ally	A person who believes in the dignity and respect of all people and takes action by supporting and advocating with groups being targeted by social injustice. In the context of LGBTQ, ally is also known as a “straight” ally.
Bisexual	A sexual orientation toward women and men in which gender is not a determining factor in romantic or sexual feelings toward another person.
Cis or cisgender	Refers to a person whose individual self-perception of their gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. This means that the majority of people in the world are cis and access privilege as a result because they are not marginalized in the same way as trans identified folks.
Coming out/ being out of the closet/ being out	Process of becoming aware of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity and sharing this identity with others. Being “outed” refers to situations where an individual’s sexual or gender identity is revealed to someone else by a third party, leaving the “outed” individual vulnerable and at risk.
Gay	An adjective describing sexual orientation toward others of the same sex and/or gender. The term is also used exclusively to describe men who are sexually attracted to men.
Gender/ Gender identity	The complex relationship between physical traits and one’s internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither; as well as one’s identity expressed through one’s outward presentations and behaviours related to that perception. Biological/assigned sex and gender are different; gender is not inherently connected to one’s physical anatomy.
Heterosexual	A noun or adjective used to describe sexual orientation toward people of another sex, typically males toward females and vice versa. Heterosexual people are also referred to as “straight.”
Homophobia	A term describing a range of negative feelings toward lesbian and gay people as individuals or as a group. Homophobia can be manifested in hostile or derisive language, or other actions directed toward lesbian and gay people or those assumed to be lesbian or gay.
Homosexual	A 19th century description of same-sex behaviour or attraction, or people who are sexually attracted to others of the same sex. In the LGBTQ community, many see this term as having negative connotations.
Intersex	Where the sex chromosomes, genitalia and/or secondary sex characteristics are neither exclusively male nor female.
Lesbian	An adjective or noun used to describe the sexual orientation of women who are sexually attracted to women. Women who are sexually attracted to women may also identify as gay instead of lesbian.
LGBTQ	An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, queer and questioning that is increasingly used to describe a broader community of sexually and gender diverse minorities.

LGBTQphobia	An umbrella term to describe a number of phobias, including homophobia, bi-phobia and transphobia that encompass a range of negative feelings toward those who are (or assumed to be) LGBTQ. LGBTQphobia can be manifested in hostile or derisive language, or other negative actions directed toward those who are (or assumed to be) LGBTQ.
Queer	An umbrella term that is sometimes used to refer to gender and sexual minorities. Historically queer was used as a negative description of lesbian and gay people. Today some LGBTQ communities have reclaimed it as an empowering identifier.
Questioning	An adjective used to describe people, especially young people, who are in the process of defining their sexual orientation or gender identity.
Trans	Trans is an “umbrella term” to describe anyone whose identity or behaviour falls outside stereotypical gender norms. Transgender refers more specifically to individuals whose gender identity does not match their assigned birth gender. Being trans does not imply any specific sexual orientation or attraction to people of a specific gender. Therefore, trans people may additionally identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual.
Transphobia	Describes a range of negative feelings toward trans or gender nonconforming people as individuals or as a group that can be manifested in hostile, derisive language or actions, directed toward people who don’t conform to gender expectations based on the sex designation they were assigned at birth.
Two-spirited	A term chosen to express distinctly Indigenous / Native American gender identity and gender variance. “Two-spirited” or “two- spirit” usually indicates a person whose body simultaneously manifests both a masculine and a feminine spirit.

## Dispelling the Myths

Until recently, the reluctance to address LGBTQphobia was based on fear, ignorance, stereotypes, myths and little or no personal association.

These myths and stereotypes are completely unfounded and extremely hurtful. Some are derived from entrenched and rigid views of what is and isn’t appropriate for men and women, i.e., prescribed societal norms of femininity and masculinity.

If not dispelled, these myths perpetuate a sport system that is not welcoming to LGBTQ or anyone else not fitting narrow societal stereotypes.



### Common Myths

- x Lesbians and gay men are sexual predators, out to “recruit” or “convert” heterosexuals
- x Gay men are paedophiles
- x Females who excel at sport are lesbians
- x Gay men have less aptitude for sport
- x Lesbians hate or dislike men
- x Gay men prefer artistic sports to contact or more “macho” sports
- x Trans people are all gay.

## LGBTQphobia is Different for Women and Men

For women, a very athletic, muscular, or “butch” appearance often results in being labelled a lesbian, a man or of suspicious gender. It includes the negative stigma and discrimination associated with these labels.

Discrimination and even violence may occur, not because of actual sexuality or gender identity, but because of perceived sexuality or gender identity. As a result, some female athletes feel the need to emphasize their femininity, and by inference their heterosexuality. Indeed, some teams insist on “feminine” behaviours in an effort to not be associated with or attractive to lesbians.

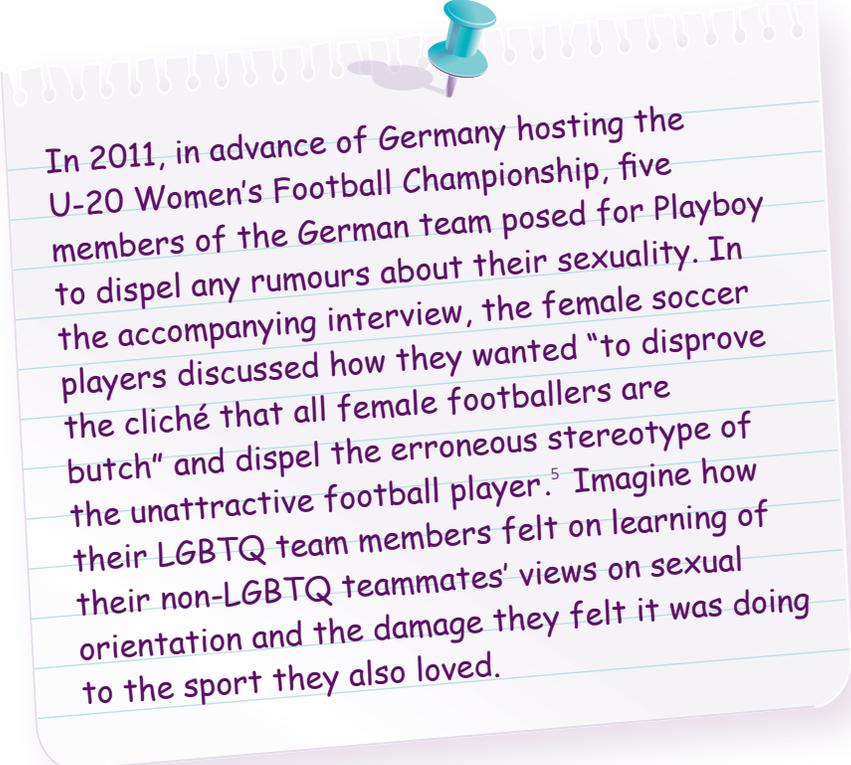
Greater acceptance of lesbians in women’s sport often does not extend beyond the locker-room in order to avoid the “negative stigma” of being a “lesbian” team. Team dress codes for girls and women can also re-inforce feminine stereotypes if they promote or require skirts or dresses over other equally acceptable attire on and off the field of play.

Often a young boy or man may be labelled gay if he is effeminate, not athletic, not interested in sports or prefers artistic sports, such as figure skating or gymnastics.

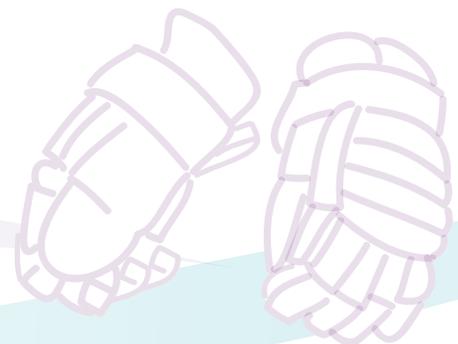
Playing sports is part of the normal socialization for males growing into masculine, heterosexual men. Being macho and “manning up” implies a traditional and rigid social norm for men. Males who do not fit this social norm are often viewed with suspicion and derision.

Until recently, it was wrongly assumed that gay men don’t play the “macho” sports, such as rugby, football and ice hockey because they aren’t “tough” enough.

Unlike women’s sports, where there is greater acceptance of lesbians in the locker room, the male locker room is an uncomfortable and often unsafe place for gay males. Because the locker room is a place of intimate team bonding, associated initiation rituals for rookies can also be extremely homophobic and sexist, both in language and behaviour.



In 2011, in advance of Germany hosting the U-20 Women's Football Championship, five members of the German team posed for Playboy to dispel any rumours about their sexuality. In the accompanying interview, the female soccer players discussed how they wanted “to disprove the cliché that all female footballers are butch” and dispel the erroneous stereotype of the unattractive football player.<sup>5</sup> Imagine how their LGBTQ team members felt on learning of their non-LGBTQ teammates' views on sexual orientation and the damage they felt it was doing to the sport they also loved.



Brendan Burke, the son of NHL General Manager Brian Burke, left the sport he and his hockey family loved so much because of what he experienced in the locker room as a teenager. His heroic coming out a few years later with his story of homophobia was a tipping point in Canada. Brendan and Brian Burke put a real face to homophobia, the harm it causes, and the important role of allies. Brendan's coming out was a catalyst for discussion on how welcoming sport was, or was not, to those who are LGBTQ. Although tragically killed in a car accident in 2010 (having returned to hockey as the team manager for a US collegiate varsity team), Brendan's legacy lives on with the **You Can Play** project, a campaign to end homophobia in sport. Brendan's family continues its involvement in this campaign today.

You Can Play has expanded its work in the Canadian sports space, with both a western and eastern regional board that works with Canadian sport organizations to make sport more welcoming to those who identify as LGBTQ.<sup>6</sup>

## LGBTQphobia Hurts Everyone

Out-dated attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes give rise to LGBTQphobia that is expressed in many ways, both subtle and unmistakably obvious. LGBTQphobia can be verbal, physical or emotional harassment, insulting or degrading comments, name-calling, gestures, taunts, jokes, offensive graffiti, humiliation, exclusion, torments, ridicule, threats, or refusing to work or cooperate with others because of their sexual orientation or identity.<sup>7</sup>

LGBTQphobia hurts everyone, including those who aren't LGBTQ. For example, when parents choose sports for their children based solely on perceived gender-appropriateness or when women stay away from sports with a "lesbian reputation" or when teenage boys quit a sport they love because of its "sissy" image amongst friends, everyone loses - the participants lose and sport loses as well.

## Negative Impact on Elite Performance

" In order for an athlete to compete at their highest level, I believe it's important to have a high level of self-worth and confidence. When you are in an environment that accepts you, regardless of race, age, religious affiliation or sexual orientation, then and only then can an athlete really push the limits in competition. I realize there is a separation between 'what we do' and 'who we are' - but the second we feel as though we have something to hide, our performance suffers. This is the best I have ever played and I think it's a direct reflection of being proud of who I am on and off the field."

Erin McLeod, Goalkeeper and Olympic Bronze Medallist  
Canada's Women's Soccer Team in London 2012<sup>8</sup>

The effort of LGBTQ athletes to conceal their preferred sex, sexuality and gender identity diverts their attention away from their training and the sport. It ultimately leads to a decrease in performance.<sup>9</sup> An inclusive environment can help get the most from all players, particularly at the elite level.

In a review of sexual orientation in sport,<sup>10</sup> three common strategies were identified for dealing with one's sexual orientation:

1. **Resistance:** confronting homophobia, asking individuals to change behaviours, trying to establish a dialogue or making a formal complaint or challenge.
2. **Accommodation:** rather than confronting the consequences of coming out, remaining in the closet and accepting heterosexual norms to appear 'normal'.
3. **Appropriation:** owning being out and being very public about it - 'out and proud'.

Although accommodation is the most common response, it creates many problems for the LGBTQ athlete. There are many stories of elite athletes who have come out during their athletic careers, experiencing feelings of "huge relief" and "the weight of the world being lifted from their shoulders". For world-class athletes like Canadian swimmer Mark Tewksbury, skeleton slider Lindsay Alcock, and more recently Erin McLeod, 'coming out' in their sport led them to real and significant improvements in their athletic performance. And being out allowed them to be their authentic selves in the sport they loved.



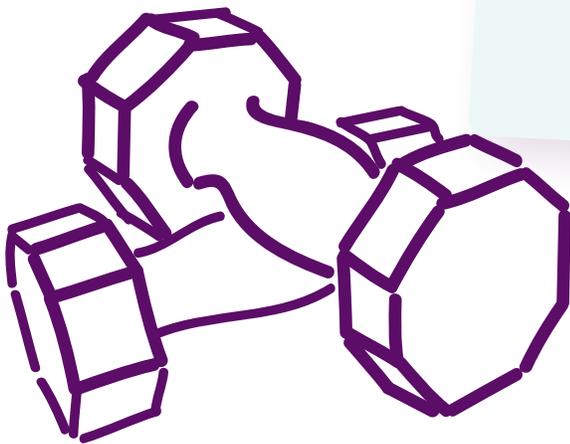


"One of my teammates told me he is gay. He is constantly afraid of being out'ed; he watches everything he says. He thinks if he comes out it will affect his chances for selection to the Olympic team. The rest of us see sport psychologists to work on the tiniest of things that could hurt performance. His fear is having a huge impact on his performance."

Ally of a gay  
Olympic hopeful, 2013

"LGBTQ athletes may go to extreme lengths to conceal their sexuality. Some athletes attempt to separate their personal life from their sporting life, avoiding conversation about families, partners and social activities. This eventually leads to dishonesty and compromises the relationship between the LGBTQ athlete, their teammates and coaches."

Brackenridge et al., 2008"



## CREATING INCLUSIVE LGBTQ TEAM ENVIRONMENTS

"Athletics teams are, like work teams, made up of people from different cultures, religions, genders, races, abilities, political perspectives and sexual orientations ... [They do] not require every member of a team to agree with everyone else on the team about political points of view, sexual orientation, religion or anything else. [This] does not mean that every member of a team approves of how every other member of a team lives her or his life. The goal of inclusion and respect is that team members recognize and agree to work together respectfully across differences. These goals invite student-athletes and coaches to build a winning team and nurture a team climate in which all members are valued for their contributions to the team and for their individual character and commitment, regardless of their individual identities or philosophies."

National College Athletic Association (NCAA), Champions of Respect<sup>12</sup>

### Taking Stock – How Inclusive is Your Environment?

With a better understanding of LGBTQphobia, how it affects people, and how it manifests in sport, the next step is to take stock of your team environment. The following questions will help you to assess how inclusive your team environment is currently:

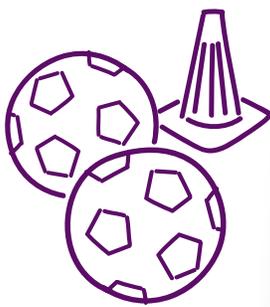
- > Does your organization/team have a clear equality or diversity policy and/or code of conduct that specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression? If yes,
  - Do all team staff understand and adhere to the policy and/or code of conduct?
  - Is the policy and / or code of conduct shared with your athletes?
- > Has your organization/club undertaken any activities to promote inclusion from minority groups, including those who are LGBTQ?
- > Are issues of equality discussed within your team?
- > Has any aspect of LGBTQphobia been discussed among your team?
- > Are efforts in place to avoid assumptions about a person's sexual orientation and gender identity being made, resulting in the individual becoming the subject of gossip, innuendo or behind-the-back talk?
- > Is it clearly understood that jokes or other casual banter that ridicule or put down LGBTQ people, women or any minority groups are seen as inappropriate and unacceptable within your team, even in jest?
- > Is it clearly understood that the use of sexist or homophobic language by coaches, team members or others as a means to motivate athletes is not acceptable or will not be tolerated? This includes using phrases like "you're playing like a bunch of girls" or "don't be a sissy".

- > Is inclusive LGBTQ language regularly used when referring to significant others, such as inviting boyfriends, girlfriends or partners to social events?
- > Does your organization/team have any openly LGBTQ members? If yes,
  - Are openly LGBTQ people treated with the same respect as all other members of the team?
  - Are openly LGBTQ people accepted into your team?
  - Would the acceptance of LGBTQ members differ based on their gender?
- > Is an openly LGBTQ coach treated with the same respect as a heterosexual or cisgender coach by the team?
- > Can members of your team use the washroom and change room of their choice based on their gender identity or expression?
- > Is the use of language and images used by your organisation (i.e. NSO/MSO, community or school sport organization) inclusive of diverse families, friendships, and sexual and gender identities?<sup>13</sup>

## Checking Your Own Beliefs

Exploring one's own feelings about working with LGBTQ athletes is important. Does talking about LGBTQphobia bring out a strong negative reaction in you that you hadn't realized you had? Everyone is influenced by experience, background, values, beliefs and fears. These factors may cause a coach discomfort or a lack of acceptance of those who are LGBTQ.

A coach's discomfort is not a sufficient reason to avoid addressing LGBTQphobia. In fact, it is the coach who should take a leadership role, regardless of personal feelings. As with any other form of diversity or difference, the coach should not tolerate discrimination against those who are LGBTQ. It is the coach's responsibility to create a welcoming environment that is fair and respectful of all athletes. A coach does not need to agree with everyone's personal beliefs, but **does need to treat everyone fairly and respectfully.**



"Recognize that this isn't their [those who are LGBTQ] problem. They shouldn't be expected to hide their sexuality or change their behaviour, e.g., by ceasing to mention their partner or changing their appearance because their sexuality [or gender identity] worries you. Try and identify why you feel uncomfortable with their sexuality [or gender identity]. Is it because of your own beliefs and values, myths and stereotypes and/or uncertainties about your own sexuality [or gender identity]?"

Play by the Rules, 2008<sup>14</sup>

## Being Intentional and Visible

According to a 2013 study by Viel and Demers,<sup>15</sup> many Canadian coaches haven't given a lot of thought, talked to team members about, or stressed the importance of using inclusive language.<sup>17</sup> To create an inclusive environment, it is important that coaches are clear and open in what they say and do, and what they expect from others on the team. Words and actions should demonstrate respect for sexual diversity and gender identity so that anyone who identifies as LGBTQ feels welcome. Suggested actions include the following:

- > Overt signals about being an inclusive environment need to come early and often. By being overt, existing and new players will hear your message, including the parents and family members of your team.
- > When talking about the strength that comes from being diverse, as well as the need to value and respect differences, add sexual orientation and gender diversity to the list of differences being respected.
- > Explain to the team that you are trying to achieve an inclusive environment of openness and respect for everyone, regardless of ethnicity or race, gender, religion, class, size, sexual orientation or gender identity. Describe what this means in terms of behaviour - discuss disrespectful behaviours or highlight behaviours that demonstrate the environment you are trying to achieve
- > Be intentional about using inclusive language. Work from the premise that there are LGBTQ individuals on your team, including potential recruits or team staff. Extend invitations to include boyfriends, girlfriends, husbands, wives, partners and significant others.
- > Recruit other team leaders, especially team captains, to assist you in delivering a positive message of respect for all. Allowing the players to take ownership and be accountable for creating a positive inclusive environment will have a significant impact on ensuring long-term success.
- > Display signs visibly demonstrating acceptance of those who are LGBTQ and indicate that you are an LGBTQ ally. Your organization may have these signs as part of a diversity effort or you may wish to create your own positive space in sport signs, stickers or buttons. Posting a Positive Space sign on your clipboard, laptop or office door is a powerful signal to those who are LGBTQ that they need not worry about your acceptance. Similarly, having a Positive Space web button that links directly to CAAWS' LGBTQ resources on your website is a visible sign of organizational commitment. These items can also be obtained directly from CAAWS at no cost.<sup>16</sup>

Being intentional is not a big deal. Signal early that you welcome all players, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Use inclusive language. Establish a safe environment for all athletes.

*"If no one mentions sexual orientation or talks about it being okay, those who are LGBTQ will just assume it's not okay and hide it. The coach can signal it's okay. Not having to hide a relationship or who you are releases a lot of negative energy that can be used positively to improve your performance in sport."*

*Out female Olympian, 2013*

"Coaches who are working with athletes with a disability need to be made aware that just because a person has a disability doesn't mean they are not a sexual person... The coaches then also need to be open to athletes or coaches with a disability being gay or lesbian."

Female Paralympian,  
2013

"I think the first thing we need is to have our coaches let it be known to the players and others that sexual orientation is not an issue and the coach expects the same from the players. I think if I had been in that environment, I would not have left his team."

A gay male athlete who  
left the team, 2013

I  
SUPPORT



POSITIVE  
SPACE  
IN SPORT

[www.caaaws.ca](http://www.caaaws.ca)

It was a positive space sticker on the wall of the Athlete Services Managers (ASM) at the Canadian Sport Institute Calgary that signalled a safe environment to an Olympic athlete to come out to the ASM, before fully deciding to come out to her teammates and coaches.



## BEING PREPARED: USING BEST PRACTICES

### Be Prepared to Address Inappropriate Language and Actions

The “casual” anti-LGBTQ jokes, slurs and innuendos, including comments like “that’s so gay” to other words and jokes that question one’s femininity or masculinity are too common. Many of these comments or words are particularly sexist and offensive to women. They all hurt. The defence that ‘no offense was intended’ is not a valid excuse. Just as we would not accept any racist language in sport, so too must we have zero tolerance for LGBTQphobic language, however casual or innocuous it may sound.

All of the athletes and coaches interviewed for this resource identified cleaning up LGBTQphobic language as a priority for the coaching staff. Addressing LGBTQphobic language is essential for younger athletes who may be questioning their own sexuality or gender identity.

Taking action to address LGBTQphobic language should be done quickly and firmly. Inappropriate comments need to be addressed at all ages and ability levels.

Athletes and coaches have the right to expect fairness and consistency. The sincerity of the intention to be inclusive must be mirrored in action. CAAWS has developed an adaptation of an excellent resource from the UK Rugby League on addressing homophobic language and behaviour in sport.<sup>17</sup> This guide can be useful for coaches who are looking at ways in which to tackle inappropriate language and / or actions; it can be accessed at: [www.caaws-homophobiainспорт.ca](http://www.caaws-homophobiainспорт.ca).

“When it became known that a teammate was gay during his coming out process, many of our team [members] were cruel, talking behind his back. The coaches didn’t do anything. So if you are another gay athlete or someone questioning his/her sexuality, and hear this from your teammates, coming out is the last thing that you would do.”

Female Para-athlete, 2013

“As a coach of both male and females in my sport, I see a general pervasive and negative attitude at all levels around those who are gay. This is largely conveyed through the use of inappropriate language. Homophobic, and often sexist language is not restricted to one gender, or age group, or ability level. It starts with young children and persists throughout our sport. We need to clean up the talk because it perpetuates a negative stereotype about those who are LGBTQ and women.”

Male Coach, 2013

## Be Prepared for an LGBTQ Athlete or Coach Coming Out to You

Coming out – the process by which an individual identifies and then shares their sexual orientation and/or gender identity – occurs along a continuum (see Figure 1). First, the individual recognizes their sexual orientation or gender identity, sometimes referred to as “coming out to myself”. This can be a very powerful but difficult revelation, especially if it conflicts with values and beliefs held by their family, friends, culture or religious beliefs.

Having self-identified as LGBTQ, the individual may choose to come out to others. This is a highly personal decision for each LGBTQ person and the experiences vary significantly. The decision to be out or not should only be made by that individual and no one else. In their research on coaching LGBTQ athletes (who have already come out to themselves), Viel and Demers (2013)<sup>18</sup> describe a typical ‘coming-out continuum’ for an athlete (or a coach) in sport:



Figure 1. Continuum of disclosing sexual identity

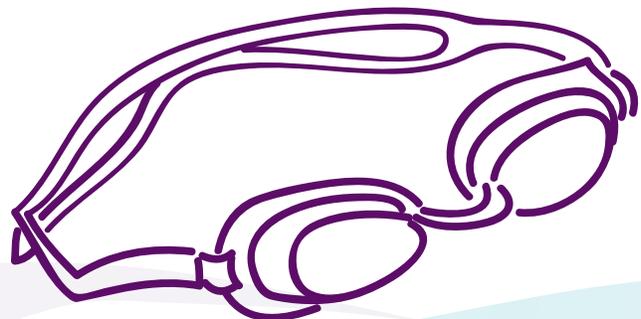
The decision to come out is an enormous step, made more manageable by trust and acceptance. Fear of rejection by teammates and coaches is often the most common reason why athletes do not disclose. There may also be pressure from the team not to come out for fear that the team may be labelled negatively.

Coming out is a decision that no LGBTQ athlete or coach has taken lightly. The individual will have closely examined the team environment and culture, reflected on the attitudes and behaviour of their teammates and coach, reviewed the implications to their athletic career, and then assessed the likely response they will receive. If an athlete has decided to openly express his/her sexual orientation and / or gender identity, the coach is in an important position to oversee this process and has the ability to help coming out be a positive experience.



## Tips for Coaches when an Individual Comes Out to You<sup>19</sup>

- Thank the LGBTQ athlete or coach for being open with you and acknowledge the trust s/he has placed in you
- Demonstrate clearly that the LGBTQ athlete or coach has your full support in the decision and offer your assistance. Do not assume s/he will need your help or advice but make it clear that it is there if needed
- Make it clear that his/her sexual orientation or gender identity will not alter how you treat the LGBTQ athlete or coach
- If the LGBTQ athlete or coach has come out to you, but remains closeted to the rest of the team, make it clear that s/he has your support if they decide to come out to the entire team. Do not pressure them to do so if they are not yet comfortable. It is your responsibility to ensure confidentiality until the LGBTQ athlete or coach decides to come out to others; do not discuss her/his sexuality or gender identity with any other individual unless asked to do so by the LGBTQ athlete or coach
- If s/he does decide to come out to the entire team, you may create an opportunity for the LGBTQ athlete or coach to address the team. S/he may wish to tell an individual on the team first, building support and confidence gradually. However the individual chooses to do it, you should facilitate his/her wishes however you can
- Make your support for the individual clear to the team. Foster an environment of openness and respect for all, allowing the team to follow your lead. Be open to speaking with athletes, coaches or other support staff who have questions or concerns, and be careful not to legitimize any LGBTQphobic attitudes or beliefs
- For trans athletes, it is important to ask for preferred pronouns and names. These may be different from the pronouns and names you have been using. Then ask if, when and where they would like you to use any new names and pronouns
- For trans athletes, you may also need to seek additional guidance on what, if any, policies and practice are in place supporting trans participation in your sport
- Deal with any discrimination or problems that the LGBTQ athlete or coach encounters from teammates, training staff, parents, supporters or other coaching staff. Allow the LGBTQ athlete or coach to come to you with problems before making any interventions on their behalf. They may want to deal with it themselves
- Ensure that sport psychologists working with the team are both knowledgeable about LGBTQphobia in sport, and are comfortable working with LGBTQ athletes and coaches. If not, find other psychologists with a good understanding of LGBTQ issues within sport. Since some LGBTQ athletes and coaches may prefer to work with a sport psychologist who is LGBTQ, having access to LGBTQ sport psychologists in both genders is helpful. Ideally, an LGBTQ competent sport psychologist(s) should be available locally; however, if this is not the case, enquiries can be made through the sport psychologists network.<sup>20</sup>



Every situation is unique and requires flexibility and adaptation. How you react is crucial in setting the tone and ensuring the individual's trust. An LGBTQ person needs to decide whether to trust and come out to each new person they meet. As the coach, you can pave the way for the LGBTQ athlete or coach, reducing their worry about negative reactions from the team.

It is possible that you may also be faced with the situation of an LGBTQ coach deciding to come out to you. Having a supportive environment is just as essential in this situation. Many factors can affect a coach's decision to come out, and their relative importance is unique to each individual LGBTQ coach. Factors include: concerns about the employer's reaction, athletes refusing to play for her or him, or being considered a sexual predator (especially when coaching at the youth level).<sup>21</sup>

There is also the potential for "competing" teams to portray an LGBTQ coach (or an LGBTQ inclusive environment) negatively in their recruitment tactics. Known as "negative recruiting", coaches using this tactic emphasize the "family orientation" or "family values" associated with their team or organization and/or raise suspicions about a competing coach's sexual orientation or gender identity. Negative recruiting has been widespread in the NCAA in the United States, particularly in women's sports. It is now prohibited and cases of negative recruiting are less frequent.

Although there are some risks to being an out LGBTQ coach, there are also tremendous benefits, most notably not having to use negative energy to hide one's personal life. As an out coach, you can also serve as a visible and valuable role model. Not making your sexual orientation or gender identity a "big deal" conveys an important message.

"I have been approached by parents whose daughter was looking at our university program - wanting to make sure there weren't any "lesbians" on the team. I gently but firmly advised the parents that if this is their primary concern, then our University program isn't a "good fit".

A "cautiously out" university  
Lesbian Coach, 2010

"I see coaches being more accepting - both with their athletes and with other coaches. As a gay coach, I think your athletes will adopt the stance you take. So if you are able to be open about your sexuality and it isn't a big deal for you, then it is not a big deal for them."

An Out Lesbian Coach, 2013

## Be Prepared to Address Locker Room Concerns

The locker room can be a vulnerable place. Whether insecure about one's own body, religious beliefs that make changing in front of others difficult, or a history of sexual abuse or violence, these are just a few reasons why some individuals may find it difficult to feel secure in a locker room. The locker room is often the place where close bonding with teammates occurs. Anxiety or fear about being labelled "gay" may result in some men choosing to declare or reaffirm their heterosexuality by using anti-gay language or talking about their sexual activities with women. The same can be true in a women's locker room, though women are generally freer to express affection for other women without questions being raised about sexuality. However, in sport where lesbian stereotypes abound, some women are just as concerned as men about asserting their heterosexuality.

Non-LGBTQ athletes and coaches sometimes express fear or discomfort about sharing a locker room or hotel room with openly LGBTQ team members. This discomfort is often based on the stereotype that LGBTQ teammates pose a sexual threat. Conversely, some LGBTQ athletes and coaches are uncomfortable in the locker room because they are concerned about how others perceive them. Given the 'predator' stereotype, they may exhibit behaviours to avoid any assumption that they are looking at teammates' bodies.



"My teammates somehow decided I was gay and that made it very uncomfortable for everyone because it was not something that was spoken about. I tried to make it more comfortable for my teammates by quickly showering and exiting the locker room as soon as I could right after practices and games. I didn't want them to assume falsely that I was interested in them or looking at them.

Behaviours like this distanced me from the team for sure ... In my second year with the team we had just finished an away game and were in the locker room. There was a stationary bike set up in the locker room and it was missing its seat, with just the seat post. The Trainer made a joke about me enjoying riding home on that seat-less bike. No one said anything; I felt awful.

The next day, our Coach heard about it, contacted me and offered to fire the trainer. At the time I didn't think this would make much of a difference, and I really didn't want to draw more attention to myself. But it was then that I knew that I couldn't stay on that team."

A Now Out Male Athlete, 2013

It is important to identify the source of discomfort in the locker room. Is it the presence of LGBTQ athletes or coaches? Or is the discomfort caused by inappropriate actions by LGBTQ athletes or coaches, or anyone else, in the locker room? Sometimes athletes and coaches become uncomfortable only after an LGBTQ teammate has come out. If they were comfortable before, what makes them uncomfortable now? If nothing has changed except the knowledge that a teammate is LGBTQ, the discomfort is from one's own fears or prejudices. This should be addressed through education or counselling for those who are uncomfortable.

Everyone has the right to feel safe and to be free of unwanted sexual attention and sexually explicit taunting or teasing in the locker room or anywhere else. If anyone is uncomfortable in the locker room because of inappropriate or unwanted sexual attention or inappropriate actions by any teammate or coach, including LGBTQ athletes and coaches, this is a case of sexual harassment and should be addressed through your organization's sexual harassment policy.

Ideally, all locker rooms should have accommodations for athletes or coaches who want privacy for any reason. Here are some best practices for addressing concerns in the locker room:

- Ensure any policy governing locker room behaviour is based on broad principles of fairness and commitment to safety for all and not on fear or stereotypes about the LGBTQ community
- Develop and enforce a sexual harassment policy that applies to everyone
- Educate athletes, coaches, and other team staff about their rights and responsibilities covered in the sexual harassment policy
- Educate athletes and coaches about LGBTQ issues, including addressing fears or stereotypes
- Allow everyone to change in the locker room of their choice and make a privacy area for changing clothes and showering for any athletes (or coach) to use
- Make parents who are concerned about LGBTQ people in the locker room aware of the respectful and non-discriminatory environment that includes sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>22</sup>



## Be Prepared to Manage Dating on the Team

Managing dating relationships on sports teams is not new to coaches, especially with co-ed teams. Dealing with the emotional highs and lows from athletes' personal lives and relationships is a common function. On some teams, players are discouraged from dating within the team in an effort to avoid any potential problems. This policy assumes that all relationships among teammates have a negative impact on the team, however this may not always be a valid assumption.

Identifying policies for dating teammates requires thoughtful consideration about what is best for the team as a whole, and what is fair and workable for individuals.

The following suggestions from the NCAA's Champions of Respect (2012) are intended to provide coaches with guidance in identifying a fair and effective policy that can ensure a team is not distracted from its competitive goals:

- > Frame intra-team dating as part of broader relationship management issues such as:
  - Best friends on a team having a falling out
  - Two women on a team dating the same man
  - One teammate breaks up with her boyfriend, and starts dating a teammate's boyfriend
  - Heterosexual dating on a mixed team
  - Heterosexual dating on men's and women's teams that practice together and travel to competitions together
  - Conflicts between student-athletes based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity
- > Develop a policy that applies to all relationship management issues, rather than focusing on same-sex teammates
- > Avoid extreme positions, i.e., eliminating dating entirely, or ignoring dating hoping it will go away
- > Create an effective and fair team policy that allows intra-team dating with clearly defined expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities based on team goals
- > Focus on what is good for the team when developing policy on intra-team dating.<sup>23</sup>

*"Dating someone who is on your team can make it more complicated for sure, but that does not mean that it is automatically a negative and I take issue that this is the case.*

*In my work as a full-time athlete, I pride myself on being professional.*

*I had been dating someone on my team for over a year and a half and the coach did not know this. When the coach found out, it was immediately assumed to be a problem, and I was spoken to about it. I felt insulted as this was the same coach who for a year and a half had no idea, and now that it was known immediately assumed it was a problem.*

*As a professional athlete, my priority is the team. I have never roomed with my girlfriend nor would I expect boyfriends to be allowed to stay in the same hotel room with their girlfriend when we are away as a team."*

*An Out Lesbian Olympian, 2013*

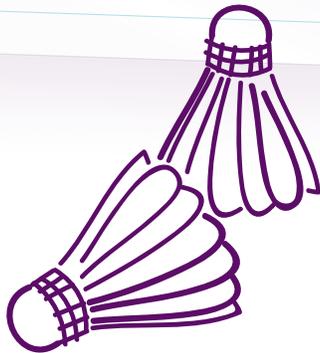
## Be Prepared when Travelling to Unsafe Places

Although training and competing internationally is an essential aspect of high performance sport, more and more competitive and recreational sport teams are travelling widely to competitions. As a coach, you need to ensure that these destinations are safe for all team members. Although more countries are adopting progressive LGBTQ legislation, being LGBTQ remains illegal in almost 80 countries. In at least eight countries, being LGBTQ is punishable by death.<sup>24</sup>

Just as you would want to know how safe a particular city or country is for your team, the same applies to your LGBTQ team members. This information can be easily accessed.<sup>25</sup> Review and share this information as you develop strategies for all aspects of safety. You cannot control the laws of other countries, but you can work with the team to ensure that every member feels safe and supported while training and competing in an unwelcoming environment.

*Major Games Franchise Holders, such as Canada Games Council, Commonwealth Games Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) and the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC), must ensure that host cities are safe for Canadian athletes. For example, the RCMP Security Team explicitly asked the Host Organizing Committee for the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne Australia how safe their city was for those who were LGBTQ. The COC and the CPC undertook similar risk management strategies for the 2014 Sochi Olympic and Paralympic Games.*

Games Organizer, 2013



## Be Prepared For a Trans Athlete or Coach

Although this resource is aimed at creating welcoming environments in Canadian sport for all who are LGBTQ, there are some additional considerations when the athlete is transgender. Although the early focus on trans inclusion in sport has been driven by high performance eligibility questions, more and more sport organizations are recognizing the need to develop trans inclusion policies and practices that address participants all levels of their LTAD model.

Building on their important early work on understanding trans issues in sport,<sup>26, 27</sup> the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES), with the support of Sport Canada, and in partnership with CAAWS and AthletesCAN completed a scan of best practices on trans inclusion in sport in 2014. This scan served as the foundation for the subsequent development of policy and practice guidance for creating inclusive environments for trans participants in Canadian sport. Developed by the Trans Inclusion in Sport Expert Working Group, the work entailed understanding the existing research, issues and best practices concerning the inclusion of trans participants in sport, and providing guidance to sport organizations at all levels of the Canadian sport system. *Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport - Guidance for Sport Organizations* outlines the Expert Working Group's policy and practice recommendations, and is now available to Canadian sport organizations to help making their sport more inclusive to trans participants.<sup>28</sup>

Consistent with existing human rights legislation in Canada, the essence of the guidance from CCES's Expert Working Group to Canadian sport organizations, which CAAWS fully supports, is to allow participation in the gender in which an individual identifies. From CAAWS's perspective, this will ensure that all who identify as girls and women, both cisgender and transgender will have the same opportunities to participate in and benefit from sport participation at all levels of sport in Canada.

"Sport and physical activity often present real barriers for young trans and genderqueer people. These barriers might include issues such as harassment in high school change rooms or the lack of social safety in public pools.

The possibility of violence, marginalization, and discomfort exists and persists in sports and recreation activities, particularly where there is body contact and a strong sense of competition. This, coupled with the rejection and isolation experienced by many trans youth in most youth-focused contexts, can lead to a higher than average drop-out rate in sport and physical activity."<sup>29</sup>

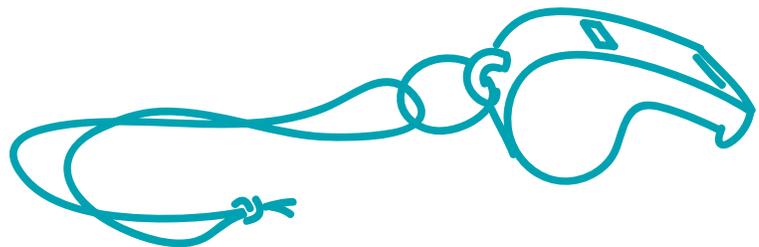
Being proactive is key; don't wait for a trans athlete before you address trans inclusion policies and practices in your organization. As the coach, you can play a leadership role through:

- Educating yourself. There is a lot of misinformation, and myths based on unfounded fears and a lack of understanding of what it means to be transgender. The CCES guidance on trans inclusion in sport is a critical resource. You can also check out CAAWS's *Leading the Way* webinar focusing on trans inclusion in Canadian sport at [www.caaws-homophobiainsport.ca](http://www.caaws-homophobiainsport.ca).

Seeking out the voices of trans athletes (and their families) in your sport (or another sport if you do know any in your sport) to better understand their experiences and expectations. You will also find Chris Mosier's Transathlete.com website very useful. As a successful trans athlete and advocate, Chris has had to navigate, educate and advocate for trans athletes' rights in his quest to compete at each LTAD level in his sport of triathlon. His website includes basic information on trans inclusion in sport, as well as listings of sport's trans inclusion policies and guidelines at all LTAD levels, and from an increasing number of Canadian sport organizations.

This education includes knowing what, if any, trans policies exist in your own and other related organizations (e.g., your league or association, provincial/territorial sport organizations, national or multi-sport organization, or International Federation). The IOC revised their eligibility requirements for trans inclusion in the Olympic Games in 2015.<sup>30</sup>

- Having in place progressive policies and practices supporting trans inclusion. If your sport organization does not yet have these in place, encourage these to be developed. They should go beyond an exclusive focus on eligibility considerations and take into consideration existing human rights legislation and rulings for your jurisdiction. This includes consideration of both the physical environment, such as access to locker rooms, showers and toilet facilities that respect the comfort and privacy of the trans athlete(s) and their teammates, as well as the interpersonal aspects, such as using the athlete's (or coach's) chosen name and pronoun.
- Being ready to be a supportive ally. As a coach of trans athletes or a colleague of a trans coach, this may mean helping to navigate a sport system that is in quite differing stages of trans inclusion.



Supporting Transgender Athletes: "As the Executive Director of Athletics and Physical Activity at University of Toronto, my experiences with transgender athletes includes working with four students who have either competed or expressed interest in varsity sport. Although this was a new area for me, in each case, the student athlete led the way, educating me and providing ideas and directions for moving forward.

Based on these experiences, my role evolved and is best described as:

- 1) Supporting the student athlete by assisting them in navigating the sport system at the university, provincial and national level. These athletes needed a champion on the inside, someone who knows the players, the policies and the environment within university sport. The athletes also need assistance with their integration into their specific varsity sport program.
- 2) Supporting the varsity program and the varsity community to which the transgender athlete aspire to become a member. From the coaches and staff to the other student athletes, there is a significant amount of education and discussion required in order to familiarize and educate all those involved with the issues faced by transgender athletes as they find their way into varsity sport. This process includes providing team members with the tools to handle comments or questions from others.
- 3) Liaising with other athletic directors to ensure that the competition spaces we compete in at other institutions are welcoming and safe environments for all our student athletes, both cisgender and transgender."

Beth Ali, Athletic Director, University of Toronto, 2017

## CONCLUSION

This resource provides a number of best practices to assist coaches and other sport leaders in dealing respectfully and equally with those on their teams and within their organizations who identify as LGBTQ. With this resource coaches at all levels in Canadian sport are better prepared to lead the way.

Additional resources, including CAAWS's LGBTQ Sport Inclusion website, can be found in the Appendices. If you would like to have more information or advice on a specific situation, find out more about the range of CAAWS's *Leading the Way* LGBTQ sport inclusion training and other LGBTQ inclusion services available to sport organizations, or provide feedback on this resource, please contact Jennifer Birch-Jones at [jb-j@caaws.ca](mailto:jb-j@caaws.ca).

APPENDIX A:

Additional Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION <sup>31</sup>
Biphobia	Describes a range of negative feelings toward bisexuality and bisexual people as a social group or as individuals that can be manifested in derisive language and/or hostile actions against bisexuals or those presumed to be.
Genderqueer	People who “blur” gender norms and who may identify as either male, female, both, neither or who may reject gender altogether (can also be written as Gender Queer or Gender-Queer).
Gender (sex) Reassignment Surgery	Includes a spectrum of medical surgeries which transform the sex characteristics of physical body to fit the desired opposite sex body. Increasingly referred to as gender confirmation surgery.
Heterosexism	A social system of individual beliefs and actions, institutional rules and laws, and cultural norms that privileges heterosexual relations and people and disadvantages same-sex relationships and lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit and trans-identified people.
Preferred Pronoun	This refers to the understanding that not all people like or prefer to be called he or she as pronouns, and people should avoid assuming which pronouns someone might prefer. It is important to respect how an individual would like to be called. Some other pronouns are: they/them, ze/zyr. Using gender-neutral pronouns are important in creating a more inclusive space.
Sexual orientation	Refers to being romantically or sexually attracted to people of a specific gender, or in the case of bisexual orientation, any gender.
Transitioned	The process by which a trans man or woman lives consistently with his or her gender identity, and which may (but does not necessarily) include changing one’s name, , sex designation, dress, the sue of specific pronouns and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, gender (sex) reassignment surgery or other procedures.
Transsexual	An individual whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth and desires to physically alter his/her body surgically and/or hormonally. This transition is a complicated, multistep process that may take years, could include cross-gender hormone therapy and surgical procedures. Treatments vary from person to person.

## APPENDIX B:

### Resource Summary

- > *Athlete Ally Campaign*. Founded by ally Hudson Taylor, a former NCAA wrestler, Athlete Ally includes a number of Canadian Pro and Olympic Ally Ambassadors. Access at: [www.athleteally.org](http://www.athleteally.org).
- > *Br{ache the Silence*. Advancing LGBTQ inclusion and equality in women's sports in the U.S. Access at: [www.freedomsounds.org](http://www.freedomsounds.org).
- > CAAWS. *LGBTQ Sport Inclusion Initiative*. Access at: [www.caaws-homophobiainsport.ca](http://www.caaws-homophobiainsport.ca).
- > CCES (2012). *Transition in Sport: Making Sport in Canada More Responsible for Gender Inclusivity*. Access at: [www.cces.ca/files/pdfs/CCES-PAPER-SportInTransition-E.pdf](http://www.cces.ca/files/pdfs/CCES-PAPER-SportInTransition-E.pdf)
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## APPENDIX C:

### Endnotes

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