Adolescents are experiencing a mental health crisis.

The adolescent mental health crisis began before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic affected all students, but it did not affect all students equally. Poor mental health is reported far more often by LGBTQ youth.

In 2021

1. 2 out of every 5 students experienced emotional distress

2. LGBTQ students were 5X more likely to attempt suicide during the pandemic

Source: Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey, 2021

All young people do better in LGBTQ-inclusive schools.

- Schools can be part of the solution by creating inclusive environments.
- LGBTQ-supportive school policies and practices also benefit heterosexual students. They may experience even greater health benefits than LGBTQ students do.
- The reverse is also true: Policies and practices that negatively affect the health of LGBTQ students also harm heterosexual students.
- The more LGBTQ-supportive policies and practices a school implements, the better the student health outcomes.

When schools implement LGBTQ-supportive policies and practices, all students experience:

- Less emotional distress
- Less violence and harassment
- Less suicidal thoughts and behaviors

Source: LGBT Health, 2022

Photos and models are used for illustrative purposes only.
CDC identifies practices that work to promote adolescent health.

CDC’s *What Works in Schools* program is a school-based approach to protecting and promoting adolescent health. It combines safe and supportive school environments with quality health education and referrals to health services. After implementing the program, schools have fewer students experiencing violence, drug use, risky sex behaviors, and poor mental health.

LGBTQ-supportive policies and practices positively affect a school’s environment, making a safer and more supportive space for all students. They include:

- **Gender and Sexuality Alliances**
- **Safe spaces for LGBTQ students**
- **Professional development for staff on inclusivity**
- **Anti-harassment policies**

“When we improve the safety and supportiveness of school environments for LGBTQ students, all students benefit. Protecting our most vulnerable youth means that school is better for everyone.”

- Dr. Kathleen Ethier
  Director, CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health

Learn more about *What Works in Schools*

www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth
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Sources
