

Parents and caregivers' Information sheet

Grade 9 – 2024-25

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI)

DEFINITIONS

Sexual orientation: an attraction (physical, emotional, romantic and sexual) or a lack of attraction for a type of person and body. Some people can clearly identify as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or others. Others may be undecided or wondering. Some are aromantic or asexual and feel no romantic or sexual attraction. In 2023, in British Columbia, 12% of boys, 32% of girls, and 94% of non-binary youth had a sexual orientation other than heterosexuality. (McCreary Centre Society, 2023)

Gender: Internal experience (deep sense of self of feeling like a man or a woman (or both or neither). Each individual understands and expresses their gender differently: some see their gender identity as their biological sex (cis-gender), while others feel a bit of both (non-binary) or neither (agender). In 2023, 6% of young people in British Columbia had a gender identity that did not match their sex assigned at birth. (McCreary Centre Society, 2023)

The above definitions were inspired by HealthLink BC.



WHY TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY?

This workshop creates a safe space to respectfully discuss the journey towards acceptance of oneself and others. Since we all have sexual orientation and gender identity, the conversation is relevant to everyone. The process of identifying one's gender identity and sexual orientation is part of every individual's personal development. Adolescence is a time of self-definition and some young people question their sexual orientation or gender identity. This questioning can also come later in life. Unfortunately, as this is still a taboo subject and sexual diversity is often stigmatized, this journey can cause isolation and confusion for some.

The workshop aims to make students aware of the sexual diversity that surrounds them and to stress the importance of inclusion and openness. In addition, sexual orientation, as well as gender identity and expression, are prohibited grounds for discrimination in Canada. These themes are part of the curriculum of the Ministry of Education. In fact, in 2016, the ministry announced that all school boards in British Columbia should incorporate the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) program into student learning goals as well as school codes of conduct. Our workshop, therefore, meets some of the curriculum objectives on the subject and is also an opportunity to identify discriminatory behaviors and their consequences.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TO TRY

Instead of this:	Try this:
Ladies and gentlemen	Folks, friends
He/him, She/her	They/them
Who are your mom and dad?	Who are your parents?
Do you have a girlfriend or boyfriend?	Do you have a partner?

HOW DOES THIS WORKSHOP RELATE TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION?

Adolescents from sexual minorities are more likely to be victims of violence and/or discrimination. The 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey highlighted concerning inequalities based on gender, impacting both school experiences and the mental health of young people (2023).

School Experiences

Non-binary youth were generally the least likely to have positive school experiences: for example, they were:

- Less likely to feel connected to school, to feel safe at school, and to plan to pursue post-secondary education.
- More likely to have missed classes for at least 3 days in the past month.
- 5% of non-binary youth missed that much school because of bullying, compared to 1% of girls and boys.

Mental Health

Non-binary youth were about 4 times more likely to have deliberately self-harmed in the past year and more than 4 times more likely to have seriously considered suicide and to have attempted suicide during that time.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS NOT PART OF THE 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY, DOES THIS CONCERN ME?

This sheet is intended for all parents. We live in a heteronormative and cisgender society. This means that we have the reflex to assume that everyone is heterosexual and cis-gendered. This is what prevents some from expressing themselves. Many parents can feel isolated and confused when they accompany their teens in their process of acceptance and empowerment, especially in terms of gender and sexuality. This is completely normal. For some parents, beliefs also come into play, this can make it even more difficult. Far be it for us to question the latter. Our goal is to share with you a few avenues to positively support your teen in their identity development and foster a healthy relationship between you:

- Communicate to your teen that you love them;
- Create space in which to speak freely, confidentially, and ask questions without fear of being judged;
- Do not assume your teen's sexual orientation or gender identity.

WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN THIS WORKSHOP AND THE PROMOTION OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?

The SOGI workshop is an opportunity to position sexual diversity among other forms of diversity that we know, such as racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, disability, etc. By normalizing sexual diversity, while emphasizing the importance of inclusion, we empower young people to treat others with dignity and respect in the classroom and in society. Discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity also allow teens to understand how certain words, actions, and behaviours can be homophobic or transphobic and represent acts of violence. By raising awareness, we hope to create an environment where young people have healthy relationships despite their differences and where each young person will develop a sense of belonging. Inclusive education, adopted in this workshop and throughout the JLRS program, aims to facilitate the de-stigmatization of vulnerable populations. We hope to help create an environment and a society where everyone can flourish and reach their full potential, in a safe environment.



HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY 2SLGBTQIA + TEEN ?

- Ask them if they want others to know. Otherwise, keep this information to yourself. Your teen is showing great confidence in you and is not ready to tell others.
- Ask if they hope you will accompany them when they go out with other people (for example, with another parent, teacher, or counselor).
- It is crucial to learn about the potential problems facing sexual minorities. Please see the resources below to learn more.
- In your communications with your teen, stress the importance of reporting if they are upset by something or if they are being harassed or discriminated against.
- Start your own inclusive SOGI education. Do your research on using preferred names and pronouns, debunking prejudices and myths, planning for a transition if necessary, and more to support them.

Resources

⚠ Important! If you are concerned about your adolescent's health, ask a professional for help, or call the helplines mentioned below.

Do not hesitate to communicate with the school staff: the counselor, the teacher or the principal. Your family doctor can also help, as can the following resources:

- Kids Help Phone: to confide in somebody, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anonymous and bilingual. Toll-free number: 1-800-668-6868. kidshelpphone.ca
- Phobias-Zéro (French only): support and self-help group for people with anxiety, panic disorders, phobias and agoraphobia. 514-276-3105 or toll-free 1-866-922-0002.
- Qmunity: Vancouver-based organization, hosts in-person and Zoom focus groups to provide a safe space between queer youth of the same age. Provides a space to talk about identity among peers (and facilitators). youth@qmunity.ca | qmunity.ca



RESOURCES IN FRENCH

- [Un guide sur l'éducation OSIG en Colombie-Britannique](#) pour les parents
- Une [introduction à l'éducation inclusive](#) au CSF
- Pour les signalements de cas de discrimination dans un établissement scolaire : consultez la [plateforme ERASE](#) (bilingue)
- [Appuyer une personne sortie du placard](#), par la Société des obstétriciens gynécologues du Canada



RESOURCES IN ENGLISH

- [Romantic Relationships and LGBTQ Youth: Tips and Strategies for Parents and Educators](#), Guide and Webinar Series by Alexa Martin-Storey/PrevNet, 2020.
- [Types of Bullying](#), PrevNet, 2019.
- [Support young trans and gender-creatives](#)

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