

INFORMATION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS



ACT SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS (SAIS) INITIATIVE

WHAT IS THE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE ALL ABOUT?

It's important to make sure that all young people are safe and welcome at their school, and are learning in an environment where they can be happy, confident and resilient, regardless of their sexual or gender identity. You can't learn if you don't feel safe. Same sex attracted, intersex and/or gender diverse people are part of every school community even when they may not be visible to everyone.

OUR COMMUNITY IS DIVERSE AND OUR SCHOOLS REFLECT THIS DIVERSITY

Many students, parents/carers, and educators recognise that school is a place where same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people often experience exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, harassment and even violence.

It is important for all of us to have a sense of belonging to a safe, supportive and respectful school community because these things have such a positive impact on the way we engage in learning, and on our emotional wellbeing and health. That's why schools have legislative and ethical responsibilities to make sure that they are a safe and inclusive place for students, families and staff.

WE WANT EVERYONE TO BE ABLE TO BE THEMSELVES AT SCHOOL AND TO FEEL SAFE AND WELCOMED AS WHO THEY ARE

WHAT DOES THE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE DO?

The ACT Safe and Inclusive Schools (SAIS) Initiative provides assistance to schools to develop and maintain safe, inclusive environments for all students regardless of their gender presentation/identity, intersex status or sexual orientation. Schools in the ACT have told us that training, support and advice options would help them do this better. The SAIS Initiative has been specifically developed to help meet this need.

The ACT Safe and Inclusive Schools (SAIS) Initiative can assist schools to:

- support individual students;
- identify ways to welcome and celebrate community and family diversity;
- connect school staff and families with the right kinds of supports services in the community; and
- support students who want to help make their school community a place where prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence is unacceptable on the basis of gender presentation/identity, intersex status or sexual orientation.

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MORE INFORMATION?

If you have questions, ideas, concerns or other feedback about the Initiative you can submit them online at saisact.info email us at saisact@shfpact.org.au or call during business hours on 02 6247 3077.

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WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS TO BE SAFE, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE?

Children and adolescents are engaged in the developmental process of discovering and forming their own identity and place in the world. For some young people, this may involve periods of questioning or exploring issues of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. For all young people, this involves the formation of values and attitudes about relationships, individual and social responsibility, appropriate conduct and ethics.

Being respectful to one another is everyone's responsibility. Everyone benefits from a school community that is welcoming and inclusive of diversity. This could include:

- Encouraging our friends and peers to be welcoming and respectful of diversity in others.
- Reminding each other that we always deserve to be included and to feel safe and respected.
- Checking any assumptions you might make about a person's gender identity, sexuality or biology.
- Encourage respectful language about sexuality and gender, and challenge stereotypes.
- Speaking up when someone else is being harassed or bullied:
 - If it is safe, remind others "that's not how we do things here."
 - If it is safe, stand next to someone to tell them they are not alone and tell others that it's not ok to harass, humiliate or demean.
 - If it is not safe to do these things, ask for help from a teacher or other adult.
- Participating in and contributing to events or activities that recognise or celebrate different kinds of diversity.
- Contributing to the development of inclusive school policies.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY SCHOOL IS ENGAGING WITH THE ACT SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE?

To access support, a school does not have to 'formally join' or meet any additional guidelines or standards - our role is simply to assist and support schools to meet their existing goals and requirements.

- The SAIS Initiative will only work with schools who have requested support, information or expertise.
- Engagement with the SAIS Initiative is a voluntary decision by school leaders.
- School leaders are free to choose from the range of supports the SAIS Initiative can provide, and each of these can be tailored to best meet the needs of each school environment.

Things you might notice in your school community if it engages with Safe and Inclusive Schools Initiative:

- The language people use to talk about sex, gender, and sexuality might change to be more inclusive.
- There may be an announcement or guest speakers at a school assembly or information in a school newsletter to explain what the school wants to do to be more welcoming, safe and inclusive. This also includes opportunities for students to contribute their ideas.
- Student leaders may be invited and supported to participate in inter-school leadership development opportunities.
- You may begin to see posters and other information that challenge prejudice and discrimination, or acknowledge and welcome sexuality and gender diversity.



EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO BE SAFE, TO BE TREATED FAIRLY AND WITH RESPECT AT SCHOOL.

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