



# Making Your Campaign LGBTQ Inclusive



**NO KIDS IN PRISON**



## — Making Your Campaign LGBTQ-Inclusive

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth are uniquely impacted by the carceral state. Homophobia and Transphobia can lead to increased harassment inside of schools, along with additional and unfair in-school punishment for LGBTQ youth. This, coupled with a lack of familial support often leads to homelessness and/or incarceration. Here are some things to consider to make sure that your campaign is more LGBTQ inclusive:

## — Internal Status Check

Before working to include LGBTQ youth or adults in your campaign or planning process it is important to make sure that your organization or coalition is ready to do the additional labor of creating an affirming and supportive environment for LGBTQ youth. An honest and thorough internal status check can ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding LGBTQ inclusivity.

### Some Questions to Consider:

- Do your campaign leaders know about LGBTQ issues?
- Do people feel comfortable sharing their pronouns or gender?
- Are people's pronouns and gender being respected?
- Do people feel comfortable presenting their gender in the ways that they want to?
- Are coalition partners willing to educate themselves on LGBTQ issues?
- What internal biases do you have about LGBTQ youth?
- Are you a member of the LGBTQ community? How will this impact the work that you choose to engage in?

Answering these questions can give you a good starting point when determining the direction of your campaign. It can also be a useful tool to identify areas for potential growth. Once these questions are answered, resources can be identified to help with additional support.

## — LGBTQ Educational Trainings

While it may be tempting to ask LGBTQ people you personally know about their lives, sometimes the people you interact with may not have the answers you need to make an informed decision about campaign strategy. They also may not feel comfortable sharing personal information with people they organize with. Utilizing LGBTQ educational trainings is a great way to show commitment to centering the needs of LGBTQ youth, while also learning more about this marginalized community. Trainings can be provided by people in the community, or also from staff at YouthFirst. It is important to emphasize that learning about inclusion is an ongoing process, and training is often the first step. Integrating new information into the campaign as you learn and grow is important for effective organizing. Co-facilitating LGBTQ Educational trainings with local partner organizations also increases opportunity for collaboration and coalition-building.

## — Research

While incarceration impacts LGBTQ youth across the United States, there may be unique issues regarding LGBTQ youth incarceration in your community. For example, are schools implementing policies to protect LGBTQ youth from bullying? If not, this could lead to an increase in harassment and targeting. Are transgender youth in your county being placed with their correct gender, or are they placed with people from the gender they were assigned at birth? How many LGBTQ youth are incarcerated in your community, and does your community provide statistics? Are community-based alternatives inclusive and responsive to LGBTQ youth? Without the proper research, it is impossible to create a campaign that best represents the needs of a population. Thinking deeply about research questions, and learning the answers to these questions will help improve campaign strategy, and make sure that you are setting goals that are realistic and helpful. Making sure that the results of this research are accessible and applicable is also key. Consider presenting research to key stakeholders, and making the research a group-led effort.

## — **Visioning Sessions**

Visioning sessions are a great way to make sure that those who are most impacted by the issue are also helping drive campaign decisions and strategy. Visioning sessions also help people form deeper connections with the people they are organizing with. You should consider holding a visioning session with LGBTQ youth to get their input on what types of community supports and opportunities they would like to see in their communities. An LGBTQ-focused visioning session could lead to productive dialogue and also raise issues that have not been previously addressed in the campaign plan. Visioning sessions share as a great way to break down barriers between co-organizers, and also help LGBTQ youth think creatively about campaign goals and tactics.

## — **LGBTQ Leadership**

One key way to make sure that the needs of LGBTQ youth are heard in campaign planning, is centering LGBTQ leadership, especially from youth. LGBTQ voices need to be heard by people working on issues that impact them the most. Creating affirming spaces, trusting the judgement of LGBTQ people, and working to make an equitable team environment can do wonders for a campaign. It's important to consider if there are any openly LGBTQ people on your leadership team, and it is also important to make sure that their voices are valued.

## — **Coalition Building**

Similar to trusting LGBTQ leadership, coalition building with other LGBTQ organizations is a good way to spread awareness about the campaign, build a broad range of support, and show stakeholders that you are committed to working on closing youth prisons with several marginalized identities in mind. Coalition building with LGBTQ organizations can open up dialogues and also lead to resource sharing. An internal status check will help campaign leadership decide if they are properly equipped to be in community with LGBTQ people.



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ALTERNATIVES  
TO  
INCARCERATION**





**ORGANIZING  
is AN ACT  
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