

# GSA 10 ACTIONS FOR ADVISORS

A GSA is a student-led club focusing on LGBTQ identity, support, and advocacy. For LGBTQ students, GSAs can provide a safe and affirming space, encourage leadership opportunities, and promote avenues for creating positive institutional change.

These 10 Actions for GSA Advisors can help you provide the best possible support to your club, whether your GSA is just beginning, or in need of a fresh start:



## 1. REGISTER YOUR GSA

By [registering your GSA](#), your club will receive monthly updates, access to new resources, invitations to youth summits around the country, free swag and more! Registering your club, old or new, is the best way to keep in touch with GLSEN and make sure you're always getting up to date information. [Register your GSA today!](#)



## 2. DO YOUR RESEARCH

As the adult advisor, it's helpful to have an understanding of your school's policies and what [LGBTQ-supportive policies look like](#). Research the laws in your state, rights for LGBTQ students, and places to send students with more questions, such as [www.glsen.org/knowyourrights](http://www.glsen.org/knowyourrights) and LGBTQ community centers in the area.

Also, take this time to reflect and consider your own LGBTQ advocacy. People are called into this work for a variety of reasons: being LGBTQ-identified, having a loved one who is LGBTQ, being a strong social justice advocate, or just being the type of educator or administrator who students trust. Consider what feels right for you to share at different times if you are asked about your role as GSA advisor.



## 3. SUPPORT YOUTH LEADERSHIP

GSAs function best when students are in charge of the group's goals, focus, and events. In many cases, a student or a group of students are the driving force for the creation of the GSA. If you are starting a GSA as an educator, consider connecting with students who might be interested and getting their input. While your role as an adult ally to youth leaders is critically important, it's important to consider how you are following their lead, listening to their desires for the group, and focusing on their interests, while also supporting them in thinking through what support they might need in order to execute their goals.



## 4. NAME YOUR GSA

We use the term "GSA" to refer to all LGBTQ-themed clubs. While the term was originally coined as "Gay-Straight Alliance", many people now use the term "Gender-Sexuality Alliance" to be more inclusive and reflective of the community and purpose of the group. Your students may want the club to be called GSA, or they may want to create their own name. Whether it's "Equity Club," "Rainbow Alliance," "Geography Club," or an acronym that works for your school, the name should be determined by the students, and the group should be open to changing and shifting over time.



## 5. DETERMINE THE GOALS AND FOCUS

GSAs can be community-focused, centering students with LGBTQ identities who want to connect with each other and supportive allies; organizing-focused, centering students committed to creating more LGBTQ-inclusive supports, celebrations, policies, and practices; or both, depending on the meeting, participants, or year. How the GSA comes together and what the students want to use their club time for is up to the students, but it's important that they (and you) understand these different models and options. Shifting between community and organizing can help sustain a group's longevity and impact in a school.

**6. RECRUIT MORE MEMBERS**

Once you have a core group of student leaders, some basic goals and focus, it's important to advertise your GSA to recruit more members. You can host an event like a movie night or guest speaker, have a "bring a friend" meeting, or ask if you can put up posters or a table in the lobby to let people know that your club exists and more are welcome to join! See more [Tips for Finding More GSA Members](#) on our website.

**7. ESTABLISH GROUND RULES**

Having ground rules for the group is a really important step in ensuring that the GSA functions as a safe, more intentional space for LGBTQ youth. These [rules and guidelines](#) can help young people to navigate discussing their identities and help them listen to each other more authentically. These rules, along with established roles within the GSA, will help the group to function more independently and to delegate the responsibilities of the group clearly to individual students. It's important to consider the multiple identities your students bring into the group, including race, ability, income/access, religion, etc., and to ensure that students with multiple marginalized identities are prioritized. Your role is to help young people when conflicts arise, and to remind the group, when necessary, about the established ground rules that they created.

**8. PLAN AHEAD**

Using planning tools such as GLSEN's school year calendar can provide a GSA with options for discussion topics or event planning throughout the year. GLSEN supports three main days of action throughout the year: [Ally Week](#) (September), [No Name-Calling Week](#) (January) and [The Day of Silence](#) (April), providing free merchandise, resources, and ways to connect to GSAs across the country over social media. You can find more activity ideas at [www.glsen.org/gsa](http://www.glsen.org/gsa).

Additionally, try to plan a meeting time that works for your students, does not conflict with other identity-based group meeting times, and is consistent. Having regularly scheduled weekly meetings rather than meeting bi monthly can create a significant difference in attendance.

**9. BE A LIAISON AND ADVOCATE**

While young people can be tremendous advocates for their needs, your role as a GSA advisor is to ensure that they are not doing this alone. You can be a valuable advocate for your students by acting as a liaison to administrators, families, and other colleagues. Use your leverage as an adult and someone with access to the faculty meetings to help others know what the group is doing and how they can be supported, and, whenever possible, to arrange for students to enter these spaces to speak for themselves. In the event that your club experiences pushback, your role in addressing the situation, advocating for the students, and holding space for them is essential.

**10. LISTEN AND LEARN**

Young people are the experts of their own identities and what they need, regardless of how fluid and shifting those identities and needs may be. Each LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ advocate has their own story and experience. GSA clubs are student-led so it is crucial to empower students to do the work and assist where you're needed. GSA advisors have access to a special space where LGBTQ students and allies can come together to be themselves. Many educators worry that they don't know "enough" about LGBTQ identity to be a GSA advisor. Remember that you don't have to be an expert at gender and sexual identity to be a respectful and affirming advisor. Be prepared with resources for topics that are outside of your expertise so that as students are exploring themselves, you have the ability to outsource their continued support while being realistic about your capacity. Be sure that you respect that space by [modeling pronouns](#), affirming any and all identities shared with you, and being open and receptive to [continually learning new things](#).