



KITSAP SAFE SCHOOLS NETWORK
www.kitsapsafeschools.org

A Student's Guide To Handling Anti-Gay Bullying or Assault

The first thing is to get safe. You can:

- Tell the person to back off (You can say something like, "Maybe you didn't mean anything by it, but ..." or, "Cut it out! Get your hands off me!"). But **don't escalate** the situation by calling the offender names or threatening to get physical.
- Defuse the situation, if it seems to be getting physical ("Never mind; let's forget it."), and go to a safe place.

Think about your possible choices:

- Is there a safe place nearby? Are there people close by who could help you?
- Could you use your voice and your body to protect yourself by yelling, running away, or attracting someone's attention?
- Sometimes people decide that not resisting is the best way to minimize physical injury or further danger.
- **However you respond, remember that it is not your fault.**

After you are safe:

- Talk with someone you trust, such as a good friend.
- Tell an adult. Maybe there's an adult *at school* whom you trust ... a particular counselor or teacher, the nurse, the principal, a school security person . . .
- Maybe you feel you need to go outside the school to talk to someone - a parent or guardian or a family friend. Whomever seems safest, do tell an adult.
- Write down everything that happened (who said and did what, the time and place, and who was involved, including witnesses).

If you don't want to talk to someone you already know, you are still not alone. Confidential help is available.

- Call Crisis Clinic of Kitsap County: 360-479-3033 or 800-843-4793
- Call Kitsap PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), 360-731-7099
- Contact Kitsap Safe Schools Network at info@kitsapsafeschools.org

The law may be able to help.

- In Washington, using homophobic, racist, ethnic or anti-religious words or gestures that cause you to worry about your physical safety or damage to your property are illegal - even if no physical violence or property damage occurs. Washington State law RCW 9A.36.080 calls this crime malicious harassment.
- You can report malicious harassment by calling 911 or contacting your local police department. Call as soon as possible after the incident. (You can make a report months or even years afterward, but it might be harder for the police to act on your case the longer you wait.)
- Or call the Anti-Violence Emergency Response Team (AVERT) at 888-606-9094.

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In the end, your safety is what matters.

Sometimes your only alternative may be transferring to a safer learning environment.

If you are under the age of sixteen, It isn't legal to just drop out. And, besides, you deserve an education! So contact someone in your school district (or at Kitsap Safe Schools Network) if you need help making arrangements for a safer place to learn ... a different school or home-schooling, a GED program, Running Start, etc.

Always remember, it is not your fault!

- If you were attacked "because" you were gay or lesbian – or somebody thought you were – it is their prejudice and hatred, **not** your sexuality, that caused the assault.
- If you were attacked and decided not to fight back, that is **not** the same as consent. That may have been the smart – or only – thing to do. It does **not** mean you "wanted" it and it does **not** make the attack your fault.