

Island Sexual Health Society's (ISHS) Position Statement on SOGI inclusive education in BC public and independent schools.

“With higher levels of discrimination and bullying, and lower level of family, school, and community support, LGBTQ youth face higher risks for significant health challenges, including suicidal thoughts and attempts, and problem substance use. However, when LGBTQ youth experience safe and supportive schools and families, they are much less likely to report these health challenges.” - Saewyc et al.¹

“62% of 2SLGBTQ+ students have reported they feel unsafe at school.” ²

“To create schools that are welcoming and equitable places for 2SLGBTQ youth (a goal that most stakeholders but admittedly not all can perhaps agree on in 2021), it is necessary to learn about how the gender binary is an inaccurate construct that harms people.” ³

ISHS supports the BC Ministry of Education's SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) directive that requires all British Columbian boards of education and independent school authorities to reference sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in district and school codes of conduct. This directive aligns with the goals of protecting individuals, especially children, from discrimination, as set out in legislation like the BC Human Rights Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. ISHS recognizes and supports this directive and utilizes it as an underlying principle in our programming in addition to our own vision and mission.

At the core of ISHS's vision and mission, we recognize and work diligently to uphold the values of identity, diversity, and expression to the health of community and society as a whole.

ISHS Vision and Mission Statement

¹ Saewyc E., Poon C., Kovaleva K., Tourand J., & Smith A. (2016). School-based interventions to reduce health disparities among LGBTQ youth: Considering the evidence.

² Peter, T., Campbell, C.P., & Taylor, C. (2021). Still in every class in every school: Final report on the second climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

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Island Sexual Health Society envisions a diverse community that celebrates healthy sexuality throughout life.

Island Sexual Health Society leads in delivering exemplary sexual health services to South Vancouver Island. Through the provision of clinical care and education, we:

- empower individuals to make choices that enhance their sexual wellbeing;
- provide all inclusive services and resources that support sexual health;
- celebrate diversity of sexual expression.

Island Sexual Health Society defines sexual health as a state of physical, emotional, mental, and societal well-being related to sexuality.

SOGI

ISHS acknowledges our unique role as guest educators who are invited into existing school communities to facilitate education. ISHS recognizes our responsibility in supporting the knowledge, safety and dignity of all education participants in our sessions within the context of an existing school community. ISHS Community Education Services and its facilitators are responsible for facilitating education programming that is safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming for all participants. ISHS recognizes and values the diversity found within all communities and believes that each individual contributes to the strength of the programming. ISHS also recognizes that Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning participants (2SLGBTIAQQ) or Gender, Sexual, and Relationship Minorities (GSRM) face a unique set of challenges.

Individuals of sexual and identity marginalized groups or those perceived to be members of these communities are frequently the targets of homophobic, transphobic, and/or heterosexist behaviours. This often has profound social consequences, including discrimination, harassment, physical and sexual violence, social and emotional isolation, substance abuse, homelessness, school truancy and drop-out, self-harm, and suicide.

It is with this rationale in mind and with an understanding that ISHS community educators recognize their shared responsibility in creating a safe welcoming, inclusive and affirming environment for all individuals congruent with that of the host school.

ISHS's Community Education Programming will promote a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination, by implementing proactive strategies and guidelines to ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ and GSRM students, allies and families are equally welcomed and included in all aspects of programming and treated with respect and dignity. We aim to do this through a variety of approaches including but not limited to statement of inclusive workshop

expectations, including the express acknowledgement of workshop sessions as SOGI-inclusive space as related to the BC and Canadian Human Rights Code, the use of SOGI-inclusive language and building workshop content as outlined by [BC Ministry of Education PHE Curriculum](#).

Passed by ISHS Board of Directors, November 26th, 2018.

Reference and language updated April 1, 2023.