

Respect All Families Action Guide

Respect All Families is a set of two posters created by youth with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents to make change in schools. We made posters to create positive images and promote visibility of families like ours, to fight the homophobia we face in our schools and communities, and to counter the isolation and prejudice that youth with queer parents often face. We hope that by raising visibility, the posters will make it known that families like ours exist and flourish. We also want to tell other youth who have queer parents: you are not alone; there are others like you. We hope these posters will open the minds of students who have not met diverse families like ours. While our main goal in creating the posters is to educate and spark dialogue, we are also happy that the posters give us the chance to express the pride we have in our families and in the LGBT community.

The *Respect All Families* posters were created by the inaugural year of the COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program in the San Francisco Bay Area. The posters are one component of a larger visibility and awareness project that fights the homophobia facing youth with LGBT parents and families in schools.



For more information about the *Respect All Families* posters, or the COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program:

www.colage.org/ylap

415-861-5437

35 43 18th Street #1, San Francisco, CA 94110



Use *Respect All Families* Posters to Raise Awareness in Your School



Some of the 2002-2003 Youth Leadership and Action Program participants

- **Encourage teachers to hang the posters in their classrooms.** By locating the posters in a classroom (rather than the hallway) you can help prevent vandalism and ensure that the message will be seen in your school. Take the posters to a staff meeting and pass them out. Give teachers copies of *Tips for Making Schools Safer for Youth with LGBT Parents*. Put flyers in teachers' mailboxes to inform them about the posters. Recruit friends who will commit to finding a specific number of teachers to hang a poster in their classroom.
- **Attach information** about your COLAGE Chapter, Gay Straight Alliance, or diversity club to the posters, including contact information and meeting time and location. Similarly, you can attach information about a specific event you want to advertise.

Are there local LGBT Centers, schools, Youth Centers and other places where potential allies to youth with LGBT parents might hang out? Ask them to display the posters with information about your club.

- **Get the posters printed in your school or community newspaper.** Write an article or announcement about your local COLAGE or GSA activities, the experience of youth with LGBT parents in your community, or other positive youth resources for the LGBT community.
- **Host a workshop for teachers or other youth service providers to educate them on serving youth with LGBT parents.** Use the posters and the resource guide, *Tips for Making Schools Safer for Youth with LGBT Parents*, (additional copies of the guide are available at www.colage.org) as a starting point for the workshop.
- **Create an agreement for teachers to sign** saying that they commit to confront harassment on the school site and will help create an environment that respects all students, staff, and families regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Give the poster out to those teachers that sign the agreement, making it a symbol that they are an ally. Also, consider printing the agreement and the list of signatures in the school newspaper with the posters.
- **Use the posters in conjunction with Day of Silence, LGBT History Month (October), LGBT Pride Month (June), Coming Out Day (October 11), or Diversity Day or Week at your school.**
- **Be ready for your posters to get torn down or vandalized.** You can take advantage of this by putting up a sign under the posters (see the Responding to Vandalism section of this guide) Also, if you are aware that other group's posters don't get torn down, you can file a harassment complaint with your principal and/or school district and hold your school accountable to changing an anti- LGBT environment.
- **Make your own posters!** You can make posters by drawing, printing, making a collage with cutouts from magazines and newspapers, or using the computer.



For more information about COLAGE or the *Respect All Families* posters go to www.colage.org/ylap/ or call (415) 861-KIDS

This information was adapted from the Liberation Ink Organizing Guide by the Free Zone Project of the GSA Network.

For more information visit www.gsanetwork.org

Responding to Vandalism



Youth with LGBT Parents speak out on an Educational Panel, March 2003

Using posters in schools is a great way to promote visibility, raise awareness and change the climate of a school. Posters spark conversations, strengthen visibility, and promote tolerance. However, as you may know, posters that challenge prejudice and oppression are often torn down or vandalized in schools. Over the years, youth have developed many strategies for dealing with this. Here are some ideas for responding to vandalism:

- **Be thoughtful about where you hang the posters.** Put the posters in places that are visible and where students are likely to see them, but are less likely to get torn down (i.e., classrooms, libraries, display cases, administration offices, etc.) If your school has bulletin boards that are encased in glass, see if you can display a poster on them.
- **Keep track of how many posters you put up and how many get torn down.** This is concrete information to share with the administration and the school community in general that can help you illustrate the reality of homophobia and transphobia in your school. You could also use this information in a school announcement or in an article in the school newspaper.
- **Laminate the posters** to prevent them from being ripped, torn, or written on. You can get posters laminated at a local copy shop if your school won't do it for you.
- **Put a surprise message under the posters.** Many youth groups have found it effective and empowering to tape a message behind each poster for the people who might tear it down and for those who see it afterwards. You can use index cards or 1/4 of a sheet of paper. You might consider using packing tape to strongly adhere these messages to the wall. Make sure the message underneath the poster is not visible when the poster is hung. Here are some ideas of messages you can use. Of course, you can come up with your own messages that are most appropriate to your community.
 - *Hate is easy. Love takes courage.*
 - *You have just committed a hateful act.*
 - *Think about the voices you've just silenced.*
 - *There used to be a poster here that challenged stereotypes and supported youth empowerment, but someone ripped it down. What are you doing to stop the hate? It's against the law to discriminate or harass people because of their race, color, origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation, or the perception of one or more of those characteristics.*
 - *You are the reason this poster was necessary.*



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Raising Visibility for Youth with LGBT Parents



COLAGE Youth attend a workshop in Provincetown, MA

In the United States alone, there are millions of people with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender (LGBT) parent(s). While research shows that there are no significant developmental differences or negative affects on children of LGBT parents, these youth do report facing significantly more prejudice and discrimination because of societal homophobia and transphobia. Youth report that schools are a key place where they face intolerance- from peers, teachers, school administration, coaches, and educational systems that are affected by the homophobia in our society. According to a 2001 study (Stacey and Biblarz, 2001), students who have LGBT parents experience harassment at the same high rate as students who themselves are gay.

- There are up to 14 million people who have one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents in the United States.
- People with LGBT parents have the same incidence of homosexuality as the general population, about 10%. No research has shown that LGBT parents have any affect on the sexuality or gender identity of their children (Patterson, 1987).
- There is absolutely no evidence that children are psychologically or physically harmed by having LGBT parents. There is plenty of evidence that they are not (Herdt, 1989).

*Some seniors at my school saw the rainbow stickers on the back of my mom's car so they grabbed me and put me in a trashcan. General homophobia in my school is very overwhelming. Most people at my school would not even think that someone's mother or father could be gay. **Kate, 18***

*My school tends to not talk about LGBT people and families, so most people are looked down upon if they are LGBT. Also, since I play football there are a lot of homophobic names that are called during games and practices that are mean and hurtful. I wish there were things that I could do to change things but my school isn't really that accepting. **Joe, 15***

*I have faced so much discrimination not only from my peers, but from adults that have met me and my family. I try to keep my head up and be proud, but it is discouraging to feel like I am hated for who my parents choose to love. **Breauna, 14***

While youth with LGBT parents often disclose their experiences with discrimination and the painful affects of homophobia in their schools and communities, they also venture that increased visibility for youth with families like theirs is a powerful antidote to isolation and harassment. By helping to raise awareness for youth with LGBT parents through your participation in the COLAGE *Respect All Families* poster project, you are sharing in the movement to create safer schools and communities for all youth and all families.

To learn more about people with LGBT parents visit the COLAGE website at www.colage.org.



Feedback Form for *Respect All Families* Posters

Thank you for helping raise awareness about youth with LGBT families by displaying the *Respect All Families* posters in your school, workplace, community center, place of worship, etc. Please let us know the effect that this project had in your community by answering the following questions. Thanks!

1. Where did you display posters?
2. How many posters did you display?
3. How did people react to the posters?
4. What types of discussions or activities occurred because of the *Respect All Families* Posters?
5. How did using the posters impact your group/school/organization? How did the poster project build community or leadership within your group? Has this project inspired any future activities or projects for your group?
6. Can you provide an estimate for how many people viewed the posters?
7. Are there other resources or support that you would like from COLAGE? If so what?

Name:
Age
Address:
Phone:
Email:
School/Organization:
How did you get involved in this project?

Thank You!
Please return to:
COLAGE
Attn: *Respect All Families* Posters
3543 18th Street #1
San Francisco, CA 94110