



Responding to an athlete coming out

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Thank the student for trusting you: The athletic community has a long-history of being homophobic and heterosexist, which plays a large role in creating fear that keeps queer athletes closeted. Tell your student-athlete that you appreciate their trust in you! This will affirm their decision and work to ease anxiety that they have built over time.



Ask the student-athlete how you can support them: Do not assume that all LGBTQ athletes need counseling! Some queer youth simply find it important to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in order to feel as though they are not keeping secrets or hiding their true selves. Make sure that they know there are resources available, but that they are there if and when the student feels they are needed.



Reiterate that neither sexual orientation nor gender identity will affect their participation: Athletes are competitive, it's in their nature. Often times LGBTQ athletes may fear that coming out will affect their ability to participate in the sport that they enjoy; make sure they know that this is not the case! Verbalize to your student that there are non-discrimination policies in place to insure their ability to participate.



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Email: dana@iowasafeschools.org





Inquire if the athlete wishes to disclose this information to the team: Coming out is a process with an unspecified timeline based only on the individual whom is coming out. It is a big step for your athlete to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to you! Ask your student if they are planning to come out to the team, and if so, if there is anything you can do to help with this process.



Always respect the athlete's privacy: Do not disclose information that your student-athlete has shared with you regarding their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as they have trusted you with this information. The *exception* to this would be following mandatory reporter requirements, such as if a student were in danger themselves, or were a safety risk to others.



Provide LGBTQ resources, supports, and educational information for your student-athlete: Highlighting the presence of LGBTQ athletes in college-level or professional sports could provide your student-athlete with a greater sense of hope. Research and provide different news specials, films, documentaries, novels, or biographies that highlight athletes who are both queer and successful.



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