

# Anti-homophobia measures reduce binge drinking for all students

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Canadian high schools with anti-homophobia policies or gay-straight alliances (GSAs) that have been in place for three years or more have a positive effect on both gay and straight students' problem alcohol use, according to a new study by University of British Columbia researchers.

GSAs are student-led clubs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ) youth and their straight allies. Their purpose is to provide support and advocacy and help make schools more inclusive.

"These strategies appear to be helpful not only for LGBTQ students, but all students," says Elizabeth Saewyc, senior author and professor with the UBC School of Nursing. "Interventions that can make schools safer for LGBTQ youth may actually reduce harassment for straight students, too. Schools should consider including GSAs and anti-homophobia policies as part of their alcohol and [drug abuse prevention](#) strategies."

In schools with established GSAs, lesbian and bisexual girls and heterosexual boys and girls, all were less likely to binge drink and experience problems associated with alcohol or drug use such as blacking out, [car accidents](#), problems at [school](#) or family arguments about alcohol use. There were no significant effects for gay or bisexual boys. Both heterosexual boys and girls also had lower odds of [binge drinking](#) in schools with anti-homophobia policies.

Published recently in the *Journal of Preventive Medicine*, and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the study used data from the

British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey to look at whether students' odds of recent substance use were lower in schools with recent or more established anti-homophobia policies and gay straight alliances compared to schools without these strategies.

**More information:** Population-level evaluation of school-based interventions to prevent problem substance use among gay, lesbian and bisexual adolescents in Canada, *Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2013.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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