



2012 'Day of Silence' Fact Sheet and FAQ

What is the Day of Silence?

The Day of Silence is a student-led action where concerned students, from middle school to college, take some form of a vow of silence to bring attention to the name-calling, bullying and harassment— in effect, the silencing—experienced by LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) students and their allies.

Who started the Day of Silence?

In 1996, students at the University of Virginia organized the first Day of Silence with over 150 students participating. In 1997, organizers took their effort national and nearly 100 colleges and universities participated. In 2001, GLSEN became the official organizational sponsor.

Has the Day of Silence been successful?

In 2011, hundreds of thousands of students from more than 8,000 K-12 schools, colleges and universities organized Day of Silence events. These numbers make the Day of Silence one of the largest student-led actions in the United States. The event has drawn significant attention to LGBT issues in schools over the years. For example, GLSEN spokespersons have appeared on national media outlets and there has always been extensive local media coverage from coast to coast, with numerous interviews with students.

Why do we need a Day of Silence?

GLSEN's 2009 National School Climate Survey found that 9 out of 10 LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school and more than 30% report missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety. The Day of Silence helps bring us closer to making anti-LGBT bullying, harassment and name-calling unacceptable in America's schools.

The Day of Silence is a call to action. Students can use this day, as well as other GLSEN Days of Action, as a means of achieving an "ask." An ask is a very specific action that calls for a change in school policies, climate and culture to achieve a larger goal of safe schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Some examples of an ask include: adding sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in your school's nondiscrimination or anti-harassment policy or training teachers to respond effectively to anti-LGBT bullying, harassment and name calling.

Does the work end after the day is over?

The Day of Silence is one element of a larger effort to create safe schools for all students regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Many communities, in addition to supporting the Day of Silence, host Breaking The Silence events, rallies, legislative lobby days, performances and more – both on the Day of Silence and all year round. We are also asking our national leaders to support policies that create safe schools for all. Many communities are asking their local and state leaders to support and implement similar policies. You can get connected to an ongoing national effort by registering your GSA with GLSEN.