

# A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth Workshops

## Overview

This workshop is designed to help educators understand, assess, and improve school climate and safety for all youth, especially those who identify as gay lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. Research consistently finds sexual minority youth to be at higher risk of homelessness, alcohol and substance abuse, harassment, assaults, suicide, school failure/dropout, and truancy. The companion piece for the training, the *A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth* resource guide, is available at <http://www.emc.cmich.edu/products/SilentCrisis.htm>.

## Audience

School administrators, board members, counselors, social workers, psychologists, teachers, school nurses, youth serving agencies, parents, and all caring adults

## Outcomes

Workshop Participants will:

- State major health and educational risks faced by sexual minority youth;
- Analyze current terminology related to sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Analyze implications of personal beliefs regarding LGBTQ issues on professional practice.
- Assess current school/agency safety and climate for sexual minority youth;
- State the implications of key legal and policy issues affecting sexual minority youth and a safe school environment;
- Use skills for responding to and intervening with students, staff and the broader school community to create a safer school environment for sexual minority youth;
- Commit to addressing school safety and climate issues that may arise among students, faculty, staff and parents in schools/agencies;
- Implement an action plan to address safety and climate issues for sexual minority youth at the individual, collegial, and the school/community levels;
- Use culturally competent local, regional, state, and national resources.

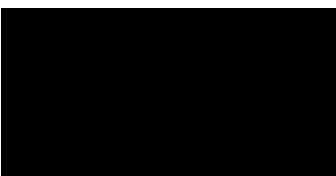
## Master Trainer

Kim Phillips-Knope, MSW, Michigan Department of Education Project Consultant

## Support

These workshops are made possible through Cooperative Agreements supported by CDC-RFA-DP08-801 with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Atlanta, GA, 30333. The contents are solely the responsibility of the Michigan Department of Education and Detroit Public Schools and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. CDC.

These day-long workshops are hosted by Intermediate School Districts and large urban school districts across Michigan and are cosponsored by the Michigan Departments of Education, the host site, and the Comprehensive School Health Coordinators' Association. Participants are eligible to receive State Board of Education CEUs or Social Work CEs. The workshop has been approved by the Social Work Continuing Education Collaborative for six credits. For information about upcoming workshops, contact Laurie Bechhofer, [bechhoferl@Michigan.gov](mailto:bechhoferl@Michigan.gov). For more about HIV Prevention and Coordinated School Health and Safety Programs in Michigan schools, go to [www.michigan.gov/hived](http://www.michigan.gov/hived) and [www.michigan.gov/cshsp](http://www.michigan.gov/cshsp).



# *A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth*

## **2012 Workshops**

### **February**

Date: February 16, 2012  
Host: Detroit Public Schools  
Location: Detroit, Michigan  
Trainers: Kim Phillips-Knope, Tracy Hobbs, Amorie Robinson  
For More Information: Arlene Richardson, 313-870-3632  
[Arlene.richardson@detroitk12.org](mailto:Arlene.richardson@detroitk12.org)

### **March**

Date: March 21, 2012  
Host: Wayne RESA  
Location: Wayne, Michigan  
Trainers: Kim Phillips-Knope, Tracy Hobbs, Jenny Murphy, Amorie Robinson  
For More Information: Kathy Gibson, 734-334-1608  
[gibsonk@resa.net](mailto:gibsonk@resa.net)

### **April**

Date: April 19, 2012  
Host: Kent ISD  
Location: Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Trainers: Kim Phillips-Knope, Amorie Robinson  
For More Information: Cheryl Blair, 616-365-2269  
[cherylblair@kentisd.org](mailto:cherylblair@kentisd.org)

### **May**

Date: May 3, 2012  
Host: Marquette-Alger RESA, Michigan  
Location: Marquette, Michigan  
Trainers: Kim Phillips-Knope, Tracy Hobbs, Jenny Murphy  
For More Information: Charlie Yeager, 906-226-5116  
[cyeager@maresa.org](mailto:cyeager@maresa.org)

### **May**

Date: May 24, 2012  
Host: Detroit Public Schools  
Location: Detroit, Michigan  
Trainers: Kim Phillips-Knope, Jenny Murphy, Amorie Robinson  
For More Information: Arlene Richardson, 313-870-3632  
[Arlene.richardson@detroitk12.org](mailto:Arlene.richardson@detroitk12.org)

*As soon as flyers are developed and posted online, this document will be updated with the links to register. For general information about the trainings, contact Laurie Bechhofer, [BechhoferL@Michigan.gov](mailto:BechhoferL@Michigan.gov).*



## A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth

January 2012

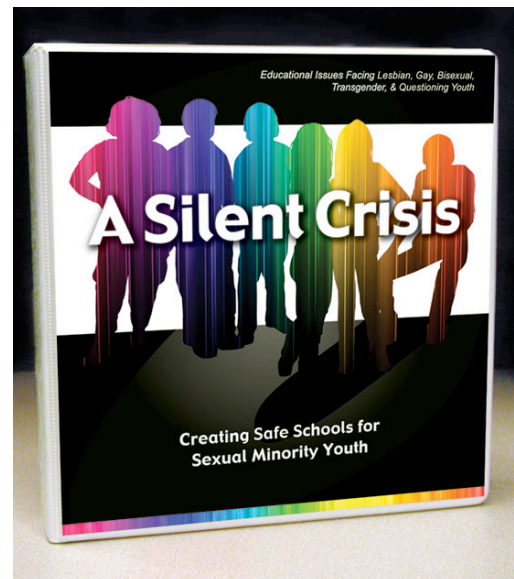
### Meeting a Need

Many educators and administrators in school districts throughout Michigan have requested information and technical assistance to help them create school environments that are physically and emotionally safe for all students including sexual minority students (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning). Schools throughout Michigan and the nation have struggled to develop policies and train staff and students to support safe and “bully-free” environments that are conducive to students learning. This project was initiated as a direct response to school district requests.

Sexual minority youth often face harassment, abuse, and violence from classmates in school settings that put them at greater risk for serious problems such as substance abuse, HIV, and suicide, as well as school failure and dropout. The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior (MA YRBS) surveys from 1997 to 2007 documented that sexual minority students are four times more likely to attempt suicide and over three times more likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon at school. For more information from the MA YRBS, go to: [www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/yrbs](http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/yrbs). The long-term effects of the harassment and violence have been documented in numerous national, state, and local reports.

### The Resource Guide

The *A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth* resource guide includes a wealth of information for teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and other professionals who want to learn more about issues related to safe schools for sexual minority youth. The guide was produced and compiled by Calhoun Intermediate School District, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), and Detroit Public Schools, with feedback from educators and youth advocates throughout Michigan and the nation. Now in its 5<sup>th</sup> printing, the guide is distributed by the Educational Materials Center (EMC), Central Michigan University. To date, more than 2914 copies of the guide have been disseminated across Michigan and 32 other states plus the District of Columbia. Those who participate in *A Silent Crisis* trainings receive the resource guide as part of the workshop. Additional copies of the resource guide can be purchased from the EMC for \$48.00 plus shipping. To request a copy, call 800-214-8961, email the EMC at [emc@cmich.edu](mailto:emc@cmich.edu), or visit the website at <http://www.emc.cmich.edu/products/SilentCrisis.htm>.



### Workshops for School Personnel

**Overview.** The MDE has supported regional *A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth* trainings for school personnel who want to learn more about issues related to this population and strategies for creating safer schools. To date, 34 regional trainings have been implemented in intermediate school districts, reaching 1181 participants from 222 school districts.

As a result of participating in trainings, participants have initiated support groups for GLBTQ youth, conducted in-services for staff, reviewed in revised policies, posted literature to indicate accessibility, established or re-established gay-straight student alliances (GSAs), revised their sex education curriculum to include language more inclusive of GLBTQ youth, and developed a list of appropriate referrals.

Workshop Summary. The workshop is designed to help educators understand, assess, and improve school climate and safety for all youth, especially those who identify as gay lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. Research consistently finds sexual minority youth to be at higher risk of homelessness, alcohol and substance abuse, harassment, assaults, suicide, school failure/dropout, and truancy.

Audience. School administrators, board members, counselors, social workers, psychologists, teachers, school nurses, youth serving agencies, parents, and all caring adults

Outcomes. Workshop Participants will:

- Gain working knowledge of major health and educational risks facing sexual minority youth
- Identify and discuss current terminology related to sexual orientation and gender identity
- Assess current school safety and climate
- Identify and analyze legal and policy implications affecting sexual minority youth
- Practice skills for responding to students, staff and the broader school community
- Develop a commitment and confidence to address school safety and climate issues
- Formulate an action plan to address safety and climate issues for sexual minority youth

### **What Education and Community Leaders Say About the Project**

*As school leaders, superintendents bear the responsibility to ensure that our classrooms, hallways, and schools are safe for all of our students. Anything less poses a significant barrier to learning. The **A Silent Crisis** training and resource guide provide useful tools and strategies for providing safe, respectful and supportive learning environments for each of our students.*

Christopher A. Wigent, Superintendent  
Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency

*As parents, one of our biggest fears is that our children might be harmed in some way. The Michigan Department of Education is to be commended for their pro-active approach in helping school personnel create an environment that is safe and shows respect for all youth and in particular our most vulnerable youth...those who are or perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning. The **A Silent Crisis** training and resource guide paves the way for school personnel to create an environment where students can not only achieve academically, but equally important, witness the fair and respectful treatment of all who enter the doors of public education.*

Barbara Flis, Founder  
Parent Action for Healthy Kids

*As a district administrator in Michigan's largest school district, I think the **A Silent Crisis** trainings and resource guide are critical for all school personnel from the bus driver, to the classroom teacher, to the social worker, principal, and parents. Sexual orientation and gender identity are often not talked about openly in our schools, and there are many students who struggle because they have no allies. The training raised my own consciousness about these issues and my commitment to educate others.*

Dr. Arlene Richardson, Program Associate Health Education  
Detroit Public Schools

### **For More Information**

Contact Laurie Bechhofer  
Michigan Department of Education  
Email: [bechhoferl@michigan.gov](mailto:bechhoferl@michigan.gov) Phone: 517-335-7252

