

non-curricular clubs. Non-curricular clubs are groups that aren't directly related to classes taught in the school. For example, Math Club is curricular but Chess Club isn't.

Starting a GSA is like starting any other club - find out what your school's rules are for forming an official student organization (things like getting a faculty sponsor if one is required, etc.) and then follow those rules carefully. Document everything in case you have any trouble from the school later on. If you have to fill out any forms or submit anything in writing, keep copies of those things. Keep a record of dates when you submitted anything to the school, and how and when the school responded.

We've found that schools often don't know much about the law or think they can find some way to get around it. Blocking a GSA from forming or treating it differently from other non-curricular clubs is against the law, and if your school does it you should contact your local ACLU affiliate or the ACLU's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Project.

Prom

Did you know that your school can't stop you from bringing a same-sex date to prom? In 1980, a Rhode Island teenager successfully sued his school for the right to take his boyfriend to prom. A federal court ruled that taking a same-sex date to prom is a matter of free expression under the First Amendment and told the school that it had to let him go to the prom with his boyfriend.

If you go to a public school and school officials try to tell you that you can't bring a same-sex date to prom, tell them about the case of *Aaron Fricke v. Richard B. Lynch* - you can find a copy of the decision from this case on our website. Or you can contact your local ACLU affiliate or the ACLU's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Project.

What else?

If you ever suspect that your school is treating you wrong because of your sexual orientation or gender identity:

Be respectful and follow the rules!

Don't give your school any excuses for treating you badly by behaving badly or losing your temper.

Document everything! Keep thorough notes about what happened, with dates, names, and any other details that might come in handy. If the school gives you anything in writing or if you submit anything in writing yourself, keep copies.

Get support! There are groups all over the country for LGBT youth, and if you live somewhere that doesn't have one, you can probably find an online discussion forum where you can be yourself and get reassurance that you're not alone.

Don't just believe what your school tells you! A lot of the time, school officials either don't know what the law requires them to do or just figure you won't question what they say. Find out what your rights under the law are!

Got more questions? Do you have a specific question about something that has happened at your school? Want to know whether it was illegal? Want someone to talk with about what you can do about it? Contact us at aclu.org/safeschools! It's confidential - we won't ever contact your school, your parents, your friends, or anyone else without your okay, and any communication between you and the ACLU is private.

