



**ALL IN FOR  
SAFE SCHOOLS**  
SAFE SPACES,  
STRONG FUTURES

# Creating Safe and Inclusive Schools

A TK-12 Toolkit

[allinfor safeschools.org](https://allinfor safeschools.org)



**ALL IN for Safe Schools** is a California-based campaign that brings together early childhood education and K-12 non-profit leaders to support educators in creating welcoming, inclusive, and affirming spaces—especially for children in immigrant families and LGBTQ+ students.



# How to Use This Toolkit

**Every student deserves to feel safe, seen, and supported at school.**

This **toolkit** brings together key strategies and trusted resources to help educators, administrators, and community partners create inclusive environments where all students can thrive.

From protecting immigrant and refugee families to affirming LGBTQ+ youth, addressing mental health and wellness, and ensuring access to care through Medi-Cal, the guidance provided here centers on **equity, belonging, and compassion**.

By taking proactive steps—such as adopting **healing-centered** practices, ensuring **language access**, and strengthening **culturally responsive** teaching—schools can become sanctuaries of learning and healing for every student, regardless of background, identity, or circumstance.

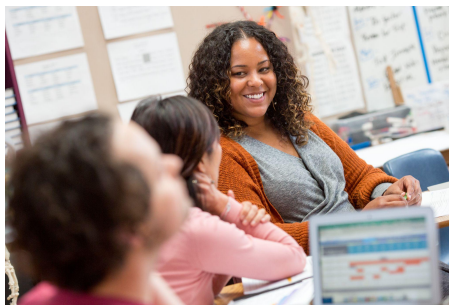
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# STUDENT RIGHTS & RESOURCES



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# STUDENT RIGHTS



Students are entitled to a safe, inclusive learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, or unequal treatment. Upholding these rights is critical for student well-being, academic success, and fostering a culture of equity.

# Key Strategies

- Ensure student rights are protected
  - [My School My Rights](#) (*student facing*)
  - [ACLU: Know Your Rights](#)
- Review and implement district nondiscrimination and equity policies.
- Intervene promptly in cases of bullying or harassment.
- Promote student voice and civic engagement opportunities.
- Ensure discipline practices are fair and consistent.
  - [National Center for Youth Law](#)
  - [Learning for Justice](#)



# IMMIGRANT STUDENT RIGHTS



All students in the U.S. have a **legal right** to attend public school and access services, regardless of their or their family's immigration status ([Plyler v. Doe](#)). Schools cannot discriminate, deny enrollment, or share sensitive student information with immigration authorities without a **court order**.

Educators can support a safe and inclusive environment by **upholding** these protections and connecting families to legal and social resources when needed.





### Signs to watch for

- Drop in attendance
- Emotional withdrawal or disengagement
- Fearful behavior, especially after immigration raids or publicized enforcement



## California AB 699

Enacted in 2017, this bill focused on protecting immigrant students in California. It mandates that schools must adopt policies to ensure that all students, regardless of immigration status, are provided with a safe and inclusive environment.

[Promoting a Safe and Secure Learning Environment for All: Guidance and Model Policies to Assist California's K-12 Schools in Responding to Immigration Issues](#)

## 2025 CA Legislation

- SB 48 Discrimination prevention coordinators (Gonzalez)
- AB 49 Schoolsites: entry requirements: immigration enforcement (Muratsuchi)
- SB 98 Elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education: immigration enforcement: notification (Perez)
- AB 419 Educational equity: immigration enforcement (Connolly)
- AB 495 Family Preparedness Plan Act of 2025 (Rodriguez)

[CA Safe Schools Policy Explainer 2025](#)

# Key Strategies

- **Safe Zones:** Advocate for “Safe Haven” policies that clarify schools do not assist in federal immigration enforcement.
  - [An Educator’s Checklist for Supporting Immigrant Students in Schools](#)
  - [Immigration Enforcement and Protections for Safe & Welcoming Schools](#): Model Policies Audit Tool
  - [AB 699 Safe Schools for Immigrant Students Toolkit for LEA Leaders](#)
  - [Resources to Preserve Welcoming and Safe Schools](#)
  - [Re-imagining Migration](#)

# Key Strategies

- **Welcoming & onboarding processes:** Establish culturally competent orientation processes for newcomers.
  - [CDE – Newcomer Students / Multilingual Learners Resources](#)
  - [California State PTA – Toolkit for Educators to Support Undocumented Students and Families, Safe Havens \(CDE\)](#)
- **Language Access:** Provide translation and interpretation services. Ensure all school communications are accessible in families' home languages.
- **Culturally responsive teaching:** Integrate students' cultural identities into curriculum and pedagogy.
  - [Californians Together / Support for Immigrant & Refugee Students \(SIRS project\)](#)
  - [Re-imagining Migration: Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist](#)

# Key Strategies

- **Trauma-Informed Practices:** Train all school staff on trauma-responsive care, especially for students who may have experienced migration-related or intergenerational trauma.
  - [Mental Health First Aid for Youth](#)
- **Family Engagement:** Connect with families through trusted community liaisons, and affinity and faith-based groups. Offer workshops on rights, resources, and services, particularly in times of heightened immigration enforcement.
  - [ACLU: Immigrant Student Rights](#)
  - [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#)
  - [National Immigration Law Center](#)

# LGBTQ+ STUDENT RIGHTS



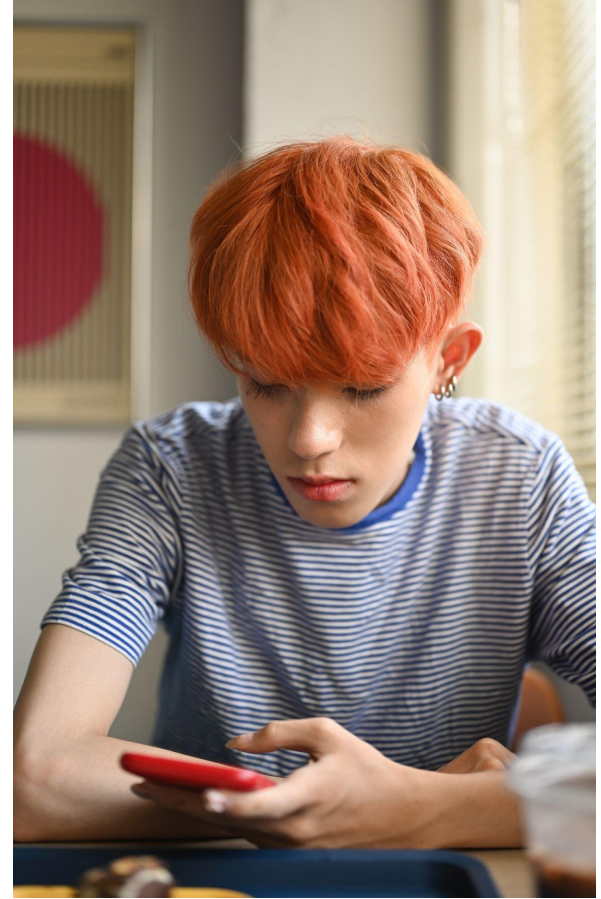
LGBTQ+ students are protected by federal and state anti-discrimination laws, including **Title IX**. Schools are required to respect students' names and pronouns, ensure access to safe and appropriate facilities, address bullying and harassment, and cannot retaliate against students for expressing their identity. Educators are key allies in ensuring LGBTQ+ students feel safe, welcomed, and affirmed in all aspects of school life.





### Signs to watch for

- Social withdrawal
- Sudden drops in attendance
- Expression of distress or identity-based targeting



# Key Strategies

- **Inclusive Policies:** Ensure anti-bullying, restroom, locker room, and name/pronoun policies affirm gender identity and sexual orientation.
  - [ACLU: Transgender Rights](#)
  - [GLSEN: Know Your Rights](#)
  - [Immigrant Legal Resource Center: LGBT Resources](#)
- **Mental Health Support:** Provide affirming counseling.
  - [Mental Health Support and Advocacy for LGBTQ Youth](#)
  - [The Trevor Project: Educator Resources](#)
- **Safe Spaces & Peer Support:** Support [Gender and Sexuality Alliances](#) (GSAs) and other student-led safe spaces.
  - [Safe Schools Project](#)

# Key Strategies

- **Educator Training:** Provide professional development on gender identity, sexual orientation, and inclusive teaching practices.
  - [PRISM](#) – Providing Relevant, Inclusive Support that Matters for LGBTQ+ Students
  - [CDE – Supporting LGBTQ+ Students](#)
  - [GLSEN – Educator Resources](#)
  - [Equality California Educator Resources](#) to cultivate a safe and supportive climate for all students, especially LGBTQ+ youth.
  - [Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ Youth](#): A Toolkit for Education, Healthcare, and Community-Based Organizations

# PRIVACY RIGHTS & DIGITAL PROTECTION



Student privacy rights ensure that personal information and educational records are kept safe and confidential. Under laws such as **FERPA**, schools must protect sensitive data, and educators must be aware of the risks of digital learning, doxing, and cyberbullying. Providing families and staff with resources on online safety, secure technology practice, and complaint procedures is essential for maintaining a safe school community.

# Key Strategies

- Use secure, district-approved platforms for digital learning.
- Keep student records confidential and limit access.
  - U.S. Department of Education: [Student Privacy](#)
  - [Electronic Frontier Foundation \(EFF\): Student Privacy](#)
  - Future of Privacy Forum: [Student Privacy Compass](#)
- Educate students about online safety and responsible use.
- Encourage staff to secure personal information (2FA, privacy settings, request removal of personal info online)
- Report and document suspected doxing or harassment incidents.
  - [National Network to End Domestic Violence: Safety & Doxing Guide](#)
  - [Anti-Defamation League \(ADL\): Cyber Safety & Doxing Resource](#)

# LAW ENFORCEMENT CONTACT



Students may interact with law enforcement officers while at or near school. It's essential for students and educators to know **student rights** in these situations, including the right to remain silent, to request a parent or attorney, and to avoid sharing information unnecessarily. School staff can help students prepare for and manage these encounters, document incidents, and advocate for **restorative approaches** to discipline whenever possible.

## California [SB 54](#) (CA Values Act)

Prohibits state and local law enforcement agencies, including sheriffs, police departments, and school police, from using resources to assist in federal immigration enforcement.

A KYR factsheet on this law is linked [here](#) or go to [iceoutofCA.org](https://iceoutofCA.org)



# Key Strategies

- Remind students they have the right to remain silent and request a parent or attorney.
  - My School My Rights: [Police in Schools](#)
  - [National Juvenile Defender Center](#)
  - [NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#)
- Do not disclose student information without proper authorization.
- Be present when possible during law enforcement interactions.
- Document all incidents and notify administration.

# STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS



Students across the spectrum, especially girls, BIPOC youth, LGBTQ+ youth and immigrant students are experiencing record levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and even self-harm.



## Signs to watch for

- Attendance or participation drops
- Emotional withdrawal or visible distress
- Expressions of hopelessness or self-harm



# Key Strategies

- **Mobile & Crisis Resources:**
  - **[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#):** A direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress. Call or text 9-8-8 or chat at **[988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)**
    - Press 2 for Spanish
    - Press 3 for LGBTQ+ support
  - **[Teen Line](#):** Call (800) 852-8336 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. PST; or text TEEN to 839863 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. PST; or emailing any time at **[www.teenline.org/email-us](https://www.teenline.org/email-us)**.
  - **[Soluna](#)** App: Mobile app for mindfulness, self-care, and mental health education tailored for youth.

## Key Strategies

- **School-Based Health Centers/Wellness Centers:** Connect students to on-site care.

Find a [School-Based Health Center/Wellness Center](#) near you.

- [Peer-to-Peer mental health support](#): These programs reduce stigma and center prevention, cultural relevance, and early intervention. Train student leaders to be wellness ambassadors.

# Medi-Cal & Access to Care



Many families face barriers accessing healthcare due to fear or misinformation. Educators can help families navigate systems and connect to care.

# Key Strategies

- **Clarify Enrollment:** Inform families that enrolling students in Medi-Cal does not affect immigration status under the Public Charge rule (and that children are eligible regardless of parent status).
  - [DHCS Medi-Cal Immigrant Eligibility FAQs](#)
- **Address Fear Proactively:** Share accurate information and be transparent.
- **Share Trusted Resources:** Partner with local clinics, school-based health centers, legal aid, and trusted CBOs to distribute accurate, multilingual information.
  - [Medicaid and SNAP Data Sharing: What Advocates Need to Know](#)
  - [FAQs: Medicaid Information Sharing with Immigration Enforcement](#)



# Educator Rights & Resources



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**FREEDOM OF SPEECH & ADVOCACY** (*within Employment*)

**PROTECTIONS AGAINST RETALIATION**

**CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS**

**PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT**

**RIGHT TO ORGANIZE & SUPPORT COLLEAGUES**

**WHERE TO GO FOR MORE HELP**

# EDUCATOR RIGHTS & RESOURCES



Educators play a vital role in fostering safe, inclusive schools. In California, those advocating for themselves, colleagues, or students—especially immigrant or LGBTQ+ students—are **protected by state and federal laws**. Following are key legal protections and resources; this list is not comprehensive, and educators should consult legal counsel for additional guidance.

# FREEDOM OF SPEECH & ADVOCACY (within Employment)

Educators have **First Amendment rights**, but these are balanced with their **employer's interests**. Speech made as part of job duties can be limited if it conflicts with curriculum or policy, while speech as a private citizen generally has greater protection. Public employees may advocate for students' rights as long as it doesn't disrupt school operations or conflict with their duties.

## Resource

- [ACLU: Free Speech Rights of Public School Teachers](#)



# PROTECTIONS AGAINST RETALIATION

State and federal labor laws (including the **California Education Code** and **collective bargaining agreements**) prohibit retaliation against educators for engaging in protected activities, such as advocating for equal treatment, reporting discrimination, or supporting a colleague/student.



## Resources

- [California Department of Labor Whistleblower Protections](#)
- [Is the School Retaliating? A Guide to Your Rights](#)

# CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

## PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

Any communication through employer-owned accounts or devices is **public record**. Emails sent through school accounts may be disclosed, so use personal devices for private matters. Under the **California Public Records Act**, parents, journalists, or community members can request communications that LEAs may be required to release. **FERPA** and the **California Education Code** protect certain information—such as student or personal records containing immigration status, chosen name, or gender identity—from disclosure. Sharing such details without consent can be unlawful, and educators should maintain confidentiality unless safety is at risk.

### Resources

- California Department of Education: [Public Access – California Laws & Codes](#)
- ACLU: [Reaffirming Privacy Obligations While Facing New Challenges](#)

# PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT

Teachers are protected from discrimination and harassment based on race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, and more. California law requires educators to prevent and address harassment or discrimination related to race, immigration status, or gender identity. **AB 699** protects immigrant students' right to a safe, inclusive environment, and staff may not ask about or share immigration status. State and federal laws, including the **Education Code**, **FEHA**, and the **Equal Access Act**, protect LGBTQ+ students' rights and ensure equal access to all programs and facilities.

## Resources

- California Civil Rights Department: [Employment Discrimination](#)
- California Department of Education: [Including Immigrant Families – Parents/Family & Community](#)
- ACLU: [LGBTQ Student Rights](#)

# RIGHT TO ORGANIZE AND SUPPORT COLLEAGUES

Educators have the **right to join unions** and advocate for better policies, resources, and protections without retaliation. Union membership and related activities are protected under **California labor law**. After two years of probation, teachers gain permanent status, ensuring due process before dismissal and requiring notice by March 15 if they won't be reemployed.



## Resources

- California Education Code: [Public Educational Employment](#)
- California Education Code: [Permanent Status](#)



# WHERE TO GO FOR MORE HELP

Teachers may find it daunting to navigate the educational and legal systems when their rights, or their student's rights are violated.

While many issues can be resolved at the school site or district level, larger issues may require partnering with trusted organizations and finding legal representation. Follow our **Checklist for Teachers Rights and Next Steps**.

## NEXT STEPS

FOR TEACHERS FACING A  
VIOLATION OF RIGHTS

1

### DOCUMENT

Record details of  
the violation



2

### REPORT

Report the issue to  
administrators



3

### CONSULT

Seek legal advice



4

### FILE

File a formal  
complaint



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# FAQ



**ALL IN FOR  
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## FAQs for Creating Safe and Inclusive Schools Educator K-12 Toolkit

### 1. Where do I go or who do I talk to if a student needs support?

If a student requires resources such as school supplies, a backpack, or glasses, contact their assigned **school counselor**. Counselors often have additional context on a student's needs and can connect the student and family with **school or district resources**. Resources will vary by location.

### 2. What if a student is late or absent due to family or mental health reasons?

- **Excused Absences:** In California, students have the right to an excused absence to support mental or behavioral health. Schools should allow students to complete any missed assignments or tests.
- **Supportive Practices:** Instead of punitive measures, schools should explore the student's reasons for tardiness and offer supports. Examples include:
  - Asking a trusted adult or neighbor to provide transportation
  - Offering virtual attendance while ensuring equitable educational opportunities
- **Pick-up Issues:** If a student is not picked up, schools should first attempt to reach all listed emergency contacts. Families should maintain updated emergency contact information. **Contacting the Department of Social Services should be a last resort.**



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