



“BEING HAPPY OUTSIDE THE POOL MEANS FAST SWIMMING IN THE POOL.”

-ERIC SHANTEAU

You Can Play has been working in sports inclusivity training and advocacy for almost 12 years, exponentially multiplying the impact of sports organization's inclusion work and focus. We call upon organizations, athletes, coaches, referees & officials, fans and families for their support & visibility. Commitment to the LGBTQ+ community tells generations of participants that athletics welcomes everyone.

If you can swim, you can swim!
If you can play, you can play!

84%



North Americans witnessed or experienced homophobia in sport

24%



LGBTQ+ youth that participate in sport vs 65% of straight youth

20%



North American Gen Z & Millennial that identify as LGBTQ+ community



4 easy ways to support inclusion in swimming

1. Signals + Symbols

Small items make a big difference! A pin or a patch on a parka, a colorful suit, a rainbow on your practice cap - anything can be a signal to those searching for support, understanding, or simply a safe place to swim. A sign hung in the pool area reminding people about language or about your commitment to inclusion works well.

2. Hit the books

Practice is not just laps, it means learning how to be a great teammate. When we get better at communicating about what we're doing, we all swim better! Educating yourself on other cultures, backgrounds and people is the best way to support them, and when we're open to learning we can better show up for each other -- whether you're on LCM or SCY.

3. Speak Up

In the locker room, in the car on your way to an away meet, or talking to coaches, fans or family - language is the leading way people include diverse individuals to your club or potentially exclude with your words. Take accountability if you have used homophobic language or offended others. Step in when you hear other teammates using this language and stamp it out. Encouraging our teammates to avoid terms, attacks, or 'smack talking' that uses homophobic, racist or other excluding language will ensure your club and pool is a home for everyone!

4. Choosing the right suit

Always be mindful of how a dress code, suit, uniform or even tshirts and sweats can potentially impact or limit some swimmers. Anticipate potential suit exemption requests or alternate clothing requests - there are **plenty of reasons someone might need to suit up differently**, whether it be religion, gender identity, disability or simply personal preference.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CLUBS & POOLS

When thinking about creating a space that welcomes everyone, regardless of sexuality, gender identity, it starts with the foundation:

- Solid policies that state your commitment to inclusion
- Codes of conduct that specifically ban homophobic language and behavior
- Guidelines for coaches, admins, volunteers and parents on how to include and support athletes and participants
- A registration form/system that uses inclusive language and questions (ie. a blank for members to write in gender instead of 'M' or 'F' as options)

Planning for gender diverse participants can include:

- Gender-neutral/family facilities
- Education resources about use of neutral language

Efforts to address these items will create opportunity for your club with new participants.



Pools & Team Spaces

Competitive spaces and team areas are a great place to set your culture and ensure your pool and club are inclusive of every participant. Show your allyship by choosing athlete leaders to help stamp out homophobic behavior and language. Make locker rooms & team spaces welcome to all with signage and monitor 'shower talk' and other chat (in group chats and in the locker room).

Instead of assuming what considerations an athlete may need, engage with that person to ask about changing areas, restrooms, etc. Let them guide the conversation.

Common issues for focus:

Potential Challenge

Best Practice

Locker Rooms	Signage & Athlete Leaders to encourage language/behavior
Travel/Away Meets	Plan Ahead for Considerations, ask the athlete!
Meets/Practice	PA Reads, Train Volunteers & Officials on language & potential issues
Dry Land Workouts/Gyms	Plan for your land spaces to reflect the same values you want in the pool
Spectator Areas	Parent Code of Conduct! Spectator signage & someone to enforce



CONSIDERATIONS FOR CLUBS & POOLS

Barriers to LGBTQ+ inclusion in swimming sports include persistent bias, limited visibility of LGBTQ+ athletes, and inadequate anti-discrimination policies. Access to gender-neutral facilities is often lacking, and traditional gender norms create unwelcoming environments. Efforts to address these issues require comprehensive educational programs, stronger anti-discrimination policies, and greater support from clubs and governing bodies to foster inclusivity and respect.

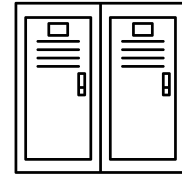
SWIMMING SPACES

Thinking about the spaces that are specific to swimming is a direct way to apply allyship principles to your sport. Make sure locker rooms have inclusive signage and policies, think about conditions for athletes (especially youth athletes) to change during away meets/games, be aware of your team's "shower talk", take note of behavior in the water, and work outside of events such as meets or practices with local LGBTQ+ organizations to support each other.

- Locker Rooms
- Showers
- Travel / Away Meets
- Practice
- Gyms / Clubs

COMMON ISSUES IN SWIMMING CULTURE

- Toxic masculinity / machismo
- Sexism and gender-policing
- Locker room / shower culture



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [USA Swimming LGBTQ+ Resources \(Policies\)](#)
- [LGBTQ Aquatic Management Strategies - BGSU](#)
- [Trans and Non-Binary Swimming in the UK](#)
- [Queering Indoor Swimming](#)

