

# PRIDE GUIDE

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEAMS, LEAGUES, ATHLETES & SPORT



2025

Powered by **You Can Play** for our Partners



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# partnering with YCP

You Can Play is dedicated to making sports a safe and welcoming space for athletes, coaches, referees, administrators, and fans. Since our founding by the Burke family, Brian Kitts, and Glenn Witman, we've partnered with athletic organizations worldwide to foster respect and fairness in sports. We work to shift locker room and spectator culture, advise on equitable policies, enhance fan engagement, and expand participation. By providing tools and support, we **help partners create safer access to sports and strengthen connections between sports brands and the LGBTQ+ community.**



## WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

You Can Play is here to support your efforts—you're not alone! As sports professionals, we're passionate about helping you create a safe and welcoming environment for all. Our team specializes in practical strategies that make a real impact. Connect with our experts to schedule a call, and we'll work alongside you to ensure your initiatives are effective, engaging, and meaningful for your community.



# pride in 2025

In the wake of a divisive election in the US, harmful legislation in Alberta being introduced, and several companies publicly pulling back their DEI initiatives; it's tempting to feel defeated. **This year's Pride season is a vital call to refocus our message and hone our mission.** We cannot afford despair. Instead, we must regroup, rethink, and recommit to a fight that is far from over.

## THE POWER OF SHARED VALUES

Americans and Canadians believe in **the right to work hard, succeed, and live freely without discrimination.** They support fairness on the field and in the workplace, where merit—not prejudice—determines opportunity. By grounding our advocacy in these widely held beliefs, we can forge connections with those who feel disconnected from or wary of our cause.

A key to this connection on values is the **'safety'** aspect and its differing definition. Many people think they were protecting their sons and daughters by voting and advocating against trans athletes in sport. We must speak to these parents and educate them on the true issues in sport and the importance of ensuring every athlete has a home and is safe both on the field of play and also off the field in team spaces—including those we may not personally know or understand. **Safety means many things in sport, and must include the safety to be yourself in your sport.**

## MOVING FROM CONFLICT TO CONVERSATION

One of the most damaging narratives pushed by opponents is the idea that inclusion comes at someone else's expense, that including someone new means I get less. Whether in debates about transgender athletes or curriculum in schools, fear of loss—of fairness, of tradition, of control—fuels resistance.

Our messaging has already shifted in recent years from **reactive to proactive**, and we must keep adjusting. Instead of defending against attacks, we highlight the countless stories of success and solidarity that inclusion has fostered. **Instead of battling over definitions with intention to exclude, we must show the benefit of sport that welcomes every participant.** Instead of only talking, we have to listen more to craft messaging, education and programs that inspire local coaches, parents, and mentors, to learn how to make a child that arrives on their field feel at home in sport.

**LISTENING AND IMPROVING OUR MESSAGE DOES NOT MEAN WATERING DOWN OUR BELIEFS OR ALLOWING HATE IN ANY FORM.**





# response guide

## BIAS ASSESSMENT

1. **What emotions am I bringing into this conversation?** Am I feeling defensive, frustrated, or like I need to “win” this discussion?
2. **What do I assume about the other person’s knowledge or intentions?** Am I expecting them to be hostile, ignorant, or unwilling to change?
3. **What language am I instinctively using?** Am I centering a certain experience as the default?
4. **What is my goal in this conversation?** Am I prioritizing proving a point over fostering understanding?
5. **How will I measure “success” in this conversation?** Am I expecting a full mindset shift, or would a small step (like reducing harmful language) be a win?

## AVOIDING INFLAMMATORY TERMS + BUZZWORDS

Buzzword	Alternative Suggestions	Notes
<i>Microaggression</i>	Harmful Comment, Subtle Bias, Dismissive Remarks	More accessible and less technical
<i>Woke</i>	Thoughtful, Open-minded, Socially Aware	"Woke" has been weaponized, but the concept remains valuable
<i>Virtue Signaling</i>	Performative Activism, Empty Gestures	Focuses on insincerity rather than attacking all forms of advocacy
<i>Education</i>	Research, Learning, Awareness	"Education" can sound one-directional; reframing as learning encourages engagement
<i>Privilege</i>	Unequal Advantages, Social Head Start, Built-in Benefits	Acknowledges systemic disparities without triggering defensiveness
<i>DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion)</i>	Respect & Fairness, Thriving Teams, Belonging in Sports	"DEI" is a major flashpoint; reframing it in terms of teamwork and fairness makes it more palatable

## KEY POINTS FOR DIVISIVE CONVERSATIONS IN SPORTS

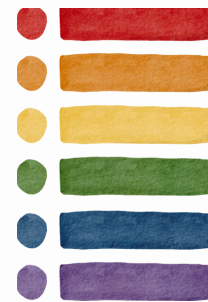
- **Minimize defensive framing:** Instead of reacting to myths about trans athletes, proactively emphasize fairness and enjoyment for all.
- **More real-world, relatable examples:** Bring in examples of successful LGBTQ athletes, fan behavior, or team dynamics.
- **Reframe allyship as everyday sportsmanship:** Instead of making it seem like a special effort, integrate these ideas into what all good teams, coaches, and fans already do.



# pride plan checklist

## PRIDE PLANNING CHECKLIST

Before you start, it's crucial to plan your Pride Night and promote it effectively. Ensure that you have the support of the team's management and players. Here are the initial steps:



- Get your FULL team together - including athletes and coaches, marketing, comms/social, development, leadership, etc.
- Find local LGBTQ+ leaders you have a relationship with to involved in your planning - Involve them early in your process
- Plan the events - Internal and also events from the community you will join. Plan only the number of items you can actually accomplish.
- Get the Parade date for your city, contact the organizers and get your slot booked. Or find the local organization you would like to join.
- Design your logo, website banners, social media avatars, and other items you will change for pride. Work with a local LGBTQ+ artist!
- Get your merch developed - Both for your team internally (tshirts for parade marchers) and your fans and community to purchase on your site. Also banners, signs, flags, etc. for your events
- Schedule your comms (suggestions in the social media section). Education and information posts are the best options!
- Publish your plans - Let your internal team know what your organization will be doing for Pride, and also push your plans our publicly. Talk about it!
- Execute the plan! Do what you commit to and the community will be grateful for the allyship and advocacy.



# planning your pride



Impactful Pride celebrations and initiatives take significant forethought and preparation and cannot be cobbled together last-minute. An end-of-May scramble to pull something off can cause your efforts to be seen as disingenuous or reactive. Get ahead and start planning early. Use the checklist below to see which activities and efforts best fit with your organization.

## GATHER THE TEAM

Your Planning should begin with bringing your whole team together, not just sticking this to HR or Community Outreach. Gather your folks from your athletes/coaches, Social Media/Comms, Marketing, Outreach, HR, Executive, AND members of the LGBTQ+ community/organizations to make sure your plan is valuable and makes the impact you seek. Do not 'guess' if your plan will help the community, ask during the planning process.

There are a number of community partners who are worthy of partnership with your organization. Reach out to integrate in their efforts and also involve them in yours. The more reach you have in the community, the more your message and brand as an inclusive organization will be heard.



[EVENT PLAN  
OUTLINE](#)



[PRIDE ACTIVATIONS](#)



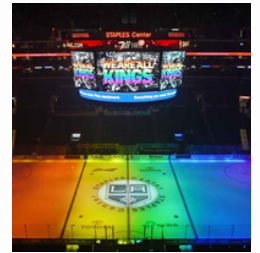
[STEP-BY-STEP  
ACTIVATIONS GUIDE](#)



# activations + events

## PRIDE GAMES/TOURNAMENTS

Pride games, matches, meets, tournaments, scrimmages, etc. are a great way to showcase your passion for inclusion and specifically welcome a community to your sport. They don't need to be only in June, in fact June gets busy and you are likely better doing them outside of the June window.



## PRIDE PARADES

**Join your local parade!** If you can, purchase a spot in the parade, and invite your athletes, admins, fans, etc. Also invite local LGBTQ+ organizations that may not be able to afford a spot in the parade. This is a great way to connect with the LGBTQ+ community and find new fans. Contact your local parade organizer and chat about the opportunity!



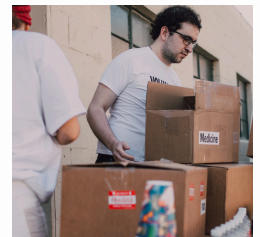
## LEARN TO PLAY EVENTS

Bringing the LGBTQ+ community into your sport involves going to them and offering opportunities to learn how to play, the rules, terminology, etc. Use your athletes and staff to run learn to play or learn the rules sessions, to introduce your sport to a new potential fan base.



## VOLUNTEER EVENTS

Having your athletes, coaches and staff interact with the community is vital to understand why Pride celebrations are important. Send your folks to a local LGBTQ+ organization's event or facility to volunteer, and learn about their work and stories. Your time and willingness to learn supports local LGBTQ+ organizations.



## FLAG SERVICE

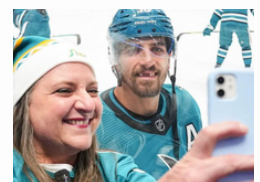
**Flag Exchange:** Allow fans to bring their Pride flags to the game and exchange them for team-branded Pride flags.

**On-Field Flag Ceremony:** During halftime or between innings, have a flag ceremony where fans can hold and display their Pride flags together.



## MEET + GREETs

Host player meet and greets with fans. Encourage players to interact with fans and take photos, showing their support for the LGBTQ+ community. Offer VIP packages with exclusive meet and greet opportunities.



## EDUCATION SESSIONS

Education truly connects people to the cause, and allows your organization to speak about what Pride has meant to you and your community. **You Can Play's education** for your staff, athletes and community will bring inclusion into sharp focus and set a standard.



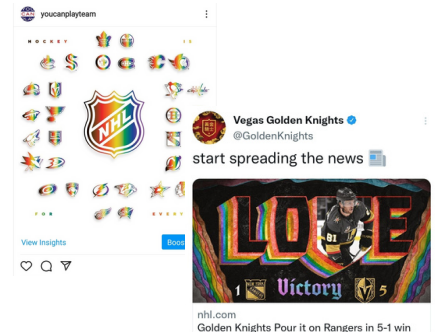
# social media

Social Media can be your best friend or worst enemy when approaching your pride planning and initiatives. Do not make the mistake of popping up a rainbow 'happy pride' on June 1, with no additional follow up, and expect a positive outcome. Here is a suggested social media Pride plan:

- MAY 25** Finalize social media schedule
- MAY 30** Publish schedule of planned events for June
- JUNE 1** Debut logo or special design for Pride
- JUNE 4** Feature a local LGBTQ+ organization
- JUNE 10** Feature advocacy champions in your team/region
- JUNE 21** Feature a piece of history or statistics around Pride
- JUNE 30** Feature your involvement or activism from the month

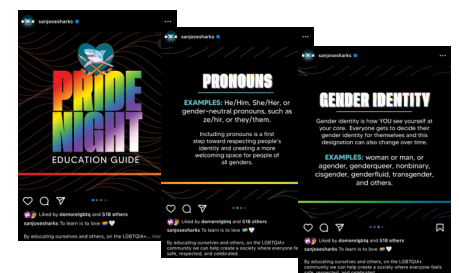
## FEATURE YOUR WORK

Highlight your team/organization/league's efforts throughout the year for when you did pride activations or engagements. Celebrate what you have done and accomplished for inclusion over the past year.



## SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Post information and education to inform your community about the LGBTQ+ community. Remember, your strength is your current fans and participants, all whom can benefit from this education!



**other  
social  
media  
resources:**



[BEST PRACTICES](#)



[RESPONSE GUIDE](#)



[HASHTAG GUIDE](#)



# branding

Support in 2025 for the LGBTQ+ community has to go further than a rainbow logo, as the community is seeing increases in violence and attacks on our very existence. Be thoughtful in your approach to your Pride Month branding and think about how important the visibility is for the community.

## PRIDE LOGO DESIGN

Work with artists in your community to think through what your pride logo could be, and what it communicates about your values and your support of the LGBTQ+ Community. Here is an example of Canucks' 2023 Pride Logo and the story behind it.



## SIGN AND BANNER DESIGN

Here are some templates for ideas for your signage and branding, but feel free to get creative with your designs and voice!

- New Signage for Bathrooms
- An 'All are Welcome' above a urinal or near concession areas can be a great time to catch people
- Signage in locker rooms and team spaces
- Small signs as gifts to employees and fans

[click here for sample Pride banner designs](#)



## TO RAINBOW OR NOT TO RAINBOW...

Making public statements like changing your logo or website during Pride Month is a great visibility item and can communicate to your people internally, and your community externally, that you care about and actively welcome the LGBTQ+ community to your sport, your team, your league. When done as part of an overall initiative and year-round inclusion work, this will be a wonderful celebration. Partner with a local LGBTQ+ artist, clarify your intentions, and be thoughtful about your messaging so it aligns with your new visibility.



# merch

## T-SHIRTS, CLOTHING, SCARVES, HATS

Making an item for your team, coaches, staff, community is a great way to bring everyone together around your inclusion efforts. Merch should be available for your greater community to purchase on your website and at events and games. Show your organization's pride by offering some items (hopefully year round, not just June) to support the community...and utilize the proceeds to support your inclusion efforts!



## BUTTONS, STICKERS, BRACELETS, BAGS

Many stadiums and parades do not allow stickers, but they are a great gift for waterbottles, offices, etc. Get creative on items you get for your community!



## REGIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Providing items to a local LGBTQ+ league or youth organization can be a great way to connect with the community!



[MERCH FAQ](#)



## THINK LOCAL

Find a local LGBTQ+ artist, and engage them to make a special pride logo! Tell their story, share the meaning behind the logo, connect with the community.





# measuring success

Measuring the impact and outcomes are key to continuing to find support for these efforts. Doing good is a wonderful thing, but much of this work can be classified as ‘feeling like we are doing good’, over actually making positive change.

Here are some key questions to ask yourself and your team as you are planning a Pride event, as well as when you are evaluating the success of a Pride event:

- **Did this make me/us feel like we did something inclusive?**
- **Did this actually include people not currently involved or authentically in our sport?**
- **Did we see an increase in attendance, viewership, or engagement from LGBTQ+ communities?**
- **Did our messaging align with long-term commitments to LGBTQ+ inclusion in sports?**

Many activities done in the name of inclusion are more for our organization to feel like we did something to help. Always evaluate your efforts for efficacy with those you are trying to include.



***Track your Social & Comms insights and website traffic... and share them publicly!***



***Survey your attendees at events for feedback on your efforts, and survey your team on their impressions.***



***Use July to chat with LGBTQ+ organizations to get their insights on your work, and make notes for improvement!***



***Review whether the event's impact extends beyond one day, influencing policies, partnerships, or training efforts.***

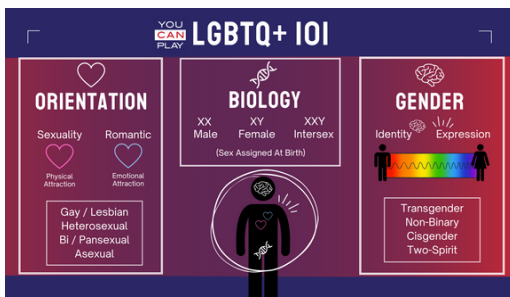
# education during pride

## HISTORY OF PRIDE



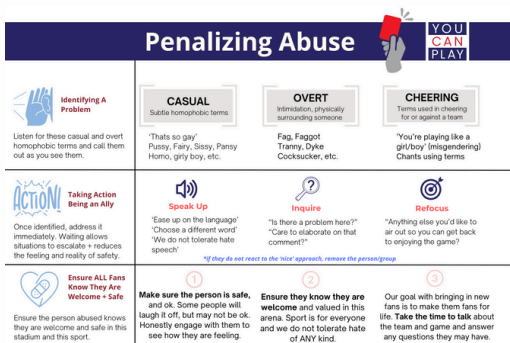
US and Canadian history of Pride illuminates a lot of significant milestones in sports history -- consider giving an overview of your region's history surrounding Pride marches, protests, and games.

## LGBTQ+ 101



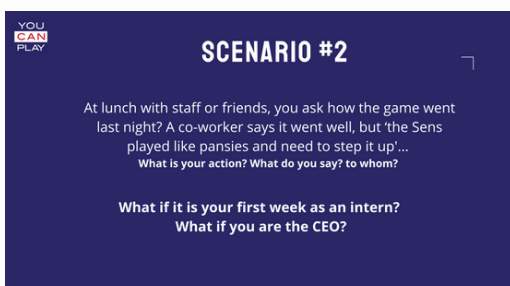
Giving an overview of LGBTQ+ 101 including defining orientation, biological features, and breaking down what gender actually consists of are great ways to provoke thoughtful discussions during Pride month.

## DE-ESCALATION TACTICS



Something we recommend for all staff, security, and authority figures in sport is our de-escalation pocket guide. Learn to identify and disrupt homophobia as it happens, while ensuring spectator safety at events.


## SCENARIO-BASED TRAINING



You Can Play prioritizes scenario-based and real-world situational training. Using this approach and identifying what solutions and responses there are equips sports professionals with the tools needed to address these issues if and when they actually occur.



# contact

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