

1. Prioritize Youth Mental Health: Save Lives

HB 8 breaks confidentiality and risks limiting youth access to vital mental health services.

LGBTQ+ youth face disproportionately high rates of mental health challenges, including suicidal ideation, depression, substance abuse, bullying, family rejection, housing insecurity, self-harm, sexual assault, lack of teacher support, and school withdrawal due to harassment. Removing confidentiality between mental health professionals and students could discourage students from seeking the care they need due to fear of parental rejection, abuse, and/or neglect.

Youth deserve a safe space to seek help. Parents already have access to therapy notes.

2. Ensure Student Access to Support Services

HB 8 requires practitioners to report ALL mental health changes, even minor issues.

Schools are often the first point of contact for students seeking help with mental health challenges and typical adolescent concerns. Increased reporting requirements will divert already limited resources from students in crisis and hinder practitioners' ability to provide effective care. This increased burden may deter individuals from entering the field of youth mental health.

Practitioners are ethically and legally obligated to support youth. Trust their expertise and let them do their jobs.

3. Protect Youth Autonomy and Promote Safety

HB 8 forces practitioners to "out" LGBTQ+ youth even if it could cause abuse or neglect.

LGBTQ+ youth actively negotiate how, when, and to whom they come out to based on whether or not it is safe to do so. Without careful consideration, this disclosure can lead to bullying, harassment, family rejection, and long-term mental health implications. Coming out to at least one supportive adult can significantly improve a young person's mental health and reduce the risk of self-harm and suicide.

Professionals need to be able to discern if, when, and how to disclose a youth's LGBTQ+ identity so the youth is not abused or neglected.

4. Creating Inclusive Schools

HB 8 bans ALL education related to sexuality, gender, and LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

Without comprehensive sex education and LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, students are denied critical information about their bodies, relationships, and identities. This can lead to them resorting to the internet for information, believing harmful misconceptions, taking risky behaviors, and increasing stigma towards themselves and others. While parents can already opt youth out of sexuality education, being LGBTQ+ is not a choice.

We must prepare our students for the future by equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive.