



## **Gay & Lesbian Athletes Association Peer Support Program**

Gay and lesbian athletes face a variety of unique issues. The issues facing these athletes go beyond homophobia and threats of violence. Coming out to their peers can be a daunting challenge for any athlete. They fear the potential for adverse reactions from teammates, coaches and others in their sport.

Sports environments can even cause a conflict in identity and destroy self-esteem. Some athletes may come to believe that they can be gay or an athlete, but not both. Some athletes go so far as to quit their sport so they don't have to deal with these issues. Others choose to hide their sexual orientation because they believe this is necessary to be successful in their sports endeavors.

GLAA hopes to remove barriers for gay and lesbian youth, men and women who want to participate fully in the sports and recreation communities. GLAA will strive to do this by providing resources, information and support to individuals who may be experiencing discrimination and stigma due to their sexual orientation.

### ***The Workbook***

GLAA is distributing a workbook with a series of action guides designed to help athletes, parents, coaches, and athletic directors take steps towards making their sports environment more inclusive of gay and lesbian athletes.

Often coaches and athletic directors want to help gay and lesbian athletes but don't know how to do so. The workbook is designed to provide guidance in making a sports environment more accepting for gay and lesbian athletes. Each guide contains a list of actions that can assist in creating an environment in which all athletes feel comfortable, secure and safe.

### ***The Mentoring Relationship***

GLAA now operates a peer support program to match volunteer mentors with people (mentees) to help them work through the challenges of being gay or lesbian in sport. Mentors provide support, guidance and advice on a one-on-one basis, through email, telephone or in person. The goal of the program is to help gay and lesbian athletes (and others in the sport community) overcome the challenges of being gay and lesbian in sport.

A mentor is someone who provides a person (the mentee) with support, advice and guidance. A mentor listens and helps their mentee understand an issue and supports him or her in working through that issue, problem or challenge.

People who have experiences that might be useful to others, are good listeners or have a good understanding of the issues that might face lesbian and gay athletes are invited to become a mentor.

Even people who feel they don't have enough experience can still become mentors – mentors constantly surprise themselves. By becoming a mentor, a person can use their strengths to help others. They gain an appreciation of the troubles others are facing and a renewed appreciation for their own ability to help others deal with tough issues related to homophobia.

To become a mentor, send an email to [mentor@glaa-sport.org](mailto:mentor@glaa-sport.org) or go to the GLAA website, [www.glaa-sport.org](http://www.glaa-sport.org).

People who feel the need to talk to someone about being gay or lesbian in sport are invited to work through these issues with a mentor. Mentors may have personal experience in dealing with the same issues and can help understand these challenges. Mentors can help people achieve their goals and succeed as a gay or lesbian athlete.

To be paired up with a mentor, send an email to [mentor@glaa-sport.org](mailto:mentor@glaa-sport.org) or go to the GLAA website, [www.glaa-sport.org](http://www.glaa-sport.org)

### *The Resource Guide*

A resource guide has been developed listing agencies, groups and organizations that provide support to gay and lesbian athletes on a range of issues.

### *The Library of Resources*

GLAA has compiled an electronic library of resources relating to homophobia in sport and is available on our web site. Documents such as the peer mentor program guide and action guides for athletes, coaches, administrators and parents are designed to help eliminate homophobia in sport and may be downloaded for free on our web site.