

The sport of lacrosse is for everyone. To ensure a safe and positive environment in our programs and activities, within our office, at all meetings related to our business and any other operation or event that we conduct, permit or sanction, the Ontario Lacrosse Association (OLA) expects appropriate behaviour consistent with ***Bill 13 of the Province of Ontario*** and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada. The OLA supports equal opportunity and prohibits discrimination in all forms. Staff, volunteers, and all members of the OLA are expected to conduct themselves pursuant to this policy; behaviour that adversely affects the experience of our members is considered detrimental to our image and reputation, and violations will be considered for merit at the sole discretion of the OLA's Board of Directors following a complaint made in writing.

1. **The impact of discrimination.** Discrimination can damage an individual or group's participation, work, mental and physical health, academic ability and/or sporting performance. Furthermore, it violates that individual or group's basic human right to be treated with respect and dignity. Discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity contributes to lower rates of participation in sport by members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Because sport can provide participants with enjoyment, relaxation, income, health and social benefits, it is imperative that our members have an equal and fair opportunity to participate without facing discrimination.
2. **The changing landscape.** In recent years, Canadian sport leaders have developed national and provincial policy initiatives and programs design to promote safety, fun, fair play and ethical conduct in amateur sport. In most cases, the experience of participating in amateur sport is overwhelmingly positive, but in rare cases, the sport experience is not safe and welcoming. Issues such as harassment, bullying, violence, homophobia and transphobia undermine the powerful potential of lacrosse to contribute to personal, social and community development.
3. **Ontario Lacrosse Values.** The OLA's Harassment Policy prohibits any member or group from behaving or conducting themselves in a manner which dishonours or disgraces the sport of lacrosse. In addition to striving for athletic success, participation in sport provides the opportunity for members to experience a range of values, including equality, teamwork, respect and honour. To this end, the OLA maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender orientation. Members of the OLA have a responsibility to treat participants of the game with respect at all times.
4. **Expectations of our leaders.** OLA members in a position of authority, which include staff, the Board of Directors and Board of Governors, non-playing bench personnel and referees, are considered ambassadors in the game of lacrosse. Homophobia and transphobia in sport remain largely unchallenged, and our participants may find that the values of sport are not extended to them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or because of what their sexual orientation is perceived to be. Ambassadors are expected to lead by example, and to address situations where OLA members are found to be violating equal opportunity for the game's participants. Best practices include non-playing bench personnel and association executives addressing the topic at the beginning of the season and, if violations arise, throughout the season as necessary.
5. **Organizational commitment.** When challenging discrimination, the OLA recognizes that people in the LGBTIQ+ community may face unique and fluctuating circumstances when participating in sport. By making a commitment to equality and diversity that challenges homophobia and transphobia, the OLA requires all member associations to make reasonable accommodations for members to participate in lacrosse while respecting membership privacy. Should any situation arise where an association fails to make reasonable accommodations for members to participate, the OLA's Board of Directors should be notified to determine the appropriate course of action.
6. **It's the right thing to do.** Instances of homophobic and transphobic language and behaviour are often ignored because individuals do not know how to properly respond or because they believe that the language and behavior is not meant to be malicious or intentionally homophobic or transphobic. However, for the game to grow, it is important that everyone involved has the courage to address these situations directly. In the same way that racist language and behaviour is challenged, all non-playing bench personnel, referees and association leaders should feel confident in challenging homophobia and transphobic language and behaviour. "Doing nothing" is neither acceptable nor excusable, and language or actions that disrespect members are never "just part of the game." Addressing homophobic and transphobic behaviour when it happens is the right thing to do.
7. **Taking further action.** In certain cases, homophobic or transphobic language or behavior may require more serious attention. To determine whether further action is necessary, incidents should be discussed within the association and should include documented incidents and the steps taken to rectify the situation. For repeat/serious offenses, the Board of Directors may be notified of a complaint in writing to determine the appropriate course of action.