

SWAD LGBTQ+ Legislative Awareness and Advocacy

NASW-TX SOGIE Committee

SOGIE Committee Overview and Mission

The NASW-TX Equity Committees provide advice and consultation to the chapter board of directors via the Executive Director, to enhance social workers' capacity to support human rights for all Texans. The Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Committee is particularly focused on promoting policies, laws, and programs that affirm, support, and value sexual orientation, gender identity and expression among individuals, families, and communities. Embracing the values and ethics of our profession, the committee serves as an advocacy, educational, and advisory group to end all forms of discrimination based on homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism in all social institutions and the public and private sectors.

Key items in this brief:

- Current social and political landscape
- 2025 laws now in effect
- Ongoing/recent litigation and opinions which may influence practice
- Taking action
- Local/State/National Resources
- Texas SOGIE centers

2026- A year without a session

As Texas moves through 2026, the impact of recent policy decisions continues to unfold in real time. Texas is a bi-annual legislative state, with legislative sessions occurring in odd numbered years. While 2026 is not a legislative session year, we are seeing the impact of the 2025 legislative cycle, which marked one of the most aggressive periods of anti-LGBTQ+ policymaking in the state's history, with a surge of over 220 bills targeting LGBTQ+ Texans, especially transgender people. While only a handful of these 2025 bills became law thanks to the efforts of countless advocates, the past two legislative sessions have reshaped access to health care, education, public spaces, and legal recognition, creating new and significant barriers for the communities social workers serve.

Old laws, new questions

While no new legislation is being passed this year, the policy landscape remains anything but quiet. Some laws from the 2023 and 2025 sessions are being challenged in courts, others that were delayed by court proceedings are now being implemented, and others are the subject of newly issued legal opinions, leaving providers and clients navigating uncertainty, fear, and rapidly shifting guidance. The realities of these policies related to gender-affirming care, censorship in schools, and broader questions of civil rights and free expression, are still being defined, and contested, every day.

The bigger picture

This moment in Texas is part of a broader national landscape where LGBTQ+ rights, specifically trans rights, have become a central political battleground. Across the country, we are seeing a patchwork of protections and restrictions, with courts increasingly deciding what rights LGBTQ+ people can access and where. At the same time, harmful rhetoric and policy efforts continue to shape public perception, often increasing stigma and risk for already marginalized communities, including immigrants, all women, and Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

A 2026 report found that 29 states have enacted at least one restrictive policy affecting LGBTQ+ people, with 53% of transgender youth living in those states, and 27 states banning gender-affirming care for minors ([Williams Institute, 2026](#)). These bans are often justified through claims about safety, despite the same care remaining available to cisgender youth. Nationally, the impact is significant, 90% of LGBTQ+ young people report that recent politics have harmed their well-being ([Trevor Project, 2025](#)), raising serious long-term concerns as they grow into adulthood in an increasingly hostile environment.

53%

of trans youth live one of the 29 states with at least one restrictive law or policy.

(Williams Institute, 2026)

50%

of trans youth live in one of the 27 states that have banned access to gender affirming health care for trans minors.

(Williams Institute, 2026)

90%

of LGBTQ+ young people reported that recent politics negatively impacted their well-being

(Trevor Project, 2025)

2025 Laws Enacted

The table below highlights the 7 anti-LGBTQ+ bills which became law in 2025. (Sourced from Equality Texas, TENT, Texas Legislature)

Bill Number	Bill Summary	Implications
HB 229	<p>Codifies a binary definition of sex in Texas law, defining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Female”: An individual whose reproductive system is developed to produce ova. • “Male”: An individual whose reproductive system is developed to fertilize ova. <p>The bill mandates that all state records reflect this definition, overriding existing legal gender markers for transgender individuals and erasing intersex people whose biology does not fit this framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal erasure of 120,000+ trans Texans (ID mismatches risk harassment/violence) • Exclusion of intersex Texans, 1.7% of the Texas population • 2.5 million to remove “unknown” sex designations from databases, creating administrative chaos for agencies and individuals.
SB 1188	<p>Mandates electronic health records (EHRs) include an unchangeable “biological sex at birth” field, only alterable for clerical errors or diagnosed sexual development disorders. Allows gender identity to be recorded separately. Grants parents unrestricted access to minors’ records. Fines up to \$250K for noncompliance. IMPORTANT: The bill does not explicitly state that the field must be filled out. Additionally, the bill states that other fields related to gender identity etc. may be added.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misgendering and exposure of sensitive info • Minors’ records are accessible to parents/guardians without restriction, could result in outing of trans youth to unsupportive families • Barriers to care and provider errors • Financial penalties driving over-compliance • Loss of trust in healthcare systems
SB 1257	<p>Requires insurers covering gender-affirming care to also cover all detransition costs, lifelong monitoring, and screenings, even if initial care occurred under another plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May result in higher premiums for trans people • Insurers likely to drop coverage entirely • Increased paperwork delaying care • Risk of unsafe DIY or unlicensed care
HB 1106	<p>Amends Family Code to specify that parental rejection of a child’s LGBTQ+ identity (refusal of affirming care, names, pronouns) is not child abuse/neglect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPS/courts may be blocked from intervening even when harm results • Increased isolation and suicide risk among LGBTQ+ youth • Chilling effect on mandated reporters • Normalization of parental rejection, worsening homelessness and estrangement
SB 12	<p>Requires parental consent for sexuality instruction, affirms parental control over moral/religious education, and mandates school facility-use reports. Prohibits school employees from supporting students in social transitioning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Censorship of LGBTQ+ topics • Hostile climate deterring teacher support • Loss of safe spaces like GSAs/Pride events • Exacerbation of mental health crises among LGBTQ+ youth
HB 18	<p>Expands rural healthcare via grants, telehealth, and hospital support, but an adopted amendment nullifies parental consent for mental health services affirming gender identity inconsistent with “biological sex.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural providers may become hesitant to offer certain mental health services to children and adolescents, especially those related to gender identity, to avoid legal or regulatory complications. • Compliance burdens diverting resources • Erosion of community trust in hospitals • No direct funding cut but indirect chilling effect on care
SB 8	<p>Prohibits transgender and gender-expansive people from using multi-occupancy restrooms, locker rooms, shower rooms, and sleeping quarters in state-controlled buildings (including higher education institutions and any facilities receiving state funds). Requires use of facilities based solely on sex assigned at birth. Enforcement is unclear and likely inconsistent across agencies.</p> <p>View the SOGIE committee one-pager on SB 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fines on entities (\$25,000 first violation; \$125,000 for each subsequent) but not individuals • Encourages reporting to the Attorney General, creating surveillance and vigilantism. • Reinforces state-level discrimination, setting a precedent for private institutions to follow • Vague language = inconsistent enforcement across jurisdictions • Contributes to broader efforts to normalize fear, restrict rights, and justify discrimination against transgender, intersex, and nonbinary Texans

Lawsuits and Legal Opinions

Even outside of the legislative session, the fight over LGBTQ+ rights in Texas continues to play out in the courts and through state-issued legal opinions. Laws passed in 2023 and 2025 targeting LGBTQ+ Texans, particularly transgender youth, are now the subject of ongoing legal challenges. At the same time, legal opinions issued by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton has issued legal opinions which has the potential to impact how social workers practice in Texas. Together, these court cases and legal opinions underscore that the current policy landscape is not settled, it is actively being contested, with significant implications for access to care, civil rights, and ethical social work practice. The following cases and legal opinion highlight some of the most significant and active areas of legal contestation, shaping how these laws are interpreted and experienced in practice across Texas.

Legal Cases

SB 12 (2025) the "Student Identity Censorship Law"- GSA Network v. Morath, filed by the ACLU of Texas, Transgender Law Center, and Baker McKenzie.

- Legal Challenges: The lawsuit challenges the law's ban on LGBTQ+ student clubs (GSAs), prohibition of inclusivity efforts, restrictions on social transition (use of chosen names/pronouns), and bans on "don't say LGBTQ+" content. Plaintiffs argue these provisions violate the First Amendment (freedom of speech), the Fourteenth Amendment (equal protection), and the federal Equal Access Act.
- Status: A preliminary injunction was issued in February 2026, halting the enforcement of some provisions in the law for specific districts for the specific districts participating in the lawsuit (Katy, Plano, and Houston ISD). The ruling halts bans on student clubs (GSAs) and restrictions on using preferred names/pronouns in these districts while a legal challenge proceeds.

SB 14 (2025) the ban on gender affirming medical care for transgender youth (2023)- Loe v. Texas. Filed by the ACLU and partners.

- Legal Challenges: Plaintiffs argue the law violates parental rights and discriminates against transgender youth based on sex, interferes with private, medically necessary decisions and deprives youth of essential healthcare, forcing families to move or split up.
- Status: The Texas Supreme Court heard arguments on the case, but as of mid-2024, the law remains in effect, and the court has left the ban in place. In March of 2026, the Texas Supreme Court ruled that the Texas Attorney General's Office can require PFLAG to turn over documents related to an investigation into medical care for transgender minors. The court overturned a previous district court decision that had largely blocked the AG's office from seeking certain records.

SB 12 (2023) the "drag ban" restricting "sexually oriented performances" in public spaces or in front of children- The Woodlands Pride v. Paxton. Filed by the ACLU and partners.

- Legal Challenges: Plaintiffs argue the law violates free speech and is unconstitutionally vague, and leaves what is considered sexual or erotic to the eye of the beholder. SB12 is not limited to drag performance but any performance that someone can deem sexual.
- Status: In September 2023, U.S. District Judge David Hittner declared the law unconstitutional, saying that it "impermissibly infringes on the First Amendment" and that it is "not unreasonable" to think it could affect activities like live theater or dancing. In November 2025, a three-judge panel in the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unblocked the law and returned the case to the district court. In February 2026, the appeals court withdrew its November opinion and reissued a largely identical ruling, denying the plaintiff's request for a rehearing in the process and establishing an enforcement date for the law. The law went into effect on March 18, 2026.

Legal Opinion

SB 14- the ban on gender affirming medical care for transgender youth (2023)- While SB 14 is the center of a lawsuit, it is also the center of a recent legal opinion from Texas AG Ken Paxton.

- In July, 2025, the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC), requested a legal opinion from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton regarding SB 14, and whether it applies to mental/behavioral health professionals licensed in Texas. The request for this opinion was in part spurred by right-wing mental health providers in Texas.
- In March 2026, Texas AG Paxton issued his opinion. His legal opinion is that mental health providers are considered "health care providers" under SB 14 and are prohibited from "facilitating" gender-affirming care, threatening them with the loss of their licenses and public funding.
- This "legal opinion" contradicts sections of the Texas "Administrative" Code that defines mental health providers, and the original stated intent of the bill.
- Professional Associations in Texas mental/behavioral health released a [joint statement](#) opposing Paxton's opinion
- Following the release of Paxton's opinion, BHEC issued guidance to licensed providers in a manner which may encourage over-compliance
- In response, the National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter [SOGIE committee issued further guidance](#) and support for licensed social workers

Federal Influence

While much of the immediate impact on LGBTQ+ Texans is shaped at the state level, federal policy developments in 2025 and 2026 have significantly influenced the broader legal and social landscape. Executive orders and U.S. Supreme Court cases and decisions during this period have narrowed protections, expanded federal authority to restrict recognition of gender identity, and elevated legal arguments rooted in “free speech” and religious liberty over anti-discrimination safeguards. Together, these actions are not only reshaping access to care, education, and public life nationwide, but also reinforcing and accelerating restrictive policy trends in states like Texas, making federal developments critical for social workers to monitor and understand.

U.S. Supreme Court: Key Cases & Rulings

United States v. Skrmetti- Gender Affirming Care for Transgender Minors (2025)

- Began when a lawsuit was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Tennessee, Lambda Legal, and Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP on behalf of plaintiff families and Memphis-based physician Dr. Susan Lacy. The plaintiff families and Dr. Lacy argued that the law violates the Equal Protection rights of transgender adolescents. Under President Joe Biden, the United States intervened to also argue that the Tennessee law violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. After President Trump’s inauguration, the U.S. reversed its position.
- The Ruling: Upheld a Tennessee law banning gender-affirming care for minors
- Found no Equal Protection violation, applying a lower level of judicial scrutiny
- Significantly narrows constitutional protections for transgender youth and may influence similar bans nationwide
- [You can view NASW-TX SOGIE Committee response to the decision here](#)

Orr v. Trump- Passport Gender Marker Case (2025)

- This lawsuit stems from a 2025 Executive Order. The American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Massachusetts, and law firm Covington & Burling LLP filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of seven people who have not been able to obtain passports that match who they are because of the State Department’s new Passport Policy or are likely to be impacted by the new policy upon their next renewal.
- The Ruling: Court sided with federal policy restricting gender marker changes on passports
- Reinforces federal authority to limit recognition of gender identity in official documents

Chiles v. Salazar- Conversion Therapy Free Speech Case (2026)

- Kaley Chiles, a licensed professional counselor, argued that the Colorado law prohibiting "conversion therapy" for individuals under 18 infringed on her freedom of speech and exercise of religion.
- The Ruling: The Supreme Court determined the law restricts talk therapy, which constitutes speech, rather than just regulating medical conduct
- Expands “free speech” protections for providers, potentially undermining state-level LGBTQ+ protections
- The case will return to a lower court, which will decide whether to abolish the ban
- This ruling sets precedent that may threaten other existing bans on “conversion therapy”
- Read the [NASW National statement](#) on this decision and the [Colorado Chapter statement](#)

HECOX/BJJ- Trans women and girls in sports (decision anticipated May/June 2026)

- Oral arguments were heard January 2026 in two SCOTUS cases centering transgender girls in sports. *West Virginia v. B.P.J.* centers the 2021 West Virginia law HB 3293, which bans girls who are transgender from participating in school sports. *Little v. Hecox* is a challenge brought by a transgender student against Idaho’s 2020 ban on transgender athletes and requirements for sex testing.
- The bans violate the rights of transgender and cisgender female students under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In addition, attorneys in *West Virginia v. B.P.J.* they argued that West Virginia’s ban violates Title IX, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in educational programs. Federal courts have blocked enforcement of these bans in both lawsuits.

Federal Executive Orders and Policies

Executive Order 14183 – Transgender Military Ban (2025)

- Reinstates ban on transgender individuals serving in the military
- Temporarily blocked, then allowed to take effect while litigation continues
- Impacts employment, benefits, and service eligibility

Executive Order 14187 – Restrictions on Gender-Affirming Care for Minors (2025)

- Seeks to eliminate federal funding for gender-affirming care for individuals under 19
- Led to disruptions in care access; partially blocked by courts
- Signals federal involvement in restricting medical standards of care

72.5% of the 455 federal research projects terminated at NIH in the first 2 months of 2025 were LGBTQ related (McKay, 2025)

Executive Order 14201 – Transgender Sports Ban (2025)

- Bars transgender girls and women from participating in women’s sports
- Threatens loss of federal funding for non-compliant schools
- Extends to international policy and visa restrictions

Executive Order 14190 – “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling” (2025)

- Prohibits teaching about “gender ideology” and LGBTQ+ topics in schools
- Encourages investigation of schools and educators
- Contributes to censorship and reduced LGBTQ+ visibility in education

Executive Order 14201 & Related Federal Education Policies (2025)

- Directs agencies to restrict federal funding tied to LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Includes mandates affecting pronoun use, parental notification, and school policies

Executive Orders Targeting DEI and LGBTQ+ Recognition (2025–2026)

- Eliminate or restrict diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives across federal programs
- Prohibit federally funded entities from recognizing transgender identities in some contexts
- Subject to ongoing legal challenges from civil rights organizations

BOP Anti-Trans Policy (2026)

- As of February 2026, the federal [Bureau of Prisons \(BOP\) has implemented a policy](#) barring gender-affirming surgeries and new hormone prescriptions for transgender inmates
- Requires those currently on hormones to taper off
- A federal court has temporarily enjoined this policy, halting the immediate cessation of care for some, but significant legal battles continue regarding housing and medical access.
- This policy is in response to a 2025 Executive Order

“Federal policy reversals in 2025 are not limited to research. These changes will shape daily life in both material and affective terms for LGBTQ+ older adults.”
(McKay, 2025)

Taking Action

Our neutrality results in harm. Social workers have an ethical responsibility to actively support LGBTQ+ people, particularly as policies and systems continue to create barriers to safety, care, and full participation in society. Advocacy is not separate from practice, it is a core part of ensuring client dignity, self-determination, and access to care for all people.

Ways social workers can show up:

- Advocate for LGBTQ+-affirming policies within workplaces, schools, and agencies
- Stay informed on current laws and legal developments impacting LGBTQ+ communities
- Use inclusive, affirming language and challenge misinformation in professional settings
- Support clients in navigating systems safely, including documentation, healthcare, and education
- Engage in community advocacy (e.g., contacting legislators, supporting local organizations)
- Create and protect affirming spaces within your sphere of influence
- Join the NASW-TX SOGIE Committee

Upcoming dates and events of interest for students and practitioners

April 26: Lesbian Visibility Day

May 17: International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia

June: LGBTQ+ Pride month

June 15: Anniversary of U.S. Supreme Court Bostock decision expanding protections to LGBTQ employees

June 26: Anniversary of U.S. Supreme Court legalizing marriage equality

October: LGBTQ History Month

October 11: National Coming Out Day

October 26: Intersex Awareness Day

See more LGBTQ+ awareness and visibility dates of note for 2026 here: glaad.org/reference/calendar/

Staying Engaged with LGBTQ+ Policy and Actions in Texas and Nationally

Be sure to follow [Transgender Education Network of Texas \(TENT\)](#), [Lambda Legal](#), [Transgender Legal Aid Clinic of Texas](#), [Human Rights Campaign](#), and [Equality Texas](#) to stay informed about legal challenges to harmful bills and executive orders, as well as opportunities to engage in webinars focused on supporting LGBTQ+ community members in these times.

For research related to LGBTQ+ issues, the impact of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and policy, visit [The Williams Institute](#) and the [Movement Advancement Project](#).

Your Plan to Advocate

Opportunities for advocacy exist in all domains of our profession. Whether you are a practicing therapist, student, case manager, school social worker, community organizer, hospital social worker, educator, or any other field of social work, what happens at the institutional and systemic level with our legislature impacts how, and if, we are able to engage in our practice ethically.

After today's Social Work Advocacy Day, I plan to take the following actions:

Examples could include: *Write a letter about a policy to my representative.... Connect with my local [LGBTQ+ Center](#).... Participate in an upcoming advocacy event.... Communicate with organizational leadership regarding LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion...*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For tips on social work advocacy, check out the NASW-TX Advocacy Toolkit here: www.naswtx.org/page/Toolkit

As you engage in your practice and advocacy, don't forget to take care of yourself. Check out our [Self-Care on-pager](#).

Resources and Information

Get connected with resources and organizations leading the way! Sign up for newsletters, follow on social media, and take the initiative to get and stay engaged.

Local/State/National Resources

- Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT)
- Equality Texas
- ACLU of Texas
- Gender Infinity
- Texas LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce
- Texas Impact Fund
- Transgender Education Network of Texas
- Texas Trans Youth
- Texas Foster Youth Connections
- WPATH World Professional Association for Transgender Health
- CenterLink - Community of LGBT Centers
- Immigration Equality
- Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
- Queer Trans Project
- KIND – Kids in Need of Defense
- RAICES Family Acceptance Project
- Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
- Strong Family Alliance
- Lambda Legal
- The Trevor Project
- Human Rights Campaign
- Fenway Health
- Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
- The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)
- National Center for Transgender Equality
- Somos Familia Valle

Texas SOGIE Centers

Amarillo: Panhandle Pride: <https://panhandleprideinc.org/>

Austin: QWELL Foundation: <https://www.austinoutpost.org/>
Out Youth: <https://www.outyouth.org/>
Rainbow Connections:
<https://www.rainbowconnectionsatx.org/>

College Station:
Pride Community Center: <https://www.pridecc.org/>

Corpus Christi:
Coastal Bend Pride Center: <https://cbpridecenter.org/>

Dallas:
Resource Center: <https://www.myresourcecenter.org/>
Youth First Texas: <https://www.youthfirsttexas.org/>
Dallas Hope Charities: <https://www.dallashopecharities.org/>
Bounding Prosperity - <https://aboundingprosperity.org/>
Prism Health North Texas - <https://www.phntx.org/>
House of Rebirth - <https://www.houseofrebirth.org/>
The Afiya Center - <https://www.theafiyacenter.org/>

El Paso:
Borderland Rainbow Center:
<https://www.borderlandrainbow.org/>

Fort Worth:
LGBTQ Saves: <https://www.lgbtqsaves.org/>
HELP Center for LGBT Health and Wellness -
<https://helpcentertx.org/>

Houston:
The Montrose Center: <https://montrosecenter.org/>
The Normal Anomaly Initiative - <https://www.normalanomaly.org/>

Lubbock:
OUTWest Lubbock: <https://www.outwestlubbock.org/>

McAllen:
Rio Grande Valley Resource List: <http://rgvresourcelist.com/>

Odessa:
Pride Center West Texas: <https://www.pridecenterwt.org/>

San Angelo:
Open Arms Rape Crisis Center & LGBT+ Services:
<https://openarmscv.com/>

San Antonio:
Pride Center San Antonio: <https://pridecentersa.org/>
Maven Youth: <https://www.mavenyouth.org/>

Tyler:
Tyler Area Gays: <https://www.tylerareagays.com/>

Wichita Falls: The Opal Center: <https://www.theopalcenter.org/>

Get Connected with Us!

Do you want to get more involved in advocating for the LGBTQ+ community? Do you want to collaborate with colleagues to promote social work values and ethics? Connect with Us! LGBTQ+ community members and allies welcome!

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[Like and follow us on Facebook](#)

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