

# PRIDE & PROTEST: SAFETY TIPS FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

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Trans and queer youth come from a long legacy of resisting, and leading direct action against, police violence. Use this resource to prepare for a protest, understand your rights, and learn what to expect when you take to the streets.

## Getting Started

It is important to be as prepared as possible before you attend a protest or direct action with a heavy police presence.

- **Pick the right protest:** Consider who is leading the protest and for what purpose. Organizers will often share whether youth should attend based on safety concerns and the nature of the protest. If you are concerned about hostile encounters with law enforcement, try to find nonviolent and explicitly youth-friendly actions.
- **Go with a group:** Never attend a protest alone. Choose a trusted group of people who understand the risks of protesting as trans and queer youth. Together, decide what type of action you feel comfortable attending. Find allies who will be able to support you in a crisis, if possible. Protesting with people of your same gender and sex assigned at birth can help ensure that you still have support if the police begin arresting people and separating them by gender or by sex assigned at birth.
- **Create a protest safety plan:** There are serious health and safety risks for LGBTQ+ youth to consider when attending a protest, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Develop a comprehensive game plan that includes emergency preparedness.
  - **With your group:** Research the planned protest route. Establish meetup locations and times in case you get separated.
  - **Choose tactics wisely:** Read up on any curfew restrictions and/or public health directives (such as requirements to wear masks and/or maintain 6 feet of physical distance) in effect in your community. Consider health, safety, and law enforcement risks that are unique to you. Clearly express to your protest group which tactics you are willing or unwilling to try in light of those rules and risks. **Example: Tell your buddy if you are willing to risk arrest or unable to put your body between an officer and protester.**



*This resource is intended only to provide you and/or your GSA with issues to consider should you voluntarily choose to attend a protest event. This information is not intended to be legal advice.*



- **Determine roles:** Trans and queer youth are more at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Envision potential law enforcement scenarios that could play out at the protest and assign safety and support roles.  
*Example: Cis, white allies will form a protective circle around undocuqueer protesters as officers approach. They will form a line between a Black trans protester and a wall of police.*
- **Inform an adult:** Tell your parents, guardians, or another trusted adult where you will be.
- **Have emergency info:** Find out who in your community provides free, emergency legal help to protesters (see "Additional Resources" section below). Write phone numbers for those legal helpers and for your personal emergency contact(s) on your arm in case police confiscate your belongings and you or a buddy/bystander need to contact someone on your behalf.
- **Download Signal:** Use the Signal encrypted messaging app to communicate with your group in emergencies. Avoid standard texting and posting your location on social media, as these methods of communication can be traced. It is best to set your phone to airplane mode and disable face and touch ID, or turn it off completely.
- **Learn your rights as a protester, as a minor, and as an LGBTQ+ young person! See "Know Your Rights" section below.**
- **If you are undocumented:** Download and bring this [Know Your Rights card](#). Research immigration lawyers or support groups and share their information with your protest group, as well as trusted family members or allies who are not protesting. Inform those contacts where your important legal documents are and develop an emergency response plan in case of an arrest.
- **What to wear (and what not to wear):** Cover your skin and avoid clothing that makes you easily identifiable by police.

Wear	Don't Wear
Dark clothing Long sleeves Pants Hoodies Sneakers Bandana/face mask Glasses or goggles	Light clothing Baggy clothing Clothing with logos Colorful prints Open toe shoes Contact lenses Jewelry

- **What to bring:** Pack these essential and optional items in a backpack.

Essential Items	Optional Items
Water Snacks Identification cards Sanitizer Pre-made water & soap mix Basic first aid (bandages, gauze, tape) Inhaler & prescription meds [limited] Cash for transportation <b>"Know Your Rights" Card</b>	Protest signs Protest instruments Sunscreen Portable phone charger <b>In case of violent police tactics:</b> Change of clothes Ear plugs Elbow & knee pads Helmet



## What To Do At A Protest

- **Show solidarity:** March, chant, sit or lie on the ground, link arms, etc. in solidarity, to the extent these activities feel safe for you.
- **Stay hydrated and fed:** Remember to drink a lot of water and eat to stay healthy and well-nourished.
- **Wear a face mask & eye protection:** Don't forget that the virus causing COVID-19 is highly contagious. Large crowds with people chanting and touching make it very easy for the virus to spread. Try not to touch your face or mask.
- **Be mindful:** Consider how your actions will negatively impact the people around you, especially BIPOC protesters.
- **Be hypervigilant and aware of your surroundings:** Police are known to provoke and incite violence as an excuse to "keep the peace," as well as block off areas to enclose/trap protestors. They often scan and collect cell phone data, as well as surveil crowds using drones and other facial recognition technology.

## What to Do When You're Arrested & Detained

Trans and queer young people of color are generally arrested and detained at higher rates than others. They are often misgendered and segregated behind bars with people based on their gender assigned at birth. Follow these steps if you are approached by a law enforcement officer or detained.

- **Do not resist, argue, or try to run away.** Do your best to stay calm.
- **Ask if you're free to leave.** If the answer is yes, calmly and silently walk away from the officer.
- **If your rights are being violated or you feel endangered,** alert your protest group or share your name with witnesses.
- **Advocate for yourself if you feel safe to do so.** See the "Know Your Rights" section below for more information.
  - If you are able to remain silent, explain that you will not speak until you have talked to a lawyer. It's your constitutional right. Remember that what you do say can be used against you.
  - Explicitly state what you do not consent to, including frisks or other searches of your body or property. (This does not mean police officers will listen.)
- **Call for help as soon as possible:** Use the emergency contact or legal support number on your arm. Do not participate in interviews without a lawyer present. If you are questioned, state: "I am choosing to remain silent until I have a parent, legal guardian, or lawyer present."
- **Do not sign anything without legal representation or your guardian's consent.**
- **If you are undocumented:** Do not present falsified IDs or lie to an officer about your legal status. Doing so can be used against you in court.

## Responding to Violent Police Tactics

Many police departments are equipped with military-grade weapons, which include chemical agents, flash grenades, rubber bullets or bean bag rounds, and long-range acoustic devices (such as sound cannons). These are often used against protesters.

- **What to do if you come into contact with tear gas (based on [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance](#)):** Take off the clothes you are wearing immediately. To take off a shirt or hoodie, cut them instead of pulling them over your head. Use your pre-made water and soap mix to wash your skin and rinse your eyes with water for 10-15 minutes. Blink fast and often. Put on fresh clothes.



- **What to do when sound devices are used against protestors (based on *Muff the Police!* guidance):** If you see a sonic device or learn that police are equipped with one, wear earplugs or earmuffs. Calmly search for shelter. Move out of the direct path of the device—do not just back away from it. If the devices are used, know what the effects are and monitor your symptoms.

## Know Your Rights

Everyone in the country (regardless of immigration status, race, age, gender, religion, etc.) is guaranteed certain protections under the U.S. Constitution.

- **All protesters**
  - Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly rights are guaranteed under the First Amendment. However, these protections are generally restricted to public spaces. Private property owners can request law enforcement intervention when protesters are organizing or speaking out on their property. Language that encourages violence is not protected.
  - Everyone has the right to remain silent and to request a lawyer when arrested and detained.
  - You are allowed to photograph police officers and abuses that are happening around you when you are protesting in a designated public space.
- **LGBTQ+ protesters:** Police often violate the rights of LGBTQ+ people during arrests or jail booking, but it is good to know what your rights are so that you can record and document abuses later.
  - You should not be touched or made to strip so that an officer can determine your gender.
  - You should be allowed to use your chosen name and pronouns during a law enforcement encounter.
  - You are allowed to photograph police officers and abuses that are happening around you when you are protesting in a designated public space.
  - You should get prompt access to your prescription medications, including hormone therapies. To minimize delays in accessing medication, bring a small amount in the original prescription container with your name on it.
  - If you think an officer is violating your rights or someone else's, try to note their name and/or badge number so you can file a complaint later.

## Legal Aid, Bail, & Emergency Fund Information

Find a [National Lawyers Guild chapter](#) in your region for legal support. (**Related:** [Crowdsourced list of lawyers providing free legal aid in major cities](#))

Find a local bail fund for protesters using this [National Bail Fund Network and Community Justice Exchange directory](#) (**Related:** [Community funds listed on the ActBlue donation page](#))

Contact the [LGBTQ Freedom Fund](#) for bail support

[Black Trans Protesters Emergency Fund](#) (Organized by The Okra Project, For the Gworls - Medical Fund, Black Trans Travel Fund, and Black Trans Femmes in the Arts)



## Additional Resources

[Protesters' Rights](#) [ACLU]

[Mobile Justice app for recording police](#) [ACLU]

[You Have the Right to Remain Silent: A Know Your Rights Guide for Law Enforcement Encounters](#) [National Lawyers Guild]

[Participating in Direct Actions: A Guide for Transgender People](#) [National Center for Transgender Equality and Sylvia Rivera Law Project]

