Sexual Minority Network

The Sexual Minority Network was created to promote and ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. Miami-Dade County Public Schools is the only school district in Florida with such a program. Sexual Minority Network Liaisons are identified at all K-8 Centers, Middle and Senior High Schools. Liaisons provide prevention, intervention, referrals and follow-up services for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and/or transgender students and their families. Sexual Minority Network Liaisons receive professional development and technical assistance four times per year to establish successful school wide programs focusing on advocacy, support and education.

Nationally, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) students are one of the most fragile and at-risk groups of students; experiencing a disproportionate level of bullying / harassment and an increased likelihood of experiencing depression, self-harm and/or other at-risk behaviors.

In fact, the most recent national statistic reports that 84% of LGBT students report being verbally harassed (name calling, threats, etc.) because of their sexual orientation. LGBT youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual young people. 36.5 % of LGBT youth, grades 9-12, have attempted suicide. LGBT students can feel unsupported, isolated, and invisible.   Unlike other victims of bullying, LGBT youth often cannot turn to their families for support. In fact, often times the family may affirm the hostility of the larger environment, including forcing the young person from the home. The need for a supportive, accepting environment at the school is essential to the safety and well-being of LGBT students.

Sexual Minority Network Liaisons are trained to provide supportive counseling for students and their families; referrals to related community agencies; and education about sexual minority issues for school site staff.

Additional information about this program may be found at http://mhcms.dadeschools.net/sm_network.asp.