

A Guide for Massachusetts Maritime Academy *Safe Harbor* Participants 2012-2013



Resources and information for people who serve as allies to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning community.

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The Massachusetts Maritime Academy Safe Harbor program is a campus-wide program that encourages members of the community to identify themselves as visible supporters of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) life at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

Much of this material is adapted from the Brown University Safe Zone Manual and the Ohio State University H.E.R.O. Program Handbook. Thanks also to Transgender Nation and to the NGLTF Policy Institute.

Safe Harbor Program Introduction

Who can participate in the program?

Anyone can be a Massachusetts Maritime Academy Safe Harbor participant, including faculty, staff, and students. It is hoped that community members of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions will become participants.

What is expected of Safe Harbor participants?

Participants are expected to display the Safe Harbor symbol in a visible location in their office, cubicle, room, etc. The Safe Harbor symbol identifies you as someone who is a supporter of LGBTQ community members and someone who is committed to creating an environment free of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and bias. As a Safe Harbor participant you should read through these materials thoroughly so that you are comfortable when LGBTQ community members approach you to talk about LGBTQ-related issues. You should be familiar with the resources outlined in this booklet so that you are prepared to refer LGBTQ people to these resources if necessary. If possible, read additional materials on your own to further your knowledge beyond the basics.

What resources are available to Safe Harbor participants?

Mental Health Services and Crisis Intervention:

Kathleen Shine-O'Brien, M.A. LMHC, Assistant Director, Health Services (508.830.5048)

Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity:

Elizabeth Benway, Director, HR, Equal Opportunity, & Diversity (508.830.5086)

Erin DeBobes, Affirmative Action Officer (508.830.5052)

In addition, this booklet is your main resource as a Safe Harbor participant. As stated above, all participants are expected to become familiar with this booklet which contains the following information:

- How to identify and confront heterosexism and homophobia
- Campus LGBTQ resources
- LGBTQ-related terms
- An overview of Trans/Transgender Issues
- How to be an effective ally to LGBTQ community members
- The coming out process
- Commonly asked questions related to LGBTQ issues
- How to report anti-LGBTQ harassment and violence

How do I become a Safe Harbor participant?

Anyone can request a Safe Harbor symbol by contacting Erin DeBobes (edebobes@maritime.edu, 508.830.5052). After becoming familiar with all of the materials that are sent with the Safe Harbor symbol, you will be prepared to post the symbol in a visible location so that community members

know that you are informed about and sensitive to LGBTQ issues and concerns. In addition, we strongly encourage all participants to attend Safe Harbor training so as to best familiarize yourself with the materials.

About This Manual

This booklet has been designed to help you learn more about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer issues. It is meant to be used as a guide with the understanding that not all individuals use the same definitions for all the terminology and concepts outlined in this book. Learning about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) issues is a lifelong process and you should not expect to learn everything you need to know quickly. In addition, there is a lot of information that is not included in this booklet. Once you become familiar with the terminology and concepts outlined here you'll be able to expand your knowledge by seeking out additional resources. If you choose to display the Safe Harbor symbol, please do so responsibly. Become familiar with the information in this booklet and be able to identify the resources on campus so that you may best be able to assist students, faculty and staff members who seek you out as a Safe Space resource.

This booklet is divided into two main sections, one that discusses sexual orientation and one that discusses gender identity. We have divided the booklet this way to help distinguish the differences between these two topics. There are some similarities in the issues that are discussed and as a result there will be some references to gender identity in the sexual orientation section and vice versa. There are, however, many differences and it is important to understand these as two separate topics of discussion. Sexual orientation refers to an identity that describes a person's emotional, physical, affectional and/or sexual attraction towards another person. Gender identity refers to a person's inner sense of being a man, woman, a little both, neither man or woman, gender-queer person, bi-gender person, trans person, etc. We provide more in depth definitions of these terms in each section as well as a glossary of other terms that you might encounter. It will be important for you to remember that each identity that we outline is a little different from the other. There is a great diversity within the LGBTQ community, not only in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, but also in terms of race, class, religion, nationality and other identities that come into play. As you read through this booklet please keep in mind that each individual has a unique experience and use this as a guide to understanding rather than a completely comprehensive manual.

Becoming an Ally: Risks and Benefits

What is an ally?

An ally is a member of the dominant social group who takes a stand against social injustice directed at a target group(s) – for example, white people who speak out against racism, or heterosexual individuals who speak out against heterosexism or homophobia. An ally works to be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression. When a form of oppression has multiple target groups, as do racism, ableism, and heterosexism, target group members can be allies to other targeted social groups (African Americans can be allies to Native Americans, blind people can be allies to people who use wheelchairs, and lesbians can be allies to bisexuals).

Allies should remember that members of groups that face oppression:

- Don't always want to be "teachers" to allies
- Don't represent all members of a particular group
- May be members of more than one group that faces oppression
- May not describe themselves the same way as other members of a particular group
- Know what it feels like to be both targeted and made "invisible"
- Can be prejudiced themselves
- May tire of answering questions about their cultures and their lives
- Often get tired of and resent stereotyping
- Can become weary, anxious, irritable, or angry because of living in the dominant culture
- Do not necessarily want to become more like the dominant culture in attitudes or behavior
- May share some of the same values as the dominant culture
- Do not appreciate appropriation of their cultures by non-members
- Have been a part of history, art, science, religion and education, but their contributions have often been ignored or downplayed

Some benefits of being an ally to LGBTQ people:

- You learn more accurate information about the reality of being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.
- You open yourself up to the possibility of close relationships with a wider range of people.
- You become less locked into gender-role expectations and stereotypes.
- You increase your ability to have close relationships with same-gender friends.
- You have opportunities to learn from, teach, and have an impact on a population with whom you might not have otherwise interacted.
- You empower yourself to take an active role in creating a more accepting world by countering prejudice and discrimination with understanding, support, and caring.
- You may be a role model for others and your actions may help someone else gain the courage to speak and act in support of LGBTQ people.
- You may be the reason a friend, sibling, child, coworker, or someone else you know finds greater value in their life and develops a higher level of self-esteem.
- You may make a difference in the lives of young people who hear you confront derogatory language or speak supportively of LGBTQ people. As a result of your action, they may feel that they have a friend to turn to instead of dropping out of school, using alcohol or drugs to numb the pain and loneliness, or contemplating or attempting suicide.

Some risks of being an ally to LGBTQ people (things that discourage some people from becoming allies)

- Others may speculate about your own sexual orientation or gender identity. You may be labeled as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender "by association," which you might find uncomfortable.
- You may become the subject of gossip or rumors.

- You may be criticized or ridiculed by others who do not agree with you or who consider offering support to LGBTQ people to be unimportant or unwarranted.
- You may experience alienation from friends, family members, or colleagues who are not comfortable with LGBTQ issues.
- You may become the target of overt or subtle discrimination by people who are homophobic.
- Your values, morality, and personal character may be questioned by people who believe that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender is wrong, sinful, or against their “family values.”
- LGBTQ people may not accept you as an ally.
- Some LGBTQ people may believe that you are actually LGBTQ but are not ready to admit it.
- Due to past negative experiences, some LGBTQ people may not trust you and may question your motivations.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction toward others. It is distinguished from other components of sexuality including biological sex, gender identity (the psychological sense of being male or female), and the social gender role (adherence to cultural norms for feminine and masculine behavior).

Sexual orientation exists along a continuum that ranges from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive gay or lesbian and includes various forms of bisexuality. **Bisexual** persons can experience sexual, emotional, and affectional attraction to both their own gender and people of other genders. The term **gay** (preferred over homosexual) is used by both men and women who have an emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction towards someone of their same gender. The term **lesbian** is sometimes used by women who are attracted to other women. There are some people who identify as **asexual**, having little or no physical or sexual attraction towards others.

Sexual orientation is different from sexual behavior because it refers to feelings and self-concept. Individuals may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors. As a result it is important not to make assumptions about people based on their identity or their behavior. For example, someone who identifies as a lesbian may occasionally have sexual relationships with men or may have had them in the past, and a man who identifies as heterosexual may occasionally have same-sex sexual encounters but not identify as gay. It may be tempting to make judgments about an apparent disparity between someone’s identity and behavior, but social identity is a complex and personal experience and it is much more productive to accept a person for who they are and understand that most people’s life experiences don’t fit neatly into a box or label.

Adapted from the American Psychological Association Help Center website:
<http://www.apahelpcenter.org/articles/article.php?id=31>.

Glossary of Terms – Sexual Orientation

Below is a list of working definitions. These definitions are a place to start from. Members of the LGBT/SGL community have different meanings and opinions of these definitions. What is most important is that you respect how a person chooses to self-define or identify.

Ally (Heterosexual Ally): Someone who is a friend, advocate, and/or activist for LGBTQ people. A heterosexual ally is also someone who confronts heterosexism in themselves and others. The term ally is also generally used for any member of a dominant group who is a friend, advocate or activist for people in an oppressed group (i.e. White Ally for People of Color).

Asexual: A term used to identify someone who does not experience sexual attraction to anyone.

Biphobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of bisexual people.

Bisexual: A term used to identify someone who has romantic and/or sexual feelings, attractions, and/or relationships with men and women. This does not necessarily mean that bisexuals have relationships with both men and women at the same time—this is a common stereotype. It also does not mean that a person is equally attracted to men and women. Levels of attraction may vary. A bisexual person can also be defined as someone who has romantic and/or sexual feelings, attractions and/or relationships with people of *any* gender (rather than saying both genders).

Closeted or In the Closet: a term commonly used to indicate that someone is hiding their sexual orientation.

Coming Out: The term used to describe the process by which lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals recognize, acknowledge, accept, and appreciate their sexual identities.

Drag queen/Drag king: Used by people who present socially in clothing, name, and/or pronouns that differs from their everyday gender, usually for enjoyment, entertainment, and/or self-expression. Drag queens typically have everyday lives as men. Drag kings typically live as women and/or butches when not performing. Drag shows are popular in some gay, lesbian, and bisexual environments. Unless they are drag performers, most trans people would be offended by being confused with drag queens or drag kings.

Gay: Usually refers to men who have romantic and/or sexual feelings, attractions, and/or relationships with other men. Some women may also identify themselves as gay.

Heterosexual: A person who has romantic and sexual feelings, attractions, and/or relationships with someone considered to be “the opposite gender.” In our section that discusses gender you will read about how gender is not a binary concept for all people. The majority of people in U.S. culture identify two genders, men and women and use the term “opposite sex” to differentiate them.

Heterosexism: The societal/cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege heterosexuals and subordinate and denigrate LGBTQ people. The critical element that differentiates heterosexism (or any other “ism”) from prejudice and discrimination is the use of institutional power

and authority to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways with far-reaching outcomes and effects.

Heterosexual Privilege: The benefits and advantages that heterosexuals receive in a heterosexist culture. (See page 13 for more information).

Homophobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived to be lesbians or gay men, including the fear of being seen as lesbian or gay yourself. Homophobic behavior can range from telling jokes about lesbians and gay men, to verbal abuse, to acts of physical violence.

In the Life: Often used by communities of color to denote inclusion in the SGL (see below) or LGBTQ communities.

Internalized Homophobia: A term used to describe lesbians, gay men and bisexuals who have internalized and accept societal prejudices, myths and lies about LGB people.

LGBTQ: An acronym sometimes used to refer to individuals or groups of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning. You may also see LGBT or GLBT used in a similar way.

Lesbian: A woman who has romantic and sexual feelings, attractions, and/or relationships with other women.

Men Loving Men (MLM): Commonly used by communities of color to denote the attraction of men to men.

MSM: Men who have sex with men.

Outing: The act of revealing someone's gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender identity without permission.

Pansexual, omnisexual, and pomosexual: (postmodern sexuality): Sometimes substitute terms for bisexual that rather than referring to *both* or "bi" gender attraction, refer to *all* or "omni" gender attraction, and are used mainly by those who wish to express acceptance of all gender possibilities including transgender and intersex people, not just two. Pansexuality sometimes includes an attraction for less mainstream sexual activities, such as BDSM.

Queen: Often used within the LGBTQ community to identify gay or bi males who take on traditional female characteristics or act in a more "feminine" way.

Queer: A term that some LGBTQ people have claimed as an inclusive and positive way to describe themselves and their community. Some people use it as an umbrella term or as a term in and of itself. Some people choose not to use the word "queer" because of its history as a derogatory term.

Questioning: The process of considering or exploring one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Same Gender Loving (SGL): Commonly used by communities of color to denote attraction to the same gender.

Sexual Orientation: An enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction to individuals of a particular gender. Commonly recognized sexual orientations are “gay” and “lesbian” (attraction to individuals of one’s own gender), “heterosexual” (attraction to individuals of another gender), and “bisexual” (attraction to individuals of various genders). Queer is also used frequently as either an umbrella term or as its own individual identity.

Women Loving Women (WLW): Commonly used by communities of color to denote the attraction of women to women.

WSW: Women who have sex with women.

Family: Often used by SGL (see below) and LGBTQ communities to identify members of the community.

What is Bisexuality?

Common Myths Dispelled

Although there is a definition of bisexuality (as a sexual orientation) given in the dictionary, the use of the word bisexual as a label and identity varies from group to group and from individual to individual. Since no one definition can fully cover all the different types of bisexuals that exist in this world, here are a few of the more popular definitions currently in use:

1. Someone who is capable of feeling romantic, spiritual, and/or sexual attraction for any gender.
2. A person who loves despite gender.
3. One who loves individuals first and genders second.
4. An individual open to sexual or emotional exploration with someone of any gender.

Myth # 1: "There is no such thing as bisexual. You're either gay/lesbian or heterosexual, no in between."

The world is not black and white, although it is sometimes difficult for people to see the shades of gray that they do not understand. It is this attitude that all things fall into extremes that keeps many people from learning about and adopting the label, bisexual. Despite this there are many people who identify as bisexual in this world. This is the label that they feel best describes their attractions, be they physical or emotional, towards different genders. Often times one may remain unaware of a friend or relative's bisexuality because of this tendency (by either party) to classify everything as either gay or straight.

Myth #2: "Bisexuals are confused about their sexuality."

This is quite possibly the hardest myth to dispel because of the fact that many people in transition from identifying as heterosexual to identifying as gay or lesbian (and vice versa) use the label bisexual as an aid in their transition. There is nothing wrong with this and in fact many people may feel bisexual for a time in their lives and then find that they identify more as gay/lesbian or heterosexual, than bisexual. In spite of the label being sometimes used transitionally, there are many people who feel that the term bisexual best describes their identity in a more permanent way.

Myth # 3: "Everybody is bisexual"

Although most people experience an attraction for someone of the same gender at some point in their lives, this does not mean that everyone is bisexual. For most people these feelings pass or change over time without the person ever questioning or redefining their sexual orientations.

Myth # 4: "To be bisexual you have to love both genders equally."

Identifying as bisexual does not set a limit as to how attracted one must feel towards either gender. There is no defined cut off point at which one must cease to identify as bisexual and must identify as gay/lesbian or straight because of a shift in attractions. Most bisexuals do not feel equally attracted to both genders on a sexual and emotional levels and experience shifts in attraction levels to either genders. Some bisexuals are not attracted to a gender per se, but are instead attracted to the person's personality or various other attributes and take note of gender afterwards, if at all. In these cases gender does not really come into play.

Myth # 5: "You can't be bisexual and be faithful to one person."

A person's decision to be monogamous with a partner is an individual choice influenced by many things involved in a relationship and in that person's own personality. Some bisexuals have open relationships and have relations with different people of different genders on different levels. Other bisexuals are in long term monogamous relationships, including faithful marriages. It is not unlike being straight or gay or lesbian and in a closed relationship. Different people simply make different choices as to how to go about relationships. This is not determined by the person's sexual orientation but rather by themselves and, in some cases, their partners.

Many bisexuals feel that they can be perfectly content with one person and don't have an overwhelming urge to carry on relations with two genders at once. This is analogous to being a part of a monogamous gay/lesbian or straight couple and choosing whether or not "cheat" on that partner. Or, in cases where both partners are involved in the decision of who is involved in their sexual lives, it is no different than being a straight 'swinging couple involved with other swinging couples (or individuals). Once again these are individual choices and are not a direct consequence of a person's sexual orientation.

Myth # 6: "Bisexuals are much more likely to carry sexually transmitted diseases/infections"

It's not who or what a person is that makes them more likely to carry diseases and infections. It is what a person DOES, the sexual practices of a person, in particular how well a person protects him/herself during sexual activities. The more educated one becomes about STD's the better protected one can be from infection.

Myth # 7: "Bisexuals are more accepted by straight society."

This myth has all been expressed by some as "Bisexuals are more accepted by gay/lesbian society." The truth is that although bisexual activists fight for many of the same rights as

gay and lesbian people do, they are not always made to feel welcome as a part of the community/movement. The heterosexual community often groups bisexuals as being "confused or undercover homosexuals" and so rejects bisexuals and the concept of bisexuality. For the opposite reason some lesbian and gay people reject bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation and see the stigma and not the people. The fact is that many bisexual people feel as if they are somewhere in between the two worlds and feel both positive and negative feelings from both. This is not to say that lesbian, gay and bisexual people do not work together in the equal rights movement and accomplish great things.

Coming Out Issues

The term "coming out" (of the closet) refers to the process of developing a positive lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. It usually involves first coming out to oneself and then deciding how and when to come out to others. It can be a long and difficult struggle for many LGB individuals because they often have to confront the homophobia and biphobia they learned growing up (called internalized homophobia/biphobia). Before someone can feel good about themselves, they have to challenge their own attitudes and move from the negative feelings to feelings of appreciation and admiration. Not everyone experiences internalized homophobia, but for those who do, it can take years of painful work to develop a positive lesbian, gay or bisexual identity. As a person overcomes internalized homophobia they need to decide when and to whom they will disclose their sexual identity. Coming out is a never-ending process throughout one's lifetime because our cultural standard is to assume heterosexuality. Over time it does tend to get easier to come out to others, but some people remain fearful over long periods of time due to the lack of acceptance that still exists in many places.

What might lesbians, gay men and bisexual people be afraid of?

- Losing friendships and family connections
- Losing closeness in relationships
- Being the subject of gossip
- Being harassed
- Being physically assaulted
- Losing financial support from family members
- Being thrown out of the house
- Losing their jobs
- Losing their children

Why might lesbians, gay men and bisexual people want to come out to others?

- To end the secrecy
- To feel closer to friends, family, coworkers, etc.
- To be able to be "whole" around friends, family, coworkers, etc.
- To stop wasting energy by hiding an essential part of themselves
- To feel like they have integrity
- To make a statement that being LGB is and okay

How might lesbians, gay men and bisexual people feel about coming out to someone?

- Scared
- Vulnerable
- Relieved
- Concerned about how the person will react
- Proud

How might an individual feel after someone has come out to them?

- Disbelieving
- Uncomfortable
- Not sure what to say
- Not sure what to do next
- Wondering why the person came out
- Scared
- Shocked
- Angry
- Disgusted
- Supportive
- Flattered
- Honored

What do lesbians, gay men and bisexual people want from the people they come out to?

- Acceptance
- Support
- Understanding
- Comfort
- A closer relationship
- Hearing that disclosure will not negatively affect the relationship
- An acknowledgement of their feelings
- Confirmation that they will not be “outed” to others without expressed permission

What are some situations in which someone might come out to you?

- They may have chosen to come out to you because you are a close friend or family member, and they want to have an honest and genuine relationship with you.
- They may feel that you are a person who will be understanding and accepting, and so they trust you with this very personal information.
- They may not be sure how you will react, but they prefer to be honest and are tired of putting time and energy into hiding their identity.
- They may decide to come out to you before they really know you, in order to establish an honest relationship from the beginning.
- They may come out to you because some aspect of your professional relationship makes it difficult to continue to hide their sexual orientation.
- They may come out to you because you are in a position to assist them with a concern, determine their access to certain resources, or address policies that affect their life.

Ways that you can help when someone comes out to you:

- Remember that the person has not changed. They are still the same person you know; you just have more information about them now than you did before. If you are shocked, don't let the shock lead you to view the person as suddenly different.
- Don't ask questions that would have been considered inappropriate before their disclosure.
- If you would like more information, ask in an honest and considerate way. If you show a genuine and respectful interest in their life, they will most likely appreciate it. Some good questions to ask are:

How long have you known that you are lesbian/gay/bisexual?

Are you seeing anyone?

Has it been hard for you having to hide your sexual orientation?

Is there some way that I can help you?

Have I ever offended you unknowingly?

- Don't assume that you know what it means for the person to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. Every person's experience is different.
- They may not want you to do anything necessarily. They may just need someone to listen.
- Consider it an honor that they have trusted you with this very personal information. Thank them for trusting you.
- Clarify with them what level of confidentiality they expect from you. They may not want you to tell anyone else, or they may be out to others and not be concerned with who finds out.
- If you don't understand something or have questions, remember that people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual are often willing to help you understand their life experiences.

What is Heterosexual Privilege?

Heterosexual Privilege: The benefits and advantages that heterosexuals receive in a heterosexist culture. Also, the benefits that lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming a heterosexual identity and denying a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity.

If you are heterosexual (or, in some cases, simply perceived as heterosexual):

- You can go wherever you want and know that you will not be harassed, beaten or killed because of your sexuality.
- You do not have to worry about being mistreated by the police or victimized by the criminal justice system because of your sexuality.
- You can express affection (kissing, hugging, holding hands) in most social situations and not expect hostile or violent reactions from others.
- You are more likely to see sexually-explicit images of people of your sexuality without these images provoking public consternation or censorship.
- You can discuss your relationships and publicly acknowledge your partner (such as having a picture of your partner on your desk) without fearing that people will automatically disapprove or think that you are being "blatant."
- You can legally marry the person whom you love in any state of the United States.
- You can receive tax breaks, health and insurance coverage, and spousal legal rights through being in a long-term relationship.

- If your partner is a citizen of another country, he or she can apply for residency based on your relationship.
- You can be assured that your basic civil rights will not be denied or outlawed because some people disapprove of your sexuality.
- You can join the military and be open about your sexuality.
- You can expect that your children will be given texts in schools that implicitly support your kind of family unit and that they will not be taught that your sexuality is a “perversion.”
- You can approach the legal system, social service organizations, and government agencies without fearing discrimination because of your sexuality.
- You can raise, adopt, and teach children without people believing that you will molest them or force them into your sexuality. Moreover, people generally will not try to take away your children because of your sexuality.
- You can belong to the religious denomination of your choice and know that your sexuality will not be denounced by its religious leaders.
- You can easily find a neighborhood in which residents will accept how you have constituted your household.
- You know that you will not be fired from a job or denied promotion because of your sexuality.
- You can expect to see people of your sexuality presented positively on nearly every television show and in nearly every movie.
- You can expect to be around others of your sexuality most of the time. You do not have to worry about being the only one of your sexuality in a class, job, or social situation.
- You can act, dress, and talk as you choose without it being considered a reflection on people of your sexuality.
- You can teach about lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals without being seen as having a bias because of your sexuality or forcing a “homosexual agenda” on students.

Progress continues to be made in many areas regarding civil rights for LGBTQ people but the progress is not consistent or widespread across the United States. Some states are beginning to provide equal access to marriage and other types of benefits and protections, but other states continue to pass laws restricting and denying rights of LGBTQ people. Privilege can be used as a tool or a weapon. As a weapon it denies and restricts, as a tool it can be used by those in power to remove barriers to equal rights.

Recognizing how heterosexism, homophobia and heterosexual privilege manifest themselves in our culture can be overwhelming. It is normal for those with privilege to feel guilty about having privilege. It is important for individuals to acknowledge the guilt and then move beyond it in order to use their power and privilege to make positive changes. Anyone can use their privilege to be a powerful ally to LGBTQ people. Please see the “How to be an ally” sections for ideas about using heterosexual privilege to make change.

How Homophobia Hurts Everyone

Adapted from work written by Warren Blumenfeld, Editor of *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*

You do not have to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or know someone who is, to be negatively affected by homophobia. Though homophobia actually oppresses lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, it also hurts heterosexuals in the following ways:

- Homophobia inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own gender for fear of being perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
- Homophobia locks people into rigid gender-based roles that restrict creativity and self-expression.
- Homophobia pushes heterosexual men to constantly prove their masculinity.
- Homophobia results in “lesbian baiting” (an accusatory charge of lesbianism) being used to control women’s autonomy and to question their femininity.
- Homophobia is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals who are perceived by others as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or who are a friend or relation of someone who is lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
- Homophobia compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that serve to diminish their basic humanity.
- Homophobia, combined with sexual taboos, results in the invisibility or erasure of the lives and sexuality of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in school-based education discussions, keeping vital information from students. Such erasure can contribute to the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Homophobia deters individuals from taking part in certain social activities. People who are heterosexual are discouraged from participating in lesbian and gay-identified activities for fear of being labeled.
- Homophobia pressures young people to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are “normal.” This premature sexual involvement can result in emotional distress, as well increases the chance of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Homophobia prevents some lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals from developing an authentic self-identity and adds to the pressure to marry. This can be traumatic not only for them, but also for their heterosexual spouses and children, should they feel compelled to get married.
- Homophobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone, because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

By challenging homophobia, people are not only fighting the oppression of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, but are also striving for a society that accepts and celebrates the differences in all of us.

Straight But Not Narrow:

How to Be an Ally to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People

- Use the words gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer instead of homosexual. The overwhelming majority of lgbq people do not identify with or use the word homosexual to describe themselves.
- Use non-gender specific language. Ask “Are you seeing someone?” or “Are you in a committed relationship?” instead of “Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?” or “Are you married?” Use the word “partner” or “significant other” instead of “boyfriend/girlfriend” or “husband/wife.”
- Do not assume the sexual orientation of another person even when that person is married or in a committed relationship. Many bisexuals, and even some gay men and lesbians, are in heterosexual relationships.
- Don’t assume that someone who is transgender is gay or that the person will seek to transition to become heterosexual.
- Do not assume that a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person is attracted to you just because they have disclosed their sexual identity. If any interest is shown, be flattered, not flustered. Treat any interest that someone might show just as you would if it came from someone who is heterosexual.
- Challenge your own conceptions about gender-appropriate roles and behaviors. Do not expect people to conform to society’s beliefs about “women” and “men.”
- Speak out against statements and jokes that attack LGBTQ people. Letting others know that you find anti-LGBTQ statements and jokes offensive and unacceptable can go a long way toward reducing homophobia.
- Educate yourself about LGBTQ history, culture, and concerns. Read LGBTQ publications, and support the businesses that advertise in them. See movies by and about LGBTQ individuals.
- Raise LGBTQ issues, concerns, and experiences in your family, workplace, school, religious community, and neighborhood.
- Educate children about families that have two moms, two dads, or alternative family structures.
- Establish an LGBTQ welcoming committee in your faith community.
- Support and involve yourself in LGBTQ organizations and causes.
- Volunteer time at LGBTQ organizations.
- Write letters to your political representatives asking them to support legislation that positively affects LGBTQ people.
- March in annual Pride Parades.

Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to a person's inner sense of being a man, woman, gender-queer person, bi-gender person, trans person, or another gender identity altogether. When we are born we are assigned a gender based on our perceived sex. Most people grow up and their gender assigned at birth is in line with their sex and their internal sense of gender. We generally grow up to believe that there are two dichotomous genders and that everyone's sex and gender match perfectly. In reality gender identity is not always that simple. There are some people who were assigned a gender at birth that is not congruent with their internal sense of gender. Some people assigned the identity of boy at birth are really girls/women and some people assigned the identity of girl at birth are really boys/men. There are some people who feel that the identities of boy/man and girl/woman are too restrictive. They may identify as gender-queer, bi-gender or another identity that best fits their own sense of their gender.

As you will see in the definitions below there are many different ways that one can identify gender, and some individuals may use more than one term to describe their gender. Some people seek gender affirmation through sex reassignment surgery and hormones and some do not. There are people who would like to access surgery and hormones but cannot due to a lack of resources including financial constraints and a lack of availability of qualified health care professionals. Most health insurance in the U.S. does not cover these services, making them very inaccessible to many people who need them. It is important to understand the difficulties that the lack of resources can create for some trans people who may not be able to access the resources they need. There is a tremendous amount of prejudice and discrimination that trans people experience within the health care system and the community at large which is exacerbated by the inaccessibility of resources. Below we've outlined some basic information about how to be an ally to trans people along with additional resources that you can access to learn more.

Most of this section was adapted from materials written by Y. Gavriel Ansara, Founder of **Lifelines Rhode Island**, a grassroots advocacy, education, and support initiative to meet the needs of transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit, genderqueer, androgyne, bi-gender, multigender and intersex (TGI/gender-spectrum) people across the Ocean State. We thank Mr. Ansara and Lifelines Rhode Island for their great contribution to this work.

Glossary of Terms – TGI

Below is a list of working definitions. These definitions are a place to start from. Members of the LGBTQ/SGL (same gender loving) community have different meanings and opinions of these definitions. What is most important is that you respect how a person chooses to self-define or identify.

TGI: An acronym that can be used as an umbrella term. This adjective refers to people who are transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit, genderqueer, gender variant, pangender, and/or intersex.

Trans (T): An adjective umbrella term that describes individuals with transgender and/or transsexual experience or identity. Trans people of any gender identity may have any sexual orientation (heterosexual, gay, bisexual, etc.). Many people of trans experience do not have a "trans identity";

many identify as men or women. Terms like “trans-woman” or “trans-man” should not be used unless preferred by the individual. Many people of transsexual experience do not identify as LGB or “queer” and may be offended if lumped into the “LGBT” category. It is important not to automatically use this terminology unless the individual prefers it. It can be awkward if you are not sure how someone identifies, but it is much better to ask rather than assume incorrectly. Overwhelmingly people will appreciate it if you take the effort to find out which terms they prefer.

Intersex: (The term intersex is preferred over the outdated and offensive term hermaphrodite) A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. Sometimes an intersex condition is evident at birth and other times the condition isn’t discovered until puberty or adulthood. Children born with atypical reproductive or sexual anatomy are always assigned a gender at birth. As adolescents or adults people with intersex conditions may change their gender if the one assigned at birth isn’t the gender they identify with. There is another term used by the medical establishment to identify various intersex conditions and that is Disorders of Sex Development. This is controversial terminology and some people who feel that using the term “disorder” is offensive do not accept this terminology. There is still a lot of debate over terminology, but the term intersex is used and understood by many.

Transsexual (TS): An adjective that describes people whose **body concept** differs from their sex designation at birth. **Body concept** refers to a person’s “hardwiring”, often called “neurological sex” or “kinesthetic sex”. Body concept functions primarily at a physiological, not merely psychological, level and should not be confused with gender role or masculine/feminine behavior. People of transsexual experience may or may not seek medical intervention (sex reassignment surgery and/or hormones) to acquire physical attributes that reflect their body concept. While some individuals self-identify using transsexual as a noun (i.e. the transsexual), many consider this usage offensive. Many people of transsexual experience want to be called “men” or “women”, not “transsexuals”. Many want to be referred to as “male” or “female” based on their body concept rather than their current embodiment or degree of medical transition.

Transgender (TG): In the past, “transgender” was used as an umbrella term to describe a broad range of people who experience and express their genders differently from cultural norms. Increasingly, this adjective is used specifically to describe people whose gender identities do not match their sex designation at birth, such as people designated male at birth who identify as women. Some people no longer consider “transgender” an inclusive umbrella term. Many trans advocates avoid the adjective “transgendered”, because it encourages usage of “transgender” as a noun (i.e. “a transgender”, “the transgenders”), which many people consider offensive and dehumanizing. As mentioned earlier, if you’re in doubt of the terminology preferred by an individual you should ask.

Man of Trans Experience/Woman of Trans Experience: Term used by people who have experienced or plan to have a social and/or medical affirmation to change their birth-designated sex and/or gender, but who do not self-identify as “trans.” For example, “a man of trans experience, designated female at birth.”

Two Spirit (2S): This term is popular as both an adjective and a noun among many Native American/First Nations peoples who feel that they have two spirits, a male and female spirit, living within a single body. This term is also used by some contemporary GLB, transgender, and intersex Native American/First Nation people to describe people with same gender partners or attractions. There are different terms for Two-Spirit individuals in various Native American/First Nation

languages. Many consider it offensive when non-Native American/First Nations identify as Two Spirit, as this concept has culturally specific historical roots and meanings.

Gender Variant (GV): This adjective is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender identities, expressions, and/or experiences are not limited to a single binary gender identity (i.e. man/woman). This term is not synonymous with “trans” and is often inaccurate to describe people of trans identity or experience, many of whom have binary identities.

Genderqueer (GQ): A term preferred by some GV individuals whose gender identities do not fit within the man/woman binary. Some GQ people consider themselves neither men nor women, while others consider themselves a combination of both or a third gender. Some GQ people designated female at birth self-identify as “FTX”, meaning female-to-X, with X representing a non-binary gender ID. Some GQ people prefer third gender pronouns “zie” (zee) and “hir” (heer). Example: Alden loves hir job, but zie still finds time for hir friends. Third gender pronouns should never be used for trans people who prefer to be identified with male or female pronouns. When in doubt, ask.

Bi-gender, Pangender: This term refers to people who have two or more gender identities. These identities may co-exist or present alternately. Bi-gender (dually gendered) people may describe themselves as “both a man and a woman,” as “third gender”, or as other genders outside the man/woman binary. Bi-gender and pangender people are a natural part of human diversity. Ask for the gender pronoun(s) a bi-gender or pangender person prefers at a given time.

Cisgender/Cissexual: Cis is a prefix that mean “on this side (of)” or “not across.” Cisgender and Cissexual is a description of a non-transgender or non-transsexual man or woman when discussing trans issues. Cisgender/Cissexual individuals therefore have a gender identity and body concept that is culturally/socially congruent with their sex and gender designation at birth. These terms are less biased than the popular terms “biomen,” “bioguy,” or “biowomen.”

Cissexism: Discrimination and invisibility experienced by TGI people who do not conform to a binary gender, body concept, or anatomy that matches their sex designation at birth.

FTM/F2M: Shortened term for female-to-male trans men. This term is not preferred or used by everyone and should not be used unless a person prefers it.

MTF/M2F: Shortened term for male-to-female trans women. This term is not preferred or used by everyone and should not be used unless a person prefers it.

Trans man: Used by some people who were designated female at birth, but who identify as men. Trans men often seek or have undergone medical interventions to change their bodies. It is important to understand that trans men are men and should be treated accordingly, whether or not they pass visually as men or have had any medical intervention.

Trans woman: Used by people who were designated male at birth, but who identify as women. Trans women often seek or have undergone medical interventions to change their bodies. It is important to understand that trans women are women and should be treated accordingly, whether or not they pass visually as women or have had any medical intervention.

Crossdresser (CD): Used by people who privately or socially present in clothing, name, and/or pronouns that differ from their everyday gender. While some trans and gender variant people begin

their self-discovery by crossdressing, many people who self-identify as CDs are not transgender and do not seek gender affirmation. Most Trans people find it disparaging to be called CDs.

Butch (sometimes Macha in Spanish): A term often used by people designated female at birth who feel that “woman” does not fit their gender identity. This term is associated with, but not restricted to, lesbian environments. Some butches self-identify as transgender. Some seek male hormones and chest surgery without identifying as men.

Drag queen/Drag king: Used by people who present socially in clothing, name, and/or pronouns that differ from their everyday gender, usually for enjoyment, entertainment, and/or self-expression. Drag queens typically have everyday lives as men. Drag kings typically live as women and/or butches when not performing. Drag shows are popular in some gay, lesbian, and bisexual environments. Unless they are drag performers, most trans people would be offended by being confused with drag queens or drag kings.

Gender Affirmation: This term refers to the social, legal, and/or medical process of affirming a gender identity and/or body concept different from a person’s birth designation. This term is more clinically accurate and less sensationalist than “sex change;” it is often more culturally sensitive than “transition”. People seeking gender or body concept affirmation are already who they affirm themselves to be inside. A man designated female at birth isn’t “a woman becoming a man”; his identity as a man motivates him to seek affirmation.

Passing: Term used to describe individuals and situations where people of TG/TS experience are not publicly identifiable as having a birth-designated sex that diverges from their current gender identity and/or body concept. Many trans people are unable to pass. Ability to pass should not be a factor when deciding whether to provide access to medical affirmation services, use of bathrooms that match their gender identity, or use of preferred name and pronouns.

Stealth: Term used to describe people who are not open about their trans history or status in some or all aspects of life. This term is not identical to or interchangeable with the concept of “being closeted”. Being “closeted” usually refers to someone who is hiding their sexual orientation for fear of negative repercussions of disclosure of their true identity. Being “stealth” refers to someone who doesn’t reveal their transgender status in order to be their true self and be identified in the correct gender. Often times when a trans person reveals their trans status it causes people to use incorrect gender pronouns and may cause someone to be disrespectful by refusing to acknowledge the trans persons true identity.

Deep stealth: Refers to people who choose not to disclose their trans history or status in all major areas of their lives. Many deep stealth people do not tell their medical providers about their trans history or status. Some even have two separate medical providers, one who knows and whom they see without using insurance, and another from whom they choose to withhold this information.

Being read/Being clocked/Being spooked: A situation in which a trans person is somehow identified or discovered as trans; this often leads to anti-trans verbal abuse or violence.

Pronoun cueing: The act of modeling the use of a person’s preferred pronoun(s) and establishing a person’s perceived gender in an interpersonal situation.

Mispronouncing: The act of using incorrect pronouns. Mispronouncing reinforces misinformation about trans people through incorrect pronoun cueing, constitutes legal harassment, and is a very damaging form of verbal abuse.

Gender Expression: How one chooses to express one's gender identity.

Sex: The biological assignment of "male" or "female" based upon the genitalia that an individual possesses at birth. The biological sexes are commonly seen as mutually exclusive, and it is often believed that a person's sex should dictate their gender identity expression (i.e. those born with "male" genitalia should identify as men and behave in a "masculine" way and those born with "female" genitalia should identify as women and behave in a "feminine" way). However, many individuals are born with sexual characteristics that cannot be categorized as wholly "male" or "female."

Transphobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as transgendered.

Trans/Transgender Issues

This section was taken from the *Resources* section of the website www.lifelinesri.org. We selected portions that we thought would give you a beginning in understanding trans issues. Due to the length of their original document only portions of their document were used for this manual. Please visit their website for additional information.

What does transgender mean?

Transgender is an umbrella term that includes trans, transsexual, cross dressers, twospirit, gender variant, genderqueer, and intersex individuals. Politically, having an umbrella identity makes it easier to demand rights for all these diverse groups of people, though the term is not embraced by all and may be considered inaccurate and offensive. Some transsexual individuals and some intersex or individuals with variations of sexual development therefore do not want to be labeled under transgender, but politically speaking, they share many of the same issues. Also, some genderqueer (as well as androgyne, bi-gender/multigender) people do not consider themselves transgender because "trans" is often associated with binary transition. Despite popular usage of the terms "LGBT community" and "trans community", most trans people are not actually part of either, particularly straight and/or stealth (not openly acknowledged) trans people. Historically, *transgender* was a term reserved for individuals who wanted to live some or all of the time in a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth, but who did not want hormones or surgery. This is no longer true as many individuals who identify as transgender desire hormones and/or surgery to affirm their gender as something other than their birth gender.

What is a transsexual?

An individual who has a gender identity that does not socially/culturally correspond with their sex/ gender assigned at birth, but instead with the opposite sex or a sex other than the one they were assigned at birth (also known as a *transgender* individual). The term *transsexual* was coined by doctors, which may hold the "mental illness" stigma, unlike *transgender* which is a self-identified term. *Transsexual* usually refers to those who want to and/or currently do receive

hormone therapy and/or sex reassignment surgery of the “opposite” sex. Using the term transgender for transsexual people can obscure the diverse needs among trans people and can contribute to inadequate care. Transsexuals do not define themselves based on their degree of medical transition, but instead male, female, or another gender.

What is Gender Identity Disorder (GID)/Gender Dysphoria?

GID/Gender Dysphoria is found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). GID is the mental disorder diagnosis for individuals that identify as the opposite gender that typically corresponds with their birth sex. Transgender and other human rights activists have opposed the existence of GID because it further stigmatizes these individuals. After homosexuality was taken out of the DSM, GID was put in. Homosexuality and GID share many similarities with the reasoning behind why they were put in the DSM. Homosexuality was dismissed as a mental illness because it was the stigma around being gay that caused problems, not being gay by itself. People argue that the same stigma of being transgender exists, and it is not being transgender itself that causes problems. The DSM treats hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery as the “treatment” to GID and many doctors will not allow individuals to receive either without a diagnosis of GID. Being transgender is not a mental illness, but as of right now, the DSM treats it as so. Stating that someone has a gender identity disorder is considered to be offensive and derogatory. There are some TGI people who feel the GID diagnosis is important mainly because they want insurance to cover the huge costs of transition. While in some cases this may be a valid argument, in many cases insurance companies will refuse to cover anything with or without a GID diagnosis.

What is the gender identity of a transgender person?

Some transgender individuals identify as a boy/man or a girl/woman and have no transgender identity. Others may identify as a boy/man or a girl/woman and also have a transgender identity and may identify as a man/woman of trans experience or an affirmed man/woman. Some may identify as a Trans boy/man or a Trans girl/woman. Some transgender individuals may have a more ambiguous gender identity, such as androgyne, genderqueer, bi-gender, two-spirit, multi-gender, or another self-identified gender.

What are transgender rights?

Transgender individuals do not yet receive the same level of civil rights protections as non-transgender Americans, in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection clause as well as more fundamental principles of human equality. Transgender people deserve to have the same rights as other individuals which may include but are not limited to: a life without discrimination and violence based on their gender identity and expression, access to social services such as homeless shelters, rape crisis shelters, and medical clinics, access to education and employment, equal treatment by law enforcement, housing rights, access to public accommodations such as shops, restaurants, public transportation, and bathrooms, and the right to get married. According to the Transgender Law and Policy Institute, 13 states and 93 counties and cities, including the state of Rhode Island, currently have non-discrimination laws on the books that include “Gender Identity or Expression.” There is currently no protection on a federal level.

How can I help support Transgender Rights?

Learn more about transgender rights, support relevant organizations, and talk to family and friends about these important issues. The **National Center for Transgender Equality**, the **National Transgender Advocacy Coalition**, and the **Sylvia Rivera Law Project**, as well as other local organizations, work to secure transgender rights on a national level. Call your representatives in Congress to see if they support rights for Transgender individuals, including a fully inclusive hate crimes bill and Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

Intersex Issues

What does intersex mean?

An intersex individual is born with a variation or ambiguity of external genitalia, internal genitalia, gonads, or sex chromosomes in relation to male and female biology.

What is a hermaphrodite?

The term *hermaphrodite* literally refers to a creature that has both male and female reproductive organs, which only exists in myth for humans. It is an out dated, improper term to refer to intersex individuals and can be seen as derogatory. The term has been used in medical terminology as a condition, however, intersex individuals feel as though it is more appropriate to have a self-identified term, *intersex*, or Variations of Sexual Development (VSD).

What are Disorders of Sex Development (DSD)?

This term and its guidelines are used by medical doctors to describe and “help” intersex. Many intersex individuals oppose its usage because their bodies are not disorders and it further pathologizes them. For more information about this controversial term you can visit <http://www.intersexualite.org/>.

How many people are born intersex?

The number of intersex individuals is difficult to determine. The Intersex Society of North America claims states that 1 in 100 babies have some sort of variation of the external genitalia from the “standard male and female” but are not labeled as intersex. Also, about 1 in 1,000 babies are born with ambiguous external genitalia. In the U.S., intersex people are forced to be legally male or female. Most of these individuals have genital surgery performed on them following birth, to “normalize” their genitals, sometimes without the knowledge or consent of the parents. Many intersex individuals do not have ambiguous external genitalia, but may have ambiguous or differing internal genitalia, sex chromosomes, gonadal sex or hormonal sex. Some of these individuals may not even realize they are intersex until puberty and the individual never reaches menarche, testes descend, or another unexpected physiological phenomenon occurs. It is also possible for some intersex people to never know or to find out in an unrelated situation. For example, a woman track athlete has been tested for steroids and the test came back positive, but not because she was using steroids. Instead, she has a Y chromosome (which females do not have), which she was previously unaware of, and the

testosterone caused her test to be read as positive. Another example: A man or woman may have abdominal surgery, but doctors may find ovaries or un-descended testes where unexpected.

How do intersex individuals define their gender identity?

Some intersex individuals identify as a boy/man or a girl/woman. Some intersex people have a more ambiguous gender identity, such as androgyne, genderqueer, bi-gender, multigender, two-spirit, or another self-identified gender. Although many of these individuals are categorized with medical diagnoses, these are not gender identities. The term *intersex* can be a self-identified label, like transgender, but may not be a gender identity by itself.

Androgyne, Genderqueer, Bi-Gender, & Multigender Issues:

What can a person do if they realize that they're not quite transgender, but are not cisgender either? Are there any options? An individual may realize that they identify as a different gender from other people of the same sex. Although we live in a society that forces us to choose a gender based on a binary system (male/man vs. female/woman), some individuals do not have a gender identity that is strictly feminine or strictly masculine. The person may be unsure if they are transgender. They may soon realize that they do not strictly identify as the opposite gender that culturally corresponds with their birth sex because they also identify with the gender that culturally corresponds with their birth sex or some sort of combination of the two, or neither of them. Listed below are some non-gender-binary identities that are the most culturally known within genderspectrum communities, but other non-gender-binary self-identities do exist.

Androgyne as a gender identity may be a good fit for this individual if they feel as though they have an androgynous gender identity. Attending gender minority support groups may be helpful to help figure themselves out and to feel more comfortable. This individual may wish to present androgynously, to varying degrees. The androgynous identity may show through dress, behavior, gestures, pronouns and/or name.

Genderqueer as a gender identity may be a good fit for this individual if the terms *man* or *woman* do not accurately describe them, but instead consider their self a combination of both or neither gender. Attending gender minority support groups may be helpful to help figure themselves out and to feel more comfortable. These individuals may prefer to vary their expression on a day-to-day basis including in a feminine, masculine, and androgynous manner, which may show through dress, behavior, gestures, pronouns and/or name.

Although the term **bi-gender** is not widely known, this gender identity may be a good fit for this individual if they feel as though they contain both a masculine and feminine gender identity, and wish to express each of them at different times and/or at the same time. Attending gender minority support groups may be helpful to help figure themselves out and to feel more comfortable. The individual may choose to express their masculine identity on some days or certain occasions, while they express their feminine identity on other days or on other occasions. Not all bigender individuals, but some may combine their masculine and feminine identities, in an androgynous manner, on some days and for certain occasions. The masculine, feminine, (and androgynous) identities may show through dress, behavior, gestures, pronouns and/or name(s).

Although the term ***multigender*** is also not widely known, this gender identity may be a good fit for this individual if they feel as though they contain a combination of many genders or wish to separately express multiple genders. Attending gender minority support groups may be helpful to help figure themselves out and to feel more comfortable. This individual may express a variety of gender expressions including feminine, masculine, androgynous, and slight variations in between on certain days or for certain occasions. The masculine, feminine, and androgynous identities may show through dress, behavior, gestures, pronouns and/or name(s).

Working with Trans People: Some Things to Keep in Mind

Don't be afraid to ask a person what their preferred pronoun is. It may be uncomfortable to ask but it is better to ask than to use the wrong pronoun.

If you have a question, make sure you ask yourself "why do I need to know this information?" Do not ask personal questions about someone's gender affirmation process unless you really need to know. Sometimes curiosity will cause us to ask personal questions that aren't relevant to the situation at hand. Also, never ask, "have you had the surgery yet?" This is an offensive question and there is no one surgery that trans people access.

Don't assume that all trans people are comfortable being lumped together with the LGBTQ community. Many trans people don't identify as "queer" or "LGBTQ" and do not feel included by this terminology.

Don't assume that someone who has revealed their trans experience identifies as a trans person. Many trans people don't consider being trans an identity and many would not want to be part of a "trans community." In LGB development models the highest level of identity development and identity integration is to be openly LGB. For many TGI people, openly identifying as TGI would be regressive and unhealthy. Many TGI people are healthiest and achieve the most positive developmental gains when they are able to affirm an identity simply as a man or a woman.

Respect trans people's right to privacy and their right to control disclosure of their trans experience.

Avoid using sensational, offensive or inaccurate catch phrases like "man trapped in a woman's body", "sex change operation", "hermaphrodite", "transvestite", "trannie", etc.

If you're working with someone medically, ask preferred body terms. For example, a man who was designated female at birth might prefer you to use the term "chest" rather than "breasts." There is no "one size fits all" approach to quality care for TGI people.

Many intersex people don't identify as "intersex". They may prefer to be viewed as a person "with a Variation of Sex Development" or another term. Learn about the specific variation. There are many intersex conditions, all of which have unique attributes. Respect the emotional impact of having biology that is non-standard and being forced to choose from two categories of biology that don't fit. Respect that many intersex people have a single, binary gender identity. Most intersex people are not "gender variant."

How to Be an Ally to Trans People

- Validate people's gender expression. It is important to refer to transgender people by the pronoun appropriate to their gender identity. In other words, if someone identifies as female, then refer to the person as "she"; if someone identifies as male, refer to the person as "he." If you are not sure, ask them. Never use the word "it" when referring to someone who is transgender. To do so is incredibly insulting and disrespectful. Some transgender people prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns: "hir" instead of "her" and "his," and "sie" or "ze" instead of "she" and "he."
- Use non-gendered language to avoid making gender assumptions. Refer to people by name, instead of calling them "sir"/"ma'am" or "Mr.,"/"Ms."
- Challenge your own conceptions about gender-appropriate roles and behaviors. Do not expect people to conform to society's beliefs about "women" and "men."
- Do not assume that someone who is transgender is lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or that a person will seek to transition to become heterosexual.
- Use the word "crossdresser" instead of "transvestite," as the latter term is often considered pejorative because of the word's clinical and pathological history.
- Never ask transgender people about how they have sex or what their genitals look like. This is inappropriate in every situation.
- Do not share the gender identity of individuals without their permission. Do not assume that everyone knows. The decision to tell others about one's gender should be left to the individual.
- When you learn about someone's transgender identity, do not assume that it is a fad or trend.
- While public discussions about transgenderism and transsexuality are a relatively recent phenomenon, most transgender people have felt themselves to be gender different from early childhood and have often struggled to be accepted by others. It is important to trust that someone's decision to present themselves as differently gendered is not made lightly or without due consideration.
- Educate yourself and others about the experiences of transgender people. Introduce trainings, readings, and other resources to your colleagues to continue educational efforts to deconstruct social norms around gender, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Work to change campus policies in areas such as housing, employment, student records and forms, and health care that discriminate against transgender people and seek to include "gender identity/expression" in your school's non-discrimination policy.

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Some material adapted from the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance: <http://www.tgnetarizona.org>

“What Should I Do If...?” Commonly Asked Ally Questions

How can I tell if someone I know is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

Ultimately, the only way to tell if a person is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is if that person tells you so. Many lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and trans people don't fit the common stereotypes, and many people who fit the stereotypes aren't lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. Assumptions on your part can be misguided. The important thing to remember is that it is very likely that someone you interact with on campus is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and to try to be sensitive to that fact.

What should I do if I think someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but they haven't told me?

Again, remember that assumptions on your part may be inaccurate. The best approach is to create an atmosphere where that individual can feel comfortable being open with you. You can do this by making sure that you are open and approachable and by giving indications that you are comfortable with this topic and are supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender concerns. If the person is already out to themselves, and they feel that you are worthy of their trust, then they may tell you. If the person seems to be in conflict about something, it may or may not be because of their sexuality or gender identity. In this case, it is best simply to make sure that they know you are there if they need to talk. Remember, they may not have told you because they don't want you to know.

How do I make myself more approachable to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

Demonstrate that you are comfortable with topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity and that you are supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender concerns. Be sensitive to the assumptions you make about people—try not to assume that everyone you interact with is heterosexual, that they have a partner of a different gender, etc. Try to use inclusive language, such as avoiding the use of pronouns that assume the gender of someone's partner or friends. Be a role model by confronting others who make homophobic and transphobic jokes or remarks. Become knowledgeable about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender concerns by reading books and attending meetings and activities sponsored by LGBTQ organizations.

What kinds of things might a person who is lesbian, gay or bisexual go through when coming out?

Because of the difficulty of growing up in a largely homophobic society, people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual may experience guilt, isolation, depression, suicidal feelings, and low self-esteem. As LGB people become more in touch with their sexual orientation they may experience any number of these thoughts and feelings to some degree. On the positive side, coming out can be an extremely liberating experience, as lesbians, gay men bisexual people learn who they are, gain respect for themselves, and find friends to relate to. Coming out to

others can be an anxious process, as the individual worries about rejection, ridicule, and the possible loss of family, friends, and employment. For students, college life is already stress filled, and adding the process of grappling with one's sexual identity to that mix can be overwhelming.

What kinds of things might a trans person go through when they begin to acknowledge their true gender identity?

Trans issues are very rarely discussed and as result they are widely misunderstood. Similarly to lesbian, gay and bisexual people, trans people may also experience feelings of guilt, isolation, depression, suicidal feelings, and low self-esteem. It may take awhile for a trans person to understand the feelings that they begin having which make them question whether the sex and gender they were assigned at birth are their true sex and gender. Once a trans person does understand these feelings they may choose to seek medical affirmation to align their physical sex with their true gender. Since it is very difficult to get these resources, some trans individuals experience extreme frustration with the lack of resources and constant discrimination that they face. When a person does not have access to the resources they need to align their sex with their gender it can make it externally difficult to "pass" in their true gender. This increases discrimination and contributes to feelings of depression and isolation. A lack of resources can also contribute to suicidal feelings.

Some trans people do use the term "coming out" to describe their personal acknowledgment of their true gender identity. However, it is important to be careful when using the term "coming out" when discussing trans people. For most LGB people, coming out is the ultimate goal. Coming out to themselves and others allows an LGB individual to shed their shame and fear and be proud and comfortable about who they are. For most trans people however, coming out is not the ultimate goal. A person may temporarily identify as trans or transgender or may never identify as trans or transgender. Many trans people strongly identify as a man or a woman and simply want to be recognized as a man or woman. "Coming out" as a trans person often contributes to an individual being perceived in a gender other than the one they identify with which in turn leads to further discrimination. If you discover that someone has transitioned gender and currently or previously identified as trans it is very important not to disclose this information to others unless given explicit permission to do so.

If someone wants advice on what to tell their roommate, friends, or family about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender how can I help?

Remember that the individual must decide for themselves when and to whom they will reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is best not to tell someone specifically what they should do. Do listen carefully, reflect on the concerns and feelings you hear expressed, and suggest available resources for support. Help the person think through the possible outcomes of coming out. Support the person's decision even if you don't agree with it, and ask about the outcomes of any action taken.

What do I do if someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender wants to come out in my office, on my residence hall floor, or within the context of any other group I am a part of?

Again, help the individual think through the possible outcomes. Discuss how others might react and how the person might respond to those reactions. Mention the option of coming out to a few people at a time, as opposed to the entire group. If someone has decided to come out, let them know you will support them.

How should I respond to heterosexual friends or coworkers who feel negatively about a person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in our office, on our residence hall floor, or in any group I am a part of?

When such problems arise, it is most useful to discuss this with the people involved. Help them to see that they are talking about a person, not just a sexual orientation/gender identity. Make sure that you have accurate information so that you may appropriately discuss the myths and stereotypes that often underlie such negative reactions. Note the similarities between LGBTQ people and heterosexual people. Be clear with others that while they have a right to their own beliefs and opinions, you will not tolerate anti-gay or anti-trans comments or discrimination. Remember that others may take their cues from you—if you are uncomfortable with, hostile to, or ignore someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, others may follow suit. Conversely, if you are friendly with the person and treat them with respect, others may follow suit.

What should I say to someone who is afraid of contracting HIV/AIDS from LGBTQ people?

HIV is not transmitted through ordinary social contact. It is necessary for everyone to be knowledgeable about HIV and AIDS. If a friend or coworker is afraid and uninformed, use this as an educational opportunity. Student Health Services and/or the LGBTQ Center can provide you with pamphlets and other resources containing current and accurate information.

How can I support LGBTQ people without my own sexual orientation becoming an issue?

Be aware that if you speak out about issues related to sexual orientation, some people may take this as an indication of your own sexual orientation. Take time in advance to think through how you might respond to this. How do you feel about your own sexual identity? Are you comfortable with yourself? Regardless of your sexual orientation, a confidence in your own self-image will make you less vulnerable.

How should I respond to rumors that someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

Let others know that the sexual orientation or gender identity of any individual is irrelevant unless that person wishes to disclose that information. If you can, address any myths or stereotypes that may be fueling such speculation. If a particular person continues to spread rumors, talk to that person individually.

How can I get others to be more open-minded about LGBTQ people?

In brief, be a role model for others by being open and visible in your support. Share your beliefs with others when appropriate. When LGBTQ topics come up, talk about them, don't simply avoid them. Show that you are comfortable talking about these issues, and comfortable with LGBTQ people. Remember that part of your goal as an ally is to create bridges across differences and to increase understanding. While you may be motivated to share your views with others, be careful of being self-righteous; others can't learn from you if they are turned off from listening to begin with. Of course, your views are more convincing if they are supported by sound knowledge. Take the time to educate yourself so that you know what you are talking about.

How can I respond when someone tells a homophobic joke?

Many people believe that jokes are harmless and get upset by what they perceive as the "politically correct" attitudes of those who are offended by inappropriate humor. Labeling a belief as "politically correct" is a subtle way of supporting the status quo and resisting change. Most people who tell jokes about an oppressed group have never thought about how those jokes perpetuate stereotypes, or how they teach and reinforce prejudice. Someone who tells jokes about LGBTQ people probably assumes that everyone present is heterosexual, or at least that everyone shares their negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people. However, most people do not tell jokes to purposefully hurt or embarrass others, and will stop if they realize this is the effect. Responding assertively in these situations is difficult, but not responding at all sends a silent message of agreement. No response is the equivalent of condoning the telling of such jokes. It is important to remember that young people, particularly those questioning their own sexual identity, will watch to see who laughs at such jokes, and may internalize the hurtful message. In some instances, the inappropriateness of the joke could be mentioned at the time. In other situations, the person could be taken aside afterward. Try to communicate your concerns about the joke with respect.

How can I respond to homophobic and transphobic attitudes?

If you disagree with a negative statement someone makes about LGBTQ people, the assertive thing to do is to say so. Again, silence communicates agreement. Remember what your goal is in responding: not to start an argument or foster hostility, but to attempt to increase understanding. Disagreement can be civil and respectful. Share your views without accusing or criticizing. You are simply presenting another way of thinking about the topic. It can be difficult to speak out in support of LGBTQ people. You might be afraid that others will question your sexual orientation, morals, and values, or that you will be ostracized. It is easy to forget that there might be positive effects of your outspokenness as well.

How can I respond to people who object to LGBTQ people for religious reasons?

Usually, there is no way to change the minds of individuals who base their negative beliefs about LGBTQ people on strict religious convictions. However, while respecting their right to believe as they wish, you can share some information with them. It can be useful to point out that identifying as a religious person is not necessarily incompatible with being supportive of

LGBTQ people. There is a great deal of diversity among the religious communities with regard to beliefs about same-gender sexuality and trans identity. In addition, there is much disagreement about the Biblical basis for condemning LGBTQ people. Many religious scholars argue that the Biblical passages which are said to refer to same-gender sexuality have been misinterpreted. It is also important to point out that while individuals are entitled to their personal religious beliefs, these opinions should not be used to deny LGBTQ people equal treatment under the law.

Online Resources:

This is not an exhaustive list, but a place to begin.

National/International Resources

Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN): www.glsen.org

The Task Force: www.thetaskforce.org

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians & Gays: www.pflag.org

BiNet USA: www.binetusa.org

GenderPAC (Political): www.genderpac.org

Organisation Intersex International: www.intersexualite.org/

Transgender Law and Policy Institute: www.transgenderlaw.org

Lynn Conway's comprehensive site on Trans Issues: www.lynnconway.com

The Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org

Intersex Society of North America (ISNA): www.isna.org

Reporting Gender & Sexuality-Related Bias Incidents

Bias incidents involve threatening or harassing behavior that is motivated by bias based upon gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation OR *perceived* gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. These behaviors can include verbal remarks, written messages, and/or pictures. Non-emergency incidents can be reported to the Commandant's Office or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity. **Any incident that involves physical threat or injury or concerns about physical safety should be reported IMMEDIATELY to Public Safety.**

Student Reports Pursuant to Regimental Manual:

-Edward Rozak, Commandant of Cadets, VP of Student Services (508.830.5030)

Student/Faculty/Staff Reports Pursuant to Massachusetts State Colleges Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity & Diversity Plan:

-Elizabeth Benway, Director, HR, Equal Opportunity & Diversity (508.830.5086)

-Erin DeBobes, Affirmative Action Officer (508.830.5052)