

Handbook



www.haywood.edu/student-wellness

Mission

The “Safe Zone” symbol is a message to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people and their allies. The message is that the person displaying this symbol will be understanding, supportive and trustworthy if a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person needs help, advice or just someone with whom they can talk. The person displaying this symbol can also give accurate information about sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

The mission of the Safe Zone Ally Program is to provide a network of safe and supportive allies to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community at Haywood Community College.

Goal

The Safe Zone Ally Program responds to the needs of the Haywood Community College student body. The goal of this program is to provide a welcoming environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning persons by establishing an identifiable network of supportive persons who can provide support, information and a safe space for LGBTQ persons within our campus community. Those who have committed to being Safe Zone Allies indicate that bigotry and discrimination, specifically regarding LGBTQ persons, are not tolerated.

The HCC Safe Zone Symbol



The Rainbow Flag has been adopted by the gay and lesbian community. It was created in 1978 for San Francisco’s Gay Freedom Celebration by local artist Gilbert Baker. It was inspired by the “Flag of the Races,” which has five stripes that represent the colors of humankind’s skin, flown at the 1960 college campus demonstrations.

Major gay and lesbian parades in New York, Houston, Vancouver, and Toronto began to fly the six-stripe Rainbow Flag. It is prominently displayed at all homosexual events. In New York, the Rainbow Flag drapes coffins of people who have died of AIDS, and is frequently displayed on hospital doors. The AIDS ward of a Sydney, Australia hospital flies the Rainbow Flag as a symbol of hope. In a few short years, the flag spread worldwide to represent a movement. Its success is not due to any official recognition but to the widespread spontaneous adoption by members of the community it represents.  
  
The more recent Progress Pride Flag was designed to be more inclusive by also featuring colors representative of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ community.

LGBTQ+ Glossary

Language is dynamic; it grows, changes and develops. Language also creates and expresses meaning. This is particularly true with the language of diversity and terms (labels) we use to identify ourselves. Language must not demean, exclude or offend. We must allow others to self-identify, for definitions of terms vary for everyone. This glossary is provided a starting point for discussion and understanding.

Core Terms

**ally** /“al-lie”/ – *noun* : a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. We consider people to be active allies who take action on in support and respect.

**asexual** – *adj.* : experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions. Many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see demisexual). Sometimes abbreviated to “ace.”

**biological sex** – *noun* : a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned at birth.”

**biphobia** – *noun* : a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have or express toward bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the LGBTQ community as well as straight society. **biphobic** – *adj.* : a word used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward bisexual people.

**bisexual** – **1** *noun & adj.* : a person who experiences attraction to some men and women. **2** *adj.* : a person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender and another gender. Bisexual attraction does not have to be equally split, or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders an individual may be attracted to. Often used interchangeably with “pansexual”.

**cisgender** /“siss-jendur”/ – *adj.* : a gender description for when someone’s sex assigned at birth and gender identity correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, and identifies as a man). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.”

**coming out** – **1** *noun* : the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). **2** *verb* : the process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others.

**gay** – **1** *adj.* : experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of the same gender. Can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to women. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who is not straight.

**gender expression** – *noun* : the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of clothing, grooming, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

**gender identity** – *noun* : the internal perception of an one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Often conflated with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth.

**Genderqueer** – **1** *adj.* : a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).

**Heteronormativity** – *noun* : the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: *when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband’s name is.* Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

**Homophobia** – *noun* : an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have toward LGBTQ people. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. **Homophobic** – *adj.* : a word used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people.

**Homosexual** – *adj. & noun* : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This [medical] term is considered stigmatizing (particularly as a noun) due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

**Intersex** – *adj.* : term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now outdated and derogatory.

**Lesbian** – *noun & adj.* : women who are primarily attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women.

**LGBTQ; GSM; DSG** – *abbr.* : shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people add a + at the end to be more inclusive); GSM is Gender and Sexual Minorities; DSG is Diverse Sexualities and Genders. Other options include the initialism GLBT or LGBT and the acronym QUILTBAG (Queer [or Questioning] Undecided Intersex Lesbian Trans\* Bisexual Asexual [or Allied] and Gay [or Genderqueer]).

**Pansexual** – *adj.* : a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to “pan.”

**Passing** – **1** *adj. & verb* : trans\* people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their

self-identified gender identity (regardless of sex assigned at birth) without being identified as trans\*.   
**2** *adj.* : an LGB/queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight.

**queer** – **1** *adj.* : an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as straight and/or cisgender. **2** *noun* : a slur used to refer to someone who isn’t straight and/or cisgender. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, and how it is still used as a slur many communities, it is not embraced or used by all LGBTQ people. The term “queer” can often be use interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., “queer people” instead of “LGBTQ people”).

**Questioning** – *verb, adj.* : an individual who or time when someone is unsure about or exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Romantic attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in romantically intimate behavior (e.g., dating, relationships, marriage), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**Sexual attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in sexually intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**Sexual orientation** – *noun* : the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for some others, generally labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.

**Straight** – *adj.* : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to some people who are not their same sex/gender. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.  
  
**transgender** – **1** *adj.* : a gender description for someone who has transitioned (or is transitioning) from living as one gender to another. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term for anyone whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, but does not identify as a man).

**Transphobia** – *noun* : the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans\* people, the trans\* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society. Transphobic – *adj.* : a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes, thoughts, intents, towards trans\* people.

LGBTQ+ Related Vocabulary Definitions

**advocate** – **1** *noun* : a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. **2** *verb* : to actively support or plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance or educate others.

**agender** – *adj.* : a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.

**ally** /“al-lie”/ – *noun* : a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. We consider people to be active allies who take action on in support and respect.

**androgyny** /“an-jrah-jun-ee”/ (androgynous) – **1** *noun.* : a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; **2** *adj.* : occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person with both female and male anatomy, generally in the form “androgyne."

**androsexual / androphilic** – *adj.* : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to men, males, and/or masculinity.

**aromantic** /”ay-ro-man-tic”/ – *adj.* : experiencing little or no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships/behavior. Aromanticism exists on a continuum from people who experience no romantic attraction or have any desire for romantic activities, to those who experience low levels, or romantic attraction only under specific conditions. Many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see demiromantic). Sometimes abbreviated to “aro” (pronounced like “arrow”).

**asexual** – *adj.* : experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions. Many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see demisexual). Sometimes abbreviated to “ace.”

**bicurious** – *adj.* : a curiosity toward experiencing attraction to people of the same gender/sex (similar to questioning).

**bigender** – *adj.* : a person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (or sometimes identifying with either man or woman, as well as a third, different gender).

**binder** - *noun* : an undergarment used to alter or reduce the appearance of one’s breasts (worn similarly to how one wears a sports bra). **binding** - *adj.* : the (sometimes daily) process of wearing a

binding – adj. : binder. Binding is often used to change the way other’s read/perceive one’s anatomical sex characteristics, and/or as a form of gender expression.

**biological sex** – *noun* : a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned at birth.”

**biphobia** – *noun* : a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have or express toward bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the LGBTQ community as well as straight society. **biphobic** – *adj.* : a word used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward bisexual people.

**bisexual** – **1** *noun & adj.* : a person who experiences attraction to some men and women. **2** *adj.* : a person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender and another gender. Bisexual attraction does not have to be equally split, or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders an individual may be attracted to. Often used interchangeably with “pansexual”.

**butch** – *noun & adj.* : a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally, or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

**cisgender** /“siss-jendur”/ – *adj.* : a gender description for when someone’s sex assigned at birth and gender identity correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, and identifies as a man). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.”

**cisnormativity** – *noun* : the assumption, in individuals and in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans\* identities and people. Leads to invisibility of

non-cisgender identities.

**cissexism** – *noun* : behavior that grants preferential treatment to cisgender people, reinforces the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more “right” than being transgender, and/or makes other genders invisible.

**closeted** – *adj.* : an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one’s safety, peer or family rejection, or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence they “come out” of the closet. (See coming out)

**coming out** – **1** *noun* : the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). **2** *verb* : the process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others.

**constellation** – *noun* : a way to describe the arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship.

**cross-dresser** – *noun* : someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.  
 **demiromantic** – *adj.* : little or no capacity to experience romantic attraction until a strong sexual connection is formed with someone, often within a sexual relationship.

**demisexual** – *adj.* : little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic connection is formed with someone, often within a romantic relationship.

**down low** – *adj.* : typically referring to men who identify as straight but who secretly have sex with men. Down low (or DL) originated in, and is most commonly used by, communities of color.

**drag king** – *noun* : someone who performs (hyper-) masculinity theatrically.

**drag queen** – *noun* : someone who performs (hyper-) femininity theatrically.

**dyke** – *noun* : referring to a masculine presenting lesbian. While often used derogatorily, it is also reclaimed affirmatively by some lesbians and gay women as a positive self identity term.

**emotional attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in emotionally intimate behavior (e.g., sharing, confiding, trusting, inter-depending), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**fag(got)** – *noun* : derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. While often used derogatorily, it is also used reclaimed by some gay people (often gay men) as a positive in-group term.

**feminine-of-center; masculine-of-center** – *adj.* : a phrase that indicates a range in terms of gender identity and expression for people who present, understand themselves, and/or relate to others in a generally more feminine/masculine way, but don’t necessarily identify as women or men.

Feminine-of-center individuals may also identify as “femme,” “submissive,” “transfeminine,” etc.; masculine-of-center individuals may also often identify as “butch,” “stud,” “aggressive,” “boi,” “transmasculine,” etc.

**feminine-presenting; masculine-presenting** – *adj.* : a way to describe someone who expresses gender in a more feminine/masculine way. Often confused with

feminine-of-center/masculine-of-center, which generally include a focus on identity as well as expression.

**femme** – *noun & adj.* : someone who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting queer woman or people.

**fluid(ity)** – *adj.* : generally with another term attached, like gender-fluid or fluid-sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift over time between or within the mix of the options available (e.g., man and woman, bi and straight).

**FtM / F2M; MtF / M2F** – *abbr.* : female-to-male transgender or transsexual person; male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.

**gay** – **1** *adj.* : experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of the same gender. Can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to women. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who is not straight.

**gender binary** – *noun* : the idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.

**gender expression** – *noun* : the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of clothing, grooming, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

**gender fluid** – *adj.* : a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy and girl. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more man some days, and more woman other days.

**gender identity** – *noun* : the internal perception of an one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Often conflated with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth.

**gender neutrois** – *adj.* : see agender.

**gender non-conforming** – **1** *adj.* : a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man). **2** *adj.* : a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as “GNC.”

**gender normative / gender straight** – *adj.* : someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with society’s gender-based expectations.

**genderqueer** – **1** *adj.* : a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).

**gender variant** – *adj.* : someone who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc)**.**

**gynesexual / gynephilic** /“guy-nuh-seks-shu-uhl”/ – *adj.* : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to woman, females, and/or femininity**.**

**hermaphrodite** – *noun* : an outdated medical term previously used to refer to someone who was born with some combination of typically-male and typically-female sex characteristics. It’s considered stigmatizing and inaccurate. *See intersex.*

**heteronormativity** – *noun* : the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: *when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband’s name is.* Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

**heterosexism** – *noun* : behavior that grants preferential treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than queerness, and/or makes other sexualities invisible.

**heterosexual/straight** – *adj.* : experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of a different gender.

**homophobia** – *noun* : an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have toward LGBTQ people. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. **homophobic** – *adj.* : a word used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people.

**homosexual** – *adj. & noun* : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This [medical] term is considered stigmatizing (particularly as a noun) due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

**intersex** – *adj.* : term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now outdated and derogatory.

**lesbian** – *noun & adj.* : women who are primarily attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women.

**LGBTQ; GSM; DSG** – *abbr.* : shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people at a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); GSM is Gender and Sexual Minorities; DSG is Diverse Sexualities and Genders. Other options include the initialism GLBT or LGBT and the acronym QUILTBAG (Queer [or Questioning] Undecided Intersex Lesbian Trans\* Bisexual Asexual [or Allied] and Gay [or Genderqueer]).

**lipstick lesbian** – *noun* : Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is assumed to be (or passes for) straight.

**metrosexual** – *adj.* : a man with a strong aesthetic sense who spends more time, energy, or money on his appearance and grooming than is considered gender normative.

**MSM / WSW** – *abbr.* : men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women, to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities: *because a man is straight, it doesn’t mean he’s not having sex with men*. Often used in the field of HIV/Aids education, prevention, and treatment.

**Mx.** / “mix” or “schwa” / - *noun* : an honorific (e.g. Mr., Ms., Mrs., etc.) that is gender neutral. It is often the option of choice for folks who do not identify within the gender binary: *Mx. Smith is a great teacher.*

**outing** – *verb* : involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

**pansexual** – *adj.* : a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to “pan.”

**passing** – **1** *adj. & verb* : trans\* people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their

self-identified gender identity (regardless of sex assigned at birth) without being identified as trans\*. **2**

*adj.* : an LGB/queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight.

**PGPs** – *abbr.* : preferred gender pronouns. Often used during introductions, becoming more common as a standard practice. Many suggest removing the “preferred,” because it indicates flexibility and/or the power for the speaker to decide which pronouns to use for someone else.

**polyamory** (polyamorous) – *noun* : refers to the practice of, desire for, or orientation toward having ethical, honest, and consensual non-monogamous relationships (i.e. relationships that may include multiple partners). Often shortened to “poly.”

**queer** – **1** *adj.* : an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as straight and/or cisgender. **2** *noun* : a slur used to refer to someone who isn’t straight and/or cisgender. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, and how it is still used as a slur many communities, it is not embraced or used by all LGBTQ people. The term “queer” can often be use interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., “queer people” instead of “LGBTQ people”).

**questioning** – *verb, adj.* : an individual who or time when someone is unsure about or exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

**QPOC / QTPOC** – *abbr.* : initialisms that stand for queer people of color and queer and/or trans people of color.

**romantic attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in romantic intimate behavior (e.g., dating, relationships, marriage), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**same gender loving (SGL)** – *adj.* : sometimes used by some members of the African-American or Black community to express an non-straight sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

**sex assigned at birth (SAAB)** – *abbr.* : a phrase used to intentionally recognize a person’s assigned sex (not gender identity). Sometimes called “designated sex at birth” (DSAB) or “sex coercively assigned at birth” (SCAB), or specifically used as “assigned male at birth” (AMAB) or “assigned female at birth” (AFAB): *Jenny was assigned male at birth, but identifies as a woman.*

**sexual attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in physically intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**sexual orientation** – *noun* : the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for some others, generally labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.

**sexual preference** – *noun* : the types of sexual intercourse, stimulation, and gratification one likes to receive and participate in. Generally when this term is used, it is being mistakenly interchanged with “sexual orientation,” creating an illusion that one has a choice (or “preference”) in who they are attracted to.

**sex reassignment surgery (SRS)** – *noun* : used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s biological sex. “Gender confirmation surgery” is considered by many to be a more affirming term. In most cases, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Some refer to different surgical procedures as “top” surgery and “bottom” surgery to discuss what type of surgery they are having without having to be more explicit.

**skoliosexual** – *adj.* : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some genderqueer, transgender, transsexual, and/or non-binary people.

**spiritual attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in intimate behavior based on one’s experience with, interpretation of, or belief in the supernatural (e.g., religious teachings, messages from a deity), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or emotional attraction.

**stealth** – *adj.* : a trans person who is not “out” as trans, and is perceived/known by others as cisgender.

**straight** – *adj.* : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to some people who are not their same sex/gender. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.

**stud** – *noun* : most commonly used to indicate a Black/African-American and/or Latina masculine lesbian/queer woman. Also known as ‘butch’ or ‘aggressive’.

**third gender** – *noun* : for a person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. This gender category is used by societies that recognise three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary.

**top surgery** – *noun* : this term refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest or breast augmentation for a female-type chest.

**trans\*** – *adj.* : an umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially-defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk is often used in written forms (not spoken) to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term, and specifically including non-binary identities, as well as transgender men (transmen) and transgender women (transwomen).

**transgender** – **1** *adj.* : a gender description for someone who has transitioned (or is transitioning) from living as one gender to another. **2** *adj.* : an umbrella term for anyone whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, but does not identify as a man).

**transition / transitioning –** *noun, verb* : referring to the process of a transgender person changing aspects of themself (e.g., their appearance, name, pronouns, or making physical changes to their body) to be more congruent with the gender they know themself to be (as opposed to the gender they lived as pre-transitioning).

**transman; transwoman** – *noun* : An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transgender people or transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as assigned female sex at birth. (sometimes referred to as transguy) 2 Identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals or transgender people to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as assigned male sex at birth.

**transphobia** – *noun* : the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans\* people, the trans\* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society. Transphobic – *adj.* : a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes, thoughts, intents, towards trans\* people.

**transsexual** – *noun and adj.* a person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

**transvestite –** *noun* : a person who dresses as the binary opposite gender expression

(“cross-dresses”) for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification (often called a “cross-dresser,” and should not be confused with transsexual).

**two-spirit** – *noun* : is an umbrella term traditionally within Native American communities to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders.

**ze / zir /** “zee”, “zerr” or “zeer”/ – alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some trans\* people. They replace “he” and “she” and “his” and “hers” respectively. Alternatively some people who are not comfortable/do not embrace he/she use the plural pronoun “they/their” as a gender neutral singular pronoun.







Coming Out

Coming Out is a lifelong process that begins when a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender person recognizes his/her own gay feelings and shares those feelings with another person. Since people in this world tend to assume a person is not gay, LGBT persons are put in the position of deciding who they would like to share this with. Please note that this is a very individual process – we do not wish to imply that everyone comes out through the same process.

Why Come Out?

Coming out can help serve a number of important functions:

1. It can help a gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, intersex or transgender person feel more positive about himself/herself.
2. It can help a gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, intersex, or transgender person gain more support.
3. It can make friendships closer by sharing such an important part of one’s life.
4. It can free a gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, intersex, or transgender person from the “hiding game.” Living a double-life, one queer and one non-queer, is draining to physical and emotional energy. Being completely honest with significant others can be a very enriching experience for a gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, intersex or transgender person.
5. Our society tends to assume that everyone is heterosexual until proven otherwise.

What Stages are involved in Coming Out?

The first step an individual in the coming out process may experience is moving toward recognition and acceptance of one’s own “queerness.” Gaining support from other gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, queer, and transgender people is another important part of the process. For some, their first same-sex sexual experience represents a profoundly important part of the coming out process. Others have acted upon their queer feelings long before and have clearly identified themselves as queer before coming out. Other important aspects of coming out include first visits to affirming establishments, affirming organizations and gay religious groups—all of which can serve as important supports for gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, queer and transgender people. Finally, coming out may involve telling non-queer people, including friends, family members and co-workers.

Outing

Outing refers to revealing someone else’s sexual orientation or gender identity to others without the consent of the person. It is important to remember that even though someone may confide their sexual orientation or gender identity to you, it is their information to share with others.

Sexual Identity Development for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual People

There are several different models that attempt to explain the process individuals go through in developing a homosexual identity. The D’Augelli Model (1994), shown here, is an approach to non-heterosexual identities based on a social constructionist view of sexual orientation. The model uses steps instead of stages, recognizing the potential for both forward and backward movement between the steps throughout the life span. This flexibility allows for diverse contexts, culture and history. *Remember that models are generalizations, and may not completely describe any one individual’s experience.*

**Step One: Exiting Heterosexual Identity** There is recognition that a person’s sexual orientation is not heterosexual.

**Step Two: Developing a Personal Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual Identity Status** A person develops a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status that is his or her own.

**Step Three: Developing a Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual Social Identity** The individual develops and finds more community support and friendships.

**Step Four: Becoming a Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual Offspring** The individual focuses on coming out with his or her biological family and dealing with the variety of issues and responses that result.

**Step Five: Developing a Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual Intimacy Status** In this step, while developing lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status, many gay and lesbian couples are invisible, thus making it difficult for gays and lesbians to publicly acknowledge gay and lesbian relationships.

**Step Six: Entering a Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual Community** A person enters the lesbian-gay-bisexual community and becomes active in political and social settings. Key factors in the formation of identity are personal subjectivities and actions (perceptions and feelings about sexual identity, sexual behaviors, and the meanings attached to them), interactive intimacies (influences of family, peers, intimate partnerships, and the meanings attached to them), and socio-historical connections (social norms, policies, and laws).

*D'Augelli, A.R. (1994). Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay and bisexual development. In E.J. Trickett, R.J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context (pp. 312-333). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.*

Homosexual Identity Formation

**1. Identity Confusion – “Who am I?”** Individuals realize that their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors can be defined as homosexual. They begin to ask the question, “Who am I?” and to accept the possibility that they may be homosexual. Confusion and turmoil may happen as they let go of their heterosexual identities.

The Cass Model, shown here, is another widely referenced psychosocial model regarding identity formation for homosexual people. In this model, people deal with different issues and concerns as they move from a sense of confusion about their identities to a sense of pride and synthesis about being gay, lesbian or bisexual. Remember that models are generalizations, and may not completely describe any one individual’s experience.

**2. Identity Comparison – “I’m different”** Individuals compare their own perceptions of their behaviors and self with the perceptions that others have of those behaviors and self, becoming aware of differences in perception. They feel alienated from all others and have a sense of not belonging to society at large.

**3. Identity Tolerance – “I’m probably gay/lesbian”** Individuals seek out other homosexuals and the homosexual subculture to counter feelings of isolation and alienation from others. They begin to tolerate, but not accept, homosexual identity.

**4. Identity Acceptance – “I am gay/lesbian”** Individuals increase contacts with other homosexuals, which validates and “normalizes” homosexuality as an identity and a way of life. They can now accept rather than tolerate a homosexual self-image.

**5.** **Identity Pride – “I’m gay/lesbian and proud of it”** Individuals tend to de-value the importance of heterosexual others to themselves and re-value homosexual others more positively, to the point of developing a “them vs. us” attitude where all heterosexuals are viewed negatively and all homosexuals are viewed positively. They are proud to be homosexual and no longer conceal their homosexual identity.

**6.** **Identity Synthesis – “I’m more than gay/lesbian; I’m a complex person”** Individuals abandon the homosexual ‘us’ versus the heterosexual ‘them’ attitude. Supportive heterosexuals are valued while unsupportive heterosexuals are further de-valued. Their personal and public sexual identities become synthesized into one identity, and they are able to integrate homosexual identity with all other aspects of self.

*Adapted from Cass, VC (1979). Homosexual Identity formation: A theoretical model. Journal of Homosexuality, 4, 219-235, and Berzon, Betty (1990). Permanent Partners Building Gay and Lesbian Relationships that Last.*

Gender Identity and Its Formation

Gender identity is defined as a personal conception of oneself as male or female. This concept is intimately related to the concept of gender role, which is defined as the outward manifestations of personality that reflect the gender identity. Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified, as a result of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors; gender role, on the other hand, is manifested within society by observable factors such as behavior and appearance. For example, if a person considers himself a male and is most comfortable referring to his personal gender in masculine terms, then his gender identity is male. However, his gender role is male only if he demonstrates typically male characteristics in behavior, dress, and/or mannerisms.

Thus, gender role is often an outward expression of gender identity, but not necessarily so. In most individuals, gender identity and gender role are congruous. Assessing the acquisition of this congruity, or recognizing incongruity (resulting in gender-variant behavior. It is important also to note that cultural differences abound in the expression of one's gender role, and, in certain societies, such nuances in accepted gender norms can also play some part in the definition of gender identity.

We should remember that all individuals possess a gender identity and that the process of becoming aware of it is an important part of the psychosocial development of a child. In the realm of pediatrics, recognition of gender identity is a process rather than a particular milestone, and variance from societal norms can cause distress to both the child and the child's family. It is necessary to understand the varied pathways that lead to a mature and congruent gender role in order to fully assess a person's behavioral health.

* How does our society prescribe gender norms?
* How are children socialized into society?
* How does gender manifest itself in American culture?

*Author: Shuvo Ghosh, MD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics,*

*Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician, Child Development Program,*

*Division of General Pediatrics, McGill University Health Centre,*

*Montreal Children's Hospital*

LGBTQ People of Color

When an individual is both a person of color and LGBTQ, he/she may feel that only one part of his/her identity can be important. As a result, sexual orientation, and especially gender identity, is often underemphasized. For many, it’s difficult to strike a balance that allows them to be empowered and liberated in both of their oppressed identities. Multiple oppressions affect their lives because:

1. They feel that they do not know who they are.
2. They do not know which part of them is more important.
3. They do not know how to deal with one part of themselves oppressing another part of themselves.
4. They do not have anyone to talk to about the split in personality that they feel.
5. They feel radical and, more often, misunderstood by each group if and when they say that both parts are of equal importance.

*Source: Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals on Campus*

***Understanding Gay and Lesbian Students of Color***

What About the B and the T?

According to Kinsey, most people exist, on a sexual orientation continuum, somewhere between exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual. However, we tend to think of sexual orientation in “either/or” terms; either a person is straight or gay/lesbian. Bisexual and transgender people’s experiences and issues are unique to them. While an exhaustive discussion of these issues is not possible in this format, additional information can be accessed via the “Resources” section at the end of this training packet.

Issues for Bisexual People

Bisexuality is commonly defined as a romantic and sexual interest in or attraction to both men and women. However, bisexual people may choose to engage in sexual relationships with only one gender. In other words, a man who is attracted to both men and women may choose to be intimate only with women, thus living as a straight man. In contrast, a woman who is attracted to both men and women may choose to be intimate with only women, thus living as a lesbian.

As you can see, bisexuality can be confusing. The discord between orientation and behavior can be made even more difficult by the perceptions that both gay and straight communities have of bisexual people. More so than with other sexual orientations, people tend to perceive bisexuality as a “transitional” identity. A common attitude is that bisexual people are either not ready to commit to an exclusively gay or lesbian identity or that they are really straight people who are “experimenting.” Either way, we fail to recognize bisexuality as a sexual orientation in and of itself or we tend to treat bisexual people as “deviant.”

Because the issue of bisexuality can be a confusing one, several issues related specifically to bisexual students need to be recognized:

1. **Invisibility** - Although there is a growing recognition that bisexuality is a true sexual identity, it is often treated as identical to gay or lesbian identities. A presumption is made that bisexual individuals have the same issues and concerns as gays and lesbians.
2. **Biphobia** - While bisexual people are subjected to homophobic and heterosexist attitudes and behaviors, like gays and lesbians, they are also subjected to biphobia (defined as the irrational fear of, hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against bisexuals or bisexual behavior). Biphobia exists in both the straight and gay/lesbian communities; therefore, bisexuals are often stigmatized within their own gay community. Biphobia also results from the association between bisexuality and HIV; some individuals believe that HIV has been transmitted from the gay/lesbian population to the straight populations through interactions with bisexual men and women.
3. **Lack of resources and education** - Although great strides have been made to education people and provide resources for and about gays and lesbians, much more needs to be done with regard to bisexuals.

Transgender

Transgender is the umbrella term that encompasses terms such as cross-dresser, transvestite, transsexual, transgenderist, and intersexual. He or she would express this as a discord that exists between (external) biological sex and (internal) gender identity.

Disagreement exists over whether or not transgender identity is a mental disorder. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) includes gender identity disorders (GID) continue to be included as a psychosocial disorder. However, many believe that having a transgender identity is not a mental disorder but should be considered a separate identity, as gay identity now is.

Currently, society does not adequately distinguish between the terms gender and sex. Using these words interchangeably has led to confusion regarding gender identity and individuals who identify as transgender.

**Gender:** the culturally determined expectations of what “man” and “woman” should be. Ex.: girls wear pink; boys wear blue.

**Sex:** A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Because usually subdivided into “male” and “female,” this category does not recognize the existence of intersexed bodies.

Some specific issues for transgender people include:

1. **Transition** - A transgender person may decide that he or she wishes to transition, male-to-female (M-to-F) or female-to-male (F-to-M). The transition process can occur either through hormone therapy or gender reassignment surgery.
2. **Discrimination** - Although sexual orientation in general is not legally protected from discrimination in all states, the situation is especially difficult for transgender persons. Currently, Minnesota is the only state in the country that lists transgender as a protected class; three cities (Santa Cruz, Seattle, and San Francisco) also protect transgender people from discrimination.
3. **Transphobia -** Transgender people, like bisexuals, experience prejudice and discrimination from both the straight and gay communities. Transgender people can be more vulnerable to random homophobic attacks than GLB people.
4. **School and Workplace Issues** - Transgender people who wish to transition face several challenges when doing so at their places of work and schools. Coming out to co-workers as a transgender person can create opportunities for more authentic interactions and also for prejudicial behaviors and interactions. Issues such as which public restroom or locker room to use, if only two options are given, and which box to check on application materials (school, credit card, mortgage, etc.) are just some examples. Some who have undergone gender reassignment surgery have needed to change their gender status with the federal government, as well as legally change their names.
5. **Language** - It is a challenge to transgender people, especially those who have not yet transitioned, to know the most appropriate way to identify themselves - as male or female, he or she, woman or man.

*Sources: Toward Acceptance, ed. Vernon Wall and Nancy Evans, and*

*Debra Davis, Executive Director of the Gender Education Center, Minneapolis, MN*



Intersex

Formerly known as “hermaphrodites” a term that is now considered offensive – the term intersex refers to people who have the traits of both male and female sexual organs or have ambiguous sexual organs. According to Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling, a recognized expert in this field of study, 1-1/2 to 2 percent of all births do not fall strictly within the tight definition of all-male or all-female, even if the child looks “normal.”

“Intersex” is 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. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types-for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

Although intersex is an inborn condition, intersex anatomy doesn’t always show up at birth. Sometimes a person isn’t found to have intersex anatomy until she or he reaches the age of puberty or finds himself or herself an infertile adult. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (including themselves) ever knowing.

Intersex is a socially constructed category that reflects real biological variation. To better explain this, one can compare the sex spectrum to the color spectrum. In nature there are different wavelengths that translate into colors most of us see as red, blue, orange, and yellow. But the decision to distinguish between orange and red-orange is made only when we need it-like when we’re asking for a particular paint color. Sometimes social necessity leads us to make color distinctions that otherwise would seem incorrect or irrational, as, for instance, when we call certain people “black” or “white” when they’re not especially black or white as we would otherwise use the terms.

In the same way, nature presents us with sex anatomy spectrums. Breasts, penises, clitorises, scrotums, labia, gonads-all of these vary in size and shape and morphology. So-called “sex” chromosomes can vary quite a bit, too. But in human cultures, sex categories get simplified into male, female, and sometimes intersex, in order to simplify social interactions, express what we know and feel, and maintain order.

**Issues for Intersex People**

According to the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), individuals and families dealing with intersex face several difficult issues:

* Intersexuality is primarily a problem of stigma and trauma, not gender.
* Parents’ distress and the medical community’s lack of understanding often lead to surgical treatment performed on the child.
* Professional mental health care is essential for individuals and families faced with intersex.
* All children can be assigned as boy or girl, without early surgery, after tests (hormonal, genetic, radiological) have been done and the parents have been consulted with the doctors on which gender the child is more likely to feel as she or he grows up. For example, the vast majority of children with complete androgen insensitivity syndrome grow up to feel female, and many children with cloacal exstrophy and XY chromosomes grow up to feel male.

*Source: Intersex Society of North America (ISNA),* [*www.isna.org*](http://www.isna.org)

Homophobia

In the clinical sense, homophobia is defined as an intense, irrational fear of same sex relationships that becomes overwhelming to the person. In common usage, homophobia is the fear of intimate relationships with persons   
of the same sex.

Below are listed four negative/homophobic and four positive attitudes toward gay and lesbian relationships and people. They were developed by Dr. Dorothy Riddle, a psychologist from Tucson, Arizona.

**Homophobic Levels of Attitude**

Repulsion Homosexuality is seen as a *crime against nature*. Gays are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc., and anything is justified to change them (e.g., prison, hospitalization, and negative behavior therapy, including electric shock).

Pity Pity is heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is more mature and certainly to be preferred. Any possibility of becoming straight should be reinforced and those who seem to be born *that way* should be pitied, “the poor dears.”

Tolerance Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people *grow out of.* Thus, gays are less mature than straights and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. Gays and lesbians should not be given positions of authority (because they are still working through adolescent behaviors).

Acceptance Acceptance still implies there is something to accept, characterized by such statements as, “You’re not gay to me, you’re a person,” “What you do in bed is your own business,” “That’s fine as long as you don‘t flaunt it.” This level denies social and legal realities. Eighty-four percent of people believe being gay is obscene and vulgar, and 70% still believe it is wrong, even between consenting adults. Acceptance ignores the pain of invisibility and stress of “closeted” behavior. “Flaunt” usually means *say or do anything that makes people aware.*

**Positive Levels of Attitude**

Support This is the basic “liberal” approach. Work to safeguard the rights of gays and lesbians. Such people may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the climate and the irrational unfairness.

Admiration This attitude acknowledges that being gay or lesbian in our society takes strength. Such people are willing to truly look at themselves and work on their own homophobic attitudes.

Appreciation Individuals at this level value the diversity of people and see gays and lesbians as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and in others.

Nurturance Individuals at this level assume that gay and lesbian people are indispensable in our society. They view gays and lesbians with genuine affection and delight and are willing to be gay advocates.

**Resource on Homophobia**

*Homophobia: How we all pay the price,* edited by Warren T. Blumenfeld

What are Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia?

The following are examples of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Sometimes well-meaning heterosexuals will say or do something without realizing that they are acting on heterosexist or homophobic attitudes and beliefs. When heterosexuals treat LGBT people as ― “others,” they are highlighting the perceived differences between us all, rather than the similarities.

* Expecting a LGBTQ person to change his or her public identity or affectional habits or mode of dress
* Looking at a LGBTQ person and automatically thinking of their sexuality or gender identity rather than seeing them as a whole and complex person
* Assuming that a bisexual person is really straight but is currently “experimenting” with a gay or lesbian relationship
* Changing your seat in a meeting because a transgender person sat in the chair next to yours
* Thinking you can “spot one”
* Worrying about the effect a LGBTQ volunteer or co-worker will have on your program
* Using the terms “gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, intersex or transgender” as accusatory
* Not asking about a LGBTQ person’s partner although you regularly ask, “How is your husband?” or “boyfriend” or “wife” or “girlfriend” when you run into a heterosexual friend
* Thinking that if a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person touches you, he or she is making a sexual advance
* Stereotyping lesbians as man-haters, separatists, or radicals; and gay men as sissies, wimps, or woman-haters, and using those terms accusingly
* Feeling repulsed by public displays of affection between LGBTQ individuals but accepting the same affectional displays between heterosexuals as “nice”
* Wondering which one is the “man” or “woman,” in the relationship
* Feeling that queer people are too outspoken about queer rights
* Assuming that everyone you meet is probably heterosexual – or homosexual
* Being outspoken about queer rights, but making sure everyone knows you are straight
* Not confronting a heterosexual remark for fear of being identified as queer

Why Do We Need a Safe Zone Ally Program?

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals bring a wide range of life experiences to the college community. Often LGBT individuals, individuals who are questioning their own sexual identities, and/or individuals who have LGBT friends and family members look for an environment to find support, seek answers to questions, and build connections. Students who build support networks and find a sense of connection with a college are much more likely to succeed. For a LGBT student, having a space on campus where he or she can feel comfortable with self-expression is vital to both personal and academic success.

The Safe Zone Program at HCC also provides great benefits to community members who are not LGBT. Heterosexual allies, through participation in this program, are able to express their appreciation for their LGBT friends, peers, and colleagues. Additionally, these individuals have committed to being involved, to whatever degree they can, in changing the climate of the campus community. Here are some reasons that a Safe Zone Ally Program is necessary…

…In the United States

According to numerous studies, as well as personal accounts, LGBT youth experience discrimination, harassment, and violence at a greater rate than their straight peers.

For example:

1. Risk of suicide is significantly higher
   1. Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for all youth aged 15-241 but is believed to be the leading cause of death for gay youth.2
   2. Gay youth attempt suicide 2-3 times the rate of straight youth.3,4,5
2. There is increased risk of alcohol and substance use. 3,4,5
3. Homelessness is a problem
   1. As many as 26% of gay youth are forced to leave their home because of conflict over their sexual orientation. 2
   2. It has been estimated that gay youth account for 25% of homeless youth.6
4. About one in five gay youth report physical attacks.7
5. 28% of gay students drop out of high school because of discomfort and fear.8

*Source: Harry C. Wang, MD, Child and Adolescent Psychiatristhttp://www.someone-to-talk-to.net/new\_page\_30.htm*

*1 National Vital Statistics Reports. June 30, 1999;47(19):27-28. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/pdf/47\_19t8.pdf.*

*2 Gibson, P. Gay and lesbian youth suicide. In: Feinlieb, M, ed. Prevention and Intervention in Youth Suicide: Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Youth Suicide, Vol. 3. Washington, DC: US Dept of and Human Services. 1989:109-142.*

*3 Fergusson, D, Horwood, L, Beautrais, A. Is Sexual Orientation Related to Mental Health Problems and*

*Suicidality in Young People? Archives of General Psychiatry. 1999;56:876-880.*

*http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/issues/v56n10/pdf/yoa9081.pdf*

*4 Garafalo, R, Wolf, R, Kessel, S, Palfrey, J, DuRant, R. The Association Between Health Risk Behaviors and Sexual Orientation Among a School-based Sample of Adolescents. Pediatrics. 1998;101(5):895-902.*

*5 Faulkner, A, Cranston, K. Correlates of Same-Sex Sexual Behavior in a Random Sample of Massachusetts High School Students. American Journal of Public Health. 1998;88(2):262-266.*

*6 Kruks, G. Gay and Lesbian Homeless/Street Youth: Special Issues and concerns. Journal of Adolescent Health. 1991;12:515-518.*

*7 Pilkington, N, D‘Augelli, A. Victimization of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth in Community Settings. Journal of Community Psychology. 1995;23:34-56.*

*8 Remafedi, G. Adolescent homosexuality: Psychosocial and medical implications. Pediatrics. 1987;79:331.*

*The Role of a Safe Zone Ally*

**What is expected of a Safe Zone Ally**

* Provide support, information and referral to individuals who approach you;
* Respect the person’s need for privacy and confidentiality;
* Develop a more genuine and realistic professional relationship with LGBTQ students, or friends and family of LGBTQ individuals;
* Gain a fuller picture of students’ lives and concerns;
* Make a personal contribution to improving our campus environment and the lives of our students;
* Provide honest feedback at the close of training to improve this program;
* Participate in periodic assessments regarding the effectiveness and impact of this program.

**What is not expected of a Safe Zone Ally**

* Be a counselor or expert regarding sexual orientation;
* Create a psychological support group;
* Know the answers to all questions regarding sexual orientation;
* Be the ONLY contact for the gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender community;
* Hear intimate self-disclosures;
* Participate in political activities involving gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender issues.

**Things to Consider**

Visibility is the most important role you have as a member of the program. Allies will be expected to display Safe Zone materials in a location that is visible to others. Once self-identified as a Safe Zone Ally, please do the following:

* Don’t assume! Be aware that the individual to whom you are talking could be either straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual or transgender.
* Avoid using terms such as “boyfriend” and “girlfriend;” instead, try using “partner” or “spouse.”
* Review your office’s publications. Suggest changes to remove non-inclusive language.
* Acquaint yourself with people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Learn about the culture that is unique to the LGBTQ community. Read books, make a friend, attend a lecture, or celebrate with them.
* Avoid homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic remarks, jokes and statements. As you feel comfortable, confront these actions of hatred.
* Create an atmosphere of acceptance in your surrounding environment through education. Share your experiences with others.
* Provide informed referrals by learning the resources to LGBTQ people in the community and share this information.
* Learn the developmental process of coming out that is unique to the LGBTQ experience.
* Join with LGBTQ persons to protect their civil rights and constitutional freedoms.
* If you have identified your affectional feelings or gender identity as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, consider coming out to others and work to provide a role model for students, faculty and staff.

Things You Should Know as a Safe Zone Ally

**Four Basic Levels of Becoming an Ally**

1. *Awareness*: Explore how you are different from and similar to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Gain this awareness through talking with LGBTQ people, attending workshops and self-examination.
2. *Knowledge/Education*: Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect LGBTQ people. Educate yourself on the many communities and cultures of LGBTQ people.
3. *Skills*: This is an area that is difficult for many people. You must learn to take your awareness and knowledge and communicate it to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role playing with friends or peers and developing support connections.
4. *Action*: This is the most important and frightening step. Despite the fears, action is the only way to effect change in the society as a whole.

**Five Important Points to Keep in Mind**

1. Have a good understanding of sexual orientation and be comfortable with your own.
2. Be aware of the coming out process and realize that it is not a one-time event. The coming out process is unique to LGBTQ people and brings challenges that are not often understood.
3. Understand that LGBTQ people receive the same messages about homosexuality and bisexuality as everyone else. Thus, LGBTQ people suffer from internalized homophobia and heterosexism. It is important to recognize the risks of coming out and to challenge the internal oppression.
4. Remember that LGBTQ people are a diverse group. Each community within the larger LGBTQ community has unique needs and goals.
5. Know at least basic information about HIV/AIDS in order to address myths and misinformation and to be supportive of those affected by this disease whether in themselves or in partners and friends. While HIV/AIDS is a health issue for all, those who live in the most fear and have lost the most members of their community are LGBTQ persons.

Ten Ways to Fight Hate on Campus

**EVERY YEAR –** more than half a million college students are targets of bias-driven slurs or physical assaults. **EVERY DAY –** at least one hate crime occurs on a college campus. **EVERY MINUTE –** a college student somewhere sees or hears racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise biased words or images.

Source: www.tolerance.org

Based on years of research into the incidence of hate crimes at U.S. colleges and universities, The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has published a guide for college students on how to fight hate crimes on their campuses:

1. **Rise Up** – Inaction in the face of hate will be viewed as apathy or, worse yet, as support for bigotry itself. Do something. Don’t let hate go unchallenged.
2. **Pull Together** – Bias incidents and hate crimes can divide communities. Don’t let hate tear people apart on your campus; pull together instead.
3. **Speak Out** – When hate strikes, don’t remain silent. Join with others; use your voices to denounce bigotry. Also, help guide the administration in its role.
4. **Support the Victims** – Make sure that any planned response to a hate crime or bias incident takes into account the victims’ needs and wishes. Too often, decisions are made on behalf of victims, but without their actual input.
5. **Name It, Know It** – Are you dealing with a hate crime or a bias incident? Hate crimes are a matter for the criminal justice system; bias incidents are governed by campus policy.
6. **Understand the Media** – What happens if the media descend on your campus during a bias crisis? And what happens if they don’t? Prepare yourself to understand and work with the media.
7. **Know Your Campus** – Before, during and after a bias crisis, examine institutional racism and bigotry on your campus. Be prepared to negotiate your way through these problem areas for effective change.
8. **Teach Tolerance** – Bias crises often bring pain, anger and distrust to campus. They also present an opportunity for learning. Don’t miss the chance to eradicate ignorance.
9. **Maintain Momentum** – The immediate crisis has passed. You’ve got two papers due and a midterm coming up. No one seems interested in follow-up meetings. What happens now?
10. **Pass the Torch** – What happens when you leave campus? Will you leave behind a record of activism that will inspire incoming students to pick up the fight? Make sure you do.

*Source: The Southern Poverty Law Center,* [*www.tolerance.org*](http://www.tolerance.org)

Resources

**Web-based Resources:** *This is a small sampling of LGBTQ web-based resources that might be helpful to Safe Zone Allies. Also, a simple search using the phrase “Safe Zone” or will bring up listings of Safe Zone programs at other colleges and universities. Or, use the phrase “GLBTQ” to find other resources on bisexuality, transgender, lesbian and gay issues and communities. These resources can also be helpful in identifying additional resources.*

**Campus Pride** - [www.campuspride.org](http://www.campuspride.org) Campus Pride is a national online community and resource network committed to student leaders and campus organizations who work to create a safer campus environment free of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and genderism at colleges and universities.

**Dignity USA** - [www.dignityusa.org](http://www.dignityusa.org) DignityUSA works for respect and justice for all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy and support.

**Human Rights Campaign** - [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org) The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender political organization with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that LGBT Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

**Intersex Society of North America** - [www.isna.org](http://www.isna.org) ISNA is devoted to systemic change to end shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgeries for people born with an anatomy that someone decided is not standard for male or female.

**Keshet Congregations** – [www.keshetcongregations.org](http://www.keshetcongregations.org) Keshet Congregations is an organization of Conservative-movement-affiliated congregations and individual congregants in the Conservative Movement who believe that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Jews should have equal rights in our congregations, be able to fully participate in positions of professional and lay leadership, and be ordained as rabbis and cantors through Conservative movement institutions.

**Lambda 10 –** [www.lambda10.org](http://www.lambda10.org) The Lambda 10 Project - National Clearinghouse for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Fraternity & Sorority Issues works to heighten the visibility of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members of the college fraternity by serving as a clearinghouse for educational resources and educational materials related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression as it pertains to the fraternity/sorority experience.

**National Gay and Lesbian Task Force –** [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org) Founded in 1973, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Foundation (the Task Force) was the first national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights and advocacy organization and remains the movement's leading voice for freedom, justice, and equality.

**Outfront Minnesota –** [www.outfront.org](http://www.outfront.org) Outfront Minnesota is one of the region‘s leading LGBT organizations. The website provides news-related information and other resources for LGBT folks and their allies. The organization also provides a weekly newsletter to those who wish to subscribe.

**Stone Wall Society –** [www.stonewallsociety.com](http://www.stonewallsociety.com) The Stone Wall Society seeks to promote tolerance and equality, especially within the arts.

**Tolerance.org –** [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org) The web resource is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center and provides valuable information and resources regarding all forms of oppression, with particular emphasis on hate crimes and acts of intolerance. The organization also provides a weekly newsletter to those who wish to subscribe.

**Youth OUTright -** youthoutright.org **\*** 828.772.1912

**Suggested Readings:**

Straight Parents, Gay Children, by Bob Bernstein

My Son Eric, by Mary V. Borhak

Coming Out to Parents, by Mary V. Borhak

When Someone You Know is Gay, by Cohen, S. & D., published by M. Evans & Co., NY

Dirt, Greed & Sex, by William Countryman

Now That You Know, by Betty Fairchild and Nancy Howard

Beyond Acceptance, by Carolyn Welch Giffen, Marion J. Wirth, and Arthur G. Wirth

On Being Gay – Thoughts on Family, Faith and Love, by Brian McNaught

Is the Homosexual my Neighbor? by Letha Scanzoni & Virginia Mollenkott

Breaking the Surface, by Greg Luganis

Parents Matter, by Ann Muller

Honor Bound, by Joe Steffan

One Teen Ager in Ten – writings by gay and lesbian youth. Allyson Publications, Boston