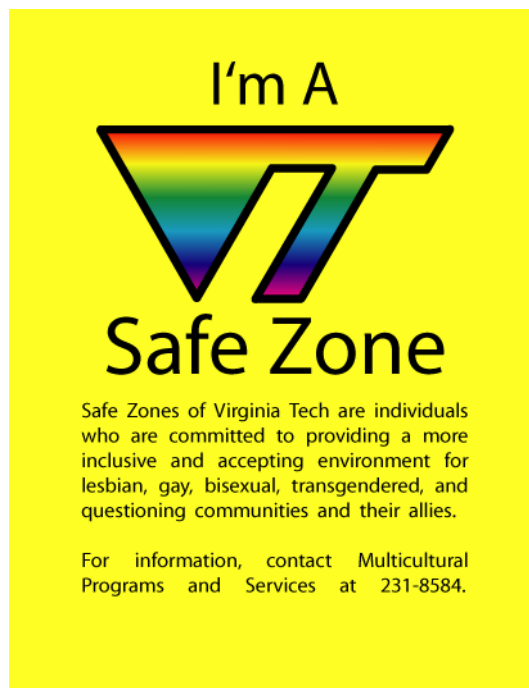


SAFE ZONES

of Virginia Tech



Resource Manual

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Dear Safe Zone Ally,

In March 2005, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Board of Visitors endorsed the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, which affirms the university's commitment to a diverse and inclusive community. In honor of this collective commitment we welcome you to the Safe Zone Program and thank you for your willingness to become a visible resource and ally to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) community of Virginia Tech. We hope that you are as excited as we are about the program and look forward to working with you through the remainder of the year.

As a Safe Zone member, you are participating in the promotion of individuality and authenticity at our prestigious institution. It is this diversity that enriches our collegiate experience both inside and outside the classroom. In an effort to inform you with a variety of information regarding the realities that the LGBT individuals face day-to-day, we have provided you with a resource manual.

We hope that you display your Safe Zone symbol with pride and thank you for taking the time and energy to join Safe Zone's mission, in concert with the university's commitment, in making Virginia Tech a more inviting and inclusive and colorful campus!

Sincerely,

Your Safe Zone Coordinators

Multicultural Programs and Services (MPS)
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Caucus (LGBTC)
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Alliance (LGBTQA)

Safe Zone is sponsored by Multicultural Programs and Services
Manual edited by Monique Vanloo, Mary Grace Campos, Scott Russell and Ryan James
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Safe Zone Overview

What is a Safe Zone?

Established in 1998, the Safe Zone program has been a collaborative effort of the former Dean of Student's Office, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Alliance (LGBTQA), the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Caucus (LGBT Caucus) and the Office of Equal Opportunity.

Safe Zone Program Goal:

The mission of the Safe Zone program is to provide a more accepting environment for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) community and their allies at Virginia Tech. This environment is created through identifying individuals who can provide a supportive environment as well as information for LGBTQ students and their allies.

Objectives of the Safe Zone Program:

1. To identify a network of allies who are concerned, empathetic, and knowledgeable about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender questions.
2. To provide evidence of the support of LGBTQ people and their allies within the Virginia Tech community by posting a sign as tangible evidence of that support.
3. To reduce the fear of reprisal and discrimination by LGBTQ people and their allies within the Virginia Tech community.
4. To assist LGBTQ and allied students in achieving their educational goals by creating an environment in which they can be themselves.

Expectations of Safe Zones Allies:

To be a Safe Zone is to be an ally for the LGBTQ community. An Ally, according to Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, is someone "joined with another for a common purpose." Being an ally on gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender issues is the process of working to develop individual attitudes, institutions, and culture in which gay, lesbian, bisexual people feel they matter (J. Jay Scott and Vernon Wall, 1991).

Members of the Safe Zone network are asked to be supportive and visible to Virginia Tech students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and their straight allies. It is expected that Members of the Network, will display their Safe Zone stickers in a prominent place in their office or room, preferably on the outside of their door. This will signal to LGBTQ students and their allies that you are supportive and comfortable with them being open about their sexual orientation. As an ally, you are expected to be open and affirming to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and questioning persons, and their straight allies and to provide information and referrals as requested.

This resource manual is designed to provide you with some basic information about LGBTQ issues on campus and community resources. The information should cover most of the common questions that will arise or situations that will arise as a result of you being a Safe Zone member. If you are uncomfortable with a question or issue, please call the Multicultural Programs and Services office at (540) 231-8584 or stop by the office at 140 Squires. You can also refer to the campus resources listed in the manual.

Some students may be hesitant to come out to everyone on campus. Safe Zones are expected to uphold an individual's privacy and treat information gained from that student in a confidential manner. The exception to this policy is if the student provides you with information that leads you to believe a human life may be in danger. In that situation it is important that you encourage the student to get appropriate assistance from local resources.

If someone challenges you on being a Safe Zone, you are expected, within reason, to defend the program. You are a Safe Zone for the students but if you can't defend the program to your colleagues you will not be an effective Safe Zone. Keep in mind that if a student trusts you as a Safe Zone ally and they hear you make a remark that can be deemed demeaning or offensive, that can and will affect them negatively. Likewise by not addressing people who make negative remarks, whether you are gay or an ally, you are denying yourself and society a solution to the problem of ignorance and prejudice. Action is the solution. By voicing your support and being a positive role model as either a gay person or as an ally, you give life and the possibility for everyone to live in a truly inclusive society.

What is not expected of a Safe Zone?

The Safe Zone program is not intended as a therapeutic support group for students. Safe Zones are not expected to provide counseling for the students as there are very supportive and knowledgeable counselors on campus through the Cook Counseling Center. It is important that Safe Zones set boundaries that are supportive and affirming with the students, but are appropriate for the goals of the program.

Occasionally people who are not supportive of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, or questioning people and their allies and may challenge you about the program. Don't feel like you must debate with these individuals. You are a Safe Zone ally who serves as a resource to students and not as a spokesperson who feels compelled to justify the program or defend issues pertaining to the LGBTQ community.

So I'm a Safe Zone now what?

The first step is to ***READ THIS MANUAL***

Second, place your sticker on your door or somewhere that everyone that walks by can see it.

Stay current with LGBTQ issues; seek out other sources of knowledge, information online, books from the library, anything that will help you serve as a better Safe Zone ally so that you are knowledgeable of the needs of these students needing to talk to you.

If you leave Virginia Tech's campus it is requested that you remove your sticker and notify the current Safe Zone coordinator in Multicultural Programs and Services.

How to be an Ally:

There are many different ways of being a Safe and supportive ally in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning community. These are just *some* suggestions:

- ◆ Don't assume everyone is heterosexual. Be aware that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are present in every walk of life, in every community. Almost everyone knows someone who is from the LGBT community although they may not realize that fact.
- ◆ Try using gender neutral terms when discussing significant others, partners, spouses, etc.
- ◆ Avoid assumptions and stereotyping.
- ◆ Create an atmosphere of acceptance and celebration of diversity in your surrounding area.
- ◆ Talk to your LGBT friends, families and/or co-workers.
- ◆ Avoid anti-gay, etc. (homophobic or heterosexist) remarks, jokes, statements, etc.
- ◆ Challenge homophobic language and actions that others display.
- ◆ Continue to educate yourself about issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. If you don't understand something, look to local or on-line resources, read an article or a book, participate in discussions related to LGBT issues and individuals.
- ◆ Be willing to discuss issues impacting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals and communities. Do this in a positive, non-judgmental manner.
- ◆ Provide information and referrals of resources for LGBTQ students. The Virginia Tech Safe Zone program does not expect you to know everything. Refer people to offices, individuals and other resources that have the information that they may need.

- ◆ Be willing to assist the individuals needing more information in accessing support and information.
- ◆ Review your department's publications. Suggest changes ensuring that documents are inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities. If appropriate create publications specific to the needs of the LGBT population (health services brochures, LGBT support materials, etc.) Doing this will show the LGBT community and their other allies that LGBT students are individuals and are not invisible, that they are valued.
- ◆ If you are a faculty member or facilitator, include information in your syllabi or handouts that show you are an ally to all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This can, and should, be done for any under-represented group and can be done in addition to university non-discrimination policies. Provide on-campus resources that are available.
- ◆ Incorporate LGBT issues and individuals into course curriculum. Many historical and literary figures were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. Use gender neutral or both heterosexual and homo/bisexual examples in math or economics courses. Look at same-sex families in sociology, child development, etc.
- ◆ Incorporate LGBT issues and individuals into staff development. Residence Hall Assistants, University Police, Health Care Providers, Administrative Assistants, Custodial and Facilities Staff will encounter LGBT individuals in the course of their work. Their attitudes to students and co-workers who are LGBT will make a big difference in the university climate and culture.
- ◆ Join the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community to attain and protect civil rights, constitutional freedoms, protections, and other political and social causes.
- ◆ Come Out. Share your experiences as an ally with others. Encourage them to be allies.

Guidelines for Safe Zone Members

- 1.** Respect individual privacy. All contacts between a Safe Zone member and a student must be kept confidential. The only exception to this is the University's policy on sexual harassment.
- 2.** Keep in mind Cass' Model of Sexual Identity Development. Try to use language that reflects where the student is in his/her development. (Example: A student may be exploring his/her sexuality and may not identify themselves as gay/lesbian/bisexual even though they may have same sex relationships.)
- 3.** You may find yourself being an advocate, advisor, teacher, or mentor to students who seek your support. We are strictly prohibiting romantic or sexual relationships forming between you and a student who seeks you out as a support through the Safe Zone program. We are also strongly recommending that you connect students with other social supports than the ones with which you are currently involved. In order for this program to be successful, it is important that Safe Zone members keep clear, professional boundaries.
- 4.** Please feel free to consult with the Safe Zone Project Coordinator, whenever you have questions or would like consultation regarding how to support, advise or refer a student.
- 5.** Refer students for counseling when appropriate. If a student is experiencing a good deal of psychological distress and is having difficulty coping, suggest that counseling may be helpful to him or her. A good guideline for you to use if you are feeling overwhelmed or worried about a student, a referral to the Cooks Counseling Center would probably be appropriate.
- 6.** Please tape the Safe Zone symbol to your door or in a visible place at your work station. If someone tears it down or defaces it, contact the Safe Zone Project Coordinator who will replace the symbol; also report the defacement to the Office of Social Justice.
- 7.** Contact the Safe Zone Coordinator if you are leaving the University, changing offices, or want to withdraw from the Safe Zone program.

Suggestions for Creating a Safe Zone

- Don't be surprised when someone comes out to you.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Stay informed on LGBT issues and resources.
- Know your limitations. If you are uncomfortable dealing with an LGBT issue, refer the person to someone else.
- Be supportive.
- Avoid language that implies that all people are heterosexual and either "single, married, or divorced." Use "partner" instead of "girl/boyfriend" or "wife/husband".
- Challenge bigoted jokes and remarks.
- Counter statements about sexual orientation that are not relevant to decisions or evaluations being made about students, staff, or faculty.
- Invite "out" professionals to conduct seminars and provide guest lectures in your classes and offices. Invite them for LGBT topics and other topics in their domain of expertise.
- Do not force LGBT people out of the closet nor come out for them to others. The process of coming out is one of enlarging a series of concentric circles of those who know. The process should be in the control of the individual until (and if) they consider it public knowledge.
- Do not include sexual orientation information in letters of reference or answer specific or implied questions without first clarifying how "out" the person chooses to be in the specific process in question. Because your environment may be Safe does not mean that all environments are Safe.
- Recruit and hire "out" LGBT staff and faculty. View sexual orientation as a positive form of diversity that is desired in a multicultural setting. Always question job applicants about their ability to work with LGBT students, staff, and faculty.
- Do not refer all LGBT issues to LGBT students, staff, and faculty. Do not assume their only expertise is related to LGBT issues. Check with individuals about their willingness to consult on LGBT issues with other students, staff, and faculty.
- View the creation of this environment as your responsibility, not the responsibility of individual persons who happen to be LGBT people. Always waiting for them to speak, challenge, or act, adds an extra level of responsibility to someone who is already dealing with oppression on many levels.

Adapted from Buhrke & Douce, 1991 and PFLAG

When to Refer a Student to a Mental Health Professional

Most of the students who will be talking with you will be seeking support, advice, or information. Occasionally, you may have a student in your office that is experiencing a good deal of psychological distress. This may be evident in several ways.

- 1.** When a student states that they are no longer able to function in their normal capacity in classes. For example, they may experience a drop in grades or academic performance.
- 2.** When a student can no longer cope with their day-to-day activities and responsibilities. A student may state that they are no longer going to classes, or has consistently been late for their job and is likely to be fired soon if this behavior continues.
- 3.** A student expresses major depressive symptoms such as sleep disturbance, sudden weight loss or weight gain, crying spells, fatigue, loss of interest or pleasure in previously enjoyable activities, and/or inability to concentrate or complete tasks.
- 4.** A student expresses anxiety symptoms such as panic, shortness of breath, headaches, sweaty palms, dry mouth, or racing thoughts.
- 5.** A student expresses suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- 6.** A student has no support. They have no friends, or friends to whom he/she can talk about their sexual orientation with. This person may not need counseling, but could benefit from a support group.
- 7. A good guideline to use if all else fails:** If you are feeling overwhelmed or worried about a student, a referral to a mental health professional would probably be appropriate. Please review the section on *Resources* for additional referral agencies.

Some Common Definitions you will come into Contact with as a Safe Zone

Sexual Orientation: One's sexual orientation refers to whom he or she is sexually or romantically attracted to. Some people believe that this is a choice (a preference) and others that it is innate (LGBT people are born this way).

Homosexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted or committed to members of the same sex.

Gay: A common and acceptable word for male homosexuals, but can be used for both genders. Recently, however, it is used less in connection with women.

Lesbian: A common and acceptable word for female homosexuals only.

Bisexual: A person who feels attracted to and or engages in sexual relations to persons of both sexes. A substantial number of bisexuals have both types of relationships at some point in their lives.

Transgender: The word transgender is an umbrella term used to refer to people who transcend the traditional concept of gender. Many feel as though they are neither a man nor a woman specifically, and many feel as though their biological sex (male, female, etc.) and their socialized gender (man, woman, etc.) don't match up. Some opt to change/reassign their sex through hormones and/or surgery and some change their outward appearance, or gender expression, through clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, etc. Many people who identify as transgender feel as though they are confined in a binary system (male-female, man-woman) that does not match who they feel themselves to be. If we look at gender as a continuum and not an "either/or" concept, we have a better idea of understanding this issue.

Transvestite: More appropriately referred to as "cross-dressing," the term transvestite most often refers to males who dress in the clothing of women. The term drag usually refers to dressing in the clothing and styles of another gender for entertainment purposes.

Transsexual: Transsexual is used to describe those individuals who use hormone therapy and/or surgery to alter their sex.

Intersex: The word intersex refers to people who, on a genetic level, are not male or female. They are individuals whose sex chromosomes are not XX or XY, or who are born with ambiguous genitalia (hermaphrodites). Surgery performed in infancy or childhood, without informed consent, leaves some of these individuals feeling incomplete or altered.

Heterosexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted or committed to members of the other sex.

Homophobia: The irrational fear of homosexuals, homosexuality, or any behavior, belief, or attitude of self or others which doesn't conform to rigid sex-role stereotypes. It is the fear that enforces sexism and heterosexism. The extreme behavior of homophobia is violence against homosexuals.

Heterosexism: The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and if not, they should be. The systematic oppression of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons is directly linked to sexism.

Lover, Partner, and Significant Other: Terms that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people use to identify those people with whom they have romantic or sexual relationships

Internalized Oppression: The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate myths and stereotypes applied to the group.

Ally: Any non-lesbian, non-gay man, or non-bisexual whose attitude and behavior are anti-heterosexist and who works toward combating homophobia and heterosexism, both on a personal and institutional level.

Coming Out: To "come out" is to publicly declare and affirm one's homosexual identity. Sometimes to one person in conversation or sometimes by an act that places one in the public eye. It is not a single event but instead a life-long process. In each new situation a lesbian or gay man must decide whether or not to come out.

Out of the Closet: A term which means being open and public about being a being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Some people are "out" in some settings (i.e. with friends) and not "out" in other settings (i.e. with family or in classes).

In the Closet: To be "in the closet" means to hide one's homosexual identity in order to keep a job, a housing situation, friends, or in some other way to survive. Many homosexuals are "out" in some situations and "closeted" in others.

Questioning: People who are in the process of questioning their sexual orientation are often in need of support and understanding during this stage of their identity. They are seeking information and guidance in their self-discovery.

Gender Identity: A person's gender identity is the way in which they define and act on their gender. Gender Expression is how they express their gender.

Queer: The term queer has a history of being used as a derogatory name for members of the LGBT community and those whose sexual orientation is perceived as such. Many people use this word in a positive way to refer to the community; they have reclaimed the term as their own. Not everyone believes this and sensitivity should be used when using or hearing it as there are still many negative connotations with its use.

Note: Some of these terms are defined differently depending on the individual with whom you will/might be talking to. For instance if a student comes to you to talk about their feelings for the same sex and does not One of the worst things to have someone tell you when you are classify

themselves to be homosexual, go with that definition of homosexual for that person. Questioning your sexual orientation is that you are a homosexual before you yourself have come to terms with your sexual orientation. Some students can/will also become offended by terms such as sexual preference as opposed to sexual orientation. Please also keep that in mind. The goal in telling you this is not for you to become politically correct but rather to let you realize the diversity of the language used when it comes to the LGBT community and their allies.

Information about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People

- 1.** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people cannot be identified by certain mannerisms or physical characteristics. People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender come in as many different shapes, colors, and sizes as do heterosexuals. In fact, many heterosexuals portray a variety of the so-called lesbian and gay mannerisms.
- 2.** Most lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are comfortable with being their own biological sex; they do not regard themselves as members of the other sex. Being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is not the same thing as being transgender where a person feels they are the wrong biological sex.
- 3.** The majority of child molesters are heterosexual men, not lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender individuals. Over 90% of child molestation is committed by heterosexual men against young girls. The overwhelming majority of lesbians and gay men have no interest in sexual activity with children.
- 4.** Sexual experiences as a child are not necessarily indicative of one's sexual orientation as an adult. There is a huge difference between sexual activity and sexual attraction.
- 5.** Many, and perhaps most, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have early heterosexual experiences, but are still lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; many avowed heterosexuals have had sexual contact, including orgasm, with members of their own sex, but are still heterosexual.
- 6.** Some lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people know at an early age — sometimes as soon as 7 or 8 years old — that they are attracted to their own sex. Some people learn much later in life, in their 60's and 70's. Some research indicates that sexual orientation is determined between birth and age 3. No one knows what causes sexual orientation.
- 7.** It is impossible to convert heterosexuals to become homosexual. Based on what is known about sexual attraction, this is simply not possible, nor is it possible to convert homosexuals to being heterosexual.
- 8.** Although homosexual “seduction” does occur, it is far less common than heterosexual “seduction”, and, in fact, it may be even less common due to the fact that heterosexuals may react with hostility to sexual advances from members of their own sex. This misinformation, together with the misinformation about molestation, is the basis for attempts to

keep lesbians and gay men from working with children.

9. Homosexuality is not a type of mental illness and cannot be “cured” by appropriate psychotherapy. Although homosexuality was once thought to be a mental illness, the American Psychiatric Association and American Psychological Associations no longer consider homosexuality to be a mental illness. Some people believe that it is homophobia that needs to be cured.

10. Most psychiatric and psychological attempts to “cure” lesbians and gay men have failed to change the sexual attraction of the patient, and instead, have resulted in creating emotional trauma. Many lesbians and gay men have known heterosexuals who tried to convert them to being heterosexual, without success.

11. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have the same range of sexual activity—from none to a lot as heterosexuals do. Some lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are celibate, some have been in monogamous relationships for decades, some have had several lovers across a lifetime, and some have many sexual partners in any given period of time.

12. If you think about all the heterosexuals you know, they, too, fall across a spectrum of sexual activity and types of relationship. What is different is that we have gotten more information about the sexuality of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and little information about the diversity and health of their relationships.

13. For example, the only “homosexual” stories generally covered by the mainstream media are sensational ones — bath house raids, a gay man accused of molesting school boys, or a case of lesbian battering while the everyday lives of most lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are effectively kept secret or never discussed in a matter-of-fact way.

14. Many people accuse lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people of “flaunting” their sexuality when they talk about their partner, hold hands or briefly kiss one another in public. And yet these are activities that heterosexual couples do all the time — in fact, some heterosexual couples do much more than this in public. Who’s flaunting their sexuality?

15. There is no definable “gay lifestyle.” In fact, there is no standard heterosexual lifestyle. Although some people might like to think that a “normal” adult lifestyle is a heterosexual marriage with 2 children, less than 7% of all family units in the United States consist of a mother, father and children living together.

- 16.** Think of all the heterosexuals you know. How many have similar “lifestyles?”
- 17.** Although there are many widely held stereotypes about people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, the most accurate generalization might be this: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are different from one another in the same way that heterosexual people are different from one another.
- 18.** People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender work in all types of jobs and they live in all types of situations. They belong to all ethnic and racial groups. They are members of all religious, spiritual, and faith communities. They have different mental and physical abilities. They are young, middle-aged, and old.
- 19.** Whatever is generally true about heterosexual people is probably true about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, with two important exceptions: their sexual attraction is different, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are affected by homophobia in powerful and unique ways.
- 20.** Each day, they must face oppression because of their sexual attraction. This affects decisions about jobs, family, friends, and housing... virtually all aspects of what most people would consider “everyday” living.
- 21.** Sometimes the oppression escalates into acts of verbal and physical violence. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force received reports of 7,248 incidents of anti-gay violence and victimization in 1988 in the United States; actual levels are presumed to be much higher. In surveys of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, 52% to 87% have been verbally harassed, 21% to 27% have been pelted with objects, 13% to 38% have been chased or followed, and 9% to 24% have been physically assaulted.
- 22.** Despite all of this, many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people live proud, fulfilled lives. Many are committed to educating others about homophobia as well as caring for themselves and other members of their communities.

Transgender 101

Adapted from "TRANSGENDERISM: Transgressing Gender Norms" by Nancy R. Nangeroni, International Foundation for Gender Education, 1996 (Ninja Design).

Sex, Gender, & Bipolarity

In order to understand the difference between someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and someone who is transgender, you need to know the difference between sex and gender. Simply put, sex is polarity of anatomy; gender is polarity of appearance and behavior. As one gains familiarity with transgenderism, these definitions quickly break down, but they serve as a good starting point.

Most people think there are just two sexes, male and female. Such is not the case. People who are intersexed and people who are transsexual constitute sexes which are neither exactly male nor exactly female. Likewise, gender is not a simple case of "either/or." Gender is exhibited by countless signals, from articles of clothing to cosmetics, hairstyles, conversational styles, body language and much more. Notice, however, that our gender "norms" are not symmetric. Women have won for themselves the right to a wide range of gender expression. Men have not made a corresponding effort. Most men live within a much narrower range of "acceptable" gender. Though our culture tends to group characteristics into "masculine" and "feminine," many people find some amount of gender transgression exciting, so there is some crossover between the two categories. Ultimately, gender is a "mix and match" mode of self-expression, and people within our culture are ever finding new ways to express their gender, with exciting subtleties and intriguing implications.

In general, it works best to think of all effects - sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual identity, and any others - as varying along a continuous spectrum of self-expression, rather than in just one of two or three ways.

Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Identity vs. Sexual Identity

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual identity are independent of each other. A person may express any variation of each of these in any combination. To discourage the free expression of identity and orientation by an individual is to impose a damaging burden of conformity.

Sexual Orientation is which sex you find romantically/erotically attractive: opposite (hetero), same (homo), or both (bi).

Gender Identity is how you see yourself socially: man, woman, or a combination of both. One may have a penis but prefer to relate socially as a woman, or one may have a vagina but prefer to relate as a man. One might prefer to be fluid, relating sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman. Or one might not identify as either one, relating androgynously.

Sexual Identity is how you see yourself physically either male, female, or in between. If someone is born female, but wishes to see their body as male in all respects, their sexual identity is male. It is generally rude to speak of such a person as female, since it denies their right to inhabit the social and physical role of their choosing. We call such a person a transsexual, whether or not they have had any surgery.

Many **FTM** transsexuals do not undergo genital surgery, often because of disappointing results or extreme cost. As surgical technique improves, this may change. Since it is healthier for these people to live in accord with their wishes and heartfelt need, we call them men, though they may have a vagina where one would expect to find a penis.

The situation for **MTF** transsexuals is equivalent, except that the surgery produces a much more satisfying result, both cosmetically and functionally. Nonetheless, many MTF transsexuals elect to not have the surgery, most often because of risk, pain, or cost. Those who retain male sexual functioning may refer to themselves as transgenderists, since it is only their gender which is changed. Those that disown all male sexual function (surgery or no) tend to identify as transsexuals, since they change their sexual function, and therefore their sexual identity.

Definitions/Terms

People tend to categorize themselves. This identification can be helpful in finding like-minded others with whom to make friends, but it can be hurtful if imposed on an individual by others, well-intentioned or not. In relating to transgender folk, it is best to avoid pushing an individual to choose a category for themselves. Some folks prefer to explore the fringes of category, and such push for identification works against personal exploration and fulfillment.

Transgender folk have self-identified as:

Drag Queen: Female-emulating male, usually campy, often (not always) gay.

Butch: Masculine-appearing person.

Femme: Feminine-appearing person.

Drag King: Male-emulating woman.

Intersex: Person born with mixed sexual physiology. Often 'assigned' at birth, such practice is coming under well-founded attack as a hurtful violation of a person's well-being.

Transvestite: Person who enjoys wearing clothes identified with the opposite gender, often but not always straight.

Cross-dresser: Polite term for transvestite.

Transgenderist: Person who lives as gender opposite to anatomical sex, i.e. person with penis living as woman. Sexual orientation varies.

Androgyne: Person appearing and identifying as neither man nor woman, presenting a gender either mixed or neutral.

Transsexual: Person whose sexual identity is opposite to their assignment at birth. Not all TS folk undergo 'sex reassignment surgery' (SRS), for various reasons, including personal preference. Sexual orientation varies.

FTM (female to male): born female but see themselves as partly to fully masculine.

MTF (male to female): born male but see themselves as partly to fully feminine.

Transgender Community: A loose association of people who transgress gender norms in a wide variety of ways. Celebrating a recently born self-awareness, this community is growing fast across all lines, including social, economic, political, and philosophical divisions. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual, identity and orientation.

Symbols of Pride for the LGBT Community

Stonewall and Pride Celebrations

On June 28, 1969, a routine raid on the Stonewall Bar on Christopher Street in New York City turned into a riot when patrons resisted. The police barricaded themselves inside the bar. The riot escalated until reinforcements arrived. The riots continued for several evenings. This rebellion, begun by drag queens and bar patrons, marked the beginning of the modern gay and lesbian movement. Each June, Pride marches, rallies, and celebrations are held throughout the nation commemorating Stonewall. There is nothing like going to a gay pride event!

Double Female Symbol



Also known as the “mirror of Venus”. This symbol represents the planet Venus, metal, copper, and femininity. The double woman’s symbol represents the love between one woman and another woman.

Double Male Symbol



Derived from the astrological symbol from Mars. Mars was the Greek God of war and patron of the warriors. The arrow is the phallic symbol. A double man’s symbol represents the love between one man and another man.

Inverted Pink Triangle



When allied forces liberated the Nazi concentration camps, the horrors they discovered shocked a disbelieving world. That millions had been systematically tortured and murdered seemed beyond human capacity for violence and hate. The Holocaust forever changed our understanding of the potential for evil and hatred. Concentration camp prisoners were classified by a set of colored triangles; pink were reserved for homosexual men. When liberation came in the mid-1940’s, most of the survivors were set free. Homosexuals, however, were taken to the U.S. Army personnel from concentration camps to allied prisons.

Since the 1940’s the pink triangle has become one of the most recognizable and powerful symbols for the LGBT community and the oppression they have faced throughout Western history.

The pink triangle was a commonly used insignia throughout the early gay liberation movements. It appears in photographs and film footage of the early marches and demonstrations. The pink triangle was ubiquitous at the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987. It is the reminder and the statement, **“Never Again!”**

Inverted Black Triangle



Just as homosexual men were forced to wear pink triangles in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, many lesbians were forced to wear black triangles, which signified that they (like prostitutes and unmarried women of the street) did not live according to the Nazis’ ideas of correct female behavior.

The Rainbow Flag



The Rainbow Flag has been adopted by the LGBT community as its own design. It depicts not the shape of the rainbow but its horizontal colors.

Created in 1978 for San Francisco’s Gay Freedom celebration by local artist, Gilbert Baker, it was inspired by the “Flag of Races”, which had five stripes; one for each of the colors of humankind’s skin, flown at the 1960 college campus

demonstrations.

Major Gay and Lesbian pride parades in New York, Houston, Vancouver, and Toronto began to fly the six-striped Rainbow Flag. It is prominently displayed at all homosexual events. In New York, the Rainbow Flag drapes the coffins of the people who have died of AIDS, and is frequently displayed on church doors. The AIDS ward of Sydney, Australia hospital flies the Rainbow Flag as a symbol of hope. A gay yacht club in the Netherlands uses a burgee based on the Rainbow Flag. In a few short years, the idea of the Rainbow Flag had spread world-wide to represent a movement. Its success is not due to any official recognition but to widespread spontaneous adoption by members of the community it represents.

The Labrys



The double-headed ax comes from the myth as the scepter of the goddess Demeter (Artemis). It may have originally been used in battle by female Scythian warriors. The labrys appears in ancient Cretan art and has become a symbol of lesbianism.

The Lambda



Chosen by Gay Activist Alliance in 1979 as the symbol of the gay movement, the lambda is the Greek Letter “L”. A battle flag with a lambda was carried by a regiment

of ancient Greek warriors who were accompanied in battle by their young male lovers and noted for their fierceness and willingness to fight to the death.

Human Rights Campaign Logo



The Human Rights Campaign is the nations largest gay and lesbian organization. They work closely with federal laws and guidelines to protect the rights of all LGBT people and their allies. Their symbol is a yellow equal sign inside of a blue square to represent equality for all people. This is usually not a common sign but it is very recognizable to the people who have the sticker or apparel of the Human Rights Campaign.

Cass Identity Model

There are stage development theories that attempt to describe the development of a lesbian or gay identity. Cass' (1979) *Homosexuality Identity Development Model* is the most widely known and used. Her model includes six stages that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The following stages are broadened to include bisexual and/or transgender people:

STAGE	TASK	SAMPLE STATEMENTS
Identity Confusion	Begin to question whether one might be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.	Could I be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?
Identity Comparison	Alienation from what has been familiar.	Maybe I am lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. I'm alone.
Identity Tolerance	Actively seek out other LGBT people and encounter positive support.	Where are other LGBT people?
Identity Acceptance	Prefer LGBT people over heterosexuals. Selective coming out.	I am lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. I can come out to some people.
Identity Pride	Pride in new identity and rejection of attempts to devalue LGBT people.	I am proud to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. I don't (and won't) pass for straight.
Identity Synthesis	Acceptance and integration of new identity along with acceptance and rejection of aspects of heterosexual culture. Typically out to most people.	I am an okay person who happens to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender.

Coming Out

The term ‘coming out’ (of the closet) refers to the life-long process of the development of a positive gay identity. It is a very long and difficult struggle for many gays because they often have to confront homophobic attitudes and discriminatory practices along the way. Many gays first need to struggle with their own negative stereotypes and feelings of homophobia which they learned when they were growing up. Before these gays can feel good about who they are, they will need to challenge their own attitudes and take them from the lower end of that homophobic continuum (revulsion, pity, tolerance) to feelings of appreciation and admiration. But it often takes years of painful work to develop a positive gay identity. Then, many gays begin to make decisions about whom to tell that they are gay. Many gays are afraid to “come out” to their friends and family.

What might they be afraid of?

- Rejection- loss of relationships
- Gossip
- Harassment/abuse
- Being thrown out of family
- Being thrown out of house
- Having one’s lover arrested
- Loss of financial support
- Losing their jobs
- Physical violence

Why might gays want to come out to friends/relatives?

- End the “hiding game.”
- Feel closer to those people
- Be able to be “whole” around them
- Stop wasting energy by hiding all the time
- Feel that they have integrity
- To make a statement that “gay is OK”

How might gays feel about their coming out to someone? Why?

- Scared
- Vulnerable
- Relieved
- Wondering how the person will react
- Proud

How might someone feel after someone comes out to them?

- Shocked
- Disbelieving
- Uncomfortable
- Not Scared
- Not sure what to say

- Not sure what to do next
- Wondering why the person ‘came out’
- Supportive
- Flattered
- Honored
- Angry
- Disgusted

What do you think gays want from the people to whom they come out?

- Acceptance
- Support
- Understanding
- Comfort
- Closer friendship
- That knowing won’t negatively affect their friendship
- A hug and a smile
- An acknowledgment of their feelings

Developed by Vernon Wall and Jamie Washington, 1989

Obstacles to Overcome in Developing a Positive Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Identity

- 1. *Silence*** - few openly “out” role models; little sense of lesbian and gay history/culture; invisibility of gay/lesbian contributions to history.
- 2. *Lies*** - distorted images and stereotypes/myths by news media, church, tv/films; lack of accurate/responsible research; etc.
- 3. *Isolation*** - without the freedom to gather or be open, gays and lesbians cannot easily share ideas and strategize ways to combat heterosexism and homophobic oppression.
- 4. *Intimidation*** - as gays become more open, society becomes more overt: ridicule; jokes; legal threats of attack, prison; blackmail; custody battles; job loss; eviction; etc.
- 5. *Physical violence*** - assaults; rape; murder; electroshock therapy; etc.
- 6. *Denial of the basic civil rights***, such as: employment, housing, child custody, freedom of association/assembly, freedom of speech; etc.

*Adapted from: Baetz, Ruth, "The Coming-Out Process: Violence Against Lesbians," in Darty, Trudy and Potter Sandee (1984), Women-Identified Women. Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, pps. 45-50.
Kathy Obear, The Human Advantage, 1989 (413) 584-0812*

Potential Problems Facing LGBT Youth

Isolation

As lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth begin to experience same-sex attractions, they often feel very different from their peers and very alone. They may go to great lengths to deny their feelings to themselves and to hide them from others. Many times they do not personally know any openly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and they don't know anyone with whom they feel safe talking about their feelings.

Low Self-Esteem

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth tend to internalize many of the negative myths and stereotypes about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people that are prevalent in our society. Their shame about their feelings can lead to an extremely negative self-image.

Depression and Anxiety

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth may experience significant emotional distress due to their sense of isolation and low self-esteem, along with the lack of resources available to help them cope with the issues they are facing.

Suicide

Unfortunately, some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth view suicide as their only option. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1989, gay male youth are six times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual male youth, and lesbian female youth are two times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual female youth. The report estimated that one-third of all youth who do commit suicide are lesbian or gay.

Substance Abuse

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth are especially vulnerable to turning to alcohol or drugs as a way of trying to cope or escape.

Violence

Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or those who are perceived to be LGBT are often the targets of verbal, physical and/or sexual assault. Most of the violence reported comes from family members or peers, but it can also come from others.

Family Problems

In addition to domestic violence, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth often face rejection or loss of support from their families. A significant number are kicked out of their homes or run away. Nationwide, approximately 25 percent of all homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth are especially at risk for a number of reasons, including: 1) the lack of specific sex education about same-sex sexual activity; 2) denial and secrecy about one's sexual orientation; and 3) self-destructive behaviors related to internalized homophobia.

Adapted From: Bryan L. Brunette, "Free to be You and Me" 1990

Homophobia

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

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 (i.e. prison, hospitalization, negative behavior therapy including electric shock).
- **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, “those 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 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:** 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 your don’t flaunt it.”

Positive Levels of Attitude:

- **Support:** Basic ACLU approach. Work to safeguard the rights of members of the LGBT population. Such people may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the climate and irrational unfairness.
- **Admiration:** Acknowledges that being LGBT in our society takes strength. Such people are willing to look at themselves and work on their own homophobic attitudes.
- **Appreciation:** Value the diversity of people and see members of the LGBT population as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and dispel in others.
- **Nurturance:** Assume that LGBT people are indispensable in our society. Members of the population are viewed with genuine delight.

How Homophobia Hurts Us All

Homophobia:

- ◆ Inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for fear of being perceived as an LGBT person.
- ◆ Locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression.
- ◆ Is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals (e.g., family and friends of LGBT people).
- ◆ Compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly.
- ◆ Combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of LGBT lives in school-based sex education discussions, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can have dire health consequences.
- ◆ Is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Young people, of all sexual orientations, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are "normal."
- ◆ Prevents some LGBT people from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and trauma on themselves, their partners, and their children.
- ◆ 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 oppression for specific groups of people, but are striving for a society that accepts and celebrates the differences in all of us.

Adapted from Blumenfeld, 1992

How to Show Sensitivity to Gays, Lesbians, & Bisexuals (If You Are Heterosexual)

- Assume that, wherever you go, there are gay, lesbian, and/or bisexual people present who are wondering how safe the environment is for them. Provide safety by making it clear that you accept gayness.
- Notice the many ways in which you reveal your heterosexuality. Imagine how it would feel if you had to keep it hidden.
- Challenge homophobic jokes and the use of homophobic epithets whenever you hear them, do not wait for gays/lesbians/bisexuals to do it.
- Speak out about stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination of any kind.

Sometimes it is the assumptions as well as anti-gay statements, which need challenging. The assumption that everyone present is heterosexual (Heterosexism) is discounting and hurtful to gays/lesbians/ bisexuals. Challenge it.

- Use inclusive, affirming, or gender-neutral language when referring to romantic relationships and sexuality. If you use terms such as “partner”, “companion”, “s.o./ significant other,” “main squeeze”, you convey openness to different kinds of partnerships.
- Get to know someone who is gay/lesbian/bisexual. Listen to his/her feelings and experiences. Some heterosexuals believe that gays and lesbians are attracted to everyone of the same gender. Don’t make that mistake and assume that if a gay/lesbian/bisexual person of the same gender as you seems friendly or “comes out” to you, she/he is making a pass.
- When speaking of your heterosexual companion, point out that he/she is of the other gender, implying that he/she would not necessarily be. Or, in situations where it is unclear whether you are seeing a man or a woman, leave it that way. Your choice not to exercise your “heterosexual privilege” will convey that the gender of one’s partner doesn’t matter.
- Realize that the cultural oppression of gays/lesbians/bisexuals is perpetuated in social situations where the only hugging and physical affection is between men and women. You can refrain from romantic touching with the other gender, and/or be affectionate with persons of the same gender.
- Attend gay/lesbian/bisexual cultural and community events. Read gay literature, books, and

articles.

- Wear pro-gay buttons and/or T-shirts, or those with anti-prejudice or pro-diversity themes. If people jump to the conclusion that you are gay/lesbian/bisexual because you speak out about gay oppression or are otherwise supportive, are seen hugging a same-gender friend, etc., resist the impulse to point out that you are not gay. Let yourself experience the oppression that gay/lesbian] bisexual people suffer; it will enrich your sensitivity and empathy.
- On “National Coming Out Day” (October 11), communicate your admiration and support to gay/lesbian/bisexual friends who have taken the risk of disclosing their sexual orientation, and your empathy for those who continue to fear doing so.

Adapted from Warren J. Blumenfeld; G. Goodman, I Lashof E E. Thorne; and Una Fahy.

37 Fabulous Ways to Support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students on Your Campus

1. Have a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation.
2. Value their perspectives and opinions in your residence halls, your classrooms, and your committees.
3. Don't tokenize them.
4. Assure their *safety*.
5. Acknowledge their presence on campus and in society publicly, at high levels, and often.
6. Attend their events once in a while.
7. Don't agree with everything they say, challenge them too.
8. Help non-gay students to understand that LGBT people are a presence on campus and in society whether they like it or not. Non-gay students do not have to accept their lifestyle but they must learn to live peaceably with them.
9. Ensure sensitivity training programs for all student affairs staff. Compensate them for it, give staff members time to discuss how their particular service function can affect LGBT students.

Support LGBT Faculty and Staff

10. Give equal benefits to their partners.
11. Assure their safety.
12. Value their perspectives and opinions on your staffs and on your committees.

At the Career Planning and Placement Centers

13. Know which employers interviewing on your campus have non-discrimination and domestic partner policies for LGBT people and offer that information to students.
14. "Employers should be required to affirm in writing that they do not discriminate against any classes protected against discrimination by University policy... If legal interpretations tie the University's hands regarding Federal governmental agency access to placement services, the University should formally express its disagreement of employment discrimination against LGBT

students and call for a change in agency policy.”

At the Financial Aid Office

15. Ensure that staff has training on how the impact of student’s “coming out” at home can affect parents’ financial support.

In the Residence Halls

16. When their assigned roommates refuse to live with them, give the LGBT student the options and give them freedom to choose.

17. Ensure that handbooks and contracts have a statement regarding nondiscrimination as it relates to sexual orientation. Indicate where students should report if they feel harassed.

18. Orientation programs should address LGBT issues and make new students understand that LGBT students are a welcomed part of campus life.

At the Health Center

19. Make sure your professional and paraprofessional health educators are comfortable with phrases and concepts such as “continual condom usage” and “anal intercourse.”

20. Make sure your gynecological physicians understand that “sexually active” does not necessarily mean “needs birth control.”

At the Counseling Center

21. Insist that there be a “coming out” support or discussion group at least once per school year.

22. Identify a counselor who has some understanding of LGBT issues who can serve as a confidential referral to students.

At the Student Activities Office

23. Make sure that the LGBT student organization has adequate professional staff support and an advisor. If there is no one on the staff or faculty to take on this role, assist the group in identifying

a local alum or local community member for the task. Compensate the advisor, even in a small way.

24. Insist that Student Government allot the LGBT student organization some reasonable funding. If they refuse, assist the group in finding alternative sources of funding.

25. Insist that fraternal organizations have a discussion on how they would deal with one of their members 'coming out.'"

At the Athletic Department

26. Ask the director of Athletics to have a discussion with coaches about how homosexuality and homophobia affect athletes.

In all Student Affairs Departments

27. Include LGBT people in examples in classes, workshops, and presentations

28. Ensure that publications are written in such a way that LGBT students will feel included in the audiences; avoid heterosexist language and assumptions.

29. When possible, include openly LGBT students as members of the student work force.

30. All student service departments should periodically participate in structured dialogues with LGBT students. The purpose of this dialogue would be to raise awareness of the nature and extent of homophobia/heterosexism within the university and the particular unit, and to explore avenues for the problems related to the access and quality of services for LGBT students.

31. When LGBT students complain, take them seriously.

32. When they are verbally assaulted, make loud, personal statements in public venues condemning such action. Empower others to do the same.

33. When their belongings are vandalized, make loud, personal statements in public venues condemning such action. Empower others to do the same.

34. When they are beaten up, make loud, official statements condemning such action. If you know who the aggressors are, punish them judicially.

35. Know their organization's name, acronym, or letters in the proper order. Even if they change it once in a while.

36. Take the time to examine your own personal feelings about LGBT people.

37. Support LGBT students because they add to the vibrancy of thought, activity, and life on your campus not because it is politically correct.

Free To Be Me

I, _____ hereby have permission to be imperfect with regards to people who are different from me. It is ok if I do not know all the answers about LGBT issues or if, at times, my ignorance and misunderstanding becomes obvious. I have permission to ask questions that may appear naïve. I have permission to struggle with these issues and be upfront and honest about my feelings. I am a product of a heterosexist culture and I am who I am. I don't have to feel guilty about what I know or believe, but I do need to take responsibility for what I can do now: Try to learn as much as I can. Struggle to change my false/inaccurate beliefs or oppressive attitudes toward LGBT people.

Signed,

BECAUSE

BECAUSE gay men, lesbians and bisexuals are discriminated against in housing and employment AND because how they act is more important than who a person is AND if they get harassed it's their problem AND if they get attacked, they provoked it AND if they raise their voices they're flaunting themselves AND if they enjoy sex they're perverts AND if they have AIDS they deserved it AND if they march with pride they are recruiting children AND if they want to have children they are unfit parents AND if they stand up for they're rights they're overstepping boundaries AND because they are constantly forced to question their worth as human beings AND if they don't have a relationship with someone of the opposite sex they haven't given it a chance AND if they have a relationship with the same sex it's not recognized AND they are told they are not real AND if they come out of the closet they are going through a phase AND because lesbian and gay history is virtually absent from literature AND because homophobia is sanctioned by much of the government AND for lots and lots of other reasons I AM A PART OF THE GAY, LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.

Discrimination faced in the LGBT community in the State of Virginia

Found on Human Rights Campaign Website: www.hrc.org

Here is a checklist of the laws that affect gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in Virginia.
(Record updated July 2, 2003).

Non-discrimination law:

Sexual orientation protected? No

Virginia's Human Rights Act makes no explicit reference to sexual orientation in the definition of "unfair discriminatory practice." *Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-3901 (2002)/ Va. Code Ann. § 36-96.3 (2002).*

Gender identity protected? No

No provision of Virginia law explicitly addresses the protection of gender identity. Disability and sex discrimination are included in some of Virginia's civil rights laws, however it is unclear whether these provisions could be used to address gender identity-based discrimination.

Safe schools law:

Protects gay and lesbian students? No

No provision of Virginia law addresses safe schools.

Protects transgender students? No

No provision of Virginia law addresses safe schools.

Couples/partners law:

Licenses same-sex marriage? No

Virginia law explicitly prohibits marriage between persons of the same sex. *Va. Code Ann. § 20-45.2 (2002).*

Licenses civil unions? No

No provision of Virginia law addresses civil unions.

Bans recognition of same-sex marriage? Yes

Virginia law purports to preclude recognition of same-sex marriages and the incidents of such a marriage celebrated in another jurisdiction. *Va. Code Ann. § 20-45.2 (2002).*

Partner benefits for state employees? No

No provision of Virginia law recognizes domestic partner benefits for state employees.

Hate crimes law:

Sexual orientation protected? No

No provision of Virginia's hate crime law recognizes violence against individuals because of their

sexual orientation. Race, religion, conviction, color and national origin are the categories explicitly recognized under Virginia's hate crimes law. *Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-57 (2002)*.

Gender identity protected? No

No provision of Virginia's hate crimes law explicitly recognizes violence based on gender identity. *Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-57 (2002)*.

Sodomy law:

Has sodomy law? No

Virginia's sodomy law was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 26, 2003, as a result of the Court's decision in *Lawrence v. Texas, No. 02-102 (U.S. June 26, 2003)*. Virginia had a statute prohibiting "crimes against nature, morals and decency," applicable to both same-sex and opposite-sex conduct. The offense was considered a felony punishable by five years in prison. *Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-361 (2002)*.

Parenting record:

Adoption by gay and lesbian individuals: **Bad**

Adoption by same-sex couples: **Bad**

Second-parent adoption granted. **Bad**

Places to Start When Looking for Resources:

You are strongly encouraged to look up all these resources regardless of whether you think you may need to use them or not. It is always good to know where to point students before you find the need to do so.

On campus resources:

Multicultural Programs and Services (MPS)

140 Squires Student Center (0187)

(540) 231-8584

Multicultural Programs and Services houses the Safe Zone Program. They work hard to create an inclusive campus climate that promotes diversity through programs that aid the personal and intellectual development of all students.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance

304 Squires Student Center

(540) 231-7975

lgbta@vt.edu

The LGBTTA creates a welcoming environment for all students here at Virginia Tech. They are the only organization that directly promotes awareness of the LGBT community and their allies for all the undergraduates and graduates here at Virginia Tech. They oversee support group which helps students with their problems ranging from coming out to relationship issues. They also lend a helping hand to surrounding colleges and high schools when requested. They have a library with LGBT related books, movies, magazines, and cd's available to borrow upon request.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Caucus

lgbcaucus@vt.edu

The LGB caucus provides a resource to faculty, staff, and graduate students who are members of the LGBT community and their allies.

Multicultural Center

140 Squires Student Center

(540) 231-8584

There are some resources in the form of books and bill boards for student to look at as well as people that work here that are knowledgeable about where to go look for more resources.

Black Cultural Center
125 Squires Student Center
(540) 231-5355

Both the MCC and BCC are important venues for exploring identity and diversity issues. They provide space for networking, programming, receptions, cultural displays, studying, lounging, watching television, and socializing. Maintain a website with the sponsored multicultural programs at www.mcp.vt.edu

Thomas E. Cook Counseling Center
240 McComas Hall
(540) 231-6557

The Counseling Center provides both individual and group counseling for enrolled graduated and undergraduate students at Virginia Tech. Consultation and outreach services are provided for Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and student organizations.

Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech
840 University City Blvd.
(540) 231-7201

Since 1981, the Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech has offered low-cost, high quality psychotherapy to more than 2,500 couples, families, and individuals in the New River Valley and surrounding areas. Sponsored by the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech, the Center is the clinical training facility for the Department of Human Development's Marriage and Family Therapy Ph.D. Program. It is the oldest continuously accredited program of its kind in the nation, fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFE) in 1981, the Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech has offered low-cost, high quality psychotherapy to more than 2,500 couples, families, and individuals in the New River Valley and surrounding areas.

Women's Center
Price House
(540) 231-7806

The Women's Center, funded by the Office of the Provost, is designed to create a more diverse and open higher education environment with emphasis on equity for women. However they are sensitive to the LGBT community and their needs.

Places to look for Church related issues:

(Allies of the LGBT community)

Cooper House

Presbyterian Campus Fellowship
305 Washington St. SW
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 552-2473
cooper.house@bev.net

Newman Campus Ministries

Catholic Campus Ministry
203 Otey St.
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 951-0032
newmanc@vt.edu

Canterbury Episcopal Fellowship

(540) 961-0496

Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge

110 Kirk Ave. SW
Roanoke VA 24011
(540) 344-4444

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the New River Valley

1301 Gladewood Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 552-9716

Lutheran Memorial Lutheran Church

600 Prices Fork Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Glade Church (UCC)

1600 Glade Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 552-3394

Community Resources:

PFLAG of Blacksburg- Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

(540) 231-9827
Post Office Box 10454
Blacksburg, VA. 24062-0454

PFLAG of Roanoke-Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
(540) 890-3957
180 Bailey Boulevard
Hardy, VA 24101-3825

PFLAG offers support group meetings, community education and advocacy opportunities in almost 500 communities across the United States.

Equality Virginia
<http://www.equalityvirginia.org/index.html>
6 North 6th Street, LL3
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 643-4816

Equality Virginia (EV) is a statewide, non-partisan, lobbying, education and support network for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight allied (GLBT) communities in Virginia. Founded in 1989 as Virginians for Justice, EV spent the 1990's building the grassroots framework and legislative presence for what has become Equality Virginia. EV has members across the Commonwealth. EV's Board of Directors is a diverse group of men and women, gay and straight, Democrat and Republican, who represent all regions of the state. Working with local communities and officials, EV's staff and team of volunteers maintain a state-wide presence at all levels of state government.

Lambda Legal Defense and Educational Fund
(212) 944-9488
www.lambdalegal.org

Mission Statement: Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, the transgender, and people with HIV or AIDS through impact litigation, education, and public policy work.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
(202) 393-5177
www.nglftf.org website
nglftf@nglftf.org email

NGLTF is the national progressive organization working for the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, with the vision and commitment to building a powerful political movement.

Human Rights Campaign
www.hrc.org
(202) 628-4160

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian and gay political organization with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and

educates the public to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

Health Testing:

(if they do not specifically test they can tell you where to look for people that need to be tested)

AIDS Council of Western Virginia

(540) 982-AIDS (2437)

1-800-354-3388

www.councilofcommunityservices.com

Schiffert Health Center

McComas Hall

(540) 231-6444

Roanoke City Health Department

515 8th Street, SW

Roanoke, VA 24016

(540)857-7600

Southwest HIV Resource Center

King George Ave SW

Roanoke VA 24016

(540) 857-6504

Suggested Readings

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