I am committed to

Respecting, Accepting, Supporting, and Listening.

**I Am Here!**

[Fayetteville State University logo]
# Safe Zone Ally Resource Table of Contents

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The Safe Zone Ally Program at Fayetteville State University

The purpose of the Safe Zone Program at Fayetteville State University is to create an affirming and supportive campus climate through identifying and educating members of our campus community who are open to and supportive of all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

A Safe Zone Ally at FSU is an informed campus partner who has committed time and energy through organized training to learn more about individuals that may identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning or may be unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Safe Zone Symbol (pictured above) is a visible symbol of support and an affirmation of commitment by that individual to fight homophobia and heterosexism at FSU.

The Safe Zone Ally Motto:
I am committed to
respecting, accepting,
supporting, and listening.
I am here.
The Safezone Office is located in 35 Hood Hall

Fall 2013 Office Hours:
Monday and Wednesday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Tuesday and Thursday 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Friday 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Safezone staff can be reached at:

Safezone Office: 672-2307
Dr. Emily Lenning: elenning@uncfsu.edu
Ms. Latosha Williams: lwilli57@uncfsu.edu

You can also visit us at:

www.uncfsu.edu/studentaffairs/safe-zone

or

www.facebook.com/safezoneatfsu
The FSU Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA)

To purpose of the FSU GSA is to:

- Provide a nurturing and supportive forum for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual (LGBT) individuals and their allies
- To facilitate the acknowledgement, acceptance and empowerment of LGBT people in the Fayetteville State University community
- To provide educational support to the Fayetteville State University and surrounding communities related to LGBT issues
- To teach love and acceptance – those things we **EXPECT** to receive – by our own examples.

FSU-GSA’s motto is: “Acceptance means **NO exceptions**”

To get more information or get involved in the FSU-GSA, please contact:

Dr. Michael DeValve, Department of Criminal Justice
672-2191, mdevalve@uncfsu.edu, 308 Lauretta Taylor

Or

Dr. Laura Coyle, Department of Psychology
672-2023, lcoyle@uncfsu.edu, 220 Nursing Bldg
Safe Zone Ally Values Statement

I ______________________________________________ agree to uphold the following in my position as a Safe Zone Ally at Fayetteville State University.

1. Publicly support all students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity by displaying my Safe Zone Ally sticker.

2. Refer students to necessary resources both on and off campus to assist them in any way I can and not attempt to help them myself if I am not an expert in that manner.

3. Object to homophobia and heterosexism anywhere I see it at FSU and speak up in support of a safe and accepting environment at this institution.

4. Explore and understand my personal fears, biases, heterocentric attitudes and homophobic feelings and keep them to myself and not impose them on any student.

5. Regardless of my personal views, as a Safe Zone Ally I will not try to “change,” or “convert” any student because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Salutation (Mr. Ms. Dr.): ______ Name: ______________________________
Department: ________________________________________________________
Physical Office Location: ______________________________________________
Official Job Title: ____________________________________________________
E-mail Address: _________________________ Phone:______________________

**Please note that the above information is required and by signing this statement you give your permission to be listed on any FSU Safezone contact list.

Ally Signature: ______________________________________________________
Date of Training: __________________________________________________________________________
Safe Zone Program Goals

1. Develop Faculty/Staff Allies
   The first goal of the Safe Zone Program is to create, develop, and train faculty and staff members who can serve as “Allies.” As stated in our “Statement of Purpose,” an “Ally” is “an informed campus partner who has committed time and energy through organized training to learn more about individuals that may identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning or may be unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

2. Support the LGBTQ Campus Community
   The second goal of the Safe Zone Program is to support the LGBTQ students, faculty, staff, and visitors of Fayetteville State University. This goal will be accomplished through Safe Zone Allies specifically trained to assist this population. In addition there will be both written and web accessible resources available to any interested party searching support.

3. Educate the Campus Community
   The third goal of the Safe Zone Program is to educate the campus community on LGBTQ issues and concerns. This goal will be accomplished through programs offered to students, faculty, and staff about this population.

4. Market Safe Zone Program to Students
   The fourth goal of the Safe Zone Program is to market the Safe Zone Allies and the program to the student population and the campus at large. This goal will be accomplished through “branding” the Safe Zone name and symbol. In addition advertising will go out through campus media, flyers, e-mails, and newsletters.

Safe Zone Program Defense

The Safe Zone Program is here to...

- Raise the cultural competence of Faculty/Staff at the University to include more knowledge of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning population.
- Provide assistance to an often marginalized student group through visible support.
- Educate the student population on the issues and concerns facing the LGBTQ community.
- Refer students to appropriate campus and non-campus resources for issues and concerns.
- Retain LGBTQ students at the University through assistance and visible support.

The Safe Zone Program is NOT here to...

- Force any individual or group to become “Allies.”
- Take a political stand or support any individual candidates or parties both inside and outside the University.
- Change any individuals’ personal, spiritual, or religious beliefs.
- Recruit or change individuals who identify as “heterosexual.”
Terminology

Terminology, especially as it relates to individual identity, is constantly shifting. These are the definitions for key identities we discuss in the Safe Zone program. These by no means are the only definitions for these terms, nor will everyone who identifies with these words use these definitions; however this does provide a basis for the Safe Zone program at FSU.

**Bisexual**- A person who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, and/or relationally attracted to both men and women, though not necessarily simultaneously.

**Cisgender**- A person whose gender identity matches their assigned gender at birth.

**Gay**- A man who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, and/or relationally attracted to other men.

**Gender Identity**- An internalized realization of one’s gender that may not be manifested in their outward appearance or their place in society. One’s gender identity also may or may not match their assigned gender at birth.

**Gender Expression**- Refers to how an individual expresses their socially constructed gender. This may refer to how an individual dresses, their general appearance, the way they speak, or they way they carry themselves.

**Gender Perception**- Refers to how others perceive another’s gender through gender clues including but not limited to clothing, mannerisms, voice, body size/shape, etc.

**Gender Role**- A societal expectation of how an individual should act, think, and/or feel based upon an assigned gender based on the current binary biological sex system.

**Heterosexual**- A person who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, and/or relationally attracted to some of the “opposite” sex.

**Intersex**- Refers to an individual born with anatomy or physiology that differs from societal ideals of female or male. This term replaces the more archaic “hermaphrodite.”

**Lesbian**- A woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, and/or relationally attracted to other women.

**Queer**- Term used to describe people who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender. Has taken on a negative connotation when used by someone not a part of the LGBTQ community.

**Questioning**- Refers to an individual who is unsure about their sexual orientation or gender identity.
**Sexual Orientation** - An enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, affectional, and/or relational attraction to another person.

**Trans** - An umbrella term used to include transgender, transsexual, transvestite people as well as gender non-conforming individuals.

**Transgender** - Refers to individuals who have been assigned a gender, but identify as the “opposite” gender, but this person may never alter their body through surgery or hormones.

**Transsexual** - Refers to an individual who has or wishes to alter their physical body through hormones or surgery as to have their body match their internal gender identity.

**Transvestite** - an umbrella term which refers to people who wear the clothing of the “opposite” gender. More often people identify as “crossdressers” and some may categorize “drag kings/queens” under this umbrella, but drag performers wear the “opposite” gender clothing for performance purposes.
Strategies for Being a Safe Zone Ally

Listen
- The most important strategy for an Ally is to listen without judgment and with compassion.

Don’t Make Assumptions
- Don’t assume that the sexual orientation or gender identity of a person is the most important aspect of that person, or the only topic they want to discuss. Remember that everyone is a multifaceted individual whose sexuality is only one aspect of their total life.
- Don’t assume that all unmarried people are single or have relationships or desire relationships with individuals of the “opposite” gender/sex.
- Don’t assume all mothers and fathers are heterosexuals or that children live in families consisting of a male-female couple.

Be Aware of Your Language
- Use inclusive terms such as “partner,” “significant other,” or “date” instead of “spouse,” “wife,” “husband,” “boyfriend,” or “girlfriend.”
- Use inclusive terms such as “committed relationship” instead of “marriage.”
- Use terms that are gender neutral and don’t assume the sex/gender of someone’s partner, such as “person,” “someone,” or “anyone.”
- Use preferred pronouns including gender neutral pronouns such as “zi/hir” or the singular “they.”

Be Aware of Your Own Bias
- Be an Ally 100% of the time, no deals, no strings attached.
- Recognize that it will take some time to bridge communication gaps and develop an understanding of the experiences of people with different sexual orientations and gender identities from your own.
- You don’t have to try and convince individuals that you are “on their side,” just be there for them.
- Confront jokes and slurs: silence may communicate that you condone the prejudicial behavior.
What Can I Do? Ideas for Allies

- Do not assume that everyone you meet is heterosexual/cisgender.
- Refuse to tolerate anti-LGBTQ comments, attitudes, remarks, or jokes.
- If you want to know something about a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity, go to that person directly and ask in an appropriate manner and setting.
- Refuse to propagate rumors.
- Report all harassment or discriminatory behavior to the appropriate officials.
- Respect confidentiality at all times. It is imperative that you can be trusted.
- Display positive materials in support of the LGBTQ community (flyers for activities, posters, cards, Safe Zone Placard, etc.)
- Use inclusive, non-gender specific language that does not assume the heterosexuality of others.
- Educate yourself on issues and concerns of the LGBTQ community and take the initiative to obtain accurate information.
- Keep everything in balance. Don’t assume that being LGBTQ doesn't matter or that it is the only thing that does matter. While it is true that being LGBTQ is a large part of an individual’s identity, it may not be the most important to them. On the other hand, remember that being LGBTQ is not being “the same as everyone else” and that there are significant differences between LGBTQ individuals and heterosexual/cisgender individuals.
- Know your own biases and fears. Know what you are comfortable talking about and be comfortable enough to refer individuals to others when necessary. In addition know your limits. Know when it is necessary to refer an individual to an “expert” who can assist them better.
- Remember that just because an individual is LGBTQ does not mean that is their sole identity or issue. In other words, “not everything is about being gay.” There will be times when an individual is dealing with other areas of their identity: their socio-economic status, their religion/faith, their race, or their ethnicity. It is important to be culturally competent across the board to better serve this community.
**Risks/Benefits to Being a Safe Zone Ally**

**Some Risks of Being an Ally:**

- Others may speculate about your own sexual orientation or gender identity. You may be labeled as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered ("by association"). This may be uncomfortable for you.
- You may become the subject of gossip or rumors. You may be criticized or ridiculed by others who do not agree with you or who view the issue as unimportant or unpopular.
- You may experience alienation from friends or colleagues who are not comfortable with the topics of sexual orientation or gender identity. These people may distance themselves from you in order to avoid conflict or labels.
- Your values, your morality, and your personal character may be questioned by people who believe homosexuality is wrong, sinful, against family values, etc.
- You may become the target of overt or subtle discrimination, such as being excluded from certain activities or a negative reflection on an employee evaluation.
- People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender may not accept you right away. Due to some past negative experiences with heterosexuals/cisgenders, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender may not trust you and may question your motivation.

**Some Benefits of Being an Ally:**

- You learn more accurate information about the reality of being part of the LGBTQ population.
- You learn more about how values and beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identity impact your own and others' lives.
- You open yourself up to the possibility of closer relationships with a wider range of people. You increase your ability to have close relationships with same-sex friends.
- You become less locked into gender roles, gender expectations, and stereotypes.
- You have opportunities to learn from, teach, and have impact on an often marginalized population, which you may not have otherwise interacted with.
- You empower yourself to take an active role in creating a more accepting world by countering prejudice and discrimination with understanding, support, and caring.
- You may be a role model for others. Your actions may influence others and help them find the inner resources to speak and act in support of this population.
- You may have opportunities to share with others what you have learned, and have a positive impact on the climate in your school or workplace or the attitudes of your family or friends.
- You may make a difference in the lives of young people who hear you confront derogatory language or speak supportively of this population. As a result of your action, they may feel they have a friend instead of turning to alcohol, drugs, or other unhealthy coping mechanisms, including suicide.
Coming Out as an Ally

Allies often find that they must go through a similar process as their LGBTQ friends, peers, students, etc. The process looks slightly different, but can be very similar in many ways. There is a process that Allies go through to fully realize their status as an ally for this population. Allies “come out” to themselves, to others, and can often be met with similar disdain, distrust, and disassociation from their friends, family, peers, coworkers, etc. Below is some basic information about this process:

Coming Out to Yourself:
It is extremely important for Allies to “come out” to themselves. This is simply a realization that you desire to help this population (LGBTQ). If you have already gone through the Safe Zone Ally training then you have already taken this first step.

Coming Out to Others:
After you realize that you want to be an Ally and possibly after you go through the Safe Zone training, now you may wish to “come out” to others. This process simply notifies those around you (your co-workers, peers, students, and supervisor) that you are a Safe Zone Ally. Here are some possible things you may do to “come out” to others:

- Post the Safe Zone Ally placard in your office/classroom
- Share information on how to become a Safe Zone Ally
- Interrupt jokes and derogatory comments about the LGBTQ population
- Work with and provide services to LGBTQ students
- Attend programs geared at educating the public on LGBTQ students

Safety Considerations:
Remember that not everyone at FSU or who visits FSU is fully supportive of the Safe Zone Program; therefore, it is important to remember your own safety when becoming an Ally and then when “coming out” as an Ally.
As a result, there are some questions to be answered regarding your safety:

- Is your office/department accepting of the Safe Zone Program?
- Will you lose your job, a promotion, or incentives by becoming a Safe Zone Ally?
- Are the students you work with receptive to the Safe Zone Program?
- Are you comfortable with the risks associated with being a Safe Zone Ally?
Ten Steps to Making a Referral

1. **Listen to the Student**

   When dealing with any student, it is always important to listen. Listening without judgment, without bias, yet with compassion and understanding is the cornerstone of the Safe Zone Ally Program. This step may take a long time and may not all occur in one sitting. Be sure to listen for clues and realize it may take some time for a student to come forward with troubling information.

2. **Identify the Issue/Concern**

   Once you and the student feel you can identify the root cause of an issue/concern, then be sure to identify it. Identifying an issue or concern can be an arduous conversation, but is essential in assisting the student. It may be helpful to make a written list of all issues/concerns to assist the student in prioritizing their needs/wants.

3. **Identify Resources Available**

   After identifying the issue/concern now you must identify what resources are available to assist the student. Please remember that the purpose of being an Ally is not to be an expert in everything and to “save” a student; the purpose is to guide the student to the experts that are available. Please feel free to utilize the resources suggested in your manual.

4. **Discuss Resources with Student**

   After identifying the resource it will be important to explain the role of the resource. Students are often oblivious to the opportunities around them and are unsure about what campus resources actually offer. For example they may have heard of “tutoring programs” but are unsure of where those programs are housed. Remember you do not have to refer students to other Safe Zone Allies, and there may be occasions when there are no Safe Zone Allies in the desired offices.

5. **Give a “How To” for Contacting the Resource/s**

   Often students are unsure of how to approach different resources. It may be helpful to give the student information beyond simple phone number, website, or campus location. Whenever possible refer a student directly to an individual and not just a department or an office. As stated above you may be referring a student to a non-Safe Zone Ally. In those cases it may be beneficial to discuss what information is “necessary” to share and what information can be kept from the resource. Remember the ultimate goal is to assist the student.
6. **Outline an Action Plan**

   It is important that the student creates an action plan, with your assistance, which will serve as their guide to working through their issue/concern. This action plan should be as specific as possible. Dates and deadlines can often be helpful to students because it provides accountability. In fact the entire purpose of an action plan is to hold the student accountable for taking the necessary steps to help themselves.

7. **Discuss Potential Outcomes of Plan**

   Once the Action Plan is developed, it is important to clarify what are the potential outcomes with utilizing the campus resource you are referring them to. This discussion should focus on reviewing the issue/concern and how the student wants to “fix” that issue/concern. This is basically a discussion of “what could happen” and it can provide “buy in” for the student to appreciate the resource. Ultimately this is a “check” to ensure the student is receiving the appropriate help.

8. **Review Action Plan**

   Reviewing an Action Plan is important and it really provides a good opportunity to “sum up” the conversation you have had with the student. This is also a way to review the responsibilities now placed on the student within the Action Plan.

9. **Contact the Resource**

   It is sometimes helpful to lay the groundwork for a student by personally making contact with the resource you are referring them to. **Never disclose information about a student that the student is not comfortable sharing.** In addition always tell a student your intentions to contact a resource. It is important to keep the student in the “loop” about your contact so they feel you can be trusted with their private information.

10. **Follow Up with Student**

    Follow up is often the piece the majority of people forget. We have a great conversation with a student, provide them with resources, even develop an action plan, but we rarely check back in with the student. Follow up can take on many different forms: an email, a phone call, another meeting, etc. But the most important piece of any referral is following up with the student to ensure they have gotten the assistance they need. Following up often takes more than one contact, but is an integral part of the referral process.
Common Issues: Identity Development

Like many other underrepresented groups, LGBTQ students are often looking for a space that supports them and reflects their identity. LGBTQ students often show up as the “only one,” whether in class, in their family, with their friends, in organizations, or in their living situation. LGBTQ students often seek out opportunities to connect with other LGBTQ students, friends, organizations, history, etc.

Who Can Help?
- FSU Gay/ Straight Alliance (see pg. 5 for contact information)

Common Issues: Mental Health

Isolation- LGBTQ individuals may feel isolated from their peers. This can be magnified if individuals do not have a support system in place.

Low Self-Esteem- Because of the large amount of misinformation in society about LGBTQ individuals, sometimes LGBTQ individuals internalize negative myths and stereotypes. This internalization can lead to shame and a negative self-image.

Depression- Compacting the low self-esteem with the feelings of isolation make LGBTQ individuals more likely than heterosexual/cisgender individuals to have issues with depression.

Anxiety- Because the LGBTQ population is an invisible minority, LGBTQ individuals may experience a lot of anxiety about who knows their sexual orientation or gender identity and who they can safely share that information with.

Suicidal Ideations- The combination of all these previously mentioned mental health issues in addition to the lack of a positive support system, can lead to suicidal ideation and ultimately suicide. It is well documented that individuals who identify as LGBTQ are often at higher risk for suicide.

Who Can Help?
- Center for Personal Development - http://www.uncfsu.edu/studentaffairs/cfpd

Common Issues: Substance Abuse

Tobacco Use- LGBTQ individuals have higher numbers of individuals that use tobacco products, like cigarettes, than their heterosexual peers. This may be tied to the stress associated with being LGBTQ.

Alcohol Use- Due to the increased depression and anxiety rates in LGBTQ individuals, it should be no surprise that they are often more susceptible to alcohol abuse. LGBTQ individuals may use
alcohol as a coping mechanism. In addition alcohol is very readily available in the LGBTQ community in bars and clubs.

**Drug Use**—Just as with alcohol, drug use (including prescription drug use) may be used by LGBTQ individuals as a coping mechanism. Like alcohol, drugs are also very readily available in the LGBTQ community in bars and clubs.

**Who Can Help?**
- Center for Personal Development - http://www.uncfsu.edu/studentaffairs/cfpd

**Common Issues: Relationship Differences**

**Friends**—A LGBTQ person’s social network may ebb and flow drastically as they come out to individuals they consider “friends.” In other words LGBTQ individuals may lose some friends and gain other friends as they come out, which could drastically change their social network.

**Family Problems**—LGBTQ individuals often face rejection from their family unit. Sometimes this can be manifested in a loss of financial assistance, being “kicked-out” of the home, or completely cutting off all communications and ties to an individual.

**Intimate Relationships**—The LGBTQ community has a very interesting dynamic in regards to intimate relationships. Because there is no legalized marriage of LGBTQ couples in North Carolina, there is also no prescribed relationship tract. That means individuals may engage in sexual relationships earlier, or may be less likely to commit to another individual. In addition intimate relationships for same-sex couples are complicated when your “ex-partner” could be the “ex-partner” of your “future partner”. In other words the community is very small and relationships are affected by this intimacy.

**Sexual Relationships**—Because sexual education to LGBTQ individuals is almost non-existent LGBTQ individuals often experiment with sex without protection. This can lead to increased cases of sexually transmitted infections and diseases, including HIV/AIDS. In addition HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects the gay male community, while HPV (a leading case for cervical cancer) disproportionately affects the lesbian community.

**Interpersonal Violence**—Same-sex couples are just as prone to interpersonal violence as heterosexual couples. However, in same-sex couples the impact of the coming out process can greatly add to a perpetrator’s control and power over a victim. In other words a victim may be less likely to report violence from a same-sex partner, because they may be fearful of the response and may not wish to disclose their sexual orientation to others. In addition same-sex couples are often ignored by police and are often met with hostility from interpersonal violence support groups.
Common Issues: Harassment & Discrimination

**Intimidation/Bullying** - LGBTQ individuals may encounter more negative attitudes, jokes, verbal taunting, or bullying because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, LGBTQ individuals may be intimidated by individuals who threaten to “out” them if they don’t do something.

**Harassment** - LGBTQ individuals may face harassment in many different forms. They may hear verbal threats, have their property damaged, or be sexually harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQ individuals may also be less likely to report harassing behavior because they do not wish to disclose their own sexual orientation or gender identity to authorities.

**Social Avoidance** - LGBTQ individuals may be left out of other events, groups, or activities by their heterosexual or cis-gendered peers. LGBTQ individuals are sometimes discouraged from joining organizations, study groups, or participating in activities.

**Discrimination** - LGBTQ individuals do not share the same protections as other minority groups in the US. While it is no longer legal to discriminate on the basis of race, skin color, ethnicity, ability, age, sex, or veteran’s status, it is still legal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**Violence** - LGBTQ individuals may be targets of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, they may be targeted because they are seen as “weaker” or less likely to either fight back or report the crime/incident.

**Who Can Help?**
- FSU Police Department: http://www.uncfsu.edu/police/about
- Dean of Students - http://www.uncfsu.edu/studentaffairs/dos

Common Issues: Academics

Due to some of the factors we have already discussed, including mental health issues, harassment, and discrimination, LGBTQ students often find that they need assistance with their academics here at Fayetteville State University. This can include seeking approval to miss classes or drop classes for tutoring and supplemental instruction.

**Who Can Help?**
- Students Striving for Success/Tutoring - http://www.uncfsu.edu/sss
Common Issues: Finances

LGBTQ students will sometimes face financial difficulties after coming out. Sometimes they are disowned and disconnected from their family support system, which may have been providing financial support. LGBTQ students often have to find financial resources quickly and on their own. This may include the need to find new housing options, employment opportunities, or new ways to pay for tuition.

Who Can Help?
- Financial Aid – http://finaid.uncfsu.edu/
- Career Services Center - http://www.uncfsu.edu/career-services
- Residence Life - http://www.uncfsu.edu/reslife
Why Come Out? Risks & Benefits

Coming out is a constant internal and external process that can sometimes be met with pain, misunderstanding, and hardship. Members of the LGBTQ population “come out” in many different ways to many different groups. In addition the coming out process can look different for each individual and sometimes an individual can come out without even noticing. Not to mention the coming out process is continual, because the LGBTQ population is an “invisible minority,” meaning that you cannot recognize LGBTQ individuals by the way they look. Because they are an “invisible minority,” this population may find themselves coming out every time they make a new friend, start a new job, or take a class. In any situation it is important to know the risks and benefits to coming out to others. Below are just a few risks and benefits commonly experienced by the LGBTQ population:

Some Risks of Coming Out

- Not everyone will be understanding or accepting.
- Some relationships with friends, family members, or co-workers may be permanently changed in negative ways, and you could end up losing some of this support system.
- Individuals under the age of 18 may be thrown out of their homes or lose financial support.
- Students may lose their financial support for school from their parent/guardian.
- An individual may experience harassment or discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In many cases this harassment or discrimination has no legal protection, therefore an LGBTQ individual may be terminated from their job, denied housing, or denied insurance.

Some Benefits of Coming Out

- Individuals will have the ability to live their lives openly.
- Individuals may build up their self-esteem by being honest with themselves.
- Individuals may develop closer, more genuine relationships with new friends and family.
- Some relationships may be changed permanently in positive ways.
- Individuals may be able to connect more with individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ population and become a part of the community.
- Individuals may alleviate the stress associated with “hiding” their identity or living their life “in the closet.”
- After coming out an individual may be able to change the common misconceptions about the LGBTQ population simply by speaking out and being open with others. The best way to change an individual’s mind is through a personal relationship.
Coming Out Issues & Concerns

The previous section of this manual discussed the risks and benefits associated with disclosing one’s sexual orientation or gender identity with others or coming out, this section breaks down some further reasons an individual may choose to or not choose to come out.

What might people who are a member of the LGBTQ population be afraid of when coming out?

- Rejection – loss of relationships with friends and/or family
- Gossip – rumors spread about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Loss of spiritual foundation - rejection from their church, mosque, temple, etc.
- Being thrown out of the house or of the family
- Loss of financial support
- Harassment or abuse
- Threat of physical violence
- Discrimination including loss of employment or discrimination by their employer
- Questions surrounding their personal or professional integrity
- Questions surrounding their intimate relationships and their health (both mental and physical)
- Being seen by others as sick, immoral, perverted, anti-family, or sinful

How might people who are members of the LGBTQ population feel about coming out to someone?

- Scared
- Vulnerable
- Unsure of how others will react
- Relieved
- Proud

What might people who are members of the LGBTQ population want from others when they come out?

- Acceptance
- Support
- Understanding
- Comfort
- Reassurance that their relationships has not changed in a negative manner
- Closer relationships to friends and/or family
- Acknowledgement of their feelings
- Understanding and compassion for their coming out process
- Love
When Someone Comes Out To You

If an individual chooses to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to you it is important that you take some time to review your own feelings, prejudices, and heterocentric ideals. The coming out process can be difficult for surrounding individuals in a similar way as it is to the actual individual. Below are some things to keep in mind when an individual chooses to come out to you:

How might someone feel after someone else comes out to them?

- Scared
- Shocked
- Disbelief
- Uncomfortable
- Not sure what to say/do
- Concern for them
- Supportive feelings
- Flattered
- Honored
- Angry
- Disgusted
- Feeling that they are coming on to you

Tips on what NOT to say:

- You’re just going through a phase
- It’s just because you have never had a relationship with someone of the opposite sex
- You can’t be gay- you’ve had relationships with individuals of the opposite sex
- You can’t be a lesbian you’re too pretty
- You can’t be gay you’re too manly
- You’re just depressed
- You’re just confused
- You need some therapy and it will all be better
- You just need to go to church and they will fix you
- Do you really want to be gay?
- When did you choose to be gay?
- You don’t want to be gay, you will get AIDS!
- It’s not normal to want to be the other gender/sex
- Do you like to wear women’s/men’s clothing all the time?
- How do you know you’re gay?
- Have you had sex with someone of the same sex yet?
- Make sure you take some condoms with you
- Which do you like better, men or women?
- It’s about time you came out; I always knew you were gay!
- I love gay people!
- Some of my best friends are gay!
Tips of how you can help someone who comes out to you:

- Remember that the person has not changed. They are still the same person who you knew before; you just have more information about them than you previously had.
- If you are shocked, don’t let the shock lead you to view the person as suddenly different.
- Don’t ask questions that would have been considered rude within the relationship you had before they disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Recognize that everyone’s experience is unique and don’t assume you know what a LGBTQ individual is going through.
- Remember that they may not want or need you to do anything. Often it is simply affirming for the individual to disclose this personal information.
- Consider it an honor that they have trusted you with this very personal information. Thank them for trusting you.
- Clarify with them what level of confidentiality they expect from you. You never want to share this personal information with others without their consent.
- If you don’t understand something or have questions, remember that persons who are LGBTQ are often willing to help you understand more. But remember they are not experts of ALL LGBTQ people. If you want to learn more, utilize your resources (like Safezone Training), not the students.
- If you find yourself reacting negatively, remember that your feelings may change. Try to leave the door open for further communication.
- Remember that you too are never alone and that there is a network of Safe Zone Allies here to support both you and your students.
- If you would like more information, ask in an honest and respectful way. If you show genuine and respectful interest in their life, they will most likely appreciate it. Some good questions are:
  - How long have you been aware that you were LGBTQ?
  - Are you seeing someone special?
  - Has it been difficult for you?
  - Is there some way I can help you?
**Heterocentrism | Heterosexism | Homophobia**

**Heterocentrism** – Heterocentrism is the ideology and assumption that all people are heterosexual.

**Heterosexism** – Heterosexism is the system of oppression that gives privileges to heterosexual people to the disadvantage of those who are not.

**Homophobia** – Homophobia is the fear, discomfort, or hatred of non-heterosexual people that is manifested on the individual level.

The ideology of heterocentrism creates the system of oppression (heterosexism), and both create the individual manifestation of homophobia.
**Heterosexual Privilege Checklist**

1. There can be gay or straight fictional characters on television or film without a negative response from viewers.
2. I feel comfortable holding hands with my partner in public.
3. As a child growing up I am presented with figures of my orientation, in cartoons, children's book, and family movies.
4. As a child it is assumed that I will grow up to be heterosexual (Homosexuals must “become” gay and “come out of the closet”).
5. When it comes to information about safer sex and sexual health I do not have great difficulty finding that information, particularly in an educational setting.
6. I can feel comfortable talking about my sexual practices with the majority of my peers.
7. Growing up I have an ample supply of role models I can look up to.
8. Even if I am part of a social minority group (specifically ethnic or religious) I will have role models of my orientation to look up to.
9. My orientation is accepted by all mainstream religions and all governments.
10. My relationship is recognized and rewarded by all mainstream religions and governments.
11. I can find adult entertainment on television for me to watch which features my orientation.
12. My assumed sexual practices as a heterosexual are accepted by society.
13. I don't have trouble finding people like me to hang-out with.
14. Whenever someone meets me in public they assume I am heterosexual.
15. If I am ever brought up in the media there is never an issue with my orientation.
16. Historical figures of my orientation never have their orientation neglected, omitted, or disputed from their historical legacy.
17. My heterosexuality is not an aspect of my life, or a lifestyle, just a fact about myself.
18. Whenever I go out in public I can be sure that I am not the only person of my orientation.
19. I will not feel stupid if I assume someone is of my orientation, even if they are not.
20. In public I feel safe as the majority.
21. I can assume that I will not be assaulted because of my sexuality.
22. People will not make fun or ridicule me because of my sexual orientation.
23. I know that when the mainstream media makes reference to men or women, they are referring to men and women of my orientation, unless specifically mentioned as homosexual men and women.
24. I can turn on the television or open the pages of any mainstream newspaper and see my orientation represented in a positive light.
25. I know when people of my orientation are rewarded it is not because of their sexual orientation.
26. I can be sure that children of my orientation will be given curricular materials of their orientation.
27. I can be sure people of my orientation do not have to worry about heterophobia in society.
28. I know that children and teens of my orientation will have teachers that will be tolerable and accepting of their orientation, as well as employers, doctors, etc.
29. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my orientation.
30. I am not expected to be a representation of my orientation.
31. If I declare that there is sexual orientation prejudicial situation at hand, my orientation will lend me more creditability than a person of one of the other orientations.
32. I can choose to ignore the writings or materials of people of other sexual orientations and there be no negative consequences.
33. I can worry about homophobia and not be seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
34. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I don’t have to wonder if it is so because of issues relating to my orientation.
35. I can think over many options: social, political, imaginative, or professional, without wondering whether or not a person of my orientation will be accepted, or even allowed.
36. I can be open about my sexuality on the Internet (MySpace, Facebook, or other social networking sites; or other things online) and not worry about any possible repercussions.
37. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical assistance, my orientation will not work against me.
38. I will never experience social rejection, such as in a fraternity, social club, or family, because of my orientation.
39. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to reflect my orientation, in a positive light.
40. I can safely display my affection for my partner or openly speak about my sexual orientation wherever I travel.
41. I don’t have to tailor my travel plans to consider my orientation.
42. My orientation is not a topic of discussion for politicians.
43. I will never have to specifically seek out heterosexual establishments to be around others like me.
44. I will never have my heterosexuality used for a reason not to feel comfortable living with me, being on an athletic team, or being assigned to the same group project for a class assignment.
45. I will never have to think about how my orientation will affect me while I am in school.
46. I do not have to explain how or why I am heterosexual, or when I realized that I was.
47. I can display photos of my partners on my desk without fear or embarrassment.
48. People do not assume that I am experienced in sex, because of my sexual orientation.
49. People do not ask me why I made my choice to be public about my sexual orientation.
50. I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation; and thus a potential danger to others.
51. I did not grow up with games that attack my sexual orientation (i.e., Fag Tag or Smear the Queer).
52. I am never asked to speak for everyone who is heterosexual.

In 1972 Martin Rochlin developed the “Heterosexual Questionnaire.” This questionnaire is a way to point out heterocentrism in our culture. These are questions that would not be asked of heterosexuals, but are often asked of non-heterosexual people.

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
4. Is it possible your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex? An overprotective father? A distant mother?
5. If you’ve never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn’t prefer that? Maybe all you need is a good gay lover.
6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
7. Why do you heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into your lifestyle?
8. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can’t you just be what you are in private?
9. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they would face?
10. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexual. Do you consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers?
11. While there is much societal support for marriage, the divorce rate is astounding. Why are there so few stable heterosexual relationships?
12. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
13. Considering the menace of overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual like you?
14. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don’t you feel that she or he might be inclined to influence you in the directions of his or her own leanings?
15. How can you become a whole person if you limit yourself to compulsive, exclusively heterosexuality, and fail to develop your natural, healthy, homosexual potential?
16. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed which might enable you to change if you really want to. Have you considered aversion therapy?
17. What are ways of recognizing heterosexuals? Are there things I can look for?
18. Do heterosexuals hate, fear, or distrust others of their own sex? Is that what makes them heterosexual?
19. How can you have a fully satisfying, deeply emotional or sexual relationship with a person of the opposite sex when men and women are so vastly different, physically and emotionally? How can men and women possibly understand each other?
How Homophobia Hurts Everyone

- Homophobia discourages emotional closeness and intimate relationships among same-sex friends, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- Homophobia supports stereotypes, giving us all a distorted and inaccurate view of reality.

- Homophobia can condition heterosexual people to treat others badly and commit actions contrary to their basic humanity.

- Homophobia has been used to divert attention away from more pressing and serious societal concerns, and diverts energy away from the search for solutions to those concerned.

- Homophobia pushes heterosexual males to constantly “prove” their masculinity and thus their heterosexuality.

- Homophobia pressures young people to become sexually active with members of the “opposite” sex/gender to “prove” they are “normal.” This premature sexual activity can result in emotional damage, as well as increasing the chances of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

- Homophobia can be used to restrict education about sexuality and sexual behavior resulting in incomplete sexual education. Such lack of information has been shown to contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS and the increase in teen pregnancy.

- Homophobia results in prejudice and discrimination, creating a culture in which people who are members of the LGBTQ community live with fear of being rejected by family or friends, losing their jobs, or being physically assaulted.

- Homophobia causes people who are members of the LGBTQ community to struggle to achieve self-acceptance and maintain self-esteem.

- Homophobia can be used to stigmatize, silence, and target people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender but who are in reality heterosexual/cisgender.

- Homophobia reinforces rigid gender roles and limits the range of acceptable behavior by both men and women.

- Homophobia has led to an increase in “bullying” in our school system from elementary school to high school and even to college.
The Pyramid of Hate was developed by the Anti-Defamation League ([http://www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)) to show how genocide and hate violence is built on a foundation of other acts of prejudice. The wider the space the more people engage in that activity. You can take a stand and stop the next act of violence or even genocide by challenging people before they climb The Pyramid of Hate.
The Pyramid of Alliance was also developed by the Anti-Defamation League (http://www.adl.org) to show how there are also varying degrees to being an ally to an oppressed group. While the goal is to have social change and eliminate hate, that has to start somewhere. Again the wider the space the more people engage in that behavior. You can make a difference by being an ally!
10 Ways to Fight Homophobia & Transphobia in Your Community
(Courtesy of Q-Resources)

1. Organize discussion groups at organizations/groups you belong to (a community of faith, education associations, social justice activist groups, etc.) to talk about LGBTQ issues.

2. Use neutral labels like “partner” or “significant other” instead of “boyfriend,” “girlfriend,” etc.

3. Bring up current LGBTQ issues in conversations with friends, at work, in class, and in your community.

4. Interrupt anti-LGBTQ jokes, comments or any other behaviors that make homophobia and transphobia appear OK.

5. Put LGBTQ-positive posters at your work, community of faith, etc., and/or wear shirts, buttons, etc. that promote LGBTQ equality and straight ally visibility.

6. Don't make assumptions about peoples' sexual orientations or gender identities. Assume there are LGBTQ people in all classes, sports, meetings, at work, daily life, etc.

7. Don't assume that "feminine-acting men" and "masculine-acting women" are transgender or not heterosexual.

8. Don't assume that "macho males" or "feminine females" are heterosexual or not transgender.

9. Use your privilege as a heterosexual/cisgender ally to speak up for LGBTQ issues and rights whenever/wherever you can. Write letters to the editor, participate in marches, lend support to LGBTQ groups at work, a community of faith, vote, etc.

10. As an ally to transgender folks, speak up when you hear slurs and attacks on people who express their gender outside of societal expectations. Educate people around you on the continuum of gender expression.
FSU’s Non-Discrimination Policy

Fayetteville State University (FSU) is committed to equality of educational opportunity and employment and does not discriminate against applicants, students, or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Moreover, Fayetteville State University values diversity and actively seeks to recruit talented students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. Any individual with a concern, grievance or complaint of discrimination or retaliation should utilize the internal grievance procedures available under the Code of Student Conduct, the SPAGrievance Policy, or the grievance procedures for faculty and EPA non-faculty employees.
National Web Resources

LGBTQ Organizations
- Accord Alliance – http://www.accordalliance.org
- Campus Pride – http://www.campuspride.org
- Children of Lesbians & Gays Everywhere – http://www.colage.org
- Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resources – http://www.lgbtcampus.org
- FTM International – http://www.ftmi.org
- Gay Health – http://www.gayhealth.com
- Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) – http://www.glaad.org
- Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) – http://www.isna.org
- Lambda Legal – http://www.lambdalegal.org
- National Association of LGBT Community Centers – http://www.lgbtcenters.org
- National Center for Lesbian Rights – http://www.nclrights.org
- National Center for Transgender Equality – http://transequality.org
- Out & Equal – http://www.outandequal.org
- Out for Work – http://www.outforwork.org
- OutProud – http://www.outproud.com
- The Transgender Center – http://www.ntac.org
- Transgender Law & Policy Institute – http://www.transgenderlaw.org
- Trans People of Color Coalition – http://www.transpoc.org
- TransYouth Family Allies – http://www.imatyfa.org
- Unid@s The National Latin@ LGBT Human Rights Organization – http://www.unidoslgbt.com
- The Victory Fund – http://www.victoryfund.org
- World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) – http://www.wpath.org

Ally Organizations
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) – http://www.aclu.org
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) – http://www.naacp.org
- Southern Poverty Law Center – http://www.splicenter.org

Blogs / Magazines
- The Advocate (magazine) – http://www.advocate.com
- Curve Magazine – http://www.curvemagazine.com
- Gender Advocacy Internet News (GAIN) – http://www.gender.org/gain
- Planet Out – http://www.planetout.com
- Q-Notes – http://gognotes.com
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