



## SafeZone Programs

The LGBTQ Academy at the Gay Alliance has worked nationally with over 40 colleges and universities from California to Pennsylvania offering our expertise on running SafeZone Trainings. This training was created to develop, enhance and maintain environments in workplaces, schools and other social settings that are culturally competent and supportive to LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning)

individuals, as well as straight, cisgender people who care about diversity, equality and inclusion.

### What is a SafeZone?

A safe zone or a safe space is a place where all people feel safe, welcome and included. It may be a room, a car, or an entire college campus. The Gay Alliance SafeZone program aims to increase the awareness, knowledge, and skills for individuals and address the challenges that exist when one wants to advocate for their LGBTQ peers, family members, friends, coworkers and for themselves. Creating safe zones or safe spaces is a proactive step that schools, agencies and corporations can take to create welcoming, inclusive spaces so that all people are empowered to reach their full potential.

### In Our Schools:

For LGBTQ students, faculty and staff the school environment poses numerous threats and obstacles. Hateful language, physical and emotional harassment and the threat of physical violence are a reality for many LGBTQ people. The Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN's) 2013 survey of 7,898 students (ages 13-21) from all 50 states, found the following results.

- 74% of LGBTQ students experienced harassment at school in the past year.
- More than half of LGBTQ students felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation.
- Nearly a third of LGBTQ students skipped at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.

Several research groups have documented results that indicate that lesbian, gay and bisexual teens are at a much higher risk for attempting suicide than their straight counterparts. The 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey "Injustice at Every Turn," which surveyed over 6,000 transgender individuals found that 41% of transgender people had attempted suicide compared to 1.6% of the general population.

### In Our Workplaces:

While progress is slowly being made to create more welcoming and inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ employees, there is still much to be done. Below are some eye-opening statistics from the 2014 Human Rights Campaign's *The Cost of the Closet*, a national study examining workplace climate for LGBTQ employees.

- 62% of LGBTQ employees report hearing jokes about lesbians and gays in the workplace.
- 53% of LGBTQ employees hide who they are at work.
- 20% of LGBTQ employees report looking for another job specifically because their workplace environment wasn't accepting of LGBTQ individuals.

For many LGBTQ individuals energy that could be spent on working and creating healthy relationships with coworkers is instead spent on maintaining barriers, avoiding social events and learning how to keep secrets about their home lives and families.

### **About our SafeZone Training**

The LGBTQ Academy at the Gay Alliance offers a SafeZone Training that can be customized to meet the needs of any organization. Our SafeZone Training is a 2-4 hour workshop, which can be presented in one or two sessions. This program is a dynamic, interactive session that includes activities and discussion around: inclusive and respectful language, the process of coming out, understanding sexual and gender identity, taking action on our campuses and in our workplaces, where to go for help and much more. This session will give participants the skills they need to provide support and to create environments that are safe, welcoming and inclusive. At the end of the class, participants are offered a Gay Alliance SafeZone sticker so that they can create their own SafeZone.

### **Feedback from our SafeZone Training Program (September 2015)**

“I really learned a lot. It was worth attending.”

“Open – honesty – humor”

“They were real people with excellent backgrounds and education in the subject at hand.”

“Presenters were wonderful – full of info.”

“Helped me understand how little I really know about this topic.”

**100% of the participants from this training rated both the training and the presenter “very good” to “excellent.”**

For more information or to request a training please contact [education@gavalliance.org](mailto:education@gavalliance.org) or 585-244-8640.