

Safe Zones for Sexual Minorities: Culturally Competent Services for LGBTQ People in Treatment

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Objectives of the Workshop

- *Educate* participants regarding sexual orientation and their relevance to treatment services
- *Challenge* heterosexist assumptions and homophobia on a personal and institutional level
- *Identify* ways participants' can improve their ability to respond to people in recovery with respect to the reality of diverse sexual orientations

Objectives of the Workshop

- *Establish* a visible support system for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBTQ) people in recovery and staff
- *Help* participants identify behaviors and policies that encourage inclusivity

Objectives of Safe Zone

- The "Safe Zone" symbol is a message to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and ally individuals. A person displaying this symbol has made a commitment to be understanding, supportive, and trustworthy should a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, or ally consumer, coworker or other individual need help, suggestions, or or someone with whom they can talk.

Objectives of Safe Zone

- The person displaying this symbol has completed a training workshop and has made a commitment to become a visible support system at their organization by posting their Safe Zone symbol.
- Homophobic and heterosexist comments and actions will not be tolerated but will be addressed in an educational and informative manner.

**Sexual Minorities:
Anybody whose sexual desires
or practices place them outside of
the mainstream...**

**...which could be anybody at some
time in their lives.**

Definitions

Definitions

- Sexual Orientation
 - A person's emotional, physical, and sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction towards members of the same sex, opposite sex, or both sexes
- Homosexuality
 - A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex
- Bisexuality
 - A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to the people of both sexes

More definitions

- Transgender Identity
 - The experience of having a gender identity that is different from one's biological sex. A transgender person may identify with the opposite biological gender and may want to be a person of that gender.
- Coming Out
 - Refers to the process in which a person acknowledges, accepts, and/or in many cases shares and appreciates her or his lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity.

More Definitions

- Homophobia
 - The fear, dislike, and/or hatred of same-sex relationships; includes prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence brought on by fear and hatred, sometimes condoned by society
- Heterosexism
 - The assumption that all people are/or should be heterosexual; excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression which reinforces realities of silence and invisibility

Sex vs. Gender

- Sex: Biophysiological
Male or Female
- Gender: Social Construct
Man or Woman

Identity vs. Orientation

- Gender Identity: who you are
- Orientation: to whom you are sexually and/or emotionally attractive

Gender Identity vs. Gender Expression

- Identity: refers to a person's actual or perceived sex - one's internal sense of being
- Expression: how one expresses themselves externally – the way one expresses their gender identity.

Transgender

- Someone who's gender expression "transgress" society's norm.

Transsexual

- Individuals who are born into one sex but identify psychologically and emotionally as another.

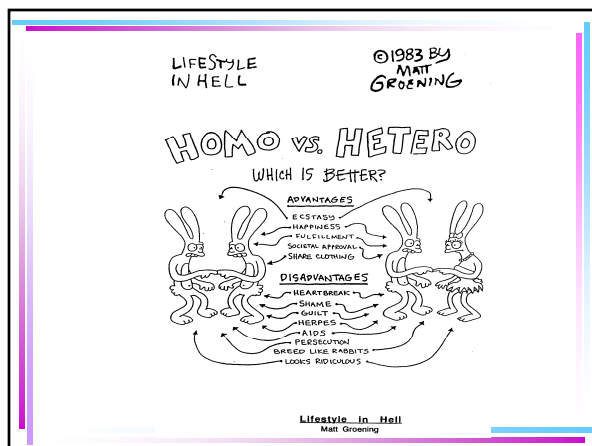
Gender Variant

- A gender identity that does not conform to the standard binary definitions of male or female.

Intersexual

- Individuals born with some combination of sex chromosomes or an internal reproductive system that is not considered standard for either male or female. They may be born with a combination of male and female genitalia or “indeterminate” genitalia.

Sexual Orientation



Critical Events Inventory

- When did it occur
- How old were you?
- How did you feel about the situation?
- How did the situation influence your attitudes, values, or beliefs about sexual orientation, gender identity and heterosexism/homophobia

Barriers to effective treatment for LGBTQ individuals

Barriers to safe environments for LGBTs in many Treatment Programs

- Human sexuality not addressed in PSR programs
- Staff homophobia and ignorance
- Consumer-consumer intolerance/harassment
- Programs lack info and resources on LGBT issues

Barriers to safe environments for
LGBTs in Treatment Programs

- Religious beliefs that are negative toward LGBTs
- We don't have any LGBT clients
- LGBT issues viewed as clinical problem to be addressed
- Discrimination and ignorance
- Others?

Sexuality not addressed in PSR
programs

- Love, sexuality, affection are important parts of people's lives
- In MH settings, sexuality of any type often seen as problem
- Consumers should not have such needs and desires
- Addressed even less with LGBT issues
- Examples?

Staff homophobia and ignorance

- Knowledge and training not covered in staff orientation or performance expectations
- LGBT consumers often experience staff as hostile to LGBT people
- Stereotypes in policies and procedures
 - Anti-discrimination policies that are ignored
 - Lack of recognition of LGBT relationships
- Examples

Consumer-consumer intolerance is not addressed

- LGBTQ consumers report harassment/belittling from other consumers
- Staff say nothing, look the other way
 - Perceived as condoning/supporting harassment
- Creates tension/fear just like other types of harassment

How can we address these types of issues in a therapeutic and community building way?

Programs lack information/resources on LGBTQ issues

- Do staff know about LGBTQ issues? Know where to get information, consultation, training, assistance?
- Is the atmosphere tolerant? Hostile?
 - Is staff comfortable asking for information?
- Are staff familiar with local programs that provide services for LGBTQ people?
- How often are LGBTQ issues talked about?

Personal religious beliefs vs. Professional conduct

- Some have personal beliefs that are negative toward LGBT individuals
 - Personal beliefs are important but must be separated from job
- Clients need to feel accepted and supported, not judged or condemned
- Need to be able to bring whole self to program
- Examples?

We don't have any LGBT consumers

- Why not? Doesn't that indicate a problem?
- May have consumers, but they may not be "out".
 - Even subtle things can create hostile environment
 - Wording on intake forms
 - Staff reactions and assumptions
 - Décor
 - Books

We don't have any LGBTQ consumers

- Often people who are not LGBTQ may also experience discrimination and disrespect because others think they are LGBTQ.

Barriers for Transgendered People

- Gender segregated facilities create problems
 - Bathrooms, changing rooms, men's/women's groups or residences
- Issue of pronouns
 - Staff need to ask if they don't know preference
 - Misuse is an act of rejection/hostility

LGBTQ issues viewed as clinical problem to be addressed

- LGBTQ orientation may be a clinical issue for some, but often it is not
 - Discomfort with sexual identity/orientation is related to social and cultural norms/values that are internalized, and tied to experiences of prejudice
- No evidence exists that sexual orientation can be changed

When programs don't address LGBTQ issues...

- Neither LGBTQ staff nor clients feel safe in the program
- Stress from hostile or indifferent environment diverts energy that could be used towards recovery or job duties
 - Staying closeted
 - Dealing with negative events (effects of disrespect or harassment)

Not addressing LGBTQ issues can...

- Exacerbate mental health issues because of increased stress and negative events
- Impede clinical improvement
- Negatively impact professional performance of staff
- Lead to clients dropping out of programs/relapsing

Addressing LGBTQ issues
in your Workplace

- Personal Action Plans
- How accepting/inclusive is your community/workplace for LGBT people?
 - What issues do you think are most important to start with?
 - Does your workplace or community have anti-discrimination policies?
 - Does your workplace/community recognize partners/offer partner benefits?

- Personal Action Plans
- Do you see images of LGBT people in your community/workplace?
 - Do you know people who are openly LGBT in your community/workplace?
 - Is the language used in your community/workplace heterosexist?
 - Are the agency forms that are used in your workplace inclusive?

Being an Ally to LGBTQ People

- ### An Ally
- Works to understand people who are different and is committed to the personal growth required to do that
 - Challenges stereotypes
 - Knows that in most empowered ally relationships, the ally initiates change toward personal, institutional, & societal justice & equality.
 - Examines the effect that sexual orientation and gender identity have on people's lives. Explores how race, class, ability, gender, etc intersect with these identities
 - Works hard to listen, be neutral, and learn

- ### An Ally
- Any non-GLBTQ who is proactive and works toward combating homophobia and heterosexism, both on a personal, societal, and/or institutional level. Someone who is respectful of how others define their gender identity and are willing to educate her/himself about LGBTQ issues.

Being an Ally

- Don't make assumptions about sexual orientation.
- Don't assume surgeries or hormones equal identity.
- If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask – politely and respectfully.
- Don't out people.
- Don't police public restrooms.

If I post this symbol what can I expect?

- GLBTQ people may censor their speech less, providing a more genuine exchange
- I will gain a fuller picture of people's lives and concerns
- I will make a personal contribution to improving my workplace and the lives of coworkers and consumers

If I post this symbol what can I expect?

- Consumers and colleagues may be more at ease when sharing issues pertaining to my job and will anticipate a non judgmental attitude in my work
- I may never notice any difference in the interactions I have with consumers and colleagues, but I will make a difference.

Resources

- Not Round Here: Affirming Diversity, Challenging Homophobia. A training manual available at http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/gay_lesbian/
- Safe Zone, University of Illinois at Chicago http://www.lgbtampus.org/faq/saf_zone.html
- Safe on Campus, Western Michigan University <http://www.salp.wmich.edu/lbg/GLB/default.html>
