

## how to be a fabulous ally

- “Come out” as an ally by publicly acknowledging your support for LGBT people and issues.
- Make no assumptions about sexuality or gender identity. Use neutral language such as “Are you seeing anyone?” instead of “Do you have a boyfriend?” Discuss ‘partners’ instead of always assuming a person’s prospective date or partner is of the opposite sex.
- In terms of gender identity, call people what they want to be called. If you’re not sure, ask.
- Support, normalize and validate students’ feelings about their sexuality and gender identity. Let them know that you are there for them. If you cannot be supportive, please refer to someone who can be.
- Make it clear that homophobic and transphobic sentiments and actions have no place in your agency. Develop a ‘zero tolerance’ policy regarding discriminatory words and behavior directed at LGBT people, just as you would toward racist or sexist remarks.
- Work proactively to address stereotypes and misperceptions that may exist in your agency/work environment about LGBT people.
- Encourage your agency/work environment to adopt and enforce anti-discrimination policies that includes sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Have something gay-related visible in your office/agency. A sticker, a poster, a flyer, a brochure, a book, a button...this will identify you as a safe person to talk to and will hopefully allow a gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning person to feel open and safe.
- Learn about and refer to community organizations. Familiarize yourself with community LGBT resources and call them before you refer to make sure they are ongoing.

Adapted from *Transitions* volume 14, issue 4, Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth, © 2002 and Youth Pride, 1997

*Action indeed is the sole medium of expression for ethics. — Jane Addams*

If you have any questions or concerns after reading this brochure and would like to discuss these issues more in depth, feel free to contact either of the following field faculty: Rebecca Brigham, 962-6532; or Marilyn Ghezzi, 962-6490.

For more information, please contact:

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# out

in the field



lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students  
and social work field education

## where we stand

Welcome to UNC School of Social Work Field Education! Field education is an integral part of our social work program and we are committed to making the experience as positive as we can for all students.

This brochure is designed specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students to provide basic information about where we stand on supporting LGBT students and challenging homophobic, heterosexist, and transphobic attitudes and behaviors within the context of field education.

While we select agencies that match our commitment to social justice and equity, we also recognize we live in a society with both subtle and overt discrimination of LGBT people. As such, the field office wants to provide a clear picture of how we can support LGBT students and model social work values.

In the field of social work, we are guided by the Code of Ethics which states:

- Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people.
- Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person and treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity.
- Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability.

At UNC-Chapel Hill, we have a nondiscrimination policy which includes a commitment to inclusivity and access with respect to age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

In field education, we ask all agencies and field instructors to sign a memorandum of agreement with the School of Social Work that states they will "accept the assignment of students without discrimination based upon race, color national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, or marital status."

## coming out in field

While deciding when and where to "come out" as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender is a personal choice, working in a safe and comfortable field environment is a right for all students. As LGBT people we may withhold personal information about our lives (i.e. our sexual orientation, gender identity or expression), because we fear discrimination, rejection or isolation. We may withhold personal information because disclosure seems irrelevant or inappropriate in our work environment. Not knowing when and what to reveal about who you are is potentially a question for all professionals. If you are LGBT you may have additional questions and need for support.

## finding support

Be proactive! Please do not hesitate to discuss concerns you may have with us at the field office or with your agency field supervisor.

### Talk to Field Education Staff

If you have any concerns about your placement, please contact your field advisor or the director of field education. Regardless of your sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, please contact us if you have questions or concerns about:

- LGBT-friendly field placement agencies
- Experiences of heterosexism, homophobia, or transphobia within your field agency
- Support for disclosure of sexual orientation and gender identity within your field placement

### Talk to Your Field Supervisor

You may want to ask your field supervisor if your agency has:

- A nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity
- "Out" LGBT staff
- LGBT cultural competence training or professional development opportunities for staff
- Policies/expectations related to staff self-disclosure of sexuality with clients

## resources outside of field

There are a number of LGBT resources in and around UNC and the Triangle area. Below are a few places to get you started.

### School of Social Work GLBT Caucus

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Caucus serves to promote a better understanding of issues related to sexual orientation relevant to the community in general and to social workers in particular. It seeks to identify available resources and to be a resource for students and faculty and is open to all students. Web site: <http://ssw.unc.edu/students/caucus>

### UNC LGBTQ Center

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Center works to foster a safe inclusive environment for UNC-Chapel Hill students of all sexualities, gender identities and gender expressions. The Center is a great resource for on and off campus activities, community events, and information on area LGBT agencies.

Web site: <http://lgbt.unc.edu>

Phone: (919) 843-5376

### Equality NC

Equality NC is a statewide organization fighting for the civil rights of North Carolina's LGBTQ citizens. Activities include lobbying and advocacy, local organizing, education and outreach, voter registration and turnout, coalition building, and hosting a bi-annual summit of leaders from LGBTQ organizations across our state.

Web site: [www.equalitync.org](http://www.equalitync.org)

Phone: (919) 829-0343