



## Creating a Supportive, Helping Environment

- (1)** Do not make the assumption that everyone in your program is heterosexual. This assumption begins on your intake forms or sign-in sheets where “check-off” boxes should be provided for sexual orientation and gender identity.
- (2)** Use gender-neutral speech when asking about family, partners, relationships, and sex-partners. Gender-neutral speech will not be apparent to most clientele, but will send clear messages to people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT).
- (3)** Do not advise youth to come out to parents, family, and friends, as they need to come out at their own safe pace. Studies show that as many as 26% of GLBT youth are forced to leave their home after they tell their parents. IT IS THEIR DECISION and they need to live with the consequences. Help them figure out what makes sense for them.
- (4)** Address anti-GLBT language. Incorrect use of language such as “That’s so gay” or “No homo” and derogatory words like faggot, dyke, and sissy should be addressed each and every time.
- (5)** Create and enforce workplace policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression:
  - For employees, about employees.
  - For employees, about clients: Outline procedure and policies about the way clients should be treated in your office.
  - Put policies in writing and include specific language regarding sexual orientation and gender identity/expression
  - When posting employment opportunities, include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in your non-discrimination clause.
  - Discuss at interviews and staff orientations.
  - Whenever written policies are presented to staff, have staff “sign-off” acknowledging receipt of policy training, understanding of policy and consequences for not acting in accordance with said policy.
- (6)** Use visual cues to appeal to GLBT people:
  - Display The Network’s Safe Space sticker at your reception desk or in your office
  - Display photos of same gender individuals together
  - Subscribe to gay health journals/ magazines – display them
- (7)** Advertise in GLBT media/publications.
- (8)** Make “routine tests” truly routine – for everyone. In accordance with recent initiatives mandated by the CDC, do routine screening for STDs and HIV as a part of routine testing for all new patients and at yearly check-ups for current patients.
- (9)** Do outreach to GLBT organizations and other Health and Human Services organizations that provide services to GLBT people.
- (10)** Ensure and talk about confidentiality. Make sure youth know what you can and cannot keep confidential.
- (11)** Become a part of The Network’s GLBT-affirming Health and Human Service Provider referral list.