

# BGCA + The Safe Zone Project

*Want to make your Club more LGBTQ affirming and inclusive?*

## Become an INFORMED Ally

Increasing your knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ identities and issues will help you become more familiar with topic, more prepared to discuss it, and more sensitive to the needs of LGBTQ folks!

- **Attend** a Safe Zone training or awareness workshop on LGBTQ identity to explore what you don't know (and what you don't know you don't know) about gender and sexuality.
- **Participate** in BGCA's online webinar to gain foundational awareness of gender and sexuality inclusion within BGCA clubs. *Coming Soon to BGCA.net.*
- **Read** through BGCA's "Creating a Safe, Positive and Inclusive Club Environment: LGBTQ Toolkit" in order to get a better understanding of LGBTQ issues and changes you can make in your Club to create more inclusive environments for all Club youth, staff and families. *Coming Soon to BGCA.net.*
- **Explore** articles, websites, and books that are affirming of LGBTQ-youth identity. For recommendations check out [thesafezoneproject.com/bgca](https://thesafezoneproject.com/bgca)

## Become an ACTIVE ally

Knowledge and awareness are essential first steps to become a more active ally. Putting what you're learning into practice is the next step in creating more inclusive and affirming environments in your Club.

- **Question assumptions.** We were all taught common assumptions and often un- or sub-consciously interact with each other based on these assumptions. Here are some common assumptions that influence our interactions:
  - Everyone is a boy or girl and uses he or she pronouns.
  - Everyone is straight.
  - Gender expression (e.g., being masculine or feminine) is directly determined by someone's sexuality (e.g., being gay or straight).
  - Gender identity (e.g., being a boy, girl, cisgender, transgender, genderqueer) is directly determined by someone's anatomy (specifically, the anatomy they were born with).
- **Examine systems.** A lot of systems are based on these assumptions above and once we can recognize those assumptions we can also take a critical look at our systems.
  - **Forms:** lot of times we ask gender (or sex) on an intake form without pausing to consider if that's information we need. Consider how you are using that information, whether that question could be shifted to be more inclusive of trans\*<sup>1</sup> participants. If you are using that information in multiple ways (to assign groups, to assume pronouns etc.) consider developing multiple questions.
  - **Bathrooms:** bathrooms are a common pain point for many trans\* and gender non-conforming people. Single person bathrooms are a great place to start creating inclusivity, and simple signage change and result in more bathrooms for everyone (check out [bit.ly/AGRestroomSigns](https://bit.ly/AGRestroomSigns) for all gender signage!)
  - **Sleeping arrangements:** the idea that by separating people by gender for overnight trips or sleeping assignments is based on many assumptions (that everyone identifies as a male or female, that people are most comfortable in single-gender groups, that everyone is

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<sup>1</sup> Tip: "Trans\*" is often used in writing (not spoken) to abbreviate for all transgender (including trans-boys and trans-girls) and non-binary (not just boy or girl, but agender and genderqueer and other) folks who consider themselves part of the trans umbrella.

straight and separating by gender will reduce intimate relationships, to name a few). Instead, we can ask people directly who they would be most comfortable rooming with, then make informed decisions on sleeping arrangements.

## Spread the Word

**Spark conversations.** The biggest difference an ally can often make is breaking the silence, whether that be in a moment of witnessing bias or in casual conversations, being willing to say something or to ask questions can make all the difference.

- Share about your experiences and what you're learning at your next staff meeting. Share both what you realized that you didn't know (which will help normalize that feeling for other people) and what you learned.
- Facilitate others' learning. Check out activities at [thesafezoneproject.com/all-activities/](https://thesafezoneproject.com/all-activities/) for individual activities on gender and sexuality. Privilege for Sale, First Impressions, or Core Vocabulary are all great activities to kick off an exploration of LGBTQ issues with your staff members.
- Set time aside to host a discussion group about LGBTQ identity with staff and with club kids. Gather questions from your staff members and kids so that you have a sense of what they are wondering about and ways you might support them in the future. You can start with two simple questions: Why is it hard to learn about LGBTQ issues? Why is it important?

## Quick Tips!

### Be a non-expert

You don't have to know everything and you'll learn a lot more if you don't worry about needing to!

- If someone says a term you don't know, ask them if they wouldn't mind sharing what that term means to them.
- If someone says something you don't understand, ask for further explanation—they may be really excited to share!

**Gender Identity ≠ Sexual Orientation** Gender identity is our understanding and labeling of ourselves as related to our gender (man, woman, genderqueer, etc.) Sexual orientation is about who we are attracted to. While they are connected aspects of our identities they are distinct and separate from each other.

### Affirming Pronouns

Regardless of your perception of someone's gender, be sure to use the pronouns they identify with.

Common Pronouns			
Female	she	her	hers
Male	he	him	his
Gender Neutral	they	them	theirs*
	ze	zem	zirs
*they/them/theirs in this case is used as a singular pronoun. "I have a friend Alex and <b>they</b> are coming over tonight after <b>their</b> dance class."			

For additional information, resources to explore, activities, & more: [thesafezoneproject.com/bgca](https://thesafezoneproject.com/bgca)

