

# **MichiganTech**

Revised 10.25.2006



## **Resource Manual**

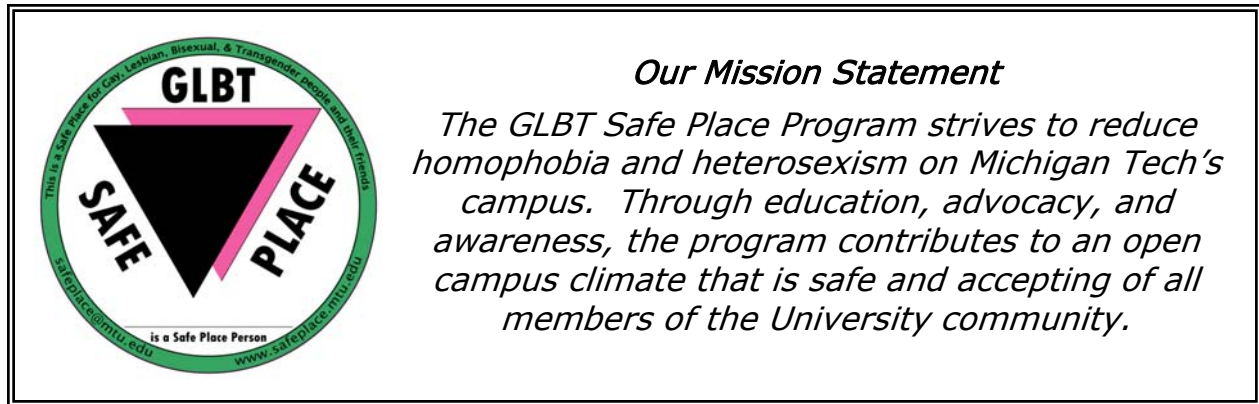
*The information contained in this manual is based on Safe Zone and Safe Place programs at other colleges and universities throughout the country. All attempts have been made to credit original authors where possible.*

**The Safe Place Program is supported by:**

Keweenaw Pride

Division of Student Affairs

Office of Affirmative Programs



### ***Our Mission Statement***

*The GLBT Safe Place Program strives to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on Michigan Tech’s campus. Through education, advocacy, and awareness, the program contributes to an open campus climate that is safe and accepting of all members of the University community.*

#### **What is the Safe Place Program?**

The Safe Place Program is a campus-wide program that offers a visible message of inclusion, acceptance and support to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people in the University community.

#### **What is the purpose the of Safe Place Program?**

The purpose of the Safe Place Program is to identify members of the University community who will model support, acceptance and inclusion of GLBT people. Participants in this program will volunteer to be visible allies and effective resource people. The Safe Place Program is open to all staff, faculty and students who are committed to making Michigan Tech a safe environment for **ALL** of its members, including GLBT persons.

#### **Why do we need a Safe Place Program?**

Because Michigan Tech’s Policy on Discrimination and Harassment states, “In keeping with its responsibilities as an educational institution, Michigan Technological University is committed to a policy of affording equal opportunity to all of its employees, students, applicants for employment and applications for admission without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, **sexual orientation**, height, weight, or marital status.”

In a study of college campuses, over two thirds of gay and lesbian college students have reported experiences of harassment and violence while at college. (Norris, 1992) In an effort to provide a more inclusive environment for GLBT individuals and ALL University members and to keep in the spirit of the Policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the Safe Place Program is being implemented.

#### **What are the participant guidelines?**

Participants in the Safe Place Program strive to make appropriate referrals to community and University resources, promote the acceptance of GLBT persons in the classroom and workplace, respect the confidentiality of individuals seeking assistance, and become an advocate for adherence to the University’s Policy on Discrimination and Harassment. Safe Place participants work to become aware of the presence of GLBT students and colleagues and are willing to engage in genuine dialogue and interaction. Participants are expected to comfortably use inclusive language, avoid stereotypes and do not assume everyone is heterosexual. Lastly Safe Place participants visibly display the Safe Place symbol and may be asked to serve as a resource for other University staff, faculty and students who have questions.

#### **How do I enroll in the Safe Place Program?**

Simply read through the packet and visit [www.safeplace.mtu.edu](http://www.safeplace.mtu.edu) to complete the registration form. Your Safe Place materials will arrive in 7-10 business days. Hard copy registration materials are available by the Office of Student Activities. In an effort to practice sound environmental principles and to keep costs to a minimum, electronic medium is preferred.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of the advisors listed on the following page or the Office of Student Activities.

Office of Student Activities  
 Memorial Union Building, 112  
 906-487-1963



## FROM THE ADVISORS OF KEWEENAW PRIDE

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Keweenaw Pride initiated the Safe Place program in 1996 as part of its mission to provide support and education for Michigan Tech students, staff, and faculty. The program is intended to create visible signs within the campus community that will help gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) persons feel more comfortable.

In an effort to foster a more supportive environment, Keweenaw Pride offers this program for Michigan Tech's students, staff, faculty, and community members who wish to learn more about the GLBT community.

Through this program, you have the opportunity to support diversity and model acceptance. The success of this program really depends upon the willingness of you, your peers and others to participate. You are being asked to display the Safe Place emblem in your workplace or residence if you are "supportive" of GLBT persons. If you are unsure of what being supportive means, please continue reading or feel free to contact anyone listed on the Safe Place web page. After discussing the Safe Place program with one of these people, you may choose to display the Safe Place emblem.

The more open environment we wish to create through this program will be the first step in creating a dialogue and affording greater opportunities for education about GLBT issues.

The Safe Place Program has been organized by students, staff, and faculty from the Michigan Tech campus community. Recently the Division of Student Affairs teamed up with Keweenaw Pride to provide a staff member to help coordinate the Safe Place efforts. If you have any questions you can contact the members of the program through the website: [www.safeplace.mtu.edu](http://www.safeplace.mtu.edu) or by contacting any of Keweenaw Pride's advisors:

**Nancy Byers-Sprague** - nspr@mtu.edu  
Keweenaw Pride Advisor  
(906) 487-2755

**Patrick Hopp** - phopp@mtu.edu  
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(906) 487-3636

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Keweenaw Pride Advisor  
(906) 487-2086

"Human beings are so made that the ones who do the crushing feel nothing; it is the person crushed who feels what is happening. Unless one has placed oneself on the side of the oppressed, to feel with them, one cannot understand."

-**Simone Weil** (1909-1943)  
French Political Philosopher

# **MichiganTech** What is Tech's position on the Safe Place Program?

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## **FROM THE DESK OF:**

**Les P. Cook, Ed. D.**

**Vice President for Student Affairs**

As a public University and one that seeks to recognize the importance of each individual student, we strive to provide an environment that is supportive and inclusive of all students. The University is committed to providing a forum and a variety of programs and services that facilitate dialogue and create positive relationships between students, faculty, staff, and the GLBT community.

Michigan Tech University is resolute in providing a vibrant and safe campus for all students -- a place where students are challenged intellectually, encouraged to become involved in the campus community, and engaged in meaningful discussions about the world they seek to create. Understanding and an appreciation of others is valued and we are determined to make diversity a university-wide priority.

The University strives to make every effort to maintain an environment that is welcoming and supportive of all students. Because GLBT students don't always feel comfortable or understood, the Safe Place Project, coordinated by Keweenaw Pride and the Student Activities Department and supported by the University, is an initiative that seeks to provide a network of support and education for the Michigan Tech community. The Safe Place symbol that is voluntarily displayed across campus is an effort to demonstrate awareness, acceptance, and support of the GLBT community at MTU. Your participation in the Safe Place Project demonstrates that you value an open and just community where learning occurs regardless of individual differences.

The Division of Student Affairs is fully supportive of the Safe Place Program and I am happy to display the Safe Place symbol.

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## **FROM THE DESK OF:**

**Sherry L. Kauppi**

**Director of Human Resources**

The Safe Place Project stirs members of our community to reflect on what "safe" might mean to each of us. Campus members may not be aware of the fears of others who live, work, and study here. These individuals are valued members of our scholarly community, yet they may have to contend with threats and hostility that most of us never even consider. Through "Safe Place," the Keweenaw Pride group is working toward several important goals of the Michigan Tech campus.

First, by educating the campus about the GLBT group, they help dispel fears. Fear often fuels the aggressive behaviors that plague many communities. Also the project may reduce the fears of the GLBT members themselves. Their worries about being the targets of aggression can be very real. This program helps to identify their committed allies and it enhances assurances of support for our Michigan Tech GLBT students and colleagues. And quite importantly, the "Safe Place" project promotes overall success for each campus member. As our campus group implements "Safe Place," they develop the skills for improving the living and learning conditions of persons on campus. Eventually these skills and focus may be used to assist the larger society to carry out its commitment to inclusion, security for all and thriving diversity. American society has benefited in vital and defining ways from many forms of advocacy like the "Safe Place" program.

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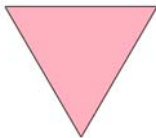
## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF I DISPLAY A SAFE PLACE EMBLEM?

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- You are supportive of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender and ally (GLBT) persons.
- You are committed to keeping your workplace or residence free from discrimination based on sexual orientation/gender identity.
- You are willing to avoid the assumption that everyone is heterosexual.
- You understand that “coming out” (telling others of one’s orientation) can be a difficult process for many GLBT people and would be an understanding listener.
- You are committed to using inclusive language such as “significant other” or “partner” in the place of “spouse” when you are unsure of the correct term.
- You are committed to being inclusive in work-related social activities. For example: inviting partners whenever spouses are invited & not asking about a colleague’s marital status.
- You are committed to educating yourself about issues important to GLBTA persons

## WHAT THE EMBLEM REPRESENTS

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### ***Why the Pink Triangle?***

The pink triangle has become a symbol of gay liberation, although its origins are those of oppression. In the years prior to and during World War II, homosexuals were among the many groups targeted for extermination by the Nazis. Just as Jews were forced to wear yellow Stars of David and political prisoners a red triangle, homosexual men were identified by pink triangles. A quarter of a million GLBT people died in concentration camps such as Dachau. Often the liberation of the camps by the Allies did not include gay men and lesbians. They were treated as criminals and forced to serve out their sentences. Today the pink triangle has been transformed into a symbol of struggle, remembrance and pride.



### ***Why the Black Triangle?***

The Black Triangle also has its origins in Nazi oppression. In the concentration camps “anti-social prisoners” were forced to wear inverted black triangles identifying them as such. Women were deemed to be “anti-social” if they refused to marry, have children, or be submissive to men. Sexual relations between women were not criminal per se, but lesbians were persecuted for the “anti-social” behavior. Also included amongst “anti-socials” were men and women who refused to work, the mentally ill, the homeless and the unemployed. The black triangle has been reclaimed by lesbians and feminists as a symbol of pride, in much the same way the pink triangle has been reclaimed by gay men.



### ***Does the Green Circle Mean Anything?***

The green circle encompassing the triangles is the international symbol of approval or acceptance.

## HOW CAN I BE SUPPORTIVE?

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Most GLBT people remain closeted, or at least partially so, within the campus community. Additionally, many individuals with gay family members or friends remain similarly closeted about these people who are important in their lives. Ironically, there are many straight people who wish to be supportive of their associates, but do not want to risk making them feel uncomfortable and don't know where to begin.

The following suggestions offer a variety of ideas for fostering a campus environment that is inclusive of all its members. Displaying a Safe Place sign is only one of the many ways to be supportive.

# WAYS TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

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## ***Do Not Permit Anti-Gay Comments or Jokes***

This includes not making comments or jokes as well as stepping in when someone else does. Simply let it be known that you find the comment offensive and divisive, and be willing to explain why. This will reinforce your support of a safe environment.

## ***Do Not Assume That Everyone is Heterosexual***

Likewise, do not assume that you can tell if someone is GLBT. Many studies have been conducted over the years and they indicate that a significant percentage, between 2-10%, of the population self identifies as being GLBT. GLBT people can be found in every part of our society and working in every profession. Contrary to popular myth, GLBT people do not always conform to stereotypical appearance, speech or mannerisms.

## ***Use Inclusive Language***

Use terms such as “significant other” or “partner” instead of husband or wife, to give people you don’t know well the benefit of the doubt and the opportunity to share that part of their life with you. Instead of asking if someone is married, ask if they are in a relationship, leaving the gender ambiguous.

## ***Include Partners***

If you know that someone is involved in a relationship, encourage inclusion of her or his partner in the same functions where spouses are normally invited. When you are conversing socially, inquire about the partner the same way you would about someone’s husband or wife. Be as sensitive and supportive of life events in a GLBT relationship (commitment ceremonies, birth or adoption of children, anniversaries, sickness or death, and the end of long-term relationships) as you would in a heterosexual one, as they involve the same emotions and significance.

## ***Treat the Subject in a Serious and Positive Way***

Members of the GLBT community frequently feel invisible or alone. Many fear losing their friends, family, jobs, reputations or even their careers simply because they are gay or because someone thinks they are. Many also fear for their physical safety. This is a very real situation at Michigan Tech regardless of official policy.

## ***Respect the Privacy of the Individual***

Do not “out” people. “Coming out” can be a difficult process for many GLBT people. Some individuals may not be ready to tell anyone about their sexuality. You have the ability to help create a supportive environment that is of great value, but don’t expect that you will “find something out.” While GLBT people will value your inclusive and fair-minded ways, they simply may not be ready to come out. Be respectful to people’s privacy and allow them the freedom to decide if and when they choose to share this information. Likewise, if an individual decides to come out to you, honor any request for confidentiality.

## ***Attend a Keweenaw Pride Open Meeting***

Learn more about the issues by participating in a Keweenaw Pride Meeting. Meetings are designed to educate and increase awareness about sexual orientation/gender identity, related campus issues, and strategies for creating a more inclusive campus environment. These meetings are open to anyone and everyone, regardless of their perspective or orientation. Check out Keweenaw Pride’s website [www.pride.students.mtu.edu/](http://www.pride.students.mtu.edu/) for meeting locations and dates.

## ***Display a “Safe Place” Emblem in Your Work Area***

Displaying the emblem lets others know that you support full participation and equal treatment of GLBT members of the campus community and are a safe place for students, staff and faculty to come for support.

It reinforces your intent to be a safe place for people to be themselves and a place where they need not concern themselves with fears of rejection and discrimination. By displaying a sign, you will be affirming that you are open and sensitive to the needs of ALL people. You are letting it be known that it is okay to discuss situations which might otherwise feel unsafe to speak about in a less inclusive environment.

## WHAT IS HOMOPHOBIA?

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In a clinical sense, homophobia is defined as an intense, irrational fear of same gender relationships that becomes overwhelming to the person. In common usage, homophobia is the fear of intimate relationships with persons of the same gender. In the following are listed four negative homophobia levels, and four positive levels of attitudes towards GLBT relationships and people. They were developed by Dr. Dorothy Riddle, a psychologist from Tucson, Arizona.

The fear of hatred which comprises homophobia can be expressed outwardly through a variety of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions.

### **Negative (Homophobic) Levels of Attitude**

#### Repulsion

- Being GLBT is against the Bible - "God hates fags"
- Denial - "Don't ask, don't tell"
- Apathy and indifference to oppression
- Believing AIDS victims deserve it
- Believing victims of bashing deserve it
- Censorship and enforced invisibility
  - Keeping books on GLBT themes or issues out of schools or libraries
- Lack of acknowledgement of GLBT persons and their relationships or of the GLBT sexuality of famous persons by media and social institutions
- Avoiding discourse about GLBT issues in family and social settings
- Parents abusing or neglecting their children on account of real or perceived GLBT associations
  - Kicking child out of house
  - Withholding financial support
- Harassment - Verbal or Physical, Implied or Direct

#### Pity

- Encouragement toward celibacy
- Encouragement towards voluntary conversion ("ex-gay" movement)
- Heterosexual chauvinism
- Heterosexuality is more mature and certainly preferred
- Those who seem to be born "that way" should be pitied, "the poor dears"

#### Tolerance

- Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people "grow out of"
- GLBT persons are less mature than "straights" and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child
- GLBT persons should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior
- No same gender marriage
- GLBT people aren't fit parents, teachers, role models
- Stereotypical depictions of GLBT people (e.g., gay men as silly, foppish, or promiscuous)

#### Acceptance

- Still implies there is something to accept
- Characterized by such statements as "You're not lesbian to me, you're a person!" or "What you do in bed is your own business," or "That's fine with me as long as you don't flaunt it!"
- Individual civil rights are sufficient to take care of GLBT needs; no need for "special rights"

## **Positive Levels of Attitude**

### Support

- GLBT people should be allowed to marry, have children, work and live where they choose.
- GLBT people should be free of discrimination, harassment, and violence.

### Admiration

- Acknowledges that being GLBT in our society takes strength.
- GLBT people make good role models because they can illustrate peoples' ability to transcend adversity.
- People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobia, attitudes, values and behaviors.

### Appreciation

- Value the diversity of people and see GLBT persons as a valid part of that diversity.
- Straight people cannot always relate to experiences of GLBT people.

### Nurturance

- Assumes that GLBT persons are indispensable in our society.
- They view them with genuine affection and delight, and are willing to be allies and advocates.

## **Student, Faculty & Staff Quotes**

*"In a way heterosexism hurts more than homophobia. When someone says something or does something homophobic they at least acknowledge you exist. With heterosexism someone is refusing to acknowledge your existence - you remain invisible."*

-a gay student

*"Heterosexism is still the norm. If everything were as LGBT-friendly as we advertise ourselves to be there wouldn't be so many closeted faculty and administration."*

-GLBT University employee

*"I have felt very unsafe in my classes. And in the classes I'm not safe in, I tend not to go. This then affects my learning and my grades. This is not a safe learning environment."*

-a gay student

*"The university needs domestic partner benefits. Our literature says that we do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and yet my partner and I can't get a couple/family pass to use the athletic facilities on campus."*

-GLBT University employee

## WHAT ABOUT BEING AN ALLY?

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Being an ally on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues is the process of working to develop individual attitudes, institutions, and cultures in which gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people feel they matter. This work is motivated by an enlightened self-interest to end homophobia and heterosexism.

-J. Jay Scott and Vernon Wall, 1991

### An Ally:

- Works to develop an understanding of GLBTA issues and the needs of GLBT persons
- Chooses to align with GLBT persons and responds to their needs
- Believes that it is in her or his self-interest to be an ally
- Is committed to the personal growth required (in spite of the probability of discomfort and possible pain)
- Is quick to take pride and appreciate successes in responding to homophobia and overcoming fears
- Expects support from other allies
- Is able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of fear or oppression have operated in their lives
- Expects to make some mistakes but does not use it as an excuse for non-action
- Knows that both sides of an ally relationship have a clear responsibility for their own response to the oppression whether or not persons on the other side choose to respond
- Knows that in the most empowered ally relationships, the person in the non-oppressed role initiates the change towards justice and equality at personal, institutional, and societal levels
- Knows that he or she is responsible for humanizing or empowering their role in society, particularly as their role relates to responding to homophobia
- Promotes a sense of community with GLBT persons and teaches others about the importance of outreach
- Has a good sense of humor

### Some Realities of Being an Ally:

- People may assume that you are GLBT.
- People, even close friends, may ask about your sexuality
- Some people may harass you
- You may lose and gain friendships
- You may be perceived as politically dangerous
- Some people may make unfair biased assumptions about you
- You may experience some emotional drain from the effort or time you expel in these issues
- GLBT folks may question your sexuality, motives, and sincerity
- You may experience a new culture and new ideas, rituals, and practices different than your own
- People that you knew before and thought were heterosexual may come out to you
- Your awareness about human relation issues may become more inclusive
- You may experience feelings about yourself and your own homophobia on a personal level
- You may begin to understand the interconnectedness of all oppressions

**In our society,  
people generally  
assume that everyone  
is heterosexual.**

-Adapted from Shawn-Eric Brooks, 1990

## Benefits of Being an Ally

- Become less locked into gender roles and gender stereotypes.
- Can help the lives of members of the GLBT community.
- Able to make a difference in the campus environment.
- You actively take a role in relieving oppression; forms of oppression impact everyone.
- You can be there for your friend, classmate, roommate, teammate, brother, sister, professor, mother, father, other peers, and other people you know who are GLBT.
- Safe Places help GLBT people develop a stronger self-esteem and can lower occurrences of depression, abuse of drugs and alcohol, and suicide.

- Source Unknown

## Your Boundaries as an Ally

Your professional boundaries are the limits you set in relationships with people with whom you work. It is important to set appropriate boundaries for closeness and disclosure and to keep these boundaries when you contact the same people outside of your formal work setting. When you become an ALLY, you are expected to maintain the same professional, ethical boundaries you do with any other student. Do not take advantage of an ALLY relationship by imposing on any student your own sexual desires or sexual curiosity. When you are acting as an ALLY, take the "sex" out of homosexuality. Sexual thoughts and feelings are only part of being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Your task is to help those you ally yourself with increase their self-reliance, not take care of them. If someone has a serious problem, know when your competence reaches its limits. Don't hesitate to refer those students to qualified helping professionals, such as counseling services.

-Adapted from Northern Michigan Allies, 2004

### Keweenaw Pride

#### **WHAT IS KEWEENAW PRIDE?**

Keweenaw Pride is a Michigan Tech University group for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning Students, Staff, Faculty, Community Members, Friends, and Allies. We hold regularly scheduled meetings that allow us to offer support for our members, educate others and ourselves and promote a "Queer Positive" atmosphere here on campus and in our surrounding community.

#### **MEET UP**

Meetings are typically held Wednesdays at 7:30PM in the Memorial Union Building. For those who don't want to be involved with the business portion of the meeting, we invite you to arrive a half hour later, at 8:00PM when we stop all business talk and begin the support/social/educational function Keweenaw Pride wants to serve. Check our website for complete information on meeting discussion topics, time and location.

#### **NEED SUPPORT?**

Keweenaw Pride has teamed up with the Michigan Tech Counseling Services staff to provide a GLBT Support Group. This support group is the place to go to receive help in a confidential and supportive atmosphere. For more information, call 906-487-2538 and ask about the GLBT support group.



[pride.students.mtu.edu/](http://pride.students.mtu.edu/)

# POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FACING GLBT INDIVIDUALS

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## Isolation

As a GLBT individual begins to experience same-gender attractions, they often feel very different from their peers and very alone. They may go to great lengths to deny their own feelings and to hide them from others. Many times they do not personally know any openly GLBT individuals and they don't know anyone with whom they feel safe talking about their feelings.

## Low Self-Esteem

GLBT individuals tend to internalize many of the negative myths and stereotypes about GLBT people that are prevalent in our society. Their shame about their feelings can lead to an extremely negative self-image.

## Depression and Anxiety

GLBT individuals may experience significant emotional distress due to their sense of isolation and low self-esteem, along with the lack of resources available to help them cope with the issues they are facing.

## Suicide

Unfortunately, it was found that about 30% of self identified GLBT youth seriously consider and often attempt suicide. According to a study from 1989 by the US Department of Health and Human Services in GLBT youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers. This research was confirmed by similar studies in the early 1990's. The reports consistently identified isolation, abuse from the classmates, and unsupportive or unaccepting family as primary causes of the depression and low self esteem that leads to thoughts or attempts of suicide.

**It is important to remember that coming out is not a single event, but a life-long process, which may begin at any age.**

**“Coming out” is often considered a positive way to avoid societal invisibility that can lead to internalized self-hate or lack of self-esteem.**

## Substance Abuse

GLBT individuals are especially vulnerable to turning to alcohol or drugs as a way of trying to cope or escape.

## Violence

Individuals who are GLBT or those who are perceived to be GLBT are often targets of verbal, physical and/or sexual assault. Most of the violence reported comes from family members or peers, but it can also be from a complete stranger.

## Family Problems

In addition to domestic violence, GLBT individuals often face rejection or loss of support from their families. A significant number of GLBT youth are kicked out of their homes or run away. Nationwide, approximately 25 percent of all homeless youth are GLBT.

## Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS

GLBT individuals are especially at risk for a number of reasons, including: 1) the lack of specific sex education about same-gender sexual activity; 2) denial and secrecy about one's sexual orientation/gender identity; and 3) self-destructive behaviors related to internalized homophobia.

The Western Upper Peninsula District Health Department provides STD and HIV testing. More information is available at [www.westernuphealth.org/](http://www.westernuphealth.org/).

-Adapted from Bryan L. Brunette, "Free to be You and Me"

## WHEN SOMEONE COMES OUT TO YOU

### Helping GLBT People Out of the Closet

When someone comes out to you, they share the information about their sexual orientation or gender identity with a keen awareness of the risks involved: the risk of losing their relationship with you, the risk of being rejected, the risk of being misunderstood and many other risks.

**How you react to someone's disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity can help them out of the closet-or keep them in.**

When someone comes out to you, the news may come as a total surprise or you may have already considered the possibility that this person might be GLBT; however it should not be important to you one way or the other. After someone comes out to you they may feel scared, be wondering why they came out, feel shocked, in disbelief, uncomfortable, angry, not sure what to do next, etc.

### What NOT to say to someone who has just come out to you:

- You're just going through a phase
- It's just because you've never had a relationship with someone of the opposite gender
- You can't be gay-you've had relationships with people of the opposite gender
- You can't be a lesbian-you're too pretty
- You're just confused
- Maybe you can find a therapist who can help you get over this

Remember that the person who has just come out to you has not changed. They are still the same person you knew before, you just have more information about them than you did before. Don't assume in advance you know what it means for them to be GLBT. Every person's experience is different. They may not want you to necessarily do anything. They may just need someone to listen. Consider it an honor that they have trusted you with this very personal information. Thank them for trusting you. If you would like more information, ask in an honest and respectful way. If you show genuine and respectful interest in their life, they will most likely appreciate it.

### Some good questions to ask are:

- How long have you known you are GLBT?
- Are you seeing anyone special?
- Has it been hard for you carrying this secret?
- Is there some way I can help you?
- Have I ever offended you unknowingly?
- Have you found someone who can be supportive?

-Adapted from "Coming Out to Your Parents" published by FLAG  
-Adapted from "About Coming Out" published by the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

**Reaffirming statement:**  
**"Being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is ok. It's part of who you are."**

**What might people who are GLBT be afraid of when they come out?**

- Rejection-loss of relationships with friend or family
- Gossip
- Harassment or abuse
- Being thrown out of the family
- Being thrown out of the house
- Discrimination
- Being seen as sick, immoral, or perverted
- Loss of financial support
- Not being accepted in their religious community
- Losing their job
- Having their professional credibility questioned or undermined
- Physical violence
- Effected school performance

**How might people who are GLBT feel about coming out to someone?**

- Scared
- Vulnerable
- Unsure-wondering how the person will react
- Relieved
- Proud

**What might people who are GLBT want from people when they come out to?**

- Acceptance
- Support
- Understanding
- Comfort
- Reassurance that their relationship with you won't be negatively affected
- Closer relationship
- Acknowledgement of their feelings
- Love
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-Adapted from "Coming Out" developed by Vernon Wall & Jamie Washington

## Tips For Professionals Who Work with GLBT Youth

Don't be surprised when a youth "comes out" to you.

Respect confidentiality.

Be informed and examine your own biases.

Know when and where to seek help.

Maintain a balanced perspective.

Understand the meaning of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Deal with feelings first.  
Be Supportive.

Anticipate some confusion.

Help, but do not force.

Don't try to guess who's GLBT.

Challenge homophobic remarks and jokes.

- taken from PFLAG

## ONLINE PUBLICATIONS: Free Downloadable Resources

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These publications are recommended for you to give students who may come to your office and seek information from you as a Safe Place person. You are free to email the PDF to the individual or if budgets permit, print it for them.

When accessing web resources, please be sure to enter the address exactly as listed below.

**Be Yourself: Questions and Answers for Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Youth (newly revised)**

[www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/Be\\_Yourself.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Be_Yourself.pdf)

**Our Daughters & Sons: Questions and Answers for Parents of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered People**

[www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/Daughters\\_Sons.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Daughters_Sons.pdf)

**Faith in Our Families: Parents, Families & Friends Talk about Religion & Homosexuality**

[www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/Faith\\_Families.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Faith_Families.pdf)

**Bisexuality Resource Packet**

[www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/BisexualityResourcePacket.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user_upload/BisexualityResourcePacket.pdf)

**Opening the Straight Spouses Closet**

[www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/Straight\\_Spouse.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Straight_Spouse.pdf)

**Tips For Professionals Who Work With GLBT Youth**

[www.pflag.org/fileadmin/Guidelines\\_for\\_Working\\_with\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/Guidelines_for_Working_with_Youth.pdf)

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS BY KEWEENAW PRIDE ADVISORS

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*Straight Parents, Gay Children: Keeping Families Together.* Bernstein, Robert A, Thunder's Mouth Press, ©1995, 2003.

*Is It A Choice? Answers to 300 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay and Lesbian People.* Marcus, Eric, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., ©1999.

### Michigan Tech Safe Place History

Keweenaw Pride initiated the Safe Place program in 1996 as part of its mission to provide support and education for Michigan Tech students, staff, and faculty. The program is intended to create visible signs within the campus community that will help gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) persons feel more comfortable. In an effort to foster a more supportive environment, Keweenaw Pride offers this program for Michigan Tech's students, staff, faculty, and community members who wish to learn more about the GLBT community. As of January 2004, the Division of Student Affairs has adopted the Safe Place Program as a function of their offices. It is currently housed in the Office of Student Activities, MUB 112.

## GLBTA ONLINE RESOURCES

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**Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays: [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)**

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

**Human Rights Campaign: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)**

As America's largest gay and lesbian organization, the Human Rights Campaign provides a national voice on gay and lesbian issues. The Human Rights Campaign effectively lobbies Congress; mobilizes grassroots action in diverse communities; invests strategically to elect a fair-minded Congress; and increases public understanding through innovative education and communication strategies.

**365Gay.Com: [www.365gay.com](http://www.365gay.com)**

365Gay.Com is an online daily newspaper the covers topics such as News & Issues, Entertainment, Health, Style, Finances, Travel, People and Editorials targeted to inform the GLBT and ally community.

**Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation: [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)**

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

**National Gay & Lesbian Task Force: [www.nglft.org](http://www.nglft.org)**

NGLTF is the national progressive organization working for the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, with the vision and commitment to building a powerful political movement.

**Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network: [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)**

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, or GLSEN, is working to ensure safe and effective schools for all students. GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

**Campus PrideNet: [www.campuspride.net](http://www.campuspride.net)**

Campus PrideNet is a national online community and resource network committed to student leaders and campus organizations who work to create a safer campus environment free of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and genderism at colleges and universities.

**LAMBDA GLBT Community Services: [www.lambda.org](http://www.lambda.org)**

Lambda GLBT Community Services mission is to create social change and achieve full civil rights, dignity, and self-respect for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals through education, youth advocacy, anti-violence efforts, and fighting discrimination of all forms, to achieve full participation in society of persons belonging to a sexual minority.

**Triangle Foundation: [www.tri.org](http://www.tri.org)**

The Triangle Foundation is Michigan's leading organization serving the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and allied communities.

\*\*\*Other sites are available as resources for our GLBT community and our allies.  
Please visit [www.safeplace.mtu.edu](http://www.safeplace.mtu.edu) for more listings.\*\*\*

## GLOSSARY

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**Affectional Orientation:** A recent term used to refer to variations in object of emotional and sexual attraction. The term is preferred by some over “sexual orientation/gender identity” because it indicates that the feelings and commitments involved are not solely (or even primarily, for some people) sexual. The term stresses the affective emotional component of attractions and relationships, including heterosexual as well as *GLBT* orientation.

**Ally:** Any non-*GLBT* person whose attitudes, behaviors, and efforts seek to combat homophobia and heterosexism on both personal and institutional levels.

**Biphobia:** Fear or hatred of those assumed to be bisexual.

**Bisexual/Bi:** Someone who has emotional and sexual responses to members of both genders. Some bisexuals prefer the abbreviated form “bi” finding the term “bisexual” too clinical.

**Closeted/in the closet:** *GLBT* individuals not “out” to themselves or others are said to be in the closet. When the perceived threat of coming out is too great, *GLBT* individuals are forced to keep this part of their lives a secret from friends and family.

**Coming out:** The coming out process is the means by which a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (*GLBT*) person comes to terms with his/her sexual orientation/gender identity. Some call this coming out to oneself. Coming out to others, telling someone that they are *GLBT*, is a never-ending process. Because heterosexism is so pervasive in our society, *GLBT* individuals must decide how “out” they want to be with new people or in new situations. Also known as coming out of the closet.

**Drag:** Wearing the clothing of another gender, often exaggerating stereotypical characteristics of that gender.

**Dyke:** Once known as a derogatory term for lesbians, the word dyke was reclaimed by lesbians in the 1970’s as slang, and many lesbians now refer to themselves as dykes.

**Gay:** Preferred by most homosexual men, this term was adopted by the community to indicate pride. Gay is sometimes used to refer to lesbians and bisexuals as well, but many members of both groups object to this usage, feeling it renders them invisible.

**Gender Bending:** Blurring the binary gender roles.

**GLBT:** Stands for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender. You may also see the letters Q and A added at times; these letters stand for Questioning and Allies.

**Heterosexual:** A clinical term for someone having emotional, physical, and sexual responses primarily to members of the opposite gender. Slang: “straight.”

**Heterosexism:** A belief in the naturalness and superiority of heterosexuality and the power to enforce that prejudice. Expressed on an individual, cultural, and/or institutional level through assumptions, policies, and procedures.

**Homosexual:** A clinical term for people having emotional, physical, and sexual responses primarily to members of the same gender. Many gays, lesbians, and bisexuals find this term offensive because it is a clinical term assigned to them by others.

**Homophobia:** An irrational fear of homosexuals. Homophobic individuals (homophobes) may engage in anti-gay discrimination, harassment or even violence. Gay men and lesbians may be homophobic themselves, since homophobia is ingrained in many cultures.

**Lesbian:** A generally positive term for homosexual women deriving from the Greek island of Lesbos, home of the lesbian poet Sappho around 400 BC.

**Queer:** Gay; homosexual. Once a derogatory term, the word “queer” has been embraced by the gay and lesbian community, and is sometimes meant to include bisexual and transgender individuals as well. Use some caution, as many in the *GLBT* community consider it only appropriate that other *GLBT* people use the term.

**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual identification, depending on a person’s sexual relationships or affinity. Innate sexual attraction. In all instances, use this term instead of *Sexual Orientation* or other misleading terminology.

**Sexual Preference:** Avoid this term. It is misleading term; the majority of queer individuals will tell you that being queer is not a preference.

**Stonewall:** The Stonewall Inn tavern in New York City’s Greenwich Village was the site of several nights of violent protests following a police raid committed on June 28, 1969, for no other reason than that it was a queer bar. Although not the nation’s first gay-rights demonstration, Stonewall is now regarded as the birth of the modern *GLBT* movement.

**Straight:** A heterosexual; a *non-Queer* person.

**Transgender:** Persons of any age or gender manifesting characteristics, behaviors, or self-expression which — in the perception of themselves or others — is typical of, or commonly associated with, persons of another gender.

**Transphobia:** Hatred and/or discrimination against people who break or blur gender roles and sex characteristics. Like biphobia, it is prevalent in both straight and gay/lesbian communities.

# SYMBOLS



## The Rainbow Flag

Originally designed by Gilbert Baker in 1978, this flag had 8 colors; Pink (Sexuality), Red (Life), Orange (Healing), Yellow (Sun), Green (Nature), Blue (Art), Turquoise (Harmony), Violet (Spirit). When the flag was to be made commercially available there was a shortage of hot Pink so the flag was made with only seven colors. Then in 1979 the committee for the pride parade decided that they only were going to use six colors in order for there to be three colors on each street side so they removed the turquoise. Now the six color rainbow flag is recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers as a valid flag representation of the GLBT community.



## The victory over AIDS flag

The black stripe added to the pride flag is to commemorate those lost to AIDS.

## New Glory or Unity Flag

Popular version of the rainbow flag with the blue star background from the United States flag.



## The Pink Triangle / Double Mars

This Triangle was originally used by the Nazis to identify gay men. In the 1980's the triangle was reclaimed by the gay men as a symbol of empowerment symbolizing the phrase "Never Forget, Never Again." Now the pink triangle is commonly used to represent the entire GLBT Community. Another common symbol used to represent gay pride is the double Mars symbol.



## Black Triangle / Double Venus

This triangle is also rooted in the Holocaust times, it was used to mark "anti-social" women (couldn't/didn't want to have children, men-haters). Now the black triangle has been reclaimed by lesbians and feminists as a symbol of pride. The lesbian community often uses the double Venus symbol to represent pride.



## The Bisexual Triangle / Bisexual Signs

Bisexual people, while being active in gay & lesbian movements, have traditionally also organized separately. The bisexual community developed the overlapping blue and pink triangles to represent bisexual pride. Bisexual people are also represented by a mixing of the Mars and Venus astrological signs.



## IFGE Logo / Mercury Logo

This was created as a symbol for The International Foundation for Gender Education, an organization concerned with the issues of cross-dressers and transgender people. This triangle represents fusing various genders onto one. Mercury represents the balance of male and female within an individual, symbolizing transgender pride.



## AIDS Awareness Ribbon (Red)

Symbolize the united world effort to find a cure for AIDS.

## Breast Cancer Awareness Ribbon (Pink)

Limited to the LBT community. Statistics show breast cancer is more prevalent in women who do not bear children, therefore some LBT community members feel breast cancer awareness and prevention is important.



## Pride Awareness Ribbon (Rainbow)

Symbolizes that the wearer is supportive of GLBT people and their struggle for equal rights.



## The Freedom Rings (Rainbow)

Designed by David Spada as a symbol of independence and tolerance.



## Lambda

This was used as a symbol of GLBT rights in the 1970's. This symbol was often associated with militant forces of the GLBT movement, because of this some GLBT are uncomfortable using it.



## Labrys

This was adopted by the lesbian and feminist society as a symbol of strength and self-sufficiency. Due to the idea that feminists and lesbians are "man-hating", feminist abandoned its use.