

What is the purpose of the Safe Zone Program?

- Raise awareness of LGBT issues and reduce homophobia and heterosexism on campus.
- Prepare members of the campus community to serve as a resource by building skills for dealing with situations and questions regarding LGBT issues.
- Build a supportive and welcoming community for LGBT people.
- Suicide rates among young LGBT students are disturbingly high and involvement in the Safe Zone Program can help to end this.
- Coming out on campus can be a terrifying experience for LGBT students. Knowing that there is at least one person who is willing to support them can make a huge difference.
- LGBT people occupy our daily lives, whether or not we know it. Participation in the Safe Zone Program lets them know that you are a person that LGBT individuals can trust.

What it means to be a Safe Zone Ally and what YOU can do

- Display your Safe Zone Sticker! The sticker indicates that, within your office or room, homophobic and heterosexist comments and actions will not be tolerated silently, but instead will be addressed in an educational and non-threatening manner.
- The sticker does not indicate whether or not you are LGBT; it merely states that you are an ally.
- Support policies that bring equity to and give open support for LGBT issues.
- Encourage others to become a part of Safe Zone.
- Attend Safe Zone Training to further increase your knowledge and awareness.
- Pay attention to the words people use to describe themselves. Not everyone identifies as "gay," "lesbian," or "homosexual."
- Do not assume that a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person is attracted to you just because they have disclosed their sexual identity.
- Respect the desire for secrecy of a person you know to be gay, lesbian or bisexual. Do not "out" someone.
- Speak out against statements and jokes that attack LGBT people. Letting others know that you find anti-LGBT statements and jokes offensive and unacceptable can go a long way towards reducing homophobia.

When a friend is questioning and seeks your help

- Your friend is probably really nervous; let them know you support them no matter what.
- They may feel like they need to define themselves (Eg. - gay/bi/straight), which is confusing. You can help them by saying that it is not a decision they have to make, because it is not a choice. Sexuality is not easily defined; one must discover on his/her own. This process can take varying time, depending on each person.
- Don't assume that they are gay because they are questioning.
- You can help them in their own self-discovery with a few questions. You might want to ask these questions depending on how well you now them and how comfortable you are talking about these things. Make it clear that they don't have to answer to you; they can keep their answers to themselves and draw their own conclusions.
 - Have you felt attracted to boys or girls?
 - Would you consider having a social, sentimental or sexual relationship with a boy or a girl?

When a friend comes out to you

- Thank your friend for having the courage to tell you and for trusting in you.
- Don't forget your friend is still the same person you've always known
- Respect your friend's confidentiality.
- Tell your friend that you still care about them, no matter what. The main fear for people coming out is that their friends and family will reject them.
- Offer and be available to support your friend as they "come out" to others.
- Be mindful of the struggle your friend may be experiencing.



- Before the conversation is over, tell them again you appreciate them trusting you with this and that they can come talk to you whenever they need to.
- If at some point you don't know what to say or do, suggest to your friend that they should come to a confidential QuEST meeting (held weekly) or to the college's counseling center. These resources can help your friend discover answers to their questions and concerns.