

The SOLUTION source

Counselling Centre of East Algoma Newsletter
By Colleen Ginter, Clinical Counsellor at Thunder Bay Counselling Centre

For You & Your Family

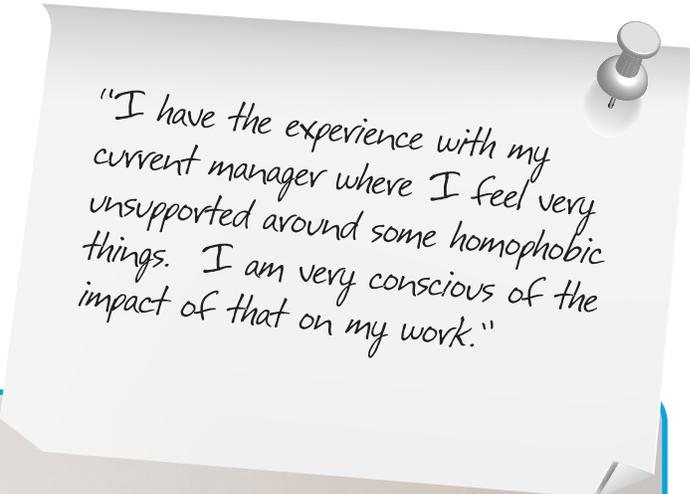
Fall 2010

Sexual Orientation in the Workplace: Being A Welcoming Workplace

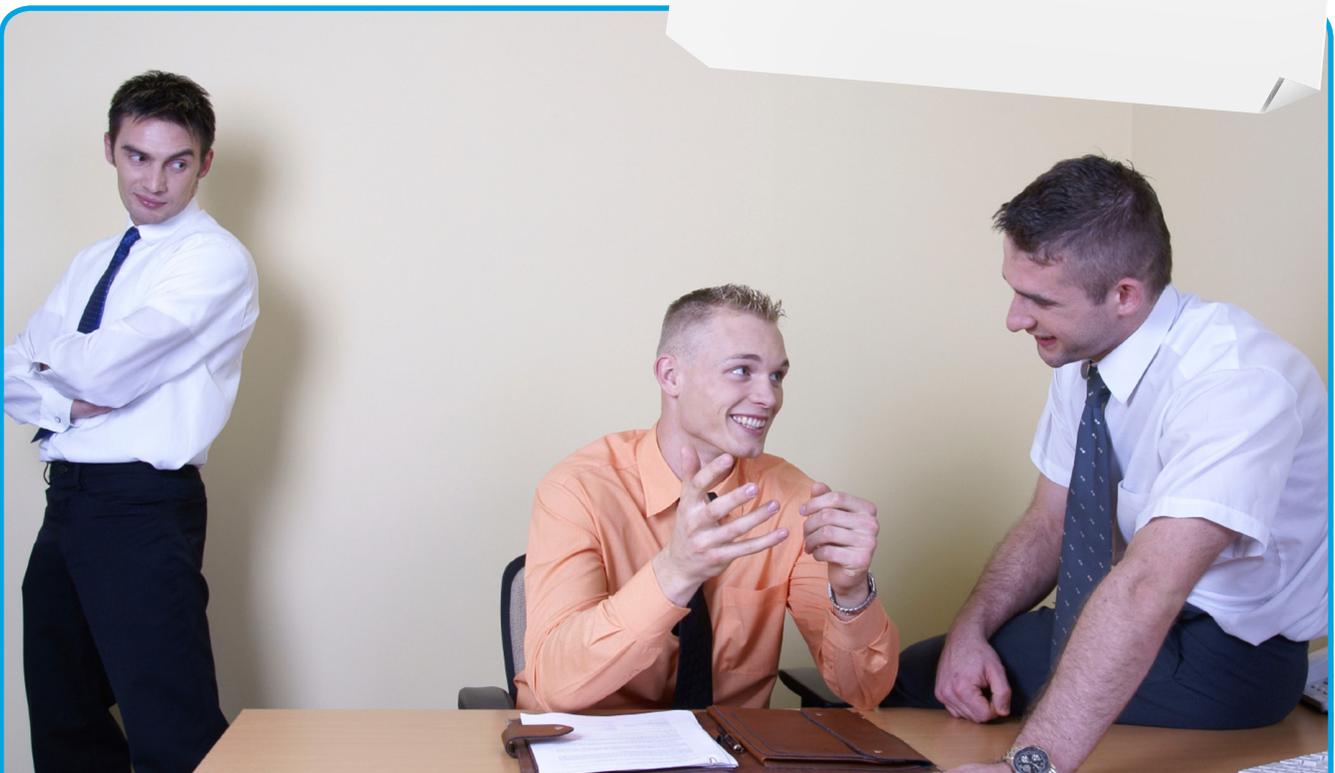


Our Autumn 2010 Newsletter focuses on being a welcoming workplace for our LGBT co-workers. LGBT is an initialism referring collectively to lesbian, gay, bisexual/pansexual and transgender people.

The addition of sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in 1996 was an important landmark in Canadian human rights. Its significance can be measured in part by the fact that it took nearly two decades from the time our Commission first called for this amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act for it to become the law of the land.



"I have the experience with my current manager where I feel very unsupported around some homophobic things. I am very conscious of the impact of that on my work."



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- Developing Inclusive Policies and Procedures
- Homophobia in the Workplace

Daily Effects of Straight Privilege

(Peggy McIntosh)

On a daily basis as a straight person...

- I can be pretty sure that my roommate, hallmates and classmates will be comfortable with my sexual orientation.
- If I pick up a magazine, watch TV, or play music, I can be certain my sexual orientation will be represented.
- When I talk about my heterosexuality (such as in a joke or talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation onto others.
- I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical or psychological consequences.
- I did not grow up with games that attack my sexual orientation (IE fag tag or smear the queer).
- I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation.
- I can go home from most meetings, classes, and conversations without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, stereotyped or feared because of my sexual orientation.
- I am never asked to speak for everyone who is heterosexual.
- I can be sure that my classes will require curricular materials that testify to the existence of people with my sexual orientation.
- People don't ask why I made my choice of sexual orientation.
- People don't ask why I made my choice to be public about my sexual orientation.
- I do not have to fear revealing my sexual orientation to friends or family. It's assumed.
- My sexual orientation was never associated with a closet.
- People of my gender do not try to convince me to change my sexual orientation.
- I don't have to defend my heterosexuality.
- I can easily find a religious community that will not exclude me for being heterosexual.
- I can count on finding a therapist or doctor willing and able to talk about my sexuality.
- I am guaranteed to find sex education literature for couples with my sexual orientation.
- Because of my sexual orientation, I do not need to worry that people will harass me.
- I have no need to qualify my straight identity.
- My masculinity/femininity is not challenged because of my sexual orientation.
- I am not identified by my sexual orientation.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my sexual orientation will not work against me.
- If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has sexual orientation overtones.
- Whether I rent or I go to a theater, Blockbuster, an EFS or TOFS movie, I can be sure I will not have trouble finding my sexual orientation represented.
- I am guaranteed to find people of my sexual orientation represented in the Earlham curriculum, faculty, and administration.
- I can walk in public with my significant other and not have people double-take or stare.
- I can choose to not think politically about my sexual orientation.
- I do not have to worry about telling my roommate about my sexuality. It is assumed I am a heterosexual.
- I can remain oblivious of the language and culture of LGBTQ folk without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
- I can go for months without being called straight.
- I'm not grouped because of my sexual orientation.
- My individual behavior does not reflect on people who identify as heterosexual.
- In everyday conversation, the language my friends and I use generally assumes my sexual orientation. For example, sex inappropriately referring to only heterosexual sex or family meaning heterosexual relationships with kids.
- People do not assume I am experienced in sex (or that I even have it!) merely because of my sexual orientation.
- I can kiss a person of the opposite gender without being watched and stared at.
- Nobody calls me straight with maliciousness.
- People can use terms that describe my sexual orientation and mean positive things (IE "straight as an arrow", "standing up straight" or "straightened out") instead of demeaning terms (IE "ewww, that's gay" or being "queer").
- I am not asked to think about why I am straight.
- I can be open about my sexual orientation without worrying about my job. ■

Developing Inclusive Policies and Procedures

Anti-bullying policies and procedures need to be practical, applicable, accessible and communicated to all staff. They should not directly or indirectly discriminate against – or exclude – any individual or group. A policy for dealing with bullying and harassment which is relevant to LGBT staff should therefore include:

- A statement that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated, including on the grounds of sexual orientation
- Clear definitions which include anti-gay bullying and harassment
- Examples of unacceptable behaviour, including anti-gay bullying and harassment
- Duties of managers in preventing and tackling bullying and harassment, including respecting confidentiality
- Details of complaints, grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Details of investigation and support procedures and provisions

Stonewall Workplace Guides ■

Is My Workplace Heterosexist?

Would you like to know whether your workplace is heterosexist?

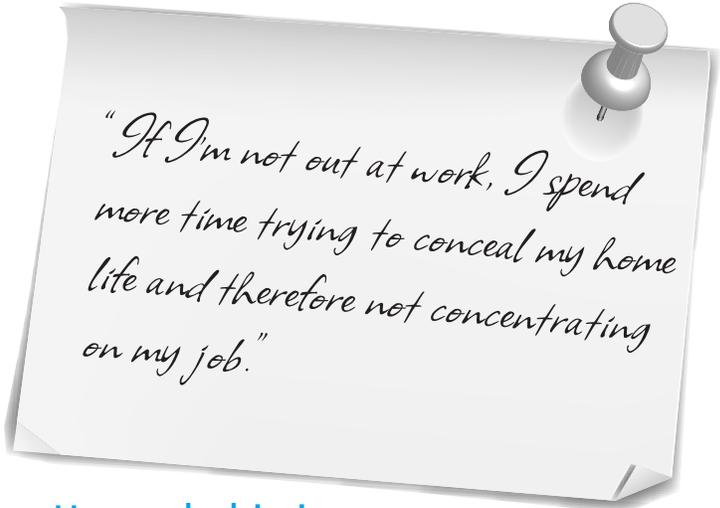
You can do this by visiting and completing an online questionnaire at the Heterosexism Enquirer:

<http://www.mun.ca/the/themain.html>. ■

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"If I'm not out at work, I spend more time trying to conceal my home life and therefore not concentrating on my job."

Homophobia in the Workplace

According to writer Annemarie Shrouder of Business Edge: "Still, a 2002 Ottawa public service employee survey cites five per cent of respondents as victims of harassment or discrimination at work because of their sexual orientation."

In their groundbreaking work, Stonewall Workplace Guides of the U.K. cite the following impact of workplaces that are not inclusionary:

- Low self-esteem
- Demotivation
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression

In turn this impacts organization. How? Impact includes low staff morale, increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, recruitment and retention problems, costly legal action, damaged image and reputation and loss of client/customer satisfaction.

Observations from lesbian and gay staff included in the research:

"You'd have to pay me a lot more than I get paid here to go somewhere else. I just feel very comfortable here and I feel very accepted. I feel very loyal to the organization."

"If I'm not out at work, I spend more time trying to conceal my home life and therefore not concentrating on my job."

"It's really great management. I feel at the moment I've got absolutely no desire to look elsewhere for work."

"I have the experience with my current manager where I feel very unsupported around some homophobic things. I am very conscious of the impact of that on my work." ■

Just Who They Are?

Writer, Jim Mauro asks the following question: “Why are people so fearful or angry towards those who are gay?” He further states “do you recall the day you decided to be heterosexual? Was it on your fourteenth birthday or earlier, perhaps eight or nine? Do you recall exactly when you preferred blondes to brunettes, shorter to taller or is just something that exists? Do you honestly believe people who are gay sit around the table and decide this is what they wish to do, to have a life of difficulty and challenge, to be looked down upon or is it just who they are?”

“We should never be afraid because some people are different. Understanding needs to replace fear. Compassion needs to replace hate and love needs to replace anger. That is the only way we as a society can move forward.” ■

Bullying and Sexual Orientation

- Physical or verbal abuse or intimidation
- Unwelcome comments or jokes
- Intimate questions about someone’s personal or sex life
- Assuming that everyone is heterosexual
- Making stereotypical assumptions
- Displaying or circulating homophobic or anti-gay materials
- Gossip and speculation about someone’s sexuality
- Excluding people because they are LGBT ■

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Assertiveness Skills For Women

Counselling Centre of East Algoma in conjunction with Sault Ste. Marie Women in Crisis are pleased to offer an 8 week group aimed at building assertiveness skills for women starting on October 21, 2010. For more information, please contact Cheryl Meawasige. **848-2585**

Sexual Abuse/Assault Survivors Group

Counselling Centre of East Algoma is pleased to offer a 20 week group for female Sexual Assault / Abuse Survivors starting on October 19, 2010. For more information, please contact Cheryl Meawasige. **848-2585**

Women for Change

This group provides support, education and counselling to women who live or have lived in a violent relationship. For more information contact Therese. **848-2585**

Creating Connections

This group is for children who have been exposed to woman abuse. Their mothers will attend at the same time and have their own group after enjoying refreshments with their children and other group participants. For more information contact Therese. **848-2585**

Annual General Meeting

The board of directors of the Counselling Centre of East Algoma invite you to join them for their Annual General Meeting on September 20th at noon – 9 Oakland Blvd. Suite 2, Elliot Lake, Ontario. \$5 membership required for voting privileges. Light lunch will be provided. Please call **848-2585** if you are able to attend.


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