Action Steps for Interrupting Heterosexism

1. Stop Heterosexist Behavior
   • Notice and ask people not to tell heterosexist jokes.
   • Notice and stop heterosexist language in yourself and others.
   • Establish guidelines and professional expectations. Enforce them gently but firmly.
   • No name calling, joking, etc.

2. Educate Yourself
   • Go to more workshops.
   • Read about LGBT issues (see bibliography).
   • Talk about the issue with others.
   • Attend LGBT events.
   • Go to see films with gay/lesbian characters or themes.
   • Join organizations (NGLTF, HRC, NASW gay caucus, etc.).
   • Make some LGBT friends.

3. Support Change in Others
   • Acknowledge when someone is non-heterosexist.
   • Rename heterosexist acts and comments as unfair or unbecoming.

4. Initiate and Prevent
   • Plan strategies together as a staff.
   • Develop an office policy statement against heterosexism.
   • Analyze training materials for heterosexist bias.
   • Write to members of the state legislature and Congress to support gay rights legislation and to oppose anti-LGBT rights legislation

5. Model Non-Heterosexist Behaviors
   • Don't joke or tease someone for non-traditional gender behaviors.
   • Avoid heterosexual credentializing - making a point of your heterosexuality.
   • Don't assume that anyone/everyone is /are heterosexual.
   • Don't assume that heterosexual relationships take precedence over same-sex ones.
   • Use terms like "partner" and "friend," not "boyfriend" or "wife," etc.
   • Value same-sex friendships.
   • Use neutral examples for pronouns.
   • Expand your repertoire of interests to non-traditional ones.

Adapted from Social Issues Training Project, University of Massachusetts, School of Education, 1984.