A comprehensive and customizable toolkit on how to interact with LGBT coworkers that can be utilized by employers, human resources, and the general public.

Discussion Guide for Scenarios

Thank you for agreeing to act as an Ally Toolkit facilitator and for helping us spread the word about the importance of LGBT Ally training in the workplace. We have prepared this discussion guide to help you lead participants through an interesting, engaging, and—we hope—enlightening conversation about how situations that arise in your workplace environment might be dealt with in a law firm or corporate setting.

A Few Words About the Scenarios

We have prepared seven different scenarios for you to choose from. We have provided them to you in writing without the discussion guide so you can have the group read them at the session (or ahead of time) and then have a discussion about them. Alternatively, we have also provided them with background and interpretations. We do not expect that you will need to use them all. Three or four should be more than sufficient depending on the length of the program you are planning to offer.

Each scenario is drawn from the experiences of the Ally Toolkit team and friends, and it is important that they ring true for you, your lawyers, and your employees. When choosing which scenarios to use, we suggest that you pick ones that you think your audience will best identify with. We have tried to offer a broad range of scenarios that address experiences representing a diverse group of individuals—from harassment to perceived gender identity to real HR concerns and even bias—may have experience or are likely to have experienced at some point in their careers.

The scenarios are designed to set up a challenging situation with no immediate obvious answers; they do not show you how the scenario ends or what ultimately happens. The idea is to set the stage for the participants to think through how they might act in a certain situation and help them deal with the issues the protagonists in each scenario are confronted with. There are a couple of reasons we have chosen to approach the scenarios in this way: (1) There are no easy answers, and to suggest that any of these situations can be solved quickly or easily is to deny how difficult they are and would be overstating the way in which ally training can be used. There are no “quick fixes” to the problems LGBT coworkers face, but rather tools that can be used to help you and your employees navigate complex challenges and situations while maintaining an open and welcoming workplace environment.; (2) Research suggests that reflecting on these issues and then trying to apply them to real-life scenarios—in other words, really taking the time to engage with these situations—leads to the most effective, lasting learning.
Discussion Questions
At the end of each scenario you will see a list of discussion questions. You can use these discussion questions in a few different ways. The first option is to ask the participants to read them and try to answer them in small groups and then select one or two people who wish to report back to the larger group. From there, you can facilitate a larger group discussion. The second option is for you and your co-facilitators (if applicable) to pose them to the group at large and jump right into a full group discussion. The best use of the discussion questions depends on the size and structure of your group and what you think will work best for you. With groups of less than 10, a good group discussion is certainly possible, but with larger groups, we recommend splitting into smaller groups so that everyone has an opportunity to meaningfully participate.

While there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, we have provided some suggested responses in case the group gets stumped on a particular question or scenario and looks to you for advice. We suggest that you do not share these suggested responses with the group at first as it is best for them to think about them on their own and suggest possible responses first—however, the thoughts and comments offered can provide valuable take-aways and we suggest to provide them at the end of the program.