

# Training Rules: A Discussion Guide

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## **INTENDED AUDIENCES**

College athletic teams, college coaches, and college athletic administrators

## **ESTIMATED TIME (minimum) — 2 hours**

Introduction, 20 min

DVD screening, 60 minutes

Post-viewing discussion, 40 minutes

## **MATERIALS NEEDED**

*Training Rules* DVD and Discussion Guide

TV and DVD player, or computer and LCD projector and screen

Flip chart paper and markers

Timer

Optional handouts

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## INTRODUCTION

*Training Rules* is a documentary film that examines how women's collegiate sports, caught in a web of homophobic practices, collude in the destruction of the lives and dreams of many of its most talented athletes. The DVD highlights Rene Portland, who had three training rules during her 26 years coaching basketball at Pennsylvania State University: No drinking, No drugs and No lesbians. *Training Rules* examines how a wealthy athletic department, enabled by the silence of a complacent university, allowed talented athletes, thought to be gay, to be dismissed from their college team.

In 2006, student athlete Jennifer Harris, in conjunction with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, filed charges against Pennsylvania State University and basketball coach Rene Portland for discrimination based on sexual orientation. This lawsuit inspired others whose lives were shattered during Coach Portland's reign to come forward. The film focuses on these individuals and investigates why organizations, established to protect these athletes, have done so little to end this common form of discrimination.

While the film highlights an example of overt discrimination, *Training Rules* serves as a wake-up call to the many athletic departments nationwide that allow explicit or subtle forms of discrimination against their student athletes and coaches.

The **primary purpose of this discussion guide** is to a) help participants understand how both overt and subtle forms of homophobia and heterosexism affect college women's athletics and b) begin to think about what can be done to challenge it. Supplemental activities are intended to c) encourage fair treatment of all women in college athletics regardless of sexual orientation, and d) identify specific actions athletes, coaches and administrators can take to address heterosexism and homophobia in college women's athletics.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to provide the information and instruction you need to facilitate a two-hour session on homophobia and heterosexism in college women's athletics. Two hours is the minimal time needed for the session. Setting aside a longer time would allow for the inclusion of one or more of the optional activities and enable the group to delve deeper into the issues. Holding follow-up sessions using the supplemental activities and accompanying materials would provide participants with the opportunity to determine concrete actions they can take.

Even if you only have time to do the basic session, reviewing all the materials included in this guide will give you a stronger foundation from which to lead the discussion.

Be sure to preview the DVD so that you are familiar with it before showing it to the group and facilitating the discussion.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

A discussion of homophobia and heterosexism requires that all participants understand what those terms mean. Make sure to review those two definitions with the group following the viewing of the DVD. You can also post them on the wall to have as a reference when needed.

**Homophobia:** originally used to describe fear of people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. More often today it is used to describe any level of discomfort or disapproval for people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This often leads to bias, hatred and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.<sup>1</sup>

**Heterosexism:** a system of injustice and discrimination based on the assumption or belief that heterosexuality is the preferable and/or ideal way to be.

**NOTE: Gender expression and identify** (e.g., identifying as male, female or transgender) is not the same as **sexual orientation** (e.g. identifying as straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual). The DVD and discussion guide are focused on homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation and do not address discrimination based on gender identity. However, both oppressions are intricately linked, as many women are mistreated or discriminated against because of the way they look (i.e., their gender expression: they may dress, wear their hair, or act in ways that are associated with being masculine), and this is interpreted as their sexual orientation (i.e., that they are lesbians). It's important to understand the link between the forms of oppression as well as to know that sexual orientation and gender identity are not the same thing. While most discussions are likely to include comments about issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, please note that an emphasis on transgender issues is beyond the scope of *Training Rules* and this discussion guide.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth.<sup>1</sup>

*Please review the longer list of definitions at the end of this discussion guide to familiarize yourself with terms that may come up during discussion.*

## FACILITATING THE GROUP

The questions and activities in this guide are meant to prompt interactive and reflective discussion to facilitate learning and understanding. Each group, however, will vary in terms of the awareness they already have about homophobia and heterosexism, their

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission from the Human Rights Campaign: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

level of comfort discussing tough issues together, and their willingness to engage in new types of activities.

Some key elements to keep in mind as a facilitator include the following:

**Create a safe space for the group to explore challenging issues.**

Facilitating a discussion about any form of social injustice can be difficult. Working with a group on issues of homophobia and heterosexism is challenging, because of the many negative associations people have learned about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, and the pervasive nature of heterosexism. Activities like the ones in this guide may bring out strong feelings, and some participants may air prejudices and stereotypes.

The most important factor in creating safe space is having people *speak from their own experience*. Emphasize the importance of respectful interactions and listening to different perspectives.

Every group will have someone or several people who identify as lesbian or bisexual. Even more will have friends or family members who do. Keep in mind, and remind the group, that some participants will have experienced the oppression you are discussing, because they are lesbian or bisexual or have been *perceived to be* so, and that requires thoughtfulness in the discussion.

Be aware that lesbian or bisexual participants may or may not choose to share their sexual identity with the group. It is important for you as facilitator to respect their decisions about disclosure.

It's also important for you to be prepared to deal with challenging moments. Introducing group agreements (see below) will help to establish the tone of the conversation. Even more so, reinforcing them *during* the discussion will be key. For more instructions on dealing with difficult situations, see "Facilitating Challenging Groups" in the Supplemental Section.

**Meet the group where they are.**

Some groups will be very familiar with these issues and experienced at discussing them in thoughtful ways; others may have never talked about lesbians in sport or not had the opportunity to do so in a respectful environment. Choose which discussion questions and activities most suit your group. Delve into more complex questions and deeper discussion with a group that is somewhat comfortable with LGBT issues in sport. Choose more basic questions and introductory topics for those who are unfamiliar with the issues.

**Provide the opportunity for participants to deepen their understanding of an issue that affects the entire athletic community and is linked with other forms of discrimination.**

Some athletes, coaches and administrators think that homophobia and heterosexism are only relevant to LGBT athletes and staff. In fact, homophobia and heterosexism impact everyone: they create an atmosphere of fear and set standards of acceptability for how to be female or male that feel confining to many women and men, regardless of sexual orientation. Furthermore, when one type of discrimination goes unchallenged, other forms of discrimination are more likely to stay entrenched as well. Addressing homophobia and heterosexism will not only make athletics safer for LGBT people, but for all athletes and staff.

Understanding the full impact of homophobia and heterosexism also requires an acknowledgment of the intersection of sexual orientation with other identities, such as race and class. Lesbians and bisexual athletes of color, for example, face compounded discrimination based on sexual orientation as well as racism. If you are able to recognize these intersections, participants will not feel they have to choose between identities (e.g., identify as lesbian but not Latina; as bisexual but not working class). It will also contribute to creating a safe environment for everyone.

**Be aware of your own perspective**

Lastly, be aware that your own attitudes and beliefs will impact the tone and effectiveness of the session. If you feel uncomfortable discussing the issues, or you are apprehensive about lesbians and bisexual women in sport, the participants will pick up on this. Spend some time examining your own perspective before leading the session described here. Feel free to go through a similar session as a participant first, or to bring in another LGBT-friendly colleague to co-facilitate with you.

**ACTIVITIES**

Have the group sit in a circle rather than rows to encourage interaction and more effective communication.

***A. INTRODUCTIONS (20 minutes total)***

**1. Group introductions and ice-breaker (10 minutes)**

- a. If you do not know the group, introduce yourself and ask the participants to each say their names.
  
- b. Choose one of the ice-breaker topics on the following page for the introductory go-around. Even if the group does know each other, an ice-breaker will help to build a sense of connection for the group before they start to talk about a challenging topic.

Ask participants to be brief. If the group is too large for a go-around, ask participants to talk in groups of twos or threes to introduce themselves and then ask for a few participants to share with the whole group.

- First memory playing your favorite sport
- Time you've felt most connected to a team
- How sports have impacted/influenced your life

b. After the ice-breaker, let the group know:

- The topic of the session is homophobia in college women's athletics.
- You'll be showing a DVD about one team in particular where the coach had the rule "no lesbians on the team."
- The DVD includes interviews with women who were on that team in different decades.
- After viewing the DVD, the group will discuss it.
- This session will be an opportunity to talk about the issue of homophobia and heterosexism in women's sports, with an emphasis on talking from your own experience.

c. Review the definitions of homophobia and heterosexism listed earlier in this guide.

## 2. Group agreements (10 minutes)

See section above on "Facilitating the Group."

a. Tell the group that talking about challenging issues means it's important to establish an environment of safety and respect for all participants. Having group agreements will help foster that environment.

b. Post the bolded parts of the group agreements on the wall for all to see. As you read them, explain what they mean with the description following each one.

- **Speak from personal experience:** Speak from your own experience rather than making generalizations. Use statements such as "I feel" or "in my experience" rather than "you" or "they."
- **Listen and respect others' perspectives:** Listening is as important as sharing your thoughts and experiences. You might disagree with someone's opinion, but try to keep your mind open for this session. Being respectful of each other in your spoken and body language will provide more space to learn about the issues and about each other.
- **Step up/step back:** Everyone's voice is important, and no one should be taking a lot more "air time" than others. If you are used to talking a lot, step back and wait for others to share, or wait before speaking a second time. If you are used to not talking in groups, consider sharing your thinking—it's as important as what everyone else has to say.
- **Practice being non-judgmental and be open to learning something new:** The more we can be open-minded, the more we can strengthen our teammate

relationships, our team or department as a whole, and our sport.

- **Set your own boundary for personal sharing:** Taking risks and sharing personal stories will allow the conversation to go deeper; at the same time, everyone should share in a way they feels right to them and not feel pressured to go beyond their level of comfort.
- **Respect confidentiality:** Make sure that everything said in the room stays in the room. Sharing someone else's story outside of the room can negatively affect the team dynamic; maintaining confidentiality, on the other hand, can strengthen team trust. Also be aware that people may share things they don't want you to ask them about later. After this session, don't refer to what people have said unless you ask them if it's ok first.

c. Explain that every group will have someone who identifies as lesbian or bisexual, whether openly or not, and this group does too. All should be respectful of their decision about whether to share this information with the group. Some in the room will have friends or family members who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Remind the group that some participants will have experienced the oppression you are discussing, because they are lesbian or bisexual or have been *perceived to be* so, and that requires thoughtfulness in the discussion.

d. Ask if there are any other group agreements the group would like to add. Add these to the written list.

e. Ask everyone to raise their hands to show they will adhere to the group agreements (or some version of getting everyone's buy-in).

## ***B. INTRODUCE AND VIEW DVD***

1. Introduction to DVD (1 minute): Let the group know you'll be viewing the film, which is approximately one hour, and then having a discussion (and activities, if you choose to do one or more of the optional activities). Write 2-3 focus questions on the flip chart so that participants can be prepared to talk them about after the film:

- What are your initial thoughts after watching the DVD?
- What part of the DVD made the greatest impression on you?
- What questions did the DVD raise that you hadn't considered before?

2. View DVD (61 minutes)

## ***C. POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION (40 minutes total)***

**1. Initial response: 10 minutes total**

a. Dyads (4 minutes each)



Tell the group that they will first have the opportunity to respond to the DVD with one other person, and then in a larger group.

Ask everyone to get into pairs. Each pair will choose who will go first. That person talks first while the other *just* listens: it's not time for the listener to ask questions, give advice, or share her own experience. The listener should give good eye contact and listen openly to the other person. After 4 minutes, call "time!" and then the pairs should switch who talks and who listens.

Questions to consider in dyad:

- What are your initial thoughts after watching the DVD?
- What part of the DVD made the greatest impression on you?
- What questions did the DVD raise that you hadn't considered before?

## **2. Large group discussion: 25 minutes**

a. Choose several questions for discussion, depending on how much time you have. General questions for all audiences are followed by questions tailored to athletes, coaches or administrators.

### ***General questions for all audiences***

- How does the DVD illustrate what homophobia is? Heterosexism?
- What are specific examples from the DVD of homophobia and heterosexism? How does it affect lesbian and bisexual athletes? Those who are *perceived to be* lesbian or bisexual? Heterosexual women?
- What connections do you see between homophobia and gender roles and sexism?
- What connections do you see to other identities (for example, race, class, nationality, religion, disability)?
- Have you played on teams or worked in a department where there is an assumption that all players or staff are heterosexual? How did this get expressed? Did it get addressed? If so, how?
- This DVD shows overt expressions of homophobia and heterosexism: "No lesbians on the team." What are some of the *subtle* ways Coach Portland expressed homophobia and heterosexism?
- What are subtle ways you have seen homophobia and heterosexism expressed in your own experience? Do subtle forms of homophobia have a different impact than overt forms?
- What strategies are shown in the DVD to address homophobia and heterosexism in sports?
- How do you think college women's sports can be made safer for lesbian and bisexual athletes?

### ***Audience-specific questions***

**For athletes:**

- Growing up, what messages did you get about women in sports? About lesbians in sports?
- What is your earliest memory of discrimination in women's sports (that you saw, heard, or experienced)?
- How does discrimination against any group or individual affect the team?
- How does homophobia in women's sports affect heterosexual coaches and athletes?
- What can you do to make sure teams are inclusive and respectful for all?

**For coaches:**

- What stereotypes do you think that some coaches have about lesbian or bisexual athletes on their teams that prompt policies like the one described in the film? How should these stereotypes be addressed?
- How can coaches teach athletes on their teams the importance of including and respecting team members of all sexual orientations? How would an environment free of homophobia improve the environment for everyone on the team, not only the lesbian or bisexual members?
- What can you do to make sure teams are inclusive and respectful for all?

**For administrators:**

- What are the factors that contribute to homophobia and heterosexism in college women's athletics? What reinforces it? What would it take to challenge/end it?
- What is the role of athletic administrators in preventing discrimination against LGBT athletes on their school teams?
- What is the university's responsibility to address homophobia and heterosexism? What is NCAA's responsibility?
- Does your university have a policy that prevents discrimination based on sexual orientation? Does your state? If so, is it enforced? If not, what impact does the absence of this policy have on your athletic program, your coaches, and your athletes?
- What can you do to make sure teams are inclusive and respectful for all?

**3. Closing (5 minutes)**

a. After a discussion like this, it's important to contextualize homophobia and heterosexism in the larger social context. Here are some comments you could make to close the discussion:

- Society's conditioning impacts individual perspectives. Attitudes toward LGBT people are shaped by negative messages that still pervade our society.
- Comments and actions that degrade LGBT people are meant to dehumanize, and they hurt everyone.
- While significant improvements have been made in accepting and supporting LGBT athletes, homophobia is still a socially sanctioned oppression, and it still plays out in college athletics.

- We can all take action to challenge homophobia and heterosexism in college women's athletics. This will benefit everyone.

b. Close the session with everyone having a chance to speak (briefly). Choose one of the following questions for each person to answer:

- What is one thing you learned during this session?
- What is something that personally challenged you today, or challenged your previous conceptions?
- What is something you could do to counteract homophobia and heterosexism in college women's athletics?

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

One hour is a very short amount of time to delve into issues of homophobia and heterosexism in college women's athletics. If you are able to allot more time, consider using one or more of the activities below after the discussion about the film.

### A. What you love about your sport

*For athletes*

- a. Ask participants to write down on a piece of paper a word or phrase that describes what they love most about their sport.
- b. Now ask them to think about a time they've experienced mistreatment in their sport, or seen or heard about someone else being mistreated, based on who they are: for example, their sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, religion, or disability. The experience could have taken place playing the sport, in the locker room, talking about their sport with family or friends, watching a game, etc.
- c. Dyads (4 minutes each):  
Ask everyone to get into pairs. Each pair will choose who will go first. That person talks first while the other *just* listens: it's not time for the listener to ask questions, give advice, or share her own experience. The listener should give good eye contact and listen openly to the other person. After 4 minutes, call "time!" and then the pairs should switch who talks and who listens.

Questions to consider in dyad:

- How did that experience impact your performance in your sport?
- Look at the word or phrase you wrote down about what you love about your sport. Did the experience change that for you?

### B. What makes a team

*For coaches*

- a. Ask participants to call out answers to the following questions, and write up answers on the flip chart:
  - What qualities make a team? What makes a team *feel* like a team?
  - What kind of environment makes a team successful (e.g., mutual support, having fun together, pushing each other to do your best, positive reinforcement, clear expectations)?
- b. Group discussion:
  - How does discrimination (of any kind) get in the way of building the qualities that support a successful team? How does it impact individuals who are targeted? How does it impact the whole team?
  - How does homophobia in particular get in the way?

- How does the combination of homophobia and racism impact lesbian and bisexual athletes of color? How does it affect the whole team?

### **C. Crossing the line**

*For athletes or coaches*

a. Choose/make an open space in the room and put a line of masking tape on the floor halfway across it to divide the space in half. Have everyone stand on one side of the line. Tell them you will be reading a series of statements and to cross the line if the statement is true for them.

b. After each statement, give people who've crossed the line an opportunity to talk about their experiences or ideas. Then ask everyone to go back on the same side of the line and repeat with each new statement.

Statements:

Cross the line if...

- You've experienced discrimination (for any reason) in playing/coaching sports.
- You've seen someone else discriminated against in playing/coaching sports.
- You've stood up against a derogatory comment or another form of mistreatment in your sport.
- You've seen someone else stand up against a derogatory comment or another form of mistreatment in your sport.
- You've seen homophobia impact an individual on a sports team.
- You've seen homophobia impact a whole team.
- You've had ideas about how to be more inclusive of lesbian and bisexual athletes and coaches.
- You've had ideas about how to challenge homophobia in college athletics.

### **D. Real life case studies**

*For coaches and administrators*

a. Ask the participants to each think of a situation from their team or department where there was overt or subtle homophobia expressed and it was not dealt with well.

b. Ask them to each describe the situation to the group: what happened and how the issue was addressed. Make sure to remind the group about confidentiality: not to use names or descriptors that will allow others to identify those involved.

c. Have the group choose one or more situations presented to discuss:

- What was problematic about how the situation was handled?
- How could it have been handled better?
- What could be done to prevent a situation like that from happening again?

- What needs to happen on the team, with staff, in the department, or within the NCAA to prepare athletes, coaches and administrators to better address situations like this?

d. Ask if anyone can share an experience where the situation WAS handled successfully.

## SUPPLEMENTAL SECTION

This section includes

1. Tips on facilitating a challenging group
2. Supplemental materials and activities
3. Definition of additional terms
4. Additional resources

### 1. TIPS ON FACILITATING A CHALLENGING GROUP

Often groups will include one or more participants who make intentional or unaware derogatory comments about LGBT people. These comments are hurtful to the LGBT people in the room and, in fact, to everyone. Allowing them to go unaddressed reinforces the societal oppression.

If someone starts to make generalizations, reinforce stereotypes, or speak about “them” or “you,” it is your job as facilitator to interrupt them and ask them to talk from their own experience.” You can say: *I’m going to interrupt for a moment, because I’d like to remind us all about the first group agreement. Can you restate that by using the word “I”?*

If someone makes an oppressive comment, you can say: *I very much appreciate your willingness to speak up and share your opinion. I want to point out that sometimes a comment like that (choose what is most appropriate for the comment): could be perceived to create misperceptions about, denigrate, or reinforce stereotypes about lesbians; OR: a comment like that could make it hard for lesbians to come out/feel safe; OR: a comment like that could contribute to the misunderstanding of or mistreatment of lesbians.*

You want to make sure the rest of the group sees that the participant’s statement is coming from her individual perspective. You don’t want to silence her, but you want her comment to be noticed in the context of societal conditioning.

### 2. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

If you have time for a longer session, or follow-up sessions, consider doing the activities listed in the following pages, to be accompanied by the designated materials. You can also hand out the supplemental materials on their own as a resource to the participants.

**NOTE:** Another excellent education kit with information, activities, materials, and resources can be found on the It Takes a Team website: [www.ItTakesATeam.org](http://www.ItTakesATeam.org).

For a list of more resources related to homophobia and women’s athletics, see the Additional Resources section at the end of this document.

## **LGBT ATHLETES HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

- Love themselves and feel proud of their identity
- Be physically safe
- Be as open about their LGBT identity as they choose to be
- Be treated with dignity and respect by coaches, teammates, other athletes, athletic department support staff and spectators
- Speak out about LGBT issues
- Participate in school or community-based LGBT groups or activities
- Attend a school which has specific policies and procedures prohibiting harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation
- Attend a school where coaches and other educators understand and are sensitive to the challenges faced by LGBT young people in a society where heterosexism is still acceptable
- Have their athletic and academic performance evaluated without regard to their sexual orientation
- Be considered for all athletic and academic honors and awards without regard to their sexual orientation
- Have their academic, social, and emotional needs met by school programs in the same ways that the needs of heterosexual students are addressed
- Participate in all athletic department or team social functions with the partner of their choice when other athletes are invited to bring partners
- Have their families receive support and education about LGBT issues

Pat Griffin, Director of *It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport.*



**Activity to accompany:  
LGBT ATHLETES HAVE THE RIGHT TO**

*For athletes, coaches, or administrators*

- a. Post the list “LGBT Athletes Have the Right To” on the wall.
- b. Discuss the following questions in the group:
  - What might get in the way of LGBT athletes having these rights?
  - What would help ensure these rights are respected?
  - What can you do as a team/coach/administrator to make this happen?

## EXAMPLES OF HOMOPHOBIA IN WOMEN'S SPORTS

- People assume that all women who excel in sport are lesbians.
- Parents, sport administrators, or athletes express a preference for men or married women as coaches for women's teams.
- Women avoid sport participation altogether or avoid particular sports because they are afraid of being called lesbians or manly.
- Coaches, teammates, or parents warn athletes to avoid women in sport thought to be lesbians.
- Lesbian athletes (or women assumed to be) are harassed by coaches, teammates, administrators or women athletes from other teams, male athletes from the same school, or spectators.
- A lesbian coach is expected to keep her identity secret, stay away from LGBT events in the community or on campus, or pretend she is heterosexual.
- Whole teams or an entire school's women's sports program is labeled lesbian by rival coaches or parents.
- A coach tells parents and prospective athletes that lesbians are not allowed on the team, or assure them that there are no lesbians on the team.
- Athletes are uncomfortable with a coach because she is believed to be a lesbian.
- Coaches spread rumors among prospective athletes and parents about lesbians in other schools' programs.
- Women thought to be lesbians are assumed to be a sexual threat to other women on the team.
- Heterosexual teammates assume that lesbian teammates are leering at them in the locker room.
- Women thought to be lesbians are overlooked for coaching jobs, fired because of their lesbian identity, or threatened with public exposure if they don't resign.

Pat Griffin, Director of *It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport*.

**Activity to accompany**  
**EXAMPLES OF HOMOPHOBIA IN WOMEN'S SPORTS**

*For athletes, coaches or administrators*

- a. Divide participants into groups of 3-5. Give each group several examples of homophobia in women's sports (from Examples of Homophobia in Women's Sports) on note cards, one example per card.
- b. Ask them to come up with one or more ways to counteract these expressions of homophobia. Encourage them to be creative in their responses: could include multimedia, law, policy, art, etc.
- c. Bring the groups back together to report to each other.

## **ASSESSING THE ATHLETIC CLIMATE FOR LGBT ATHLETES AND COACHES**

### **HOSTILE**

- School and department non-discrimination policies do not include sexual orientation.
- People believe that addressing the needs of LGBT athletes is not part of the department mission.
- Anti-gay slurs or comments are commonly used by athletes and are not interrupted by coaches or other staff.
- LGBT issues are not included in department diversity programming.
- People who believe it is important to address LGBT issues in the athletic department are afraid to say so.
- LGBT people would never bring a same-sex date or partner to team or department social events.
- LGBT athletes or those thought to be are isolated or harassed by teammates or coaches.
- A coach's perceived sexual orientation is a factor in hiring: heterosexual coaches are preferred.
- LGBT coaches or those thought to be are discriminated against (fired or harassed).
- Coaches have formal or informal policies barring LGBT players from their teams.

### **CONDITIONALLY TOLERANT**

- School policies on non-discrimination and harassment include sexual orientation, but few people are aware of it and there is no direct connection between the policies and programming.
- LGBT coaches and athletes are tolerated as long as they keep their identity hidden.
- Administrators allow individual coaches or teams to address LGBT issues but prefer that it be done privately.
- The needs of LGBT athletes are treated as individual counseling issues.
- If parents or athletes complain about the athletic department addressing LGBT issues, the program is immediately in jeopardy.
- LGBT coaches or athletes who become too visible in the community or on-campus are warned that their visibility is a problem.

## **OPEN AND INCLUSIVE**

- LGBT coaches, staff, and athletes are publicly out if they choose to be.
- School non-discrimination policies include sexual orientation and are known and used by staff and athletes.
- LGBT athletes and staff are welcomed to bring partners to department or team social events.
- LGBT athletes have access to school-based support and social programs designed to meet their needs.
- All athletic department staff members participate in staff development programs designed to help them address homophobia among athletes and to respond to the needs of LGBT athletes.
- The athletic director publicly supports programming to address homophobia in athletics and the needs of LGBT athletes.
- Coaches and staff regard making athletics safe for LGBT and heterosexual athletes as a part of their professional responsibilities.
- Athletes or coaches who engage in anti-gay actions are disciplined.
- Parental complaints or concerns about LGBT coaches or athletes are received cordially, but administrators and coaches support and value diversity in the athletic program.
- A coach or athlete's sexual orientation is not a factor in determining their eligibility for teams or coaching positions.

Pat Griffin, Director of *It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport*.

**Activity to accompany**  
**ASSESSING THE ATHLETIC CLIMATE FOR LGBT ATHLETES AND COACHES**

*For administrators*

- a. Hand out copies of “Assessing the Athletic Climate for LGBT Athletes and Coaches.” Ask each participant to check statements that are true for their university.
- b. When they finish, ask them to tally how many checkmarks they have in each area.
- c. In small groups, discuss what can be done to change the conditions that make each environment hostile, improve the ones that are conditionally tolerant, and reinforce the ones that are open and inclusive.
- d. Bring everyone back together to share in a large group.

## TYPES OF RESPONSES TO PARENTS' QUESTIONS

Most coaches of women's college athletic teams have been asked "the lesbian question" by parents of prospective recruits. Typically, parents ask this question because they have concerns about their daughter associating with lesbian athletes or coaches based on stereotypes and prejudices about lesbians.

The problem is not that there are lesbians in athletics. The problem is the prejudice and fear that prompts parents and athletes to ask the question and coaches to fear answering it.

There are a number of possible responses to parents' question. Some examples:

- **QUESTION:** Could you say more about why you ask that question? What is your concern about this?
- **REFRAME:** College is a time when students learn to live with people from different backgrounds: race, class, nationality, religion, and culture. LGBT students are one population all college students encounter. College is a time for young people to learn acceptance for people who do not share their beliefs or life experiences. College athletics is one of those opportunities.
- **DEFLECT:** What I'm concerned about is that my athletes are respectful of each other, have good character, get good grades, and work hard to be the best athletes they can be. I've found that an athlete's sexual orientation has little to do with these qualities.
- **AFFIRM:** Yes we do. All colleges have lesbians on their team; some will be open about this and others won't. We are proud to support all of our athletes and hope other colleges will do the same.
- **CITE SCHOOL POLICY:** Our school has a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation. The athletic department abides by that policy.

Pat Griffin, Director of *It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport*.

**Activity to accompany**  
**TYPES OF RESPONSES TO PARENTS' QUESTIONS**

*For coaches*

- a. Ask the group to call out questions they've gotten from parents along the lines of "Do you have lesbians on your team?" Write these on the flip chart for all to see.
- b. Ask for two volunteers. Ask one person to play a parent who asks one of the posted questions. The other volunteer will play the coach, using one of the techniques described in "Types of Responses to Parents' Questions" (have copies for everyone).
- c. After the role play, ask the "parent" how it was to hear the "coach's" response. Ask the coach what it was like to respond in the way that she did. Ask the larger group for feedback on what the coach did well, and then what other suggestions they might have.
- d. Do several role plays with different response types. Discuss the pros and cons of using the different types of responses.



## **MAKING ATHLETICS SAFER FOR LGBT COACHES AND ATHLETES**

- Educate yourself and colleagues about homophobia in sport (read, attend workshops, talk with school counselors or community groups).
- Speak up to object when you hear slurs, jokes or other comments or actions that demean or attack LGBT people.
- Use inclusive language that does not assume that all coaches or athletes are heterosexual.
- Use the words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” and “transgender” in positive ways.
- Always assume that there are LGBT people on athletic teams and among the coaching and support staff even if they have chosen not to identify themselves.
- Monitor your own stereotyped beliefs about LGBT people and commit yourself to unlearning them.
- Ask LGBT friends or colleagues how you can show support for them.
- Propose a non-discrimination policy for your athletic department that includes sexual orientation.
- Know what campus groups or agencies provide support for LGBT students and staff.
- Make it clear to athletes and coaches that anti-gay prejudice will not be tolerated.
- Prepare to answer questions from parents about LGBT people in your program in ways that do not support anti-gay prejudice.
- Prepare to answer questions from the media about homophobia or LGBT people in sport in ways that do not support or accept anti-gay prejudice.
- Treat all athletes and coaches fairly and respectfully regardless of their sexual orientation.
- Make clear your expectations for acceptance of diversity among all members of athletic teams.
- If LGBT athletes or coaches identify themselves to you, respect their right to confidentiality and privacy.
- Be prepared to provide information about Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) to parents of LGBT athletes.
- Expect the same standards of behavior from all athletes regardless of their sexual orientation.

Pat Griffin, Director of *It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport.*

**Activity to accompany (2 materials)**  
**MAKING ATHLETICS SAFER FOR LGBT COACHES AND ATHLETES**  
**and**  
**WHAT ATHLETES CAN DO TO MAKE SPORT SAFER FOR ALL**

*For coaches and administrators*

a. This activity can be done in pairs, small groups or a large group. Hand out copies of the two lists: “Making Athletics Safer for LGBT Coaches and Athletes”, and “What Athletes Can Do to Make Sports Safer for All.”

b. Ask the pairs, small groups, or the large group to choose from the lists several activities they would like to see happen on their team, in their department, or at their university (they can add their own additions to the lists, too). What could they do to help make those activities happen? What would be a first step? What help do they need?

## WHAT ATHLETES CAN DO TO MAKE SPORTS SAFER FOR ALL

- Stop using anti-gay or other slurs or comments that demean groups of people.
- Speak out against prejudiced comments and slurs made by others.
- Do not let others intimidate you by calling you gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
- Judge teammates and coaches on the basis of their character and personality, not their sexual orientation.
- Support teammates who are targeted by anti-gay harassment, vandalism, or violence.
- If you are targeted by anti-gay discrimination, harassment, or violence, tell someone who can help.
- Support LGBT teammates who choose to identify themselves to others.
- Respect the rights of all teammates to safety and privacy.
- Respect the rights of all teammates to set boundaries on relationships with other teammates.
- Do not make assumptions about teammates' or coaches' sexual orientation based on appearance.
- Do not make assumptions about teammates or coaches based on their sexual orientation.
- Assume that every team is a mixed group of LGBT and straight people.
- If a teammate is depressed or afraid about sexuality issues, encourage them to seek help (counselors, coaches, trained peer support groups).
- Do not tolerate anti-gay harassment directed at individuals or teams from spectators, opponents, coaches, or teammates.
- Encourage your athletic department or coach to schedule seminars on homophobia and sexual harassment in sport.
- Understand that when someone uses anti-gay slurs or harasses LGBT people, they are expressing prejudice and fear.
- Take classes or seminars that will help you to better understand prejudice and discrimination based on sex, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, class, nationality, and religion.

Pat Griffin, Director of *It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport*.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA IN ATHLETICS**

### **SAFETY**

- LGBT athletes and coaches should not be subjected to verbal and physical harassment from coaches, athletes, fans, or the school community (e.g., anti-gay slurs, pushing or shoving, property damage, graffiti directed at a particular person or group).
- LGBT coaches and athletes should be able to participate in a team and athletic department free of hostility. This refers to actions not directed to a particular person or group, but still create an anti-gay climate (e.g., anti-gay slurs, innuendo, comments, graffiti).
- Sexual harassment policies should include specific references to harassment based on sexual orientation.
- Coaches, athletes, other athletic department personnel, or students who participate in the physical or verbal harassment of LGBT people or who contribute to a hostile environment for LGBT athletes and coaches should receive appropriate education and discipline.

### **FAIR TREATMENT/EQUAL ACCESS**

- Athletic Department non-discrimination policies should prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the department and on teams.
- The Athletic Department should have guidelines for coaches to help them address parental concerns about LGBT people in athletics in ways that are consistent with non-discrimination policies.
- LGBT athletes and coaches should be able to identify themselves if they choose to without fear of negative consequences (e.g., loss of job, negative performance evaluation, loss of scholarship, loss of starting position, dropped from team).
- LGBT coaches and athletes should be welcomed to bring partners to department or team functions when other athletes or coaches are invited to bring their partners.
- Domestic partnership benefits available to heterosexual coaches and other department personnel also should be available to LGBT coaches and staff.
- A coach or athlete's sexual orientation should not be a factor in determining her or his eligibility for teams or coaching positions.
- A coach or athlete's sexual orientation should not be a factor in determining his or her eligibility for athletic or academic honors or awards.
- LGBT athletes and coaches should be able to participate in community or school-based LGBT social, educational or political events or organizations without fear of reprisal.

## **SUPPORT**

- LGBT athletes and coaches should have access to school or community-based counseling, social, and educational groups.
- Parents of LGBT athletes should have access to school or community-based support and educational groups for parents with LGB children.
- Athletes or coaches who participate in anti-gay harassment should have access to school or community-based counseling services.
- Coaches should know about school or community-based groups who can provide assistance in addressing anti-gay incidents and the needs of LGBT athletes.
- Administrators should support coaches and athletes in addressing anti-gay incidents.

## **EDUCATION**

- Staff development programs for coaches and other support staff should address homophobia in athletics.
- Athletic staff should know about departmental policies addressing anti-gay discrimination.
- Educational programs for athletes should address homophobia.
- Athletes should know about departmental policies addressing anti-gay discrimination.
- Educational material and department policies addressing homophobia should be given to prospective athletes, parents of athletes, and coaches.

Pat Griffin, Director of *It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport*.

### **Activity to accompany**

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA IN ATHLETICS**

*For administrators*

- a. Pass out copies of “Policy Recommendations for Addressing Homophobia in Athletics.” Tell participants to put a check mark next to those policies that are already in place in their college, and to circle those policies they would like to see in place in their college.
- b. Ask participants to divide into four groups: safety, fair treatment/equal access, support, and education. They can choose the group based on where they have the most items circled (they want to put those policies in place) or the most checked (they have been successful in putting those policies in place).
- c. In the groups, participants should brainstorm ways to implement the policies they would like to see. Those who joined the group because they already have those policies in place can share their experiences, both successes and challenges, with the others.
- d. Bring the groups back together to report their ideas to the rest of the group. If any group had difficulty brainstorming on a particular policy, they can get input from the larger group.
- e. Ask each participant to commit to one or more policy they will work on implementing at their college.

### 3. DEFINITIONS OF ADDITIONAL TERMS<sup>2</sup>

*Following are terms that may come up in your discussions.*

**Anti-discrimination Policy:** a policy that states clearly that bias or discrimination against a particular group will not be tolerated. This discrimination includes both actions and words. A comprehensive anti-discrimination policy should include both actual and perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Bias:** having thoughts or feelings, or displaying behaviors that assume people who are different from you or hold different ideas or beliefs are less worthy of equal rights and treatment.

**Bisexual:** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to men and women.\*

**Coming out:** The process of becoming aware of one's sexual orientation or gender identity, accepting it, acting on it and telling others. This process usually occurs over time and in stages. This process may occur in a different order depending on each individual.

**Discrimination:** An action that treats people unfairly. Denying equal treatment to individuals or groups of people.

**Dyke:** A derogatory term used to describe a lesbian or someone perceived as a lesbian—most often a woman who does not display traditionally feminine characteristics. For example, it may be used to insult a girl or woman who voices a strong opinion or one who is very good at sports. This term, when used outside of the LGBT community, is often used as a biased and derogatory term. Some lesbians have reclaimed the use of the word to refer to themselves in a strong, positive light.

**Faggot or fag:** This word is considered offensive to gay males. A derogatory term used to describe a gay male or a male perceived as gay, especially one who does not display traditionally masculine characteristics. Also used as an insult when a man or boy does something considered unmanly.

**Gay:** A generic term used to describe both men and women who are sexually and romantically attracted to someone of the same sex. Sometimes used just to refer to gay men. It is also used as a derogatory slur to describe anything, anyone or any behavior that does not meet the approval of an individual in a given group.

**Gender expression:** An individual's characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions that are perceived as

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<sup>2</sup> All definitions are reprinted with permission from the Human Rights Campaign ([www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)), with the exception of those with an asterisk (\*).

masculine or feminine. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation.

**Gender Identity:** An individual's internal, deeply felt sense of being male, female, or something other or in-between. This identity may or may not match the individual's biological sex.

**Gender Non-Conforming:** A person who has or is perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. Gender non-conforming people may or may not identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

**Gender Role:** The set of socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to females and males. These roles can vary from culture to culture.

**Harassment:** Behavior meant to frighten, taunt or defame someone. Harassment can be physical, verbal, social or emotional in nature. All forms are destructive and have personal consequences for the victim.

**Heterosexual:** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to members of the other sex.

**Heterosexism:** A system of injustice and discrimination based on the assumption or belief that heterosexuality is the preferable and/or ideal way to be.\*

**Heterosexual:** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to members of the other sex.

**Homophobia:** originally used to describe fear of people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. More often today it is used to describe any level of discomfort or disapproval for people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This often leads to bias, hatred and harassment of LGBT people.

**In the Closet:** A LGBT person who is not open about the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender aspect of their identity.

**Intersex:** a term used for people who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a "standard" male or female.\*

**Lesbian:** A woman who is sexually and romantically attracted to other women.

**Out:** A term used to describe a LGBT person who is open about his or her sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This term comes from the expression "out of the closet," which means being open about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.



**Outing:** Revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person, usually without that person's consent.

**Prejudice:** A feeling or an attitude about a person or group simply because the person belongs to a specific religion, race, nationality, sexual orientation or other group.

**Queer:** Historically a negative term for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people. More recently reclaimed by younger LGBT people to refer to themselves. Often used to reference a more flexible view of gender and/or sexuality. Some people still find the term offensive. Others use it as a more inclusive term that allows for more freedom of gender expression. Also used in academic fields, such as *queer studies* or *queer pedagogy*.

**Sexual orientation:** An identity based on whether someone is attracted to a person of a different sex, the same sex, or both sexes (*heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual*). Everyone has a sexual orientation.

**Stereotype:** An oversimplified idea or generalization about a group of people. Labeling an entire group based on the actions of some.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Trans:** Short for transgender.

**Transsexual:** An individual who does not identify with his or her biological sex. Transsexual people sometimes alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally.

**Two-Spirit:** The definition of a two-spirited person varies across diverse Native American cultures in which they have traditionally been valued and recognized for their unique nature and roles. In general, two-spirited individuals possess many qualities of both sexes and often fulfill unique roles within their communities. Some Native Americans consider two-spirit a term that can refer to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, while others think it is best used only for individuals who are transgender.\*

*\* Definitions followed by an asterisk (\*) are derived from a variety of sources.*

## 4. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Education Kit**

It Takes a Team Education Kit

*Comprehensive guide with a wealth of materials and resources*

[www.ItTakesATeam.org](http://www.ItTakesATeam.org).

### **Websites**

Women's Sports Foundation

<http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/>

National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) Sports Project

[http://www.nclrights.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issue\\_sports\\_overview](http://www.nclrights.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issue_sports_overview)

Gay and Lesbian Athletics Foundation

*Includes video and audio of keynote speeches from the 2003 and 2004 International Gay and Lesbian Athletics Conferences*

<http://glaf.org/>

Center for the Study of Sport in Society

*Includes an "Athletes Bill of Rights"*

<http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/research/published/index.html>

Outsports

*Campus page*

<http://www.outsports.com/campus/index.htm>

Our Group

[http://www.lgbtathletes.org/Our\\_Group/Welcome.html](http://www.lgbtathletes.org/Our_Group/Welcome.html)

Association for Applied Sport Psychology Reference and Resources bibliography from the Diversity Committee

*Includes a section on gender/sexual orientation*

<http://appliedsportpsych.org/files/file/resources/professional/diversity-references.pdf>

Creating Inclusive and Positive Climates in Girls' and Women's Sport: Position Statement on Homophobia, Homonegativism, and Heterosexism

*Includes recommendations on creating a positive climate in sport for all female athletes endorsed by the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, as well as references for additional resources*

<http://www.aahperd.org/nagws/publications/news/loader.cfm?csModule=security/goffile&pageid=28762>

**Books**

Cahn, S. (1994). *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Women's Sport*. Toronto: Free Press.

Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong Women: Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Lensky, J. (1986). *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport & Sexuality*. Toronto: Women's Press.

Pronger, B. (1990). *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality, and the Meaning of Sex*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rogers, S.F. (Ed.). (1999). *Women on the Verge: Lesbian Tales of Power and Play*. St Martin's: NY.

Young, P. (1994). *Lesbians and Gays and Sports: Issues in Lesbian and Gay Life*. NY: Chelsea House.

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### **Training Rules Film Credits**

Directed by Dee Mosbacher and Fawn Yacker  
Produced by Dee Mosbacher and Fawn Yacker  
Cinematography by Fawn Yacker  
Written by Dee Mosbacher and Fawn Yacker  
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### **Woman Vision Board of Directors**

Martha Jimenez  
Dee Mosbacher  
Marj Plumb  
Diane Sabin

In Memoriam: Eric Rofes (1954-2006) in remembrance of his years of work with our organization and a lifetime of work for social justice movements throughout the country and world.

### **Woman Vision Staff**

Marj Plumb, Administrator  
Kevin Waller, Bookkeeper  
Silvana Lopez, Assistant to Dee Mosbacher