

IDAHO

Welcome to the IDAHO health services audit.

The audit is not about blaming or shaming people into action, it's about learning, celebrating achievements and identifying options for improving our services to the GLBTIQS communities.

We hope it will be a useful experience for everyone involved, how about making it a team development exercise – maybe incorporate a happy hour – it's up to you !

We encourage agencies to go through the audit as a team rather than have one individual tick & cross boxes. We want everyone to take part in challenging homophobia...completing the audit as a group may promote further discussion.

Before the audit –

- Getting management approval can allow for some concentrated work time on these issues
- Let everyone know what's going on. The audit can be sent out prior to allow for some individual reflection.
- Prepare a process for delivering the audit – what would work best for your agency / team etc. It could be an activity as part of an inservice, or a morning / afternoon tea, or a happy hour – wine, cheese & an audit
- Canvas colleagues on what they need/want to know? What do they want from this audit/workshop? This can also provide a safe space to raise issues of homophobia within the workplace. However these must be addressed whilst ensuring safety for everyone involved.
- Encourage people to be involved by setting some homework. Ask them to research GLBTIQS communities and bring one item of information that they'd learnt from their research. It doesn't have to be too big & heavy, just something they'd never thought of before. Alternatively, you might ask them to share an experience where they'd acted or been treated in a homophobic way. Once again this isn't about blaming but about being accountable and moving forward (learning).
- Ensure time & space to talk about issues and actions. Get focussed on making them happen e.g. what's the issue, how can we address it, who's going to do it & when will it be done by?
- Don't expect GLBTIQ staff to volunteer information or acts as experts. They may act as a resource but they may be unwilling to identify, or they may not want to be responsible for educating non-GLBTIQS staff.

- If you want someone to speak personally, a guest speaker might be a good option. Contact one of the agencies listed below and we may be able to help out.

While completing the audit on it's own is a good start you might want to add a few activities to further explore these issues.

You could....

- Brainstorm & list the services/groups/projects you provide to the GLBTIQS communities.
- List options for improving your service, as identified during the audit.
- Heterosexual questionnaire – one option for getting people to look at the assumptions they make about sexuality is the Heterosexual questionnaire. This looks at a range of assumptions made about same-sex-attracted people but flips the question, making the assumption about heterosexuals (see attached)
- Role play / scenarios – use the scenarios provided (see attached), or develop your own. Share the scenario (in pairs or as a group) then talk about how you're feeling, what you're thinking and how you could address the situation then de-brief with your partner or group.
- Set your team a challenge – what will you do to challenge homophobia, personally or professionally, in the next year?

On the day

Depending on the group you might want to briefly establish an agreement about how you're going to work together. Acknowledge that there may be some GLBTIQS staff in attendance, and that while homophobia affects everyone, it might be extra stressful for staff that have had homophobia directed at them.

The audit may highlight achievements but it may also highlight long standing pain. Ensure safety is discussed, especially the idea of challenging the idea rather than the person.

When introducing the audit it might be a good idea to set the scene for people that are new to these issues. Cover the basics....for example....

- What is homophobia? Discuss personal/internal, interpersonal/social, organisational/institutional and cultural.
- Why challenge homophobia? Why have an audit? Read out blurb from front of pamphlet
- What has your organisation done to challenge homophobia?
- What are the options for challenging homophobia in the future? Display these around office to keep people focussed.

Extra questions....

All of the audit questions can act as a discussion starter, but here's some extra questions you can use to explore your service delivery.

If a client continually refers to their same-sex partner as their boyfriend or girlfriend it may negate that relationship if we refer to them as their 'partner'. What issues would this pose for your interactions with this client, and how could you deal with them?

If a client or staff member transitions, can their records be easily amended to reflect their gender status?

What are some of the issues GLBTIQS staff may face when working with GLBTIQS clients?

If a staff member talks openly about being same sex attracted is it ok to share that information with other colleagues? What about clients?

What are some of the possible consequences of breaking a client's (or colleagues') confidentiality regarding sexual orientation or gender identity (e.g. violence, vilification, harassment, homelessness, family breakdown, alienation, isolation etc.)?

How are the GLBTIQS communities consulted in your area?

What's the latest research say about the impacts of homophobia on health & wellbeing?

If your agency has anti-discrimination policies, or has images promoting diverse sexualities, where/how are these displayed? Can clients, walking in for the first time, easily see your agencies policies, views or attitudes to sexual diversity?

Ask participants to name a privilege of being heterosexual.

What about language what does GLBTIQS stand for? Is being T similar to being G or L? How is it similar, and how is it different?

Why is it important to name these communities? What are the benefits of labels? What are the drawbacks?

Some words to discuss....

GLBTIQS = Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Same Sex Attracted...What do these words mean to you?

Heterosexual privilege – the privilege heterosexuals have over non-heterosexuals. For example: having your relationship celebrated instead of vilified; being able to show your love publicly and get married; and not having to continually justify your identity or relationships.

Heteronormative/Heterocentric – this means that heterosexuality is seen as the normal/right/straight way and anything else is deviant or deficient. This comes across in statements like “what causes homosexuality”, which frames homosexuality as something to be fixed or cured instead of a normal part of human sexual diversity.

Heterosexism – “a system of coercion that demands heterosexuality in return for 1st class citizenship” (Virginia Mollenkot).

Erasure – making a group of people invisible by continually ignoring them (and hoping they’ll go away). Occurring historically or in our own time it denies the GLBTIQS communities visible & viable role models.

There’s plenty of other activities, for more info contact one of the IDAHO agencies.

Finishing up – where to now...

Regardless of how you’ve done on the audit remember this is a starting point

If you’ve done really well – how can you maintain your service?

If you’ve not scored so well – how can you improve your service?

It’s important that we don’t get bogged down by how much we have to do – every little bit helps. Just doing the audit is a great start.

The rest is up to you & your agency...

Options for further info / action

Consult with GLBTIQS communities (clients & colleagues)

Provide inservice training re. challenging homophobia/supporting sexual and gender diversity

Resources – explore what resources are available (pamphlets, posters, books, street press, phone lines, websites, agencies, people etc)

Network with agencies that support the GLBTIQS communities.

Review or develop your agencies policies re sexual orientation & gender identity.

Social stuff – start a book club or go to see a movie re. GLBTIQ issues.

Queer Corner email network – get a Queer Corner CD from Lauren Riggs at Dale St Women’s Health Centre (8444 0713, lauren.riggs@health.sa.gov.au). It has a range of emails regarding issues facing the GLBTIQS communities – start up a Queer Corner in your agency.

Contact one of the IDAHO committee members to talk through some of these issues.

Get involved with IDAHO this year, and/or start planning for next year.

IDAHO is on May 17 but you can use this audit to challenge homophobia all year round.