Seven steps to a community of equality and belonging

The first step towards creating a culture and environment where everyone can belong is a commitment to a vision and the values of equality and respect for all people—and cultivating the language necessary to communicate those values and put them into action.

◢ Use inclusive language on all communications

Instead of saying, "ladies and gentlemen," "boys and girls," or other language that makes assumptions about gender, try using language that is gender-inclusive. Try out terms like folks, families, congregants, community members, children, friends, students, campers, etc.

◢ [Designate an all-gender restroom](#)

It's important that all members of our community can take care of their physical needs safely and with dignity. All-gender restrooms provide access to safe bathrooms and changing areas for people of any gender identity and presentation, and are particularly critical for nonbinary individuals, binary transgender individuals who want additional privacy and security, and gender-expansive individuals who might face harassment in restrooms because of their gender presentation. They also provide safe spaces for those who need the assistance of a personal care attendant, those with small children, or anyone who wants additional privacy for any reason. You can do this simply by designating an already existing single stall restroom as an all-gender restroom.

◢ Respect people's names and pronouns - and avoid assumptions

Using people's correct pronouns and names is one of the biggest and simplest ways you can show respect. Also, show respect by not making assumptions about their sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, when talking to someone about dating, don't automatically assume that they are interested in a heterosexual relationship.

◢ Educate yourself and others on LGBTQ+ terms

Often, one of the greatest challenges for non-LGBTQ+ people in talking about LGBTQ issues is uncertainty regarding language and vocabulary. Educating yourself, being respectful, and taking responsibility if you make a mistake goes a long way to making LGBTQ people feel welcomed and safe.

◢ Have LGBTQ+ programming

Host a Pride Shabbat. Host a speaker during services to speak about LGBTQ inclusion. Celebrate LGBTQ holidays and days of mourning and add them to your calendar. Find Queer themes in Jewish holidays and talk about them!

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◢ **Review or update your policies**

Explicitly state in your policies that your organization is affirming and inclusive of all people including (and not limited to) sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. The necessary documents include a comprehensive anti-bullying statement for folks, inclusive anti-harassment Human Resources policies for staff, and a non-discrimination policy. These statements should be easily available on your website, printed in your staff, parent, and student handbook, and available upon request.

◢ **Host or attend a training for your staff/community on LGBTQ+ equality and belonging**

If you are interested in bringing in a Keshet staff member to train your staff or community please email education@keshetonline.org or visit our website to find out about Keshet events around the country.

Belonging is a journey, not a destination

Every organization is different, and no one knows your organization better than you. No matter how many trainings you hold, safe space signs you put up, or anti-bullying policies you put into place, the only true way to create a fully open and supportive community is to be committed to values of equality and respect all the time, every day.

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