

SHOWCASING YOUR OPENNESS

Since 2009, the LGBT Family Coalition (CF-LGBT) carries out workshops with professionals who work with families and youth in diverse settings, in order to empower them to create spaces that are open and inclusive of sexual and gender diversity. Over the years our team of facilitators have noticed that the professionals that we work with are generally very open-minded. But this open-mindedness is not always visible.

And so, *Showcasing Your Openness* is a tool that was created to help you to carry out an analysis around the inclusion of sexual and gender diverse individuals and families in your organization (whether you work in a community organization, a daycare, a health or social service establishment, or even a school). The tool also offers concrete ideas about how to adapt your practice to become more visibly inclusive. **Seven intervention domains** are targeted in this document. This tool can be used on a regular basis in order to follow the progress of your organization.



Coalition des
Familles LGBT
LGBT Family Coalition

En partenariat avec :

Québec 



PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Promotional material can include:

- Pamphlets, information fliers, etc.;
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.);
- Website (your own website or the one where your page is hosted);
- Publicity in your neighbourhood/city/region (posters, local newspapers, resource listings, etc.).

Reflection:

- Amongst these different elements, are there any signals that explicitly show that you are open to sexual and gender diversity?
- What might your organization do to explicitly signal its openness through your promotional material?

Concrete solutions:

- If there are photos or illustrations on your promotional material, think about including different family models (families with same-sex parents, multiethnic families, multi-parent families, single-parent families, trans-parent families, etc.).
 - We're not suggesting that you remove all the photos on your promotional material, but rather that the visual elements of your promotional material are diversified in order to better communicate your values and openness to those who seek out your services.
- Whether there are photos or not in your promotional material, you might include a sentence showing your openness to all kinds of families, for instance:

“At [name of your organization], we respect the uniqueness and diversity of each person and each family. We welcome all families: single parent, adaptive, foster, of diverse ethnocultural origins, with two parents (be they heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or trans), blended, extended, conceived through assisted procreation or surrogacy, transparental, multiparent, and with children living with or without their parent(s). We value a diversity of people, opinions and viewpoints in order to build a solid and inclusive community.”

This can be included, for example in a mission statement that would be part of your promotional material.

2

PHYSICAL SPACE

Physical space can include:

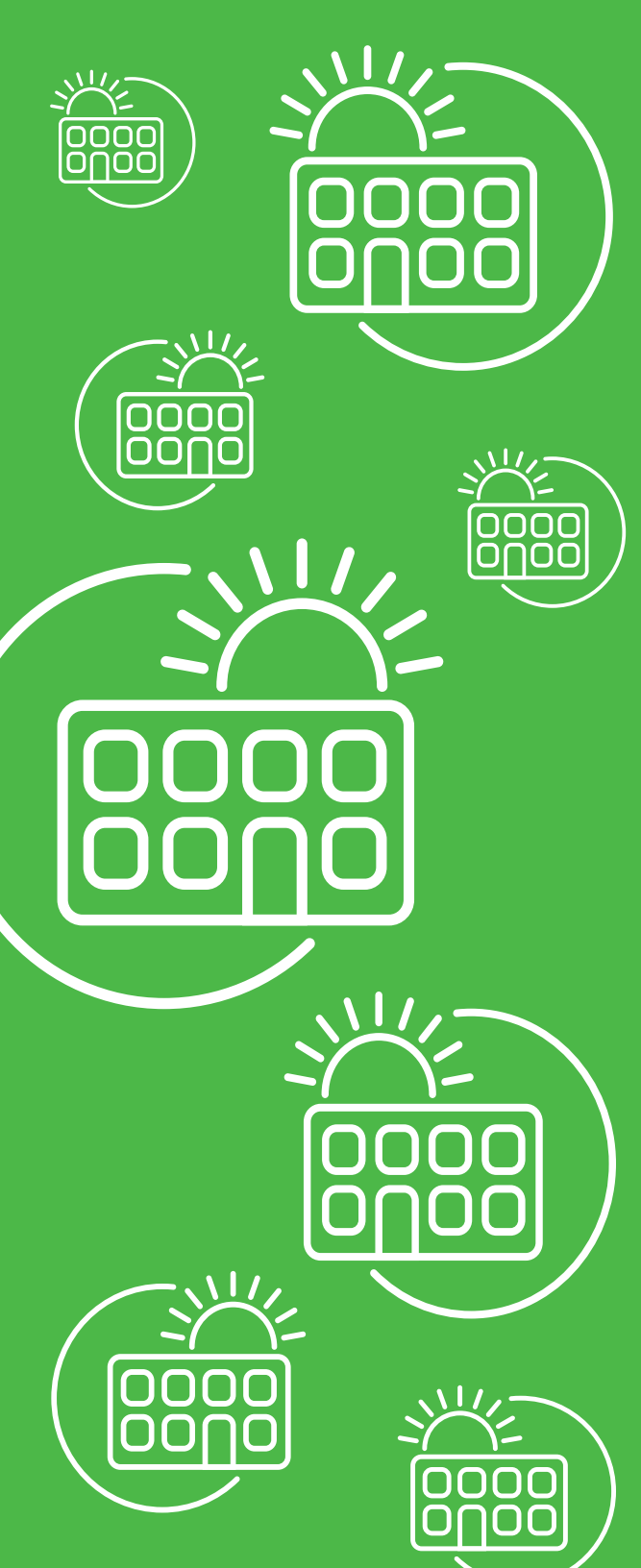
- Banners (outside your building/on the door/in the window);
- Inside decorations (posters, artwork, photos, etc.);
- Signs, posted rules and regulations, etc.;
- Toy corner, library or book collection, etc.;
- Washrooms/lockers.

Reflection:

- Whether on the inside or the outside of your organization, what are the signs that you are open to sexual and gender diversity?
- DO you think that LGBT+ people feel included and see their reality represented in your organization?
- Does your space reinforce sexual stereotypes (ex.: separate toy areas for girls and boys)?
- What might your organization do to explicitly signal its openness through its physical space?

Concrete solutions:

- Outside the walls of your organization, think about including a sign of openness toward sexual and gender diversity, whether through your banner outside the building, on the door or in the window. It can be:
 - one or a few flags representing sexual and gender minorities;
 - a sticker indicating that you are part of an allies network in your region, if this is the case.
- If there are photos, artwork or posters from different organizations on your walls, think about showing different family models (homoparental, multiethnic, multiparental, single parent, transparental, etc.) as well as different LGBT+ organizations and resources.
 - We're not suggesting that you remove all the photos and posters on your walls, but rather that the visual elements of your physical space are diversified in order to better communicate your values and openness to those who seek out your services.
 - You can hang up the posters "Family Diversity: It's all about love" or "Safe Space" created by the LGBT Family Coalition to make your openness more visible.
 - Contact LGBT+ organizations in your city/region/province to ask them for posters.



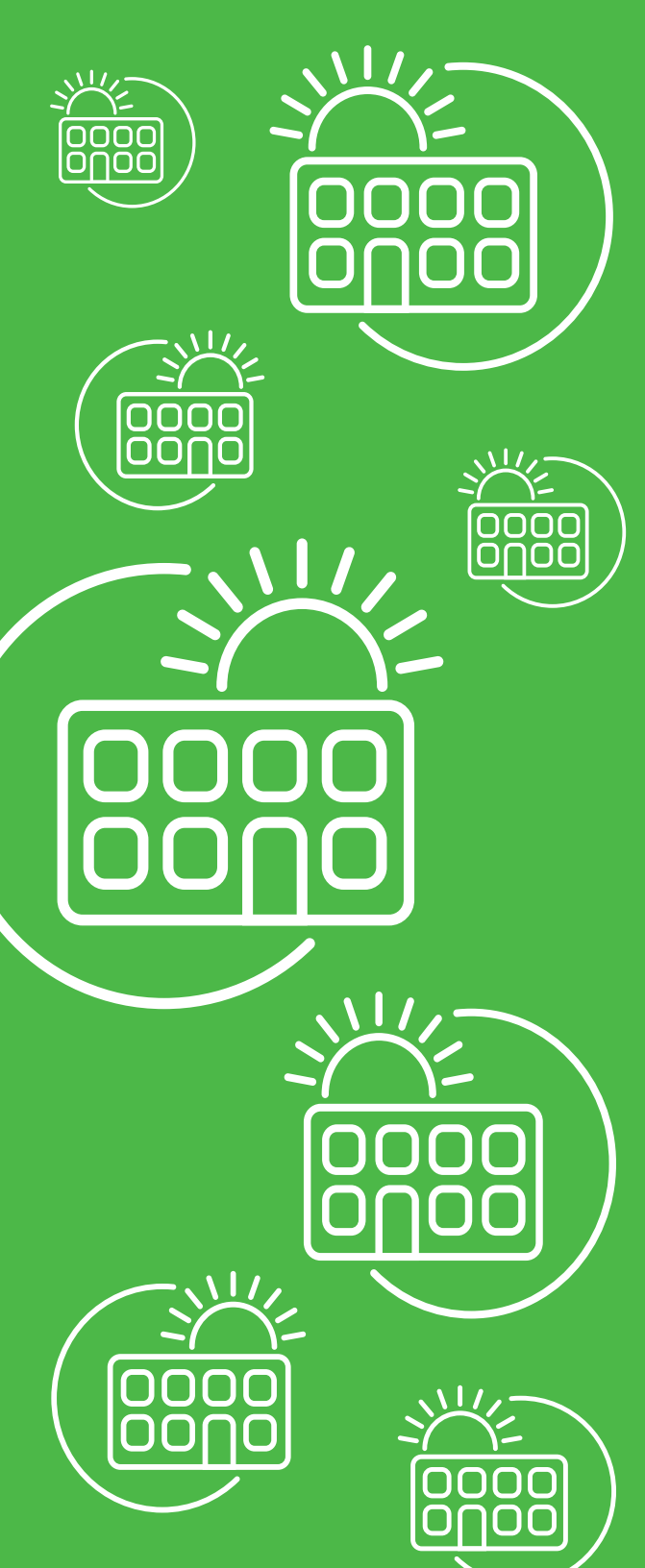
2

PHYSICAL SPACE (CONTINUED)

- You can also post your mission (or other similar documents) that might include a sentence promoting openness to all kinds of families, for example:

“At [name of your organization], we respect the uniqueness and diversity of each person and family regardless of their ethnic origin, their religion, their sexual orientation, their gender identity, their gender expression or their values or viewpoints. Homophobic, transphobic, racist and sexist comments and actions as well as insults about gender expression are not accepted here.”

- There may be different signs or directives on your walls. Make sure that they are inclusive.
 - For example, you can use the gender-neutral washroom signs available on the web site of the LGBT Family Coalition famillesLGBT.org/tools in the section “Safe and inclusive environments: concrete actions”.
- The presence of books and films that include sexual and gender diversity (amongst other differences) is an important indication of your openness.
 - To find books and films that showcase sexual and gender diversity, you can refer to the variety of lists present on the site of the LGBT Family Coalition (familleslgbt.org/tools), in the section “Books and videos.”
- If you work with children, you can organize your toys in a way to avoid gender divisions between children and in order to stimulate their creativity. You can also encourage them to choose a variety of toys, regardless of whether or not they are associated with their gender.
- In order to allow your members to express themselves about your practices and operating modes, you can install a suggestion box in a discreet place (ex.: in the washroom). A short sentence can be written on the box to encourage your members to communicate with you, for example: “Help us to become more inclusive!”



3

ACTIVITIES

Activities can include:

- Discussion groups, conferences, outings, field trips, drop ins, workshops, etc.;
- Publicity and appeals to participate;
- The people or small groups that your activity targets.

Reflection:

- Are your activities inclusive of LGBT+ people? Are their realities taken into account? Do some of your activities exclude a portion of your clientele?
- Are your activities divided in terms of the gender (feminine/masculine) of the individuals who participate? Does this division exclude certain people?
- In the activities that you offer, what elements show your openness to sexual and gender diversity?
- How can your organization's activities explicitly show that you are inclusive and open to sexual and gender diversity?

Concrete solutions:

- During group discussions, conferences, outings and activities, make sure that the themes that you choose reflect and include the diverse realities of the people that use your services and more broadly represent the diversity of Quebec society.
 - Consult your members to find out what interests them. This can be done anonymously through a suggestion box for example (see the section "Physical Space").
- Concerning participation at activities, it might be beneficial to organize activities that specifically address minority groups or groups that might experience discrimination or exclusion during larger group activities. Smaller group activities can create a safe space that permits people to share their experiences as a minority group.
 - For example, it might be pertinent to offer a discussion group specifically addressing single-parent families or immigrant families, because they might experience particular challenges that are not generally a part of the everyday experience of two-parent families or families of Québécois origin.
 - On the other hand, special attention needs to be made in order not to reinforce stereotypes and stigmatize these minority groups.

3

ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- + For example, if a book presenting a homoparental family is chosen to read to children, this activity should not be only addressed to children in homoparental families. The invitation must be addressed to all families, because they can all benefit from this activity in the same way as a book with a heteroparental family could be beneficial to all.
- They same applies to activities that are separated in terms of gender (mothers/women/girls on one side and fathers/men/boys on the other). Whether activities address adults or children it is important to reflect on whether the activity is reinforcing heterosexist norms¹, excluding certain people or reinforcing gender stereotypes. If yes, reflect on the objectives that you have for this activity. Is the male-female division necessary to obtain these objectives? If yes, then how can we divide the group to better include people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and still attain our goals? Nowadays, parental roles are increasingly diversified, and less and less entrenched in traditional gender roles. Keep in mind as well that there can be more than two parents involved in a child's life (pluriparental families, polyparental families and blended families, for example).
 - + For example, in a daycare, you decide to launch a day for princesses (for the girls) and knights (for the boys). Although well-intentioned this would reinforce gender stereotypes and leave little place for children to make their own choices. In order to allow each child to freely express themselves why not call for a Fairy Tale Day? Children can then decide what kind of character they might like to incarnate and the freedom to do so will even stimulate their creativity. Maybe some will decide to dress up in something other than Princess or Knight or might like to dress up in a role that is not usually associated with their gender.
- Conferences and sensitization workshops offered by LGBT+ organizations in your region or ready-made activities that you can animate yourself is another way to broach the subject of sexual and gender diversity with your members. These activities can contribute to deconstructing myths around LGBT+ families and help to assure that it is not the families themselves that must bear the burden of educating others in the organization.
 - For children, in the sections "Classroom activities preschool-elementary" and "Classroom activities: high school" of the LGBT Family Coalition's website (familiesLGBT.org/tools), you can download a number of activities about diversity to carry out with children and teens.
 - For adults, you can invite LGBT+ organizations to carry out a workshop for your members. Whatever activity you carry out, whether it is the title of the activity, the publicity around it, or the content, try to use inclusive language so that LGBT+ families can feel that their realities are represented as well (see the section "Language").

¹ Heterosexism refers to the affirmation that heterosexuality is the social norm or that it is superior to other sexual orientations. Heterosexism can manifest itself in many ways, notably when we presume that all people that we encounter are heterosexual.

4

COLLABORATION

Collaboration with LGBT+ groups can take many forms:

- Participating in activities that these groups carry out and promoting these activities;
- Organizing activities or events together with LGBT+ groups;
- Exchanging promotional material;
- Knowing the LGBT+ resources available in your city/region/province.

Reflection:

- Have you been offered any activities that represent LGBT+ families?
- What type of LGBT+ demystification activity can you offer to your members?
- What are the LGBT+ groups in your city/region?
- With whom and how can your organization collaborate with LGBT+ organizations to offer activities/services and resources addressed specifically to LGBT+ people but also to your membership at large?

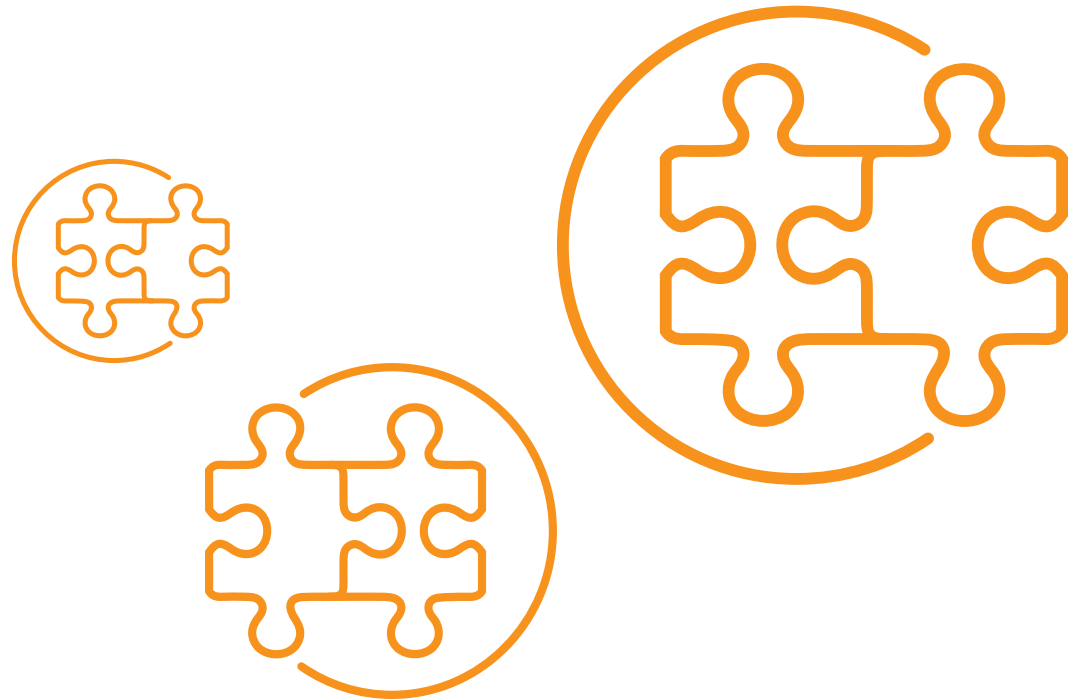
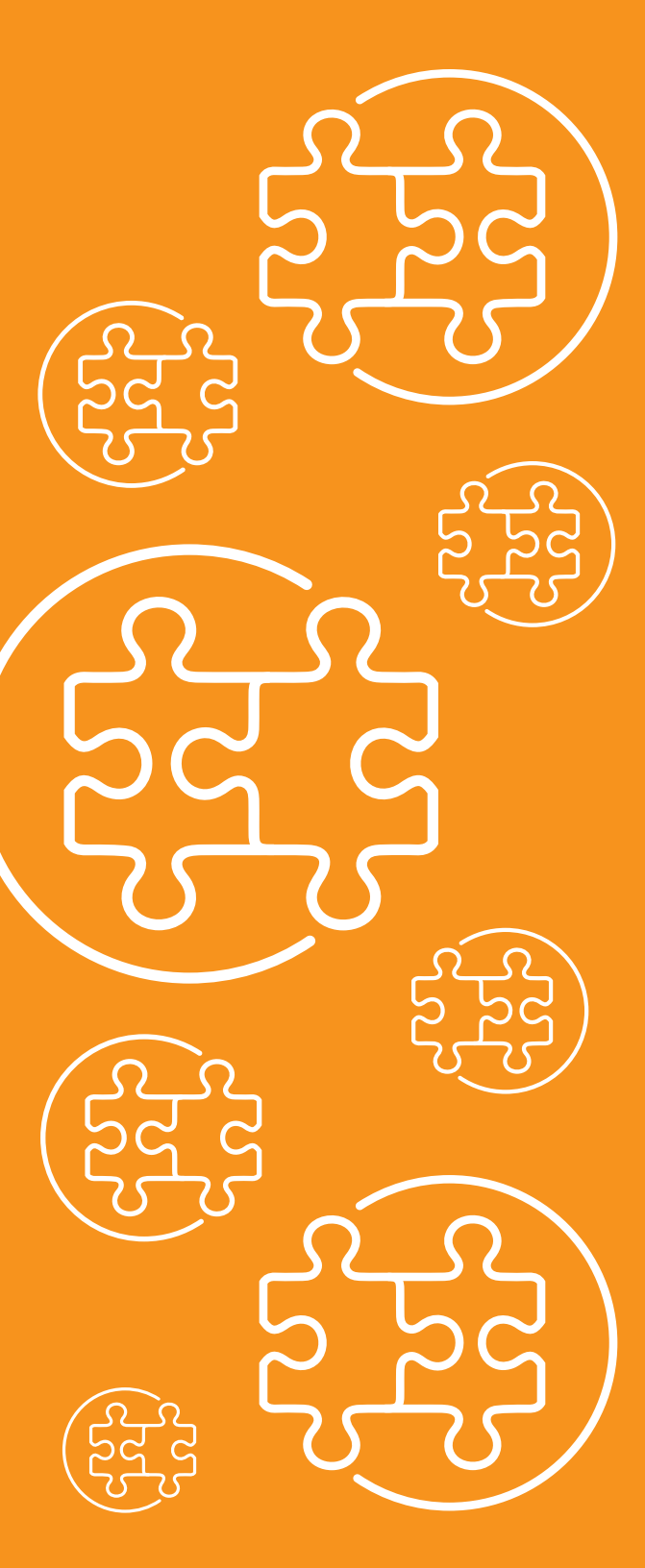
Concrete solutions:

- If you don't already know the LGBT+ community and institutional resources available in your city/region or those that are available throughout the province, get informed:
 - On guideLGBT.org, a website put in place by Interligne, you can do a search, by region, of all the LGBT+ services open to the LGBT+ community.
- Get informed about activities being carried out by LGBT+ groups and advertise them to your members/families.
 - For example, community days, pride parades and marches against homophobia and transphobia are great occasions for all families to participate in an LGBT+ activity. Many cities like, Sherbrooke, Quebec City, Montreal, Trois-Rivières, Val-d'Or, etc., carry out these special days in the spring and summer.
- Ask LGBT+ groups in your city/region to disseminate your activities amongst their members. You can also consult these groups to have their input on how to make your activities more inclusive.
- Organize activities in partnership with LGBT+ groups in your city/region. For example: picnics, family outings, parties, etc.

4

COLLABORATION (CONTINUED)

- Trade promotional material with LGBT+ groups. You can display their posters/pamphlets in your organization, add their logo and/or a link to their resource on your website or vice versa.
- You can also ask to be a part of their resource list if they have one.
 - Add your organization to the LGBT resource guide of Interligne (guideLGBT.org).
- Become a member of an ally's network in your region if this is possible.
- Don't hesitate to refer families to the LGBT Family Coalition (info@famillesLGBT.org)!



5

LANGUAGE

Language can include:

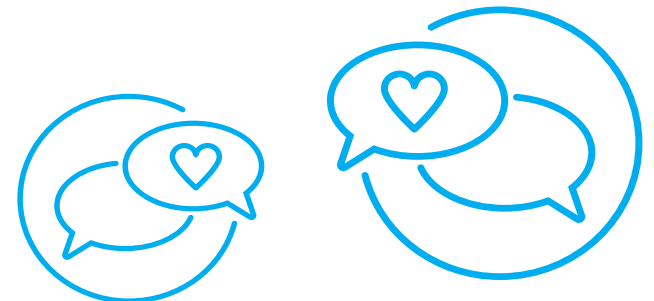
- Language used by people at the front desk or the reception;
- Forms to fill out;
- All written and oral communications to your members/families/children and teens.

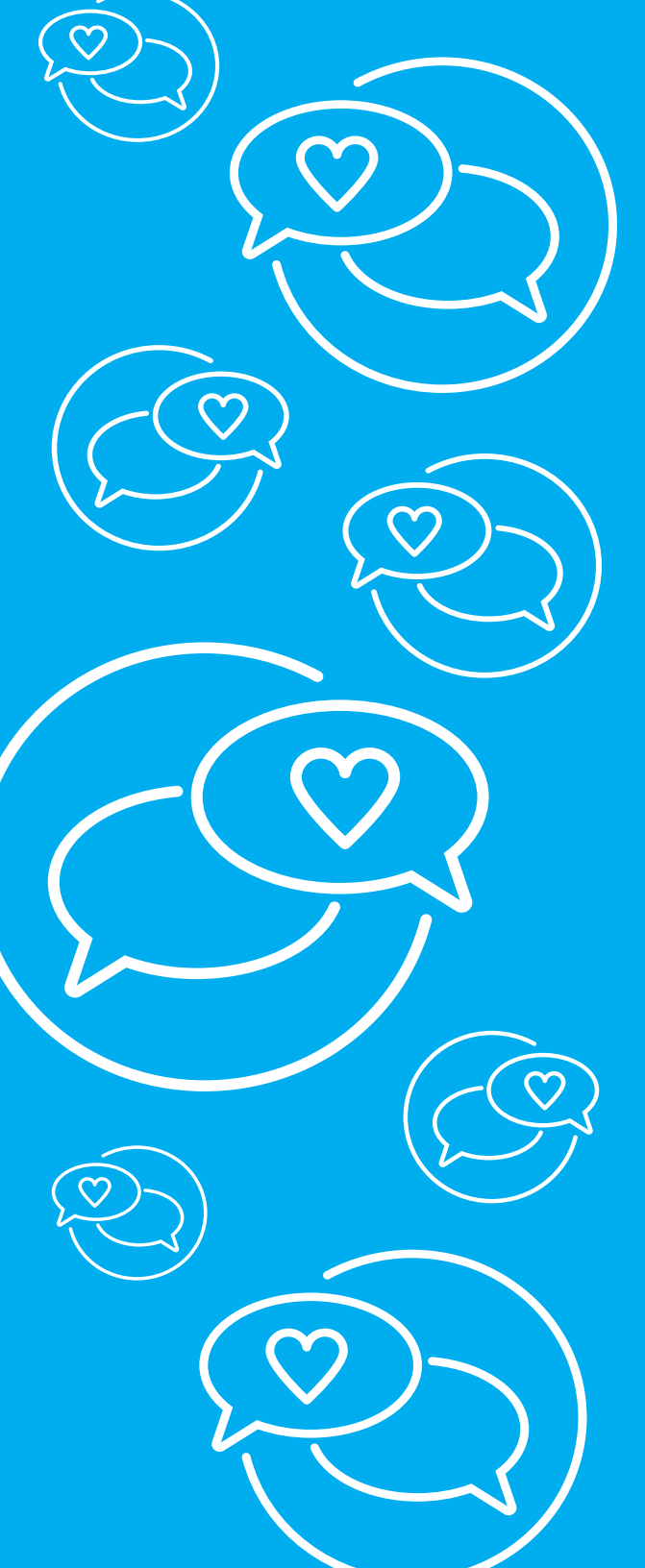
Reflection:

- Is your language, whether oral or written, inclusive?
- What are the signs in the words that you choose that express the openness of your organization toward sexual and gender diversity?
- How can your organization better express openness when it comes to welcoming, forms and other spoken and written communications?

Concrete solutions:

- Use inclusive language, notably for the enrolment of families/children. Avoid presuming that everyone is heterosexual. For example:
 - Use the word “parent” (instead of “mother and father”/“daddy and mommy”), in order to include all kinds of families (single parent, homoparental, etc.)
 - During registration, you can ask if there is “another parent to register” or you can ask for the name of “your partner,” when it is appropriate to ask.
- Make sure that your organization’s forms are equally inclusive and that they say “parent or legal guardian” instead of “father” and “mother” in order to include different family constellations. [\(see following page\)](#)





CHILD / STUDENT

Family name	Given name(s)
Preferred pronouns (he, she, they)	
Date of birth	
Language(s) spoken at home	
Address	
City	Postal Code

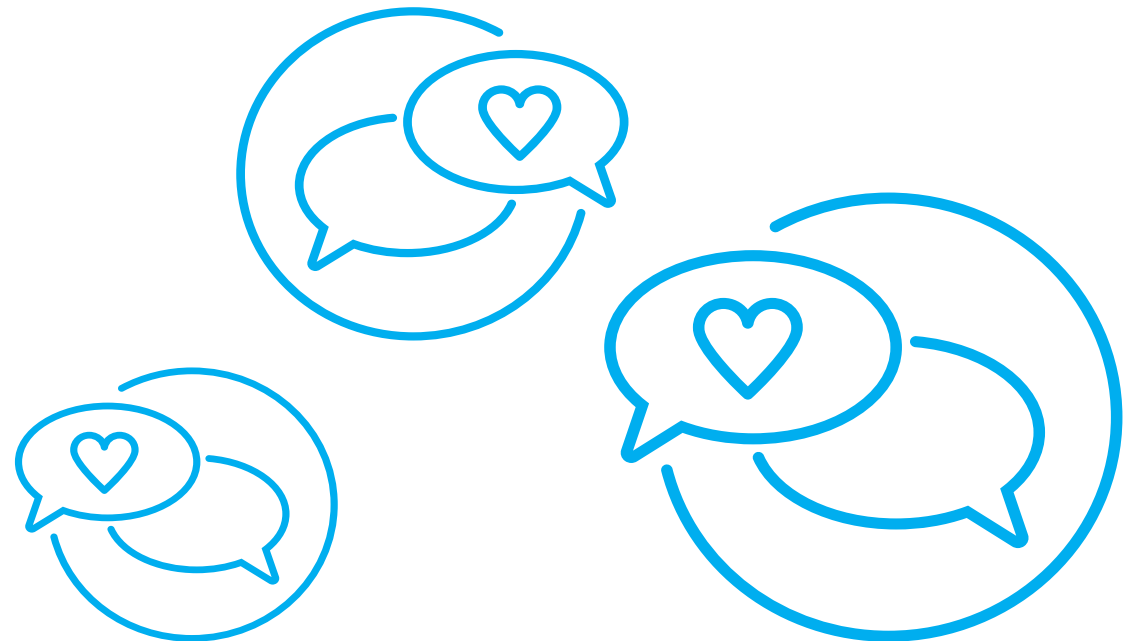
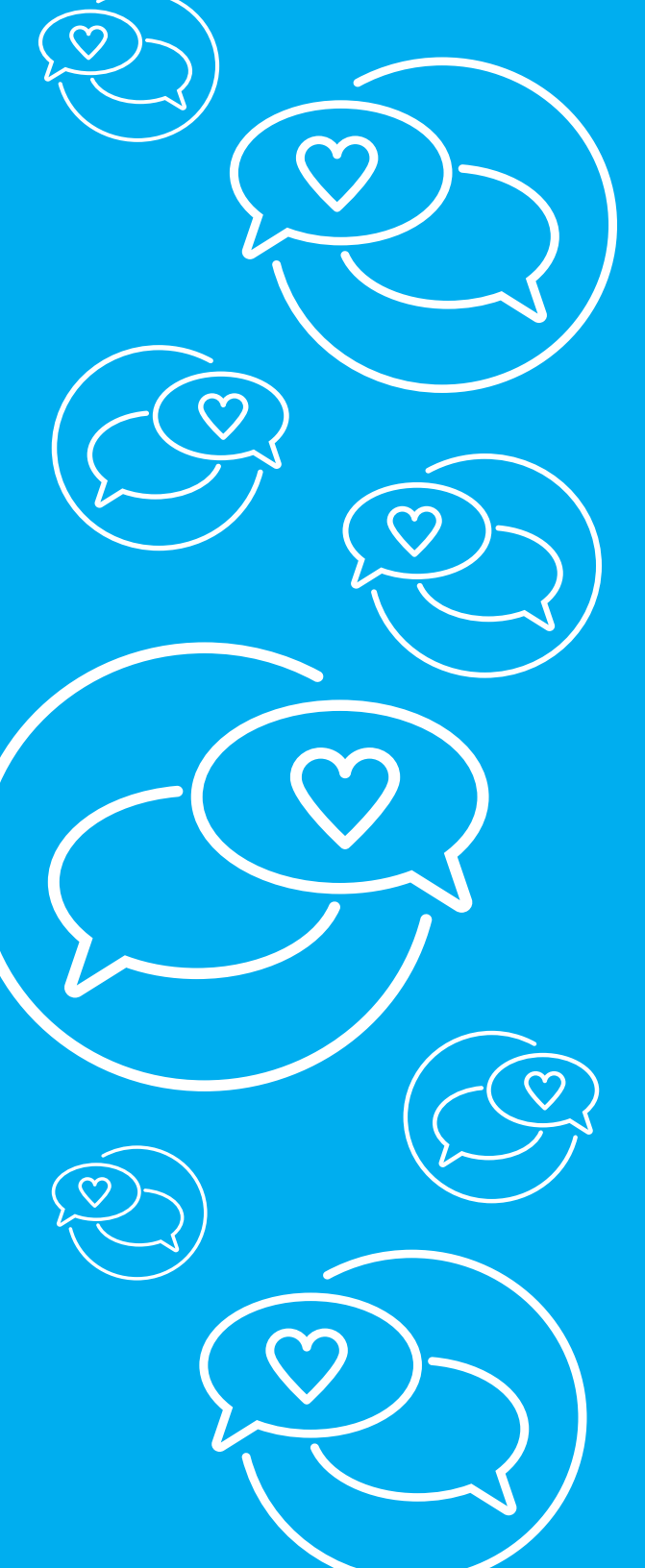
ADULT(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHILD/STUDENT

	ADULT	ADULT
Family name		
Given name(s)		
Preferred pronouns (he, she, they)		
Connection to the child (mother, father, parent, step-parent, legal guardian, tutor, other)		
Home phone number		
Work phone number		
Cell phone number		
Address		
City		
Postal code		
	ADULT	ADULT
Family name		
Given name(s)		
Preferred pronouns (he, she, they)		
Connection to the child (mother, father, parent, step-parent, legal guardian, tutor, other)		
Home phone number		
Work phone number		
Cell phone number		
Address		
City		
Postal code		

5

LANGUAGE (CONTINUED)

- In the forms, you can provide space for registering more than two parental figures. There are an increasing number of blended families, multi-parent families, and multi-generational families, etc., and so there can be more than two significant parental figures for the child or children.
- Review all other written documents (letters to families, other forms, pamphlets, publicity for your activities, rules, etc.) to ensure that the language they contain is inclusive.
 - Don't start from square one! You simply have to adapt the material that you already have to ensure inclusion.
- If your written production already contains inclusive language then it will be that much easier to adapt your spoken language as well.
- Inclusive language is a practice that should be used at all times and with everyone: members/families, children/teens, volunteers, participants in your activities, etc..



6

POLICY

Official documents can include:

- Mission statement;
- Anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy;
- Code of conduct, groundrules, etc.;
- Hiring policy (positive discrimination).

Reflection:

- Do your official documents (rules/code of conduct, policies, mission statement, etc.) contain explicit references about sexual and gender diversity? Do your policies specifically address homophobia and transphobia in a way that can be useful to you if you observe homophobic or transphobic situations?
- Is there an official mechanism in place for people to lodge complaints in your organization (for employees as well as members/families) in case of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity?
- What can you modify in your official documents to ensure explicit protection of LGBT+ individuals who take part in your organization's activities/services?

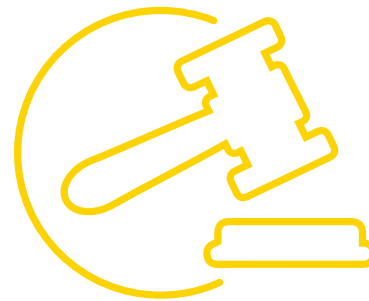
Concrete solutions:

- Indicate clearly in your mission statement that your organization is open to diversity and/or that all families are welcome (single parent, transparental, multi-parent, adoptive, foster, multi-generational, multi-ethnic, blended, homoparental, immigrant, etc.).
 - The mission statement of an organization is often widely used. It can turn up in letters to members/families, on your website, in social media, in your pamphlets and in resource lists, etc. It's often the first thing that people will read when they approach your organization. It is therefore an excellent way to show your openness to diversity.
- Revise your definition of family to make it more inclusive. Family Diversity: It's all about love!
- In your various policies and all other official documents don't hesitate to make explicit about certain terms like "violence," "respect," "inclusion" "discrimination," "harrassment," etc. These concepts can be very large and vague if they are not well-defined and explained.

6

POLICY (CONTINUED)

- For example, in your anti-discrimination/anti-harassment policy you can explicitly name different types of discrimination and harassment (ex. Homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, etc.) and how to recognize them concretely.
- Consult the document “How to Establish Inclusive and Non-Discriminatory Policies” in the section “Legal Support for Promoting Inclusion” on famillesLGBT.org/tools in the section “Safe and inclusive environments”.
 - Concerning your official rules (or code of conduct), you can actually hang them up in your organization, to send out a positive message about inclusion to all people that use your services.
- For example, in your code of conduct, you can write, “Homophobic, transphobic, racist and sexist comments and actions, as well as insults about gender expression are not accepted here.”
- It will be much easier to intervene if you hear a homophobic comment because you can refer directly to your organization’s commonly known rules or code of conduct, that explicitly proscribe this type of violence.
 - Your hiring policy can be made equally inclusive. You can use affirmative action to preferentially hire someone from a minority group, all things being equal.



STAFF TRAINING

Continuing education can come from diverse organizations and institutions and can take on a variety of forms:

- LGBT+ organizations, health and social service sector, etc.;
- Educational material, subscriptions to newsletters, etc.;
- Getting involved in LGBT+ networks, etc.

Reflection:

- Did you ever do a training on sexual and gender diversity?
- Knowing that realities and vocabulary evolve rapidly and that there are so many diverse experiences, what can you do to keep up-to-date?
- What are the organizations and institutions in your city/region/province that can help you with continuing education? What resources can these organizations and institutions provide to you?

Concrete solutions:

- Offer continuing education to employees, volunteers, interns, to the administration, etc. of your organization on different issues and realities linked to sexual and gender diversity. A number of organizations offer training sessions for free or with fees. Here are some examples:
 - LGBT Family Coalition, National Public Health Institute (INSPQ), gender Creative Kids, Institute for Sexual Minority health (ISMH), etc.
 - Check out the LGBT+ resources or the allies network (if it exists) in your city/region.
 - Contact LGBT+ resources if you need help for a specific situation having to do with sexual or gender diversity or if you would like educational material to provide to your staff members.
 - Visit the LGBT Family Coalition website to find tools (famillesLGBT.org/tools) or contact us (info@famillesLGBT.org or 514 878-7600).
 - Call Interligne [1 888 505-1010] or visit their LGBT online resource guide (guideLGBT.org) to find information, tools and resources in your city/region.

STAFF TRAINING (CONTINUED)

- Subscribe to the newsletters of LGBT+ organizations or follow their Facebook pages to keep up with new tools, resources, training sessions, terminology, research, practices, news, etc. realities and issues are diverse and rapidly evolving, so, keep up to date!
 - LGBT Family Coalition: find us on Facebook or subscribe to our newsletter by writing to us at info@famillesLGBT.org with "allies newsletter" in the title of the email.
 - Research Chair on Homophobia at UQAM: chairehomophobie.uqam.ca

