



Facilitator Guide

www.secularsafezone.org

A Program of the Secular Student Alliance





www.secularsafezone.org
info@secularsafezone.org

This Facilitator Guide and the Secular Safe Zone program are produced by the Secular Student Alliance, a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit corporation. If you would like to learn more about the Secular Student Alliance, or to support the Secular Safe Zone and other Secular Student Alliance programs, please visit the website at www.secularstudents.org.

This manual is a product of many people at the Secular Student Alliance. If you would like to reproduce any part of this work, please contact us before you do so. In most cases, we will be happy to give you permission to use this material.

Copyright © Secular Student Alliance 2014

Secular Student Alliance
P.O. Box 2371
Columbus, OH 43216-2371

Phone: 614.441.9588
Fax: 877.842.9474

Email ssa@secularstudents.org
Website: www.secularstudents.org

Contents

Overview of the Secular Safe Zone Program	4
Who Can Participate?	5
Expectations of the Secular Safe Zone Ally	5
Overview of the Secular Safe Zone Facilitator Role	6
What is a Facilitator?	6
Expectations of the Secular Safe Zone Facilitator	7
Institutional Implementation Guide	9
Step One: Evaluate your Ability	9
Step Two: Identify the Need	10
Step Three: Plan Implementation Strategy	11
Step Four: Prepare Materials	12
Step Five: Execute Implementation & Oversee Secular Safe Zone Program	14
Training Secular Safe Zone Allies	14
Purpose and Basis of the Secular Safe Zone Training	14
Implementing Ally Trainings	15
Implementing Your Training	16
Issues with Trainings	18
Dealing with Resistance - A Facilitator's Guide	19
Complaints Against Allies or the Program	19
Limiting Liabilities	20
Limiting Ally, Facilitator, and Institutional Liability	20
Limiting Liability for the Secular Student Alliance	21
Congratulations!	22
Appendix A	23
Sample Program Proposal: The University of Montana Allies Program	23
Background and Development of the UM Allies Program	23
How the UM Allies Program Would Enhance the UM Campus	24

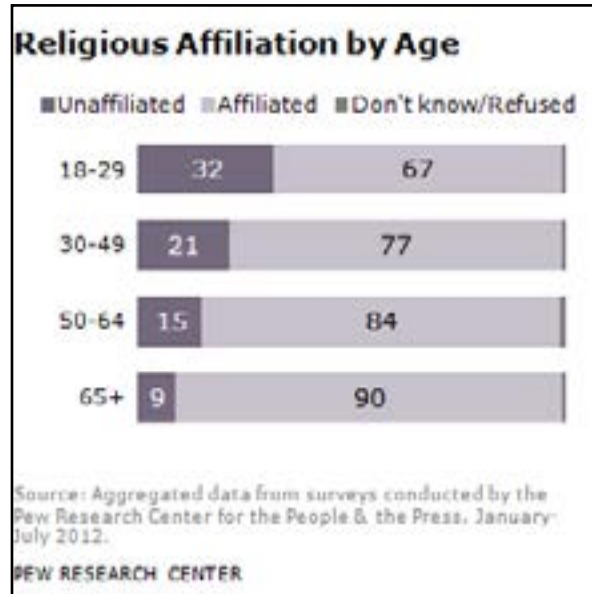


Overview of the Secular Safe Zone Program

Secularism is growing rapidly in America. According to a report by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life from 2012, 32% of people under the age of thirty currently don't identify with any major organized religion.

These numbers have grown steadily over the past decade and they show no signs of stopping. As America's population becomes more and more secular, it will become necessary to create new institutions that build community, help people find purpose, and answer important questions about life and our world.

Unfortunately these increasing numbers are not always accompanied with a new attitude about secular students. Polls and studies continue to show that secular individuals are mistrusted, looked down upon, and discriminated against.¹ Many everyday activities such as the Pledge of Allegiance alienate secular students from our culture and present a society that is inclusive only to those who share a belief in a particular type of deity.



The Secular Safe Zone was established to help curb these feelings of alienation, to push back against discrimination, and to provide fertile ground in which to create new communities and institutions that address the needs of a growing secular population.

For many years there has been a great deal of misunderstanding about secular students. Research on this demographic is limited and very new: their identities, motivations, beliefs, and needs are just now beginning to be understood. One of the first and most informative papers to shed light on this population was Kathy Goodman and John Mueller's article, titled "Atheist Students on Campus: From Misconceptions to Inclusion."² In the article, Goodman and Mueller identify secular students as a silent minority that is in need of inclusion and support from educators. Specifically, they outline four steps educators could take to improve the lives and understanding of secular students. They suggested educators should:

- Learn more about atheism
- Create an open and welcoming environment
- Include atheism in the curriculum
- Create safe spaces

The creation of safe spaces is especially important. A series of studies by Will Gervais, Azim Shariff, and Ara Norenzayan in 2011³ demonstrated how the perception of atheists in a community impacted the attitudes participants had about atheists. These studies showed that when atheists are perceived as being a prevalent part of the community, discrimination and ill-feelings towards atheists sharply decreased.

¹ Bramlett, Damian M., "Godless Americans: How Non-Religious Persons are Labeled as Deviant in a Religious Society" (2012). Master's Theses. Paper 4224. http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4224

Garneau, Christopher R. H., "Perceived Stigma and Stigma Management of Midwest Seculars." Dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2012.

² Goodman, K. M., & Mueller, J. A. (2009). Invisible, marginalized, and stigmatized: Understanding and addressing the needs of atheist students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 125, 55-163.

³ Gervais, Will M.; Shariff, Azim F.; Norenzayan, Ara. "Do you believe in atheists? Distrust is central to anti-atheist prejudice." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 101(6), Dec 2011, 1189-1206. doi: 10.1037/a0025882



The Secular Safe Zone program seeks to equip Allies and role models to create a welcoming and safe environment for secular students. The presence of Secular Safe Zone Allies normalizes nontheism, which, according to the Gervais et al. studies (2011), will help to curtail discrimination against secular students as they become an increasingly visible part of their community.

Safe spaces are not just important for ending discrimination, but are also an important aspect of ensuring the mental health and future well-being of secular students. Many of the students that Allies find themselves working with are adolescents or young adults. This time of life is important for psychological development because it is the point at which many students begin experimenting with new roles, beliefs, and ideas. This experimentation allows the young adult to “try on” many different hats, so-to-speak, and allows them the room they need to find and settle into roles they find genuine and fulfilling⁴.

Without safe spaces in which to test ideas and question beliefs, students’ psychological development may be arrested. This arrested development can lead to a number of mental health issues in the future. As it currently stands, many secular students do not have the resources or space needed to experiment with their roles. This means that many may choose religion not because they find it genuinely fulfilling, but because it is the only social and ideological opportunity available to them.

Considering the environment in which secular students find themselves, it is easy to see the need for Secular Safe Zones. Secular Safe Zones provide students with the resources and opportunities they need to explore their world and to find a worldview that genuinely suits them and helps them accomplish their goals. By normalizing a nontheistic worldview, an Ally also discrimination against secular students. This, in turn, has the effect of creating a safer environment in which students feel that they can come out as a nontheist or openly question religion without being bullied.

Who Can Participate?

The short answer is: anyone. It is our firm belief that any person who interacts with secular students, whether in a professional capacity or in day-to-day life, can benefit from this training and from becoming an Ally. We don’t expect you to save the world. Just by standing up and identifying yourself as an Ally, you are doing very important work.

Much of the material in this guide (and our *Resource Guide for Allies*) is geared toward educators. As an educational non-profit, the Secular Student Alliance (the parent organization that operates the Secular Safe Zone) spends a great deal of its time working with and developing resources for students and educators. However, as was said above, it is our belief that anyone can use this training. While the examples and some of the information may seem specific to those in the educational profession, we ensure you that it is just as applicable to a scout leader, a police officer, or a store manager.

Likewise, while the this guide focuses on implementation within the context of a university or college setting, we believe that the Secular Safe Zone can be implemented in a variety of institutions with some customization. If you are interested in implementing a program in a different context and need additional guidance, please contact us at info@secularsafezone.org.

Expectations of the Secular Safe Zone Ally

These expectations are presented to remind you what we require of Secular Safe Zone Allies. Later in the manual we will have a new set of expectations for Facilitators, but be sure to familiarize yourself with both lists as it will be important for you to know and understand them, and why they exist.

4 Hunt, M. M. 2007. *The Story of Psychology*. New York: Anchor Books.



The Secular Student Alliance provides recommendations, support, our experience, and certain boundaries to Allies; the particulars of how Allies relate with students are generally for the student and the Ally to define. We encourage this flexibility as, by being in-person on the same campus or institution, the student is generally in a better position to share information about their particular situation and receive personalized support.

Allies are required to do the following to maintain their relationship with the Secular Student Alliance, the parent organization of the Secular Safe Zone program. Please let us know immediately if an Ally violates any of these expectations, or otherwise puts you in a position where you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

1. Allies maintain the Secular Safe Zone poster or card prominently in their professional space (which, for Resident Advisors or others in-dorm, may be the outside of your room).
2. Allies have reviewed and understand the training materials available on secularsafezone.org. These training materials provide recommendations and our experience working with secular students.
3. Allies follow all laws (including any rules from their campus or institution), and never violate anyone's personal property, privacy, or autonomy. Further, Allies avoid situations that suggest any form of impropriety.
4. Allies never "out" someone's religious or non-religious identity. Just because you "come out" to an Ally doesn't mean you have to be "out" to everyone.
5. Allies provide support and an open listening environment. However, Allies do not attempt to engage in counseling or therapy at a level expected of a professional counselor or therapist (unless they are, in fact, a licensed counselor or therapist, and are willing to take on that professional relationship).
6. Allies report all incidents of bullying, threats of self-harm, or threats of violence to the proper authorities, just as they would any other incident.
7. Allies never engage in romantic, physical, or sexual activities with a student.
8. Allies meet with students only in their professional space, or in a space that is sufficiently open to the public (such as a coffee shop on campus). Allies do not meet with students in your home, their home, or other secluded areas.
9. If an Ally has any questions regarding these expectations, please contact the Secular Student Alliance (info@secularsafezone.org) so we can provide personalized support.

Overview of the Secular Safe Zone Facilitator Role

In this section we will provide you with a broad picture and definition of what role you will be taking on as a Facilitator for the Secular Safe Zone. The topics we cover in this section will be revisited in depth later in the manual.

What is a Facilitator?

A Secular Safe Zone Facilitator is an Ally who has received specialized training to create campus-wide Secular Safe Zone programs at their institution. Facilitators provide Allies within their institution with guidance, training, access to resources, and supervision. Specifically, the Facilitator will be responsible for:



Implementing and overseeing the Secular Safe Zone program at their institution

The Facilitator is the individual who utilizes the resources provided by the national Secular Safe Zone program to create a customized program for their specific institution. See the “Institutional Implementation” section of this guide for more details on what this entails.

Serving as the public face of the program at their institution

The Facilitator will be the public face of their institution’s Secular Safe Zone program. This means that they will be the go-to person for media reporters, administrators, students, Allies, and other programs and individuals who require more information about the Secular Safe Zone program within the institution.

Training and Supporting Allies

The Facilitator will be in charge of scheduling and running Ally trainings at their institution. The Facilitator is also responsible for providing Allies with supervision, guidance, and resources when necessary. This means that the Facilitator is responsible for ensuring Allies comply with the expectations set by the national Secular Safe Zone program, and addressing complaints that may come up about the program or specific Allies. These issues are addressed later in this manual, in the sections Training Secular Safe Zone Allies, Dealing with Resistance - a Facilitator’s Guide, and Limiting Liabilities.

Serving as an Ally

The Facilitator is still an Ally themselves and can (and should!) still act in that capacity. They should display the Secular Safe Zone sign in their office (hopefully along with their Facilitator certification) and endeavor to mentor and nurture students who come to them for assistance. The role of the Facilitator does not replace the responsibilities of being an Ally!

Expectations of the Secular Safe Zone Facilitator

We provide recommendations, support, our experience, and certain boundaries for maintaining a relationship with the Secular Student Alliance. We also provide our own training materials, which you can adapt to your particular style. The particulars of how you train others are for you to define. We encourage this flexibility as different Facilitators have different strengths and interests when it comes to how they present material, and your campus or institution may have unique cultures that warrant emphasizing different aspects of the Secular Safe Zone training.

We have the following specific boundaries for maintaining a Facilitator relationship with the Secular Student Alliance:

1. You are a Secular Safe Zone Ally in good standing with the Secular Student Alliance, and continue abiding by the boundaries and expectations of that program. We incorporate those boundaries and expectations by reference into the Facilitator program.
2. You maintain Secular Safe Zone signage prominently in your professional space.
3. When we update our core training materials available on www.secularsafezone.org (we’ll send you an email), you review any new or updated materials within a reasonable period of time.
4. At least once per year, you lead or co-lead a Secular Safe Zone training. This training can be in coordination with your own institution, or with another institution, such as a local Unitarian Universalist congregation or as part of a professional conference you attend. If you need help finding potential host institutions, contact us - we can probably connect you with an interested organization!
5. If you substantially modify our slides or other presentation materials, you send us a copy at least two weeks ahead of either the presentation, or two weeks ahead of when the materials



become available to attendees (whichever comes first). We're very flexible on how you adapt our materials, but want to ensure your adaptations don't accidentally contradict the core principles of the program.

6. If you substantially modify our slides or other presentation materials, you agree that we can put your adapted slides or materials on www.secularsafezone.org, or incorporate your adaptations into future versions of the materials we make available (we promise to credit you wherever possible).
7. After the presentation, you send us the following information (see below):
 - a. What institution hosted the training?
 - b. How many people attended the training?
 - c. What went well, and what will you change for next time?
 - d. An "action photo" of you mid-presentation and/or photos of the attendees together, that we may promote on our website, social media, etc.
 - e. Paper Ally registration forms to enter into our system.
8. If you have any questions regarding these boundaries, contact the Secular Student Alliance so we can clarify the boundary based upon your particular situation.

Post-training reports can be sent in either of two ways. You may complete the webform at www.secularsafezone.org/facilitators/training_report, which will be quicker but may not work well if you have large files. You may alternately use the form found at the end of this book to send a paper packet to our office:

Secular Student Alliance
Attn: Secular Safe Zone Coordinator
P.O. Box 2371
Columbus, OH 43216

Aside from holding at least one training per year, we do not have a "minimum" or "maximum" hours worked for Facilitators, or specific required availability. We only ask that you be reasonably available as an Ally or Facilitator so long as you maintain the Secular Safe Zone poster/card and are listed on our website.

Any Facilitator is free to end his or her relationship with the Secular Student Alliance at any time, for any reason or no reason at all. The Secular Student Alliance may end the relationship with a Facilitator for any reason or no reason at all, and will end the relationship if we become or are made aware of any boundary violations.

Payment and Fees for Facilitators and Ally Training

The Secular Student Alliance does not charge Facilitators for the Facilitator relationship. Facilitators are prohibited from charging a fee for potential Allies to attend their Facilitator training, with the following exceptions:

1. Facilitators may put on a training as part of a paid conference that is not generally open to the public (and limit attendance to conference attendees), so long as conference attendees are not charged extra for training attendance. In the event the paid conference generally charges a per-workshop or per-seminar fee to attendees, the conference may assign a fee to the training, so long as that fee is the lowest per-workshop or per-seminar fee assigned to any other workshop or seminar (so if any workshops or seminars are free, then the Secular Safe Zone training must also be free).



2. Facilitators may accept an honorarium or expense reimbursement from a host institution for putting on the training, so long as the Facilitator informs the Secular Student Alliance prior to accepting the honorarium or expense reimbursement. We do not require a portion of the payment, we simply want to better understand the demand for the Secular Safe Zone program.

Financial support of the national Secular Student Alliance is graciously accepted from any member of the public (Facilitator, Ally, student, or otherwise). Visit www.secularsafezone.org/donate for more information.

Institutional Implementation Guide

The Secular Safe Zone can function on a number of levels. At its most basic form, a single Ally can create a Secular Safe Zone in his or her professional space. In a slightly more involved form, several Allies from the same institution may create a small network of Secular Safe Zones within their institution. The Facilitator, however, takes the program to a new level, by creating an institutionalized Secular Safe Zone with support and recognition at many levels of the institution.

The implementation guide here focuses on implementation at a college or university campus, as this is the “default” setting for the Secular Safe Zone program — but this guide can easily be adapted to implement a Secular Safe Zone program in a variety of other settings, including (though certainly not limited to) high schools, community organizations, businesses, counseling centers, and much more.

Step One: Evaluate your Ability

Taking on the role of a Secular Safe Zone Facilitator requires commitment, but we do not want the responsibilities of being a Facilitator to be cumbersome. Before stepping into this role, you should thoroughly evaluate your ability to handle the responsibilities of a Facilitator, and we strongly encourage you to consider the occupational benefits you will incur (e.g., developing your CV, gaining experience) in light of the potential risks you may encounter. Risks will likely vary depending upon institution-type, your specific department, and where you are in your career. To help you evaluate your ability to be a Facilitator, we have noted a few things to consider prior to implementation:

Increasing Workload: By becoming a Facilitator, you will be increasing your workload. We strongly encourage potential Facilitators to consider their individual academic demands – teaching load, research and publication expectations, and institutional/discipline service commitments. The workload of being a Facilitator will depend on three key factors: level of program implementation, level of institutional implementation, and level of involvement. We strongly encourage potential Facilitators to think about the overall goals they want to achieve and the material (e.g., website) and non-material (e.g., manpower) resources needed.

Career Path: The scholarship on nontheism in the U.S. shows that non-believers, and atheists in particular, are situated outside the moral boundaries of civic life. We strongly encourage potential Facilitators to consider where they are on their career path and assess the campus climate regarding non-theism for faculty and staff. If you do not have tenure, you may want to re-think what role (if any) you want to have in spearheading the implementation of a Secular Safe Zone program. Similarly, some faculty are required to sign lifestyle statements. (For more information on Lifestyle Statements, visit: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/05/14/shorter-university-faculty-leaving-over-new-lifestyle-statements>) If this applies to you, you’ll need to decide if your involvement in this program is a violation of your contract. Occupational risk may be significantly lower for faculty members with tenure.



Administrative Resistance: We strongly encourage potential Facilitators to try to ascertain the level of administrative resistance they may encounter by thinking about a few key considerations, such as institution type and location, how the student population rates on all measures of diversity, how committed the administration is to providing diversity services and education, and if other programs for students with parallel marginalized identities – LGB/trans, women, students of color – were successfully implemented.

If, after considering the range of issues, both listed and not listed above, you decide you want to become a Secular Safe Zone Facilitator, welcome aboard! Now that you've made this decision, we can begin the real work of implementing a Secular Safe Zone Program.

Step Two: Identify the Need

Most institutions have limited resources, and can not implement every program that comes their way. In order to successfully implement a Secular Safe Zone program at your institution, you will need to demonstrate both that there is a specific need for secular student support, and that the Secular Safe Zone addresses that need. There may be competition for resources, in which case you may need to demonstrate that the need for this program outweighs the need for other programs.

We have compiled data that provides national-level information about secular students and the challenges they face, included as a “Proving the Need” packet in this manual. The information in this packet outlines and explains:

- Important definitions and concepts
- Statistical data on religion and nonreligion in higher education, taken from the 2012 General Social Survey and 2013 American Religious Identification Survey.
- Statistical and narrative data on discrimination types and the impact of intolerance on nonreligious students
- Suggestions and resources for institution-specific customization
- A bullet point summary of how the Secular Safe Zone program can meet the needs of the secular students at your institution
- References and additional media stories covering nontheist issues

These materials consistently show that secular students need support above and beyond what is typically available, and justify the need for Secular Safe Zones. However, you can make that case even stronger by demonstrating that this is both a need at large, as well as a need right here in your community. To do this, you will need to find information specific to your institution, which may be hard to do due to a lack of information available. Some areas you can assess/explore within your institution are:

- **Student Organizations:** What is the ratio of religious to nontheist student organizations? (i.e., organizations that specifically provide a social outlet for nonreligious students). An typical approximation is 50:1. If secular student organizations do exist, are there instances of religious and secular groups partnering with one another on specific projects/programs, or are the secular groups excluded from the larger campus community?
- **Explore Class Programming:** How many classes are offered on religion? Does your institution offer a Religious Studies major/minor/graduate program? How many classes are offered on secular worldviews? (You may explore the philosophy and sociology department class offerings for this information). For an example of programming that focuses on secular perspectives, see: <http://www.trincoll.edu/Academics/centers/issc/Pages/Curriculum-Development.aspx>
- **Demographic Information/Campus Climate:** Institutions often administer some type of campus climate survey and make the information available to the general public. Look at these reports to see if they include any information about secular students. (In some



cases, there may not even be options for secular students to identify as such or report their concerns; this is also telling.)

- **Campus Programs/Forums/Speakers:** Is there a secular perspective present on campus? Are there forums that focus on secularism or non-belief? Have explicitly non-theist speakers given talks on campus? Are secular perspectives included in campus interfaith efforts?
- **Scholarships:** Does your institution disseminate information about scholarship opportunities for atheist students? These opportunities do exist. For example, the American Atheists organization provides scholarship opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate atheist students.

Here are some additional things you can do to generate information specific to your institution/ community:

- **Talk to Students:** If there is an SSA affiliate group on your campus, do an interview or focus group to get an understanding of their campus experiences.
- **Talk to Colleagues:** Have a conversation with colleagues in different disciplines across campus. Find out what classes they teach. When applicable, ask if they include secular/ non-theist perspectives in their curriculum. Find out if anybody is currently doing research on American non-belief.
- **Search News Media:** Do a quick search of news stories, both from your institution and in the greater community, about nonreligious students/groups. Have there been any documented cases of church/state violations at other nearby primary and/or secondary institutions?

Customizing your Training

Once you have institution-specific information, you may find areas in which the Secular Safe Zone program as presented here is not a perfect fit for your institution. That's ok! We invite and encourage our Facilitators to customize the training to meet their institutional needs. You may find that your campus has a large number of secular students from heavily religious backgrounds (such as formerly Muslim students, students from the black community in which the church plays a central community role, or students from a Mormon background). You may need to add material helping Secular Safe Zone Allies at your institution address these specialized needs. Alternately, if you're at a religious institution, you may need to find ways to balance the goal of providing a safe space for secular students against institutional values.

We strongly encourage you to customize the program to fit your institutional needs. Tailoring the Secular Safe Zone to meet the specific needs of your campus will help you generate interest and can increase the likelihood of institutional cooperation. We are happy to help with program modifications upon request. Please remember that the Facilitator Expectations require that you send us a copy of your modifications at least two weeks before you launch them, for two reasons – we want to ensure that the core principles of the program are being upheld and to enable us to make those adjustments available to other Secular Safe Zone Facilitators who may have similar needs.

If you require assistance with making institutional-specific adjustments, just contact our staff at info@secularsafezone.org.

Step Three: Plan Implementation Strategy

To ensure the highest level of success for your institution's Secular Safe Zone implementation, you'll want to work with the right people, which requires making some decisions. You will need to think about the appropriate levels of institutional implementation and program implementation, and different options for the level of additional faculty and staff involvement for pursuing implementation. The level of institutional implementation and additional involvement will likely depend on the needs of your institution



and/or the expected amount of administrative resistance you may encounter (if any). The level of program implementation can range from simple to in-depth, holding a few Ally training sessions each year or incorporating Ally training into all institution staff training, and will likely depend on your institution's needs and the particular program/department/office that houses the Secular Safe Zone program.

Institutional implementation can occur on three different levels – department-wide, college-wide, or campus-wide. With department- and college-wide implementation, a particular department (e.g., sociology) or college (e.g., College of Liberal Arts) sponsors the program. If the need is low and/or you expect a high amount of resistance, you might implement the Secular Safe Zone program at the department or specific college level.

Facilitators will need to work with a sponsoring entity to determine if trainings are mandatory or encouraged, who should attend, how often trainings are offered, and the number of trainings/hours individuals must complete. When attempting to plan an implementation strategy at the department or college levels, it's important to think about the type and availability of resources that you will need to implement the program at your institution.

If the needs of the nonreligious students at your institution is high and/or the expected amount of administrative resistance is low, you may consider working towards campus-wide implementation, or program institutionalization. Facilitators would partner with whatever office/department/program handles diversity and inclusivity efforts: this might be a multicultural center, a diversity office, or just a division of the student affairs or student life office. You might look at which office provides support for LGBT students, who runs the campus climate surveys, the office in charge of the interfaith center, or similar inclusivity efforts. Your institution may have multiple offices that connect to this subject area. Perhaps you have an office for diversity programs as well as an interfaith center under the auspices of a different department. That's ok! In fact, it means that you may have multiple sources of support for the program.

If both the needs of your institution and expected amount of administrative assistance is high, you might consider pursuing campus-wide implementation through a collaborative effort and develop a steering committee comprised of interested faculty, staff, and student representatives across the campus.

You can read about implementing a faculty-driven Campus Allies Program here: <http://www.usu.edu/accesscenter/lgbtqa/allies/history.cfm>

You might want to start small and build up, but if an opportunity for wider involvement presents itself, don't hesitate to take advantage of it!

Step Four: Prepare Materials

Depending of the level of institutional implementation you are trying to achieve, you will have to communicate your plan to implement a Secular Safe Zone program at your institution. This might be done through a conversation with your department chair, or you may be required to develop and present a program proposal. If pursuing campus-wide implementation on your own, you might want talk with your department chair or supervisor first and mention what you are trying to do. This person might be a useful resource (and potential Ally) and may be able to provide you with specific contacts, helping you cut through bureaucratic red tape.

Before you begin sending emails to various offices, you may want to do a bit more research. For example, if your institution has an LGBT Safe Zone, consider contacting the person in charge and see if he/she is willing to share information about their program's implementation process. By taking some time to learn from those who have successfully gone through the process you are about to embark on, you may be saving yourself time in the long-run and increasing your chance of success. Successful programs



for students with parallel marginalized identities can be an invaluable resource after which you can model your program.

Once you have a sense of what the administration will require, you should begin compiling the information you will convey to the entities with whom you plan to meet with.

Developing a Proposal

By providing you with a [“Proving the Need” packet](#), we’ve helped develop much of your proposal. Depending on the level of institutional and program implementation, your full proposal can include some/all of the following:

- Cover Letter
- Executive Summary
- Background and Development of the Secular Safe Zone Program
- Proving the Need Packet (national data)
- Statement of Need for your institution
- Institution’s Non-Discrimination Policy (optional)

You might also include the following as an Appendix/Appendices in your proposal:

- *Secular Safe Zone Resource Guide for Allies*
- Additional Resources (e.g., web links to media coverage, annotated bibliography, web links to national resources, etc.)

To see an example of a proposal for a similar program, see Appendix A.

Additionally, identify some areas in your institution where you would like information about the Secular Safe Zone to appear. After all, the signs on Allies’ offices will be much more effective if students know what the sign means. A few suggestions are:

- New staff and/or student orientation materials
- University website
- Administrative offices, such as admissions, academic advising, provost or principal, registrar, athletics
- Multicultural center
- Interfaith center
- Visitor’s center
- Health center
- Student Union
- Counseling offices

Remember, you’ll need to work with the sponsoring entity or partnering office to make a plan for program implementation. You might be able to do it in your first meeting, or it might be a much longer process spanning weeks and involving multiple departments. But during your meeting, be prepared to answer questions like:

Who will take ownership of and/or staff the program?

This is an important question to think about ahead of time. The biggest problem with sustaining a program’s continuation (i.e., institutionalization) is ownership. Can you provide enough institutional memory to ensure the program will continue in your absence? For institutionalization, you’ll want to house the program in a well-established office (e.g., diversity services) and consider if running the program may (eventually) require its own staff position.



What is the projected cost to the institution?

Keep in mind that, depending on the level of institutional and program implementation you are seeking, you are essentially asking participants to take on more work with no incentive. We've provided all the necessary materials on the [national Secular Safe Zone website](#) at no cost to you. The Secular Safe Zone is a relatively low-cost program to implement.

What are the expectations of the sponsoring entity/partnering office?

Here is where you want to realistically outline what you need from the people you'll be working with. Program resources will vary depending on need and scope and can include, but is not limited to, enforcing program requirements, dispersing information via mass email, providing a website for the program, organizing university brown bags, etc.

Contact & Communicate

Congratulations! You are ready to involve the administration. You will need to determine if your institution has an established policy and/or forum for presenting program proposals. If not, you will need to make an appointment with the appropriate person or office, or you may choose to set up a meeting between multiple people if your institution will have multiple involved offices. When presenting your proposal, we strongly encourage you to outline key talking points. Sell them on the idea. Make sure you mention specific things that are relevant to your campus. Have ideas for how you'll alter the training to support these specific needs. It's good to come to the meeting with an idea of what your goals are.

Step Five: Execute Implementation & Oversee Secular Safe Zone Program

Once you are given the green light by the powers that be, there is nothing holding you back. Plan and promote your first training, and remember to submit your paperwork to the national Secular Safe Zone office. To avoid falling prey to the "once and done" mistake, continue to hold your trainings as planned, perhaps even scheduling training in advance. As you continue moving the program forward in future semesters/years, look for creative ways to strengthen and grow the program. This can include things like providing ongoing Ally support, developing a communication network with Secular Safe Zone Facilitators at other institutions, partnering with individuals from other diversity programs on inclusion projects, establishing a relationship with your institution's SSA affiliate group, talk to campus and local media, provide regular updates to the national Secular Safe Zone office, etc. We recommend keeping up-to-date on new research about non-religious students (which you can find on the [national Secular Safe Zone website](#)) and the campus climate at your institution, and we strongly encourage you to revise trainings as necessary. Ensure program continuation by looking out for new potential Facilitators.

Training Secular Safe Zone Allies

The Secular Safe Zone Facilitator is responsible for training Allies at their institution, and this is one of the most important aspects of the Facilitator role. The national Secular Safe Zone program provides the resources necessary to train Allies, but it is the Facilitator's responsibility to utilize these resources and to organize trainings at their institution. In this section, we will discuss the purpose and basis of the training, how to implement trainings, and provide some insight into difficulties you might run into.

Purpose and Basis of the Secular Safe Zone Training

The purpose behind the Secular Safe Zone Ally training is to equip potential Allies with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to be effective and active members of the Secular Safe Zone community.

The first thing that you will need to do is familiarize yourself with the standard Secular Safe Zone training (available at www.secularsafezone.org under "Training Materials"). However, instead of viewing



these resources as an Ally, you'll need to understand them as a Facilitator. For example, it's important that you understand and are familiarized with:

Why Secular Safe Zone Training is Important

The numbers of nontheists in America is rising rapidly. America is quickly becoming a secular nation as it moves into the new century. Just as the religious have institutions that provide community, support, and education, so, too, the secular community in America is now working as it grows to build these institutions.

The Secular Safe Zone training seeks to train Allies who can assist students in exploring religion and topics connected to religion in an unbiased manner. The Ally training also prepares Allies to recognize and respond to issues of discrimination and bullying that secular students may come up against.

The Foundation of the Training

The Secular Safe Zone training is founded on two very important pieces of academic literature. In this section, we'll briefly review each and discuss the way they connect to the training.

Goodman & Mueller, 2009⁵

In an article titled *Atheist Students on Campus: From Misconceptions to Inclusion*, Kathleen Goodman and John Mueller outlined the need for secular students to be recognized and supported on campuses across the nation. The article specifically outlines four points that the authors suggest can help achieve the inclusion of secular students. They encouraged educators to:

1. Learn more about atheism
2. Create a welcoming environment for secular students
3. Include atheism in curriculum
4. Create safe spaces

The Secular Safe Zone incorporates these steps into our program and believes that not only educators, but Allies from all walks of life can help to accomplish these steps. Secular Safe Zone Allies, through their training and continued education, learn more about atheism and help educate others. By returning to their institution and hanging up their sign, they help to create a safe and welcoming environment for secular students, who may be in need of help. And while not every Ally will be able to help include atheism in curricula, by educating others about atheism, fighting misconceptions, and advocating for secular students, Allies are working to achieve these goals, regardless of if they are educators or not.

Gervais et al., 2011⁶

Another study that was essential in forming the foundation of the Secular Safe Zone's training and goals was a six-part study on discrimination and atheists by Gervais, Shariff, and Norenzayan. This research demonstrated that when atheists were perceived as being prevalent in a community, discrimination against them was greatly reduced. In other words, if people know atheists and other nontheists, it becomes much harder for people to bully them or act in a discriminatory manner.

It's easy to see how this research became a cornerstone of the Secular Safe Zone and our training program. By providing a public face and showing that there are nontheists and Allies who support them in the community, we can drastically reduce the discrimination that many secular students face today.

Implementing Ally Trainings

Now that we've covered the background of the training and program, it's time to get into the nuts and bolts of how you take that understanding, and the standard Secular Safe Zone Ally training, and

⁵ Goodman, K. M., & Mueller, J. A. (2009). Invisible, marginalized, and stigmatized: Understanding and addressing the needs of atheist students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 125, 55–163.

⁶ Gervais, Will M.; Shariff, Azim F.; Norenzayan, Ara. "Do you believe in atheists? Distrust is central to anti-atheist prejudice." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 101(6), Dec 2011, 1189-1206. doi: 10.1037/a0025882



implement it at your institution. In this section, we'll cover how to customize the training to make the best use of it at your institution, and go over some of the more hands-on aspects of the training.

The Standard Training

The national Secular Safe Zone training provides its standard training to Facilitators as a starting point. It is available at our website under the "Facilitator Materials" section. It's important to familiarize yourself with this standard training, as it will be the base on which you build your own. Take some time to go through the slides, and understand the flow and purpose behind the different parts of the training. The training is structured in a very similar format to the *Secular Safe Zone Resource Guide for Allies* and covers the topics in a similar order.

Customization

After you are familiar with the standard training, it's time to take it and to customize it for the specific needs and goals of your institution. Every institution will be different and require a different approach, so it's important to understand how the Secular Safe Zone will fit in at your institution. Some things to consider are:

- Collaboration with potential allies (e.g., LGBT groups, religious groups, multicultural/diversity departments or programs, student activities, etc.)
- Existing safe zone programs or trainings (e.g., LGBT safe zones)
- Support from other national or local organizations
- Specific circumstances at your institution that may impact secular students (for example, HBCUs, minority-serving institutions, women's colleges, and religious campuses may all have specific program needs)

Regardless of how you customize your training, the national Secular Safe Zone program requires a few parts of the training to always be included. They are:

- The Ally expectations
- Ensuring that Allies are mentors, not evangelists (i.e., neutrality)
- How to respond to common questions/concerns that students may have
- The connection between the Secular Safe Zone and the Secular Student Alliance

We strongly encourage you to customize the training. However, please remember the Facilitator expectation that you send your modifications to our Secular Safe Zone program coordinator in advance of your training. This ensures that your customizations are in line with the core program, and also helps us make those changes available to other Facilitators addressing similar issues.

Implementing Your Training

Once you've customized your training, it's time to start implementing it. The first step to this is, naturally, to find a venue or space and a time. When scheduling trainings, remember to keep in mind the timing, space, and resources you'll need.

Timing

Depending on who your main focus is and what institution you're at, you'll want to schedule trainings effectively so that they are at a time when the most people can attend. For example, if you are at a university, scheduling a training during exams or on break would not be a good utilization of your resources or time if your audience is mainly students (but it might work well if your audience is faculty and staff!). If your main audience is business professionals, scheduling a training after a long day of work might not encourage many people to attend. So, pay attention to the ideal time for your audience and try to schedule your trainings to best fit that.



Space

Space is another concern you'll want to pay close attention to. For some trainings, a small classroom or meeting room might work. If you're expecting a larger audience, you'll want to take that into account and make sure that there is adequate space. In a larger space, you may also need to arrange for a microphone or other amplification. We also encourage you to ensure that your training location is accessible for any participants with limited mobility.

Resources

For your training, you'll want to make sure ahead of time that you have all of the necessary resources on hand. Typically this will include:

- A computer
- Some type of projection equipment and screen
- A slide clicker (laser pointers are very helpful too)
- A bottle of water
- Notes or a script for your training
- Ally Registration Forms
- *Secular Safe Zone Resource Guide for Allies*
- Secular Safe Zone signage
- Pens and notepaper for participants

Depending on how you've customized your training, this list could change. If your training is more interactive than the standard training program, projection equipment and a slide clicker may not be as important.

So, once you've squared away a venue, a time, and have your resources in order, give yourself time to practice for this presentation. The more polished and professional your training, the more legitimacy your Secular Safe Zone program will have. You can find some resources on public speaking and presentation preparation at the Secular Student Alliance website at www.secularstudents.org/speakerprep.

The Big Day

Once you've practiced, have a space and time, it will soon be the big day. Make sure you dress for the event! This will depend a great deal on where you're giving the training and who the audience is. If you're giving a more casual training with your peers, casual dress may be perfectly fine. However, if it's in a more formal setting, such as a university-wide faculty training, business casual or more formal dress may be more appropriate. Tailor your dress depending on the situation you find yourself in.

On the day of the training, try to be at your venue at least thirty to forty-five minutes early. This will give you adequate time to set up anything that you need and to make sure that there are no technical issues with your training or the equipment you'll be using. You may also want to put up signs outside your venue to let people know that they are in the right place (and to entice some passersby to join, too!).

Soon people will start showing up. Depending on the size of your training you may or may not want to greet each person. If it is a relatively small training, it is helpful to introduce yourself to people as they arrive and invite them to take a seat. At a larger training, it may be easier to do the same thing, but instead of saying it to each individual, try to make several announcements as people come in (as they're likely to arrive in groups). For example, every two minutes or every time a large group comes in, welcome them, invite them to take a seat, let them know they're in the right place and that the training will start shortly. If you're using a projection system for your training, it's a good idea to have a "Welcome" or title slide, as it will help people know they're in the right place.

As it gets closer to the start of the training (about five minutes before) let people know that the training will be starting shortly and try to wrangle stragglers by inviting them to take a seat. At this time, it's best

to take your spot at your podium or at the front of your venue and go through any last-minute preparation you need. Once it's time to begin, jump in and remember to have fun with it!

Bringing the Training to a Close

At the end of your training session, there are a few things that you will want to remember.

You may want to have an allotted time for questions at the end. This is helpful as it allows you to get through your training without being interrupted by questions and a lot of the questions people have are typically covered in the training. If you choose to put aside time, make sure to encourage people at the beginning of the presentation to write down any questions they may have during the training, as they are likely to forget them.

You will also want to make sure that everyone who comes gets an Ally Registration Form. You can hand these out at the beginning or end of your session, depending on the context. However, each Ally must fill one out to complete their training and become a registered Ally. Make sure that you collect the forms from every person after the training. These forms are part of the required training reports (see below).

The national Secular Safe Zone program also needs you to collect data from each training for reporting purposes. We need:

- The date of the event
- Location
- The number of attendees (you might ask someone to help you count attendees as they enter or during the talk)
- The number of Allies registered through the training (based on the collected forms)

Once you've collected the forms and data that you need, wrap up your training by thanking everyone for coming and directing them to the Secular Safe Zone website at www.secularsafezone.org. There, they can access all the training materials (including digital copies of the *Resource Guide for Allies*) and other valuable resources.

Reporting on your Training

Don't forget to send your materials to the Secular Safe Zone office after the training! You can use the paper form at the end of this book, or you can submit your reports electronically at www.secularsafezone.org/content/secular-safe-zone-ally-training-report

Issues with Trainings

As you gain experience with your training, you'll no doubt run into some bumps and challenges. This is normal, so don't be discouraged! In this section, we'll address some of the most common difficulties that the national Secular Safe Zone program encounters, and offer best practices on how to deal with them.

Questions galore!

We highly recommend that you leave questions for the end of your training. This is because most questions tend to be answered during the training and you can quickly get bogged down with questions that you have answers for later in your training.

If it comes to the end of your training and you still have too many questions for the time you've allotted, make sure that people get your contact information so they can follow up with and unanswered questions. If you can, also try to make yourself available for an hour or two after the training so that you can have follow-up conversations if they come up.



Technical Problems

Technical problems seem to always come up, no matter how much you plan beforehand. Being early can often take care of many of these problems, but inevitably something will stop working.

Being familiar with the training (both the original and your own) will help you a great deal when technical problems come up. Try to continue with the training as much as you can without the use of your visual aids. Sometimes switching to a more discussion-based or question-and-answer format is useful in this situation. Know your training well enough that you can adapt to the issues that are likely to come up.

Incomplete Ally Registration Forms or Someone Doesn't Turn One In

Ideally, you should mention to your participants that we need complete information on the forms before collecting them. Try to quickly scan each form as it comes in. If you see any important information is missing (especially contact information) and try and get the person's attention then and there. If you can't or there's too many for you to scan each one, use what contact information you have to get in touch with them. You may be able to utilize institutional resources such as a staff directory to complete missing information.

What if there's a question I'm not sure about?

If a participant asks a question that you're not sure about, be honest. We don't expect Allies or Facilitators to know the answer to every question that comes up. There's always time after a training to go and look up a new issue or to gain new resources. Be sure to follow up with the person afterwards with an answer or additional resources related to their question.

What if someone has suggestions to change the training?

There's plenty of opportunities to improve the Secular Safe Zone program, and there are always plenty of great ideas. It's up to you how you customize your training, but please feel free to pass along interesting ideas to the national office.

Dealing with Resistance - A Facilitator's Guide

Dealing with resistance as a Facilitator is typically the same as dealing with it as an Ally. Most of the information contained in the *Secular Safe Zone Resource Guide for Allies* - such as dealing with resistance from subordinates, peers, administrators and the community - will work perfectly well in situations where you're a Facilitator and we encourage you to refer to it when or if you need to. However, there is one situation in particular which we will highlight in this section.

Complaints Against Allies or the Program

One unique situation that a Facilitator is responsible for is following up on complaints about Allies or the Secular Safe Zone program itself. Dealing with these types of situation is not only the Facilitators' responsibility, but also require a different approach than the other types of resistance we discussed in the Resource Guide for Allies.

Firstly, the national Secular Safe Zone program trusts that you have the required skills and knowledge to handle these complaints. Having said that, the national program does not require any kind of official reporting about these issues. However, we also trust your judgment that if a situation warrants it you'll bring it to our attention. As always, the national program is here to help you address situations if you're not sure how to approach them or need support.

You may receive pseudo-complaints that hinge on the fact that someone is upset that we're a program that works especially for improving the well-being of secular students and those who are non-religious.

“You’re going to hell,” or the like do not merit serious responses (or even responses at all) and we do not consider them true complaints that require your attention.

A quick reminder: we do not expect you to be a detective, police officer, or an ombudsman. If the issue or complaint is personal, involves a crime or harassment, etc. it should be handed off to the proper authorities and handled that way.

In general, when you receive a legitimate complaint, treat it seriously and respect the person reporting it. You’ll want to get these pieces of information:

- Who - Who were the people involved and how can you contact them?
- What - What happened?
- When - When did this take place?
- Where - Where did this take place?

When gathering this information, it’s important to remember that we want to gather the facts, not speculation or opinion. The person involved may have a very complicated idea about why Person X was involved or why they did Y in the boardroom, but that isn’t our concern. Right now, what we need is the simple facts like names, dates, and locations.

After you’ve collected the above information, it will help you to decide what to do next and how to handle the situation. As we said, if it involves a crime, harassment, or the like, you should pass off what information you have to the proper authorities and let them handle it. If it is a situation that you feel you can handle, then follow up with the people involved and help them to resolve the situation.

If an Ally has violated one of the Ally Expectations, please contact the national Secular Safe Zone program and inform the Coordinator at info@secularsafezone.org. If that person has violated the expectations multiple times, or severely enough that their Ally status needs to be revoked, the national program will review the issue.

Limiting Liabilities

Any program providing counseling services (psychologists, therapists, social workers and others) must be aware of the risk of the liabilities produced by negligent performance of those services. In this section, we will review methods to manage those risks and protect both your institution and the Secular Student Alliance from those liabilities.

We recognize that every institution is different, and policies and procedures must address the particular needs of each organization. The law varies in different jurisdictions, and the information discussed in this guide may not be applicable to the law in your state. If specific legal advice is required, consultation with an attorney is recommended. The material in this section is provided as a starting point, not legal advice, and the Secular Student Alliance assumes no liability for reliance upon the information provided in this publication.

Limiting Ally, Facilitator, and Institutional Liability

The first and most important way to limit the liability of all parties involved in the Secular Safe Zone program is to reinforce the fact that **Secular Safe Zone Allies are not counselors**. In no circumstance should an Ally attempt to provide professional counseling or therapy (unless the Ally is in fact a licensed counselor or similar professional and authorized to provide such services within your institution). In any case which requires such services, the Ally should make every effort to get the student into the care of qualified professionals. Allies are mentors, listeners, and teachers: our work is to provide tools and a safe



space for students to explore and understand their worldview - not to act as psychologists, therapists, or counselors.

It is crucial that every Secular Safe Zone Ally in your program understands this distinction. Allies should also be fully aware of this program's requirements that students be referred to professional care whenever necessary. These are the two most important things you can do to limit your liabilities.

Your institution probably already has established procedures for handling bullying, harassment, students at risk of self-harm or suicide, and other such situations. Secular Safe Zone Allies should always be aware of and follow these procedures. If guidance in these materials directly contradicts your institutional procedures, Allies should default to the established institutional procedures.

Your institution is also likely to have insurance policies which protect the organization and its employees, volunteers, and others from liability. When establishing your institution's Secular Safe Zone program, part of your responsibility as a Facilitator will be to consult with the appropriate parties to ensure that all insurance policies are adjusted as necessary to cover the Secular Safe Zone program, Facilitators, and Allies.

We continually review and revise the Secular Safe Zone materials, and update all Facilitators and Allies of any changes made.

As a Facilitator, you are responsible for reading and understanding such changes, as well as ensuring that they are effectively communicated to all Allies within your program. Ensuring that you keep your program and Allies up to date will provide further protection from liability.

What if the institutional procedures are wrong?

In a society where nontheists are so frequently misunderstood and negative stereotypes abound, it is possible that your institutional policies are at odds with the needs of secular students. For example, your institutional policy may require referring an individual to a 12-step addiction recovery program, even though such programs are religious/spiritual in nature. In such situations, an Ally might reach out to an institutional official and discuss the specific situation to explore alternatives; however, if such an option is not available or the situation requires immediate action (e.g., a student at risk of self-harm or suicide), Allies should follow the institution's established procedures.

Where such policies exist, we encourage you work with your institution's policy-makers to amend them to be more supportive of nontheists. Secular Safe Zone staff can work with your institution to improve such policies - contact info@secularsafezone.org for assistance.

Limiting Liability for the Secular Student Alliance

As the organization operating the Secular Safe Zone program, the Secular Student Alliance must also manage its risk of liability. We achieve this primarily by establishing clear boundaries for Allies and Facilitators. Any Ally or Facilitator in violation of those boundaries will be removed from the program.

Ally expectations are communicated in the Secular Safe Zone Resource Guide for Allies as well as during in-person trainings, video or slide-based trainings, and as part of the Ally registration process. As a Facilitator, it is your responsibility to ensure that Allies within your institutional program are aware of and in compliance with those expectations. Facilitators must remove Allies in violation of the program expectations, and you must notify the national Secular Safe Zone coordinator of the removal so we can update our records as well. The Secular Student Alliance may bar anyone from the Secular Safe Zone program, but especially any Allies with multiple violations of the program expectations.

Facilitators are held accountable to the Facilitator expectations, which include the Ally expectations and address additional areas of responsibility. The Facilitator expectations are communicated in this Secular Safe Zone Resource Guide for Facilitators as well as during in-person trainings and as part of the Facilitator registration process.

Facilitators in violation of their expectations will be removed from the program. If such a removal results in a lack of registered Facilitators at your institution, Allies at your institution may also be removed from the Secular Safe Zone program. Please respect the importance of understanding and following all established expectations.

If you have any questions or concerns about the expectations, or if the expectations come into conflict with your institutional policies or procedures, please contact us at info@secularsafezone.org. We can work with you to match the Secular Safe Zone program to your institutional needs.

Congratulations!

If you've gotten this far, then you are ready for the challenges and rewards of implementing a Secular Safe Zone program at your institution! We are delighted to have you on board as a Secular Safe Zone Facilitator and as part of the program.

We encourage you to visit the [Facilitator Program page](#) on the Secular Safe Zone website. You'll find all the materials and tools you need to run a successful program, as well as reporting tools and other resources. As the Facilitator program grows, we expect to add program customization modules and other materials to this page - so please send us any updates or customizations you create! This is also where we'll post updates to the core program materials.

We are here to support your program! If you have any questions or concerns, challenges or unusual circumstances, please contact us. We also love to hear your success stories! You may email our Coordinator at info@secularsafezone.org, or call us at the Secular Student Alliance office at 614-441-9588 x107.



Appendix A

Sample Program Proposal: The University of Montana Allies Program

July 24, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Faculty, staff, and students from the University of Montana are pleased to announce the development of "The University of Montana Allies Program". The Allies Program has been designed to promote a more welcoming, safe, and inclusive campus for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and their heterosexual supporters. We are requesting administrative and financial support from the University in order to implement the program on the Missoula campus; please see the attached itemized budget and list of pledged contributions to date. The estimated total cost is \$9,300.

LGBT students often find campus environments to be unwelcoming and even hostile. Students whose emotional and physical safety is at-risk can experience fear and anxiety, isolation and invisibility, fear of disclosure, and high levels of stress. In turn, these experiences can interfere with academic achievement and personal development. Inhospitable campus settings may also contribute to attrition and turnover among promising LGBT students and staff who fear an oppressive environment.

Several high-profile incidents in recent years (the burning of a lesbian UM professor's home, brutal attacks toward LGBT and perceived-to-be-LGBT students and individuals in the community) have demonstrated that homophobia remains alive and well in Missoula. Despite efforts by the University to support and protect its LGBT community members, LGBT UM students continue to experience threats and insults daily because of their sexual minority status. Such experiences and the campus climate that they engender undoubtedly interfere with LGBT individuals' ability to enjoy the equal opportunities for "education, employment, and participation in University activities" guaranteed by the University's Non-Discrimination Policy.

Please see the appendix to this document for further information about this proposed program and its benefits to the university community, along with an itemized budget. Thank you for your consideration and your support. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact [name deleted] at [phone number] or contact [name deleted] at [phone number].

Sincerely,

Members of the Allies Program Committee

(Names of Steering Committee Members Deleted)

Background and Development of the UM Allies Program

The UM Allies Program is modeled after "Safe Zone" programs, which exist in many college campuses throughout the US. In this appendix, we describe "Safe Zone" programs, the current resources available for LGBT individuals at the UM campus, and how the UM Allies program can meet existing needs in our community.

"Safe Zone" Programs

Dozens of universities across the country have implemented "Safe Zone" programs to improve the campus climate for LGBT students by increasing awareness, enhancing conversations around LGBT issues, providing safe space, and educating and providing skills to confront homophobia and



heterosexism (Poynter & Tubbs, 2007). Through these programs, heterosexual allies are publicly identified as safe people to whom LGBT students can go for support, resources, and referrals, with the goals of alleviating previously held misperceptions, encouraging affirming group identification, and encouraging others to participate (Poynter & Tubbs, 2007).

Do “Safe Zone” Programs Work?

Anecdotal evidence has indicated that such programs raise awareness of LGBT issues and encourage allies to become more supportive of LGBT students (Hothem & Keene, 1998). More recently, a qualitative, ethnographic evaluation demonstrated that such a program on the campus of a large Midwestern university had a positive impact on the visibility of LGBT individuals and issues, increased support for LGBT people, and made LGBT staff and students feel welcome, safe, and valued on campus, thereby promoting their recruitment and retention. These impacts were both symbolic and tangible (Evans, 2002).

What Current Support Exists for LGBT Individuals on The Missoula Campus?

The Missoula campus of the University of Montana is home to two groups that explicitly support LGBT students and staff. The Lambda Alliance is a student group committed to “increas(ing) the visibility and acceptance of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community through education, information, socialization, and support”. The Outfield Alliance is a group of LGBT UM faculty, staff, and graduate students and their supporters that “functions as a support network, works on gay-related issues at the University, sponsors educational events on campus, and provides support to victims of discrimination”. Both groups consist predominantly of LGBT individuals, and they believe that a campus-wide program that involves and nurtures heterosexual allies is essential if the UM campus is to become truly affirmative toward and inclusive of its LGBT community members.

Members of both the Lambda and Outfield Alliances have been instrumental in the development of the Allies Program. Because the existing LGBT organizations on campus have few ties to each other, the Allies Program will help to fill in the gaps between these groups in serving the UM community. In addition, the Allies Program has been the product of a University-wide collaboration of many divisions and departments across campus, including: academic units (English, Music, Psychology), the Outfield Alliance, Lambda Alliance, Curry Health Center, Student Assault Resource Center (SARC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Clinical Psychology Center (CPC), Multicultural Alliance, Residence Life, Dean of Students, National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), Human Resources, ASUM, the Psychology Department, and the Women and Gender Studies Program.

What is an “Ally”?

Washington and Evans (1991) used the term “ally” to denote “a person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed population” (p. 195). Allies are able to use the privileges or advantages that they enjoy based on their majority status to advocate for members of the minority who do not possess access to those rights and privileges. (Note: LGBT individuals can also be “allies” if they are in a position to provide support, advocacy, and guidance, but heterosexual allies have a special role to play in effecting positive change in the dominant culture.

How the UM Allies Program Would Enhance the UM Campus

What is the Purpose of an Allies Program on Campus?

The University of Montana Allies Program plans to develop and nurture heterosexual allies for its LGBT students and staff. These individuals will be given opportunities to engage in self-reflection, commit to addressing intolerance and prejudice, and advocate on behalf of their LGBT community members. Because providing a safe campus is really a human rights issue, such a program is consistent with The University of Montana-Missoula’s mission to “educate competent and humane professionals and informed, ethical, and engaged citizens of local and global communities.”

The Allies Program: Mission

The goal of the University of Montana Allies Program is to actively promote a campus environment that is inclusive and supportive of all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition to designing activities that foster a campus climate of inclusivity and awareness, the UM Allies Program also seeks to establish safe spaces for individuals who experience isolation, discrimination, threats, or intimidation in the campus community. These goals will be accomplished through high visibility of the program, a training component that provides staff, faculty, students, and the administration with tools to support and respond to the needs of LGBT individuals, and the commitment of LGBT allies to the project.

The Allies Program: Target Audience, Participants, and Promoters

The Allies Program is intended to benefit directly those sexual minority students and staff who may be experiencing discrimination, feeling afraid or isolated, needing emotional support, and/or needing information (e.g., where to find resources, how to report a 'hate crime'). Program participants will be primarily heterosexual university administrators, faculty, staff, and students who are committed to improving the campus climate with regards to LGBT issues and concerns by supporting, assisting, and advocating on behalf of LGBT community members. (These individuals are in a position to demonstrate that LGBT people are not alone, and they can take a stand in places where it may not feel safe for LGBT people to do so.) Program "personnel" will be LGBT and ally Committee members who have committed to developing, implementing, and sustaining the program over time. We will be responsible for educating the larger campus community about the meaning of the program logo and the importance of building a more supportive, safe, and inclusive community for LGBT (and indeed all) students and staff.

The Allies Program: Training

The Allies Program will advertise and recruit individuals interested in enhancing the sensitivity and inclusiveness of the campus with regards to LGBT issues and concerns. Program participants will undergo training to enhance their awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of sexual minority individuals. When they have completed the training, they will be given the opportunity to sign an allies "pledge" that demonstrates their commitment to making the campus a safer place for LGBT students and staff. (If they so desire, they can also be publicly identified on the program webpage as an ally.) Those who successfully complete the training and sign the pledge will be given a sticker, button, or magnet with the program's logo to display on their door, backpack, or person. The Allies Program will thus visibly mark people and places that are "safe" for LGBT students and staff, and LGBT individuals will be able to identify their allies on the University of Montana campus from these program symbols. The sensitivity and awareness of other heterosexual individuals will also be enhanced by the program, through dialogue and engagement with those displaying the program logo.

The Allies Program will provide two 2-hour trainings per year, at the beginning of the Fall and Winter semesters. (If there is interest, we will offer web-based training and/or provide additional in-person training.) The training sessions will include a panel discussion of LGBT individuals talking about their experience as sexual minority persons and a half-hour small group discussion. The other hour will include additional training on privilege and oppression, heterosexism and homophobia, the "coming out" process, local and national resources, what it means to be an effective ally, etc. Everyone who participates in the training will also receive a training manual that includes definitions, resource materials, and referral information for programs and services in the community. (Allies will not be expected to provide counseling, for example, but they will thus be able to refer LGBT individuals to those who can.)

The Allies Program: Other Programming

In addition to training, the Allies Program Committee will work to promote the inclusion of LGBT curricula and content in classes, develop a web-based presence to break silence and the sense of invisibility on campus, create spaces to hear the voices of sexual minorities on campus (e.g., through campus events), and make it clear that the University of Montana does not tolerate physical or emotional violence against minority students. The Allies Program will serve as a unifying program that brings together other, previously disconnected, LGBT-focused groups on the UM campus.

The Allies Program: Evaluation

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Allies Program, we will track both the number of program materials (i.e., stickers, buttons, or magnets) that are distributed and the number that are displayed on campus. We will also track the number of individuals who complete the Allies training. In addition, we will conduct surveys and interviews to assess the attitudes and experiences of students, faculty, and staff on campus (both LGBT and heterosexual) before and after program implementation. Lastly, we will track the number of bias-related incidents reported on campus before and after program implementation.

The Allies Program: Benefits

We believe that the Allies Program will provide affirmation and support, enhance visibility, promote communication and networking, increase awareness, and therefore enhance the sense of safety and inclusion on campus for LGBT students and staff. Evans (2002) noted that heterosexual allies who participate in such programs report increased personal awareness, a desire to further educate themselves, and appreciation for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. It is our hope that LGBT staff and students, their heterosexual allies, and indeed the entire community will benefit from a campus that is more tolerant, inclusive, supportive, and celebratory of its LGBT community members.

References

- Buhrke, R. A., & Stabb, S. D. (1995). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual student needs. In S. D. Stabb, S. M. Harris, & J. E. Talley (Eds.), *Multicultural needs assessment for college and university student populations* (pp. 173-200). Springfield, IL: CC Thomas.
- D'Augelli, A. R. (1992). Lesbian and gay male undergraduates' experiences of harassment and fear on campus. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 7, 383-395.
- Evans, N. J. (2002). The impact of an lgbt safe zone project on campus climate. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(4), 522-539.
- Evans, N. J., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1996). Lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people in college. In R. C. Savin-Williams & K. M. Cohen (Eds.), *The lives of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals* (pp. 201-226). New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Evans, N. J., & Rankin, S. (1998). Heterosexism and campus violence: Assessment and intervention strategies. In A. M. Hoffman, J. Schuh, & R. Fenske (Eds.), *Violence on campus: Issues for higher education* (pp. 169-186). Gathersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.
- Hershberger, S. L., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1995). The impact of victimization on the mental health and suicidality of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths. *Developmental Psychology*, 31, 65-74.
- Hothem, K. B., & Keene C. D. (1998). Creating a safe zone project at a small private college: How hate galvanized a community. In Sanlo R. (Ed.) *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators* (pp. 363-369). CT: Greenwood Press.
- Poynter, K. J. & Tubbs, N. J. (2007). Safe zones: Creating lgbt safe space ally programs. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 5(1), 121-132.
- Savin-Williams, R.C., & Cohen, K. M. (1996). Psychological outcomes of verbal and physical abuse among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths. In R. C. Savin-Williams and K. M. Cohen (Eds.), *The Lives of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals: Children to Adults*. (pp. 181-200). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.
- Washington, J. & Evans, N. (1991). Becoming an ally. In N. Evans & V. Wall (Eds.), *Beyond Tolerance: Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on campus* (pp. 195-204).

(*Budget Deleted)



Secular Safe Zone Training Report Form

Congratulations on running a successful Secular Safe Zone training!

This form is required for every Secular Safe Zone training you run. You may instead complete an electronic version of this form at www.secularsafezone.org/content/secular-safe-zone-ally-training-report

Your Name: _____

Institution Name: _____

Training Date: _____ Number of Attendees: _____

Was this training part of a larger event/series of events/program? If so, please provide the name of that larger event:

What went particularly well about this training session?

What will you change for your next training session?

Do you have any additional comments about this training?

Please mail this completed form, along with all paper Ally registration forms (photocopies are permitted), and any photos of the event to the Secular Safe Zone office at:

Secular Safe Zone Coordinator
P.O. Box 2371
Columbus, OH 43216

Alternately, you may email photos to us at info@secularsafezone.org.

This page intentionally left blank as the back side of the Secular Safe Zone Training Report



Ally Registration

Complete this form to become a registered Secular Safe Zone Ally!

Your Name: _____

Institution Name: _____

Position/Title: _____

Institution Address: _____

Institution Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

By default, we will include your name and institutional information in the Secular Safe Zone locations directory on the Secular Safe Zone website. If you choose not to be listed, you will not appear in any way on the website.

☐ DO NOT include me in the online Secular Safe Zone Ally directory.

By default, we display the street address of your institution as part of your listing on the Secular Safe Zone website. (City, state and zip code will be displayed in all listings. This preference affects street address only.)

☐ DO NOT display my institution's street address information.

By default, we display your email address in a spam-protected format as part of your listing on the Secular Safe Zone website.

☐ DO NOT display my email address.

By signing this form, you agree to the boundaries and expectations listed on the opposite side of this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Facilitator: _____

Training Location/Event: _____

The Secular Student Alliance does not charge allies for the ally relationship. Allies are prohibited from charging students for their support as an ally. Financial support of the national Secular Student Alliance is graciously accepted from any member of the public (Ally, student, or otherwise). Visit www.secularstudents.org/donate for more information.



Secular Safe Zone Ally Boundaries & Expectations

The Secular Safe Zone is a program of the Secular Student Alliance.

We provide recommendations, support, our experience, and certain boundaries for maintaining a Secular Safe Zone Ally relationship with the Secular Student Alliance; the particulars of how you relate with a student are generally for you and the student to define. We encourage this flexibility as, by being in-person on a campus or institution connected to the student, you are generally in a better position to gather information about their particular situation and give them personalized support.

We have the following specific boundaries for maintaining an Ally relationship with the Secular Student Alliance:

- You maintain the Secular Safe Zone poster or card prominently in your professional space.
- You have reviewed and understand the training materials available on www.secularsafezone.org. These training materials provide recommendations and our experience working with secular students.
- Although it should go without saying, follow all laws, and never violate the personal property, privacy, or autonomy of any individual or entity. Further, avoid situations that suggest any form of impropriety. Practically every boundary below is simply an example of these principles.
- Never “out” someone’s religious identity. Just because a student is “out” to you does not mean they are “out” to everyone.
- You should provide support and an open listening environment. However, do not attempt to engage in counseling or therapy at a level expected of a professional counselor or therapist (unless you are, in fact, a licensed counselor or therapist, and are willing to take on that professional relationship).
- If a student reports incidents of bullying, threats of self-harm, or threats of violence, report that incident to the proper authorities as you would any other incident.
- Never engage in romantic, physical, or sexual activities with a student.
- Meet with students only in your professional space, or in a space that is sufficiently open to the public (such as a coffee shop on campus). Do not meet with students in your home, their home, or other secluded areas.
- If you have any questions regarding these boundaries, contact the Secular Student Alliance so we can clarify the boundary based upon your particular situation.

We do not have a “minimum” or “maximum” hours worked for Allies, or specific required availability. We only ask that you be reasonably available so long as you maintain the Secular Safe Zone poster/card and are listed on our website.

Any Ally is free to end his or her relationship with the Secular Student Alliance at any time, for any reason or no reason at all. The Secular Student Alliance may end the relationship with an Ally for any reason or no reason at all, and will end the relationship if we become or are made aware of any boundary violations.