Welcome to the online Ally Skills Workshop!

We're so happy you could join us today! A few things you can do while we are waiting to get started:

- Get the files at [https://allyskillsworkshop.com/#materials](https://allyskillsworkshop.com/#materials)
- Rename yourself: click on "Participants," mouse over your name, click on "Rename," and type in the name you want other people in the meeting to use for you. If you like, include your gender pronouns. Example: "Valerie (she/her/hers)".
- You are welcome to turn off your video, use your favorite virtual background, or show us your pet!
Ally Skills Workshop

Valerie Aurora

http://frameshiftconsulting.com/

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Format of the workshop

- 30 minute introduction
- 2 hours group discussion of real-world scenarios
- 10 minute wrap-up and Q & A

Long break every hour, short breaks in between
Valerie Aurora

Founder Frame Shift Consulting

Taught ally skills to 3000+ people in Spain, Germany, Australia, Ireland, Sweden, Mexico, New Zealand, UK, South Africa, and across the U.S.

Linux kernel and file systems developer for 10+ years

Valerie Aurora
(she/her/hers)
Let’s talk about technical privilege

We are more likely to listen to people who "are technical"

... but we shouldn’t be

"Technical" is more likely to be granted to white men

I am using my technical privilege to end technical privilege!

https://frYERZelic.kr/p/ CC BY @sage_solar
What are ally skills? Some terminology first:

**Privilege**: an *unearned* advantage given by society to some people but not all

**Oppression**: systemic, pervasive inequality that is present throughout society, that benefits people with more privilege and harms those with fewer privileges
**Terminology**

**Marginalized person:** a member of a group that is the primary target of a system of oppression

**Ally:** a member of a social group that enjoys some privilege that is working to end oppression and understand their own privilege
Ally is a verb, not an identity

Being a marginalized person takes no action - it is an identity

Acting as an ally is about action - it is not an identity, which is why we talk about "ally skills" instead of "allies"

Depending on what is most relevant about you to the situation, you may switch between being marginalized and acting as an ally
Example

Privilege: The ability to interview for a job and have the interviewer assume that if you have children, you will continue doing a good job at work

Oppression: Family expectations that mothers do more childcare, belief that mothers don't want to do paid work, financial systems unwilling to extend credit to mothers, laws that put more burdens on mothers than fathers, paying men more than women...
Example

Marginalized person: Any woman who wants to work for pay for an employer, regardless of her plans for children

Ally: A man who takes on significant childcare responsibilities, donates to women’s causes, votes for feminist candidates and laws, speaks up at work against stereotypes about mothers, reads news articles about privileges fathers enjoy and mothers don't...
Why focus on ally skills?

In an experiment, researchers found that when marginalized people work to increase diversity, supervisors give them worse performance evaluations. But when more privileged people work to increase diversity, it does not harm their performance evaluations (and may improve them).

Does valuing diversity result in worse performance ratings for minority and female leaders?
http://amj.aom.org/content/early/2016/03/03/amj.2014.0538.abstract
Keep the focus on ally skills

For this workshop, let's assume that oppression exists, it's bad, we should try to stop it, it's possible to stop, etc.

Disagree? No problem, just argue about it somewhere else

I can't give legal advice or tell you what your employer's rules are
Exercise: Identify your power and privilege

Privilege and power are often invisible to people who have them, but identifying them helps you act as an ally.

This exercise is voluntary - you do not have to do it.

If people assume you have a privilege that you do not, you can make your own decision about whether to include it.

Download at https://allyskillsworkshop.com/#materials
What did you think?

Do you have more or less power than you thought?

Do you have more or less privilege than you thought?

Any surprises or things you hadn't thought about before?

https://flic.kr/p/H2cL7F
CC BY-SA jason gessner
Basics of ally skills

Be short, simple, firm
Don't try to be funny
Play for the audience
Practice simple responses
Pick your battles
While you're trying to help one group, don't be:

- sexist
- homophobic
- transphobic
- racist
- ableist
- ageist
- classist
- casteist
- and don't criticize people's bodies or attractiveness
Awkward...
What if I make a mistake?

Apologize, correct yourself, and move on.
One of my mistakes: "You guys"
Help us create a safer space

You may leave or return at any time without explanation

This workshop is designed to be voluntary

You only have to share if you feel comfortable doing so

Please anonymize stories if you can

Joining groups is optional

Tell me if you don't want to be in a group with someone
Preparing for group discussion

Each group will choose a note-taker and moderator.

Moderator interrupts people who are speaking too much and invite others to speak.

Feel free to moderate the moderator! 🙃

Note-taker writes down and reports out what your group talked about.

Note taker should be someone different each time.
A few more tips for group discussion

There aren't any misleading scenarios

"You" in the scenario means "a potential ally"

Focus on **what an ally can do**

If necessary, make up additional details

When you get the 1 minute warning, keep talking!

Note-taker: write down your breakout room number
Scenarios & group discussion
Scenario: What could an ally do?

At a meeting you run, you notice that people with high proficiency in English dominate the discussion. You often see people with moderate English proficiency getting ready to speak and then get talked over by someone who speaks more quickly.

*Remember, choose your note-taker and moderator!*
Tip: Effective and just meetings have structure

Meetings without explicit structure inherit structure from society, reinforcing systems of oppression.

Use structure to fight oppression: agenda, meeting roles, reserved speaking time, hand signals, etc.

Useful meeting roles: facilitator, moderator, note-taker, timekeeper.

https://frameshiftconsulting.com/meeting-skills/
Who is speaking in your group?

Who is speaking most in your group?

Is someone having difficulty being heard?

Are there patterns related to gender, race, age, or anything else?

How do these discussions compare to ones you have in other contexts?
Scenario: What could an ally do?

A peer manager tells you that one of their reports has complained about people using the word "Aspie" in a derogatory way. The manager says, "I told them to stop complaining and grow a thicker skin."

Note: "Aspie" is a nickname for Asperger's syndrome, which can be used as a slur.
Tip: Include the context of systemic oppression

Foot-stepping analogy: Why is this person so upset that you accidentally stepped on their foot?

Answer: Because someone steps on their foot TEN TIMES A DAY, EVERY DAY, FOR THEIR ENTIRE LIFE

The person who likes the slur can also "grow a thicker skin," accept this criticism, and change their behavior

Scenario: What could an ally do?

One of your direct reports avoids speaking to another of your direct reports. When you ask, they say it is because that person is gay and homosexuality is against their religion and not acceptable where they grew up. When you push back, they say that you should be more considerate of people from other cultures.
Tip: "Paradox" of tolerance


A tolerant society must be intolerant of one thing: intolerance itself (otherwise intolerance takes over)

Multiculturalism is good but you can leave out the parts that dehumanize people based on identity

Company culture takes precedence in this case
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In your organization, you notice that the higher up the hierarchy someone is, the more likely they are to be white, male, or otherwise privileged. Three different groups announce a new senior hire in one month. All three appear to be white men.
Tip: Bias interrupters

3 step process from UC Hastings WorkLife Law Center

1. Use metrics
2. Implement bias interrupters
3. Repeat as needed

Detailed list of bias interrupters for workplace systems:

http://biasinterrupters.org/
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In a private conversation, a co-worker tells you that DEI trainings are politically correct and biased against white men.
Tip: Reframe the discussion

Assumption: at present, everyone in the workplace is treated equally, regardless of race or gender

Reality: White people and men get unearned advantages in the workplace and throughout their lives

Reframe: "I didn't understand either until I realized that white men are consistently given opportunities and benefits that others are not. Now I want to fix that."
Goal-setting exercise

http://files.frameshiftconsulting.com/asw/goals.pdf
Advanced ally skills

Speak less, listen more - except when speaking is risky

Treat ally actions as bare minimum expectation

Follow and support leaders from marginalized groups

Follow your discomfort: if something makes you feel bad, find out more and understand why before reacting

When you make a mistake, apologize, correct yourself, and move on
Ally Skills Workshop

http://frameshiftconsulting.com/ally-skills-workshop

Frame Shift Consulting
Alternate intro slides
**Example**

**Privilege:** The ability to walk into a convenience store and have the owner assume you are there to buy things and not steal them

**Oppression:** The self-reinforcing system of stories, TV, news coverage, police, and legal system stereotyping Black people as criminals, that benefits non-Black people and harms Black people
Example

Marginalized person: Any Black person who wants to enter a convenience store

Ally: A non-Black person who donates to legal system reform organizations, actively objects to racist stories, calls their representatives to support police reform and defunding, and reads news articles about this privilege
Other scenarios
Scenario: What could an ally do?

You are eating lunch in the employee kitchen when a group sits down near you. One person comments loudly “If I ate that, I’d be as big as a house!” A higher-weight coworker is sitting nearby and can clearly overhear.
Tip: Weight discrimination at work

“Fat talk/diet talk” can be used as a form of bonding but creates a hostile environment.

Higher weight people face workplace discrimination, particularly women, regardless of ability to do the job.

Body size is falsely equated with virtue: self-control, hard worker, in good health.

Workplace “health initiatives” often discriminate against higher weight and disabled employees and don't work.
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In a meeting you attend, several people disagree strongly but productively over a technical decision. Later, one of the other people in the meeting tells you they were disturbed by your report's tone in the meeting. Your report was the only person of a marginalized race/ethnicity in the meeting. This is not the first time this has happened.
Tip: tone policing/the “tone argument”

When members of marginalized groups advocate for themselves or their ideas, it violates expectations that marginalized people should be submissive and quiet.

The same behavior in a person with a lot of privilege may be described as "passionate" or "committed".

Tone policing often uses the word "tone".

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tone_policing
Scenario: What could an ally do?

A woman on your team has been successfully filling in for her direct superior after he left. After 6 months, she asks to be formally promoted to the position. Instead, your director hires a man from outside the company with less experience to fill the position and asks her to train the new hire. When you ask why, your director tells you that the new hire has a lot of potential.
Tip: What Works for Women at Work

By Joan C. Williams and Rachel Dempsey

Four patterns of subtle bias, varying by race, ethnicity, appearance, etc.

1. Prove-it-again
2. The Tightrope
3. The Maternal Wall
4. Tug-of-war
Scenario: What could an ally do?

At a meeting, a woman makes a suggestion, but no one picks up on it. Later on in the meeting, a man makes the same suggestion and is given credit for it.

*Remember, choose your notetaker and moderator!*
Tip: Effective and just meetings have structure

Meetings without explicit structure inherit structure from society, reinforcing systems of oppression

Use structure to fight oppression: agenda, meeting roles, reserved speaking time, hand signals, etc.

Meeting roles: facilitator, moderator, note-taker, timekeeper

https://frameshiftconsulting.com/meeting-skills/
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In your weekly team meetings, you notice that women don't speak nearly as often as men. When women do speak, you notice that they are interrupted more often than men.
Tip: Create psychological safety

Psychological safety means an environment in which people feel safe and take turns sharing information.

Google study showed the most productive and profitable teams have psychological safety.

Two elements: sensitivity to others' feelings, and conversational turn-taking.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_safety
Tip: How to create psychological safety?

More structure: agenda, moderator, reserved speaking time, hand signals to request speaking time, etc.

Praise and reward when quiet people speak up more

Discourage shaming, humiliation, dominance

Reduce hierarchy (switch up who takes notes, change meeting leader, powerful person gets coffee, etc.)
Scenario: What could an ally do?

A woman of color points out that an upcoming company-wide meeting will have all white male presenters. Several other people criticize their coworker for being too abrasive, aggressive, loud, out of line, etc.
Tip: tone policing/the “tone argument”

When members of marginalized groups advocate for themselves or their ideas, it violates expectations that marginalized people should be submissive and quiet.

The same behavior in a person with a lot of privilege may be described as "passionate" or "committed".

Tone policing often uses the word "tone".

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tone_policing
Scenario: What could an ally do?

At a meeting, a person who is hard of hearing makes a suggestion, but no one picks up on it. Later on in the meeting, a hearing person makes the same suggestion and is given credit for it.
Tip: Effective and just meetings have structure

Meetings without explicit structure inherit structure from society, reinforcing systems of oppression

Use structure to fight oppression: agenda, meeting roles, reserved speaking time, hand signals, etc.

https://frameshiftconsulting.com/meeting-skills/
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In your team's weekly meeting, you notice that the group often ends up agreeing with whatever the loudest, most persistent talker wants to do, even when most people think it is not the best solution.
Tip: Create psychological safety

Psychological safety means an environment in which people take turns sharing information.

Google study showed the most productive and profitable teams have psychological safety.

Two elements: sensitivity to others' feelings, and conversational turn-taking (equal speaking time).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_safety
Scenario: What could an ally do?

A new colleague of yours has a different first language than you. Your experience is that your new colleague tries hard to be considerate. During a routine meeting, your new colleague makes a comment in your first language using a figure of speech that is deeply insulting to you.
Tip: Cultivate curiosity

We all subconsciously create "stories" about why people do things that are a product of our fears and insecurities.

Curiosity lets us be open to different, less frightening explanations for the behavior of others.

Exception: no need to "assume good intent" when you frequently experience oppression.

Scenario: What could an ally do?

You and another manager are reviewing the minutes of a meeting of your employees in which several employees request management to make a difficult change. The other manager sees the name of one of the people asking for change and says, "That person is always making trouble and being demanding."
Tip: Reward feedback as much as possible

Good management requires that people report both good and bad news up to their managers.

Information that produces negative emotions is aversive—we want to run away from it.

Develop habits of thanking, encouraging, and rewarding.

Remember: punishment is more memorable than reward, rewards must vastly outweigh punishment.
Scenario: What could an ally do?

At a meeting you run, a person with moderate proficiency in English makes a suggestion, but no one picks up on it. Later on in the meeting, a person with high proficiency in English makes the same suggestion and is given credit for it.
Tip: Effective and just meetings have structure

Meetings without explicit structure inherit structure from society, reinforcing systems of oppression.

Use structure to fight oppression: agenda, meeting roles, reserved speaking time, hand signals, etc.

https://frameshiftconsulting.com/meeting-skills/
Scenario: What could an ally do?

On a Slack channel with about 50 people, a co-worker is talking about a badly implemented software feature. They write, "That's so ghetto," followed by a smiling face emoji.
Tip: Have a concise code of conduct with examples

Have a short, clear, concise code of conduct that focuses on what **not** to do

Specifically list common forms of oppression

Put everything else (values, how to be inclusive, etc.) in separate documents

Hand over any dispute over CoC violations to an expert

Scenario: What could an ally do?

A colleague of yours says, "It's great to hire more Black people, but let's not lower the bar." Before you can reply, another colleague says, "Oh yes, we'll be careful not to lower the bar."
Tip: Reframe the discussion

Assumption: at present, everyone has an equal chance, regardless of race

Reality: Black people face a much higher bar than white people, and white people often get a pass or exceptions to the process

Reframe: "Actually, the problem is that Black people have to pass a higher bar, and we need to fix that."
A co-worker comes out as trans. Another co-worker assumes you are cis and starts complaining to you privately about how ridiculous it is to expect everyone to start using your co-worker’s new name and pronouns.
Tip: Read Captain Awkward

Advice blog that answers questions on social interaction from an awkward, geeky perspective

Great for "How do I get someone to stop doing something without upsetting anyone?" type of questions (hint: someone is already upset)

http://captainawkward.com
Scenario: What could an ally do?

You are having lunch with a group of co-workers. One of your co-workers says something unintentionally homophobic. A gay co-worker gently corrects them. The first co-worker says, "Thank you for letting me know so nicely! I'm glad you're not one of those angry gay people."
Tip: Don't reinforce unfair expectations

Marginalized people are often held to a higher standard of behavior than those with more privilege.

When marginalized people are more patient, kind, or helpful than necessary, thank them in a way that acknowledges they are going above and beyond.

Related to tone policing: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tone_policing
You are one of the interviewers for a person applying to an operations position. You notice that their resume says they graduated from university 20 years before anyone else on the team. In the hiring discussion, a coworker says, "I worry that they won't be able to keep up with the rest of us."
Tip: Bias interrupters

3 step process from UC Hastings WorkLife Law Center

1. Use metrics
2. Implement bias interrupters
3. Repeat as needed

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Scenario: What could an ally do?

In your weekly team meeting, the only woman of color takes the notes for the fourth week in a row, even though that's not part of her job description. When you talk to the meeting lead about this, they say, "I ask for volunteers and she's the only one who volunteers."
Tip: Fairly distribute "office housework"

"Office housework" is necessary but unrewarded work (taking notes, organizing parties, tidying, etc.)

People of color and women of all races are expected to do more of this work and punished for not doing it

"Asking for volunteers" activates this expectation

Instead, managers should assign this work to all available team members on a strict rotating basis
Scenario: What could an ally do?

You notice that several of your other colleagues raise their voice and speak more slowly when talking to your wheelchair-using colleagues.
Tip: Share your experience

Two problems: lack of knowledge, and fear of mistakes

Share your own experience learning to be a better colleague to disabled colleagues

Share articles or guides on creating a more accessible workplace and offer to help review

Ask people to repair the door opener buttons!

Help others apologize, correct themselves, and move on
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In social spaces at work, like work parties and online social chat channels, you notice that men speak far more often than women. When you ask women why they speak less, they note that women generally have less power in your company hierarchy and men with more power strongly influence the topic of conversation.
Tip: Be welcoming and redistribute power

People with more power can express interest and encourage follow-up: "That's interesting!" "Tell me more" "Thank you for bringing up that important topic"

Automatic measurement can inform people privately if they are taking up more space than average, or as a group

Giving more power and influence to care and maintenance functions can change the power balance positively
Scenario: What could an ally do?

A woman in your company goes on maternity leave. You are discussing which projects to assign to people after she has returned, including one that is in her area of expertise and requires some travel. A co-worker says, "She has a small baby, I'm guessing she won't want to travel."
Tip: What Works for Women at Work

By Joan C. Williams and Rachel Dempsey

Four patterns of subtle bias, varying by race, ethnicity, appearance, etc.

1. Prove-it-again
2. The Tightrope
3. The Maternal Wall
4. Tug-of-war
Scenario: What could an ally do?

Your team announces that the next team-building offsite activity will be playing laser tag.
Tip: Inclusive offsites

Design your offsite meetings to be inclusive.

Make a list of marginalized groups and spend time researching how each might feel left out.

Lists of more inclusive and less inclusive offsites here:

https://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Inclusive_offsites
Scenario: What could an ally do?

A colleague of yours consistently uses male pronouns to refer to software and people of unknown gender ("he crashes on start," "what would he do?"). When you tell them it makes you uncomfortable to treat maleness as the norm, they say that male is the default gender in their first language and you should be more considerate of people from other cultures.
Tip: "Paradox" of tolerance


A tolerant society must be intolerant of one thing: intolerance itself (otherwise intolerance takes over)

Multiculturalism means including different cultures - except parts that harm/exclude people based on identity

Company culture takes precedence over other cultures in this case
Scenario: What could an ally do?

You are part of the performance review process and see a lot of feedback for other employees. The feedback for several women include comments like "Needs to work on her communication style," or "too aggressive." Many fewer men's reviews have the same problems.
Hint: it’s not the women

"When we analyzed a sample of performance evaluations of men and women across three high-tech companies and a professional services firm, we found that women consistently received less feedback tied to business outcomes. [...] 76% of references to being "too aggressive" happened in women’s reviews, versus 24% in men’s."

Shelley Correll and Caroline Simard,
https://hbr.org/2016/04/research-vague-feedback-is-holding-women-back
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Detailed list of bias interrupters for workplace systems:
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Scenario: What could an ally do?

A colleague of yours consistently expresses disdain for gender non-conforming people, including queer people. When you tell him this makes you uncomfortable, he tells you that making fun of gender non-conforming people is part of the culture he grew up in, and you shouldn't try to impose your culture on him.
Tip: "Paradox" of tolerance


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Tip: "Paradox" of tolerance


A tolerant society must be intolerant of one thing: intolerance itself (otherwise intolerance takes over)

Your company culture should tolerant and inclusive of everything except intolerance itself

Short take: company culture takes precedence over intolerant opinions or cultural beliefs
Scenario: What could an ally do?

You are in a hiring committee discussion trying to decide between two candidates, a Latina woman with non-traditional educational background and several years of full-time experience, and a white man with no full-time experience from a top-tier school. Someone says, "I know we said that experience is more important than educational background, but this guy's education is so stellar I think we should make an exception."
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Scenario: What could an ally do?

A co-worker shares an article on your work Slack claiming that white men are biologically more suited to STEM careers, saying "I don't agree with all of it, but it has some good points." Another co-worker replies, saying that they disagree with the article but we have to be tolerant of co-workers with different political views because diversity of thought is important too.
A tolerant society must be intolerant of one thing: intolerance itself (otherwise intolerance takes over)

Multiculturalism means including different cultures - except parts that harm/exclude people based on identity

Company culture takes precedence over other cultures in this case
Scenario: What could an ally do?

On a company mailing list, someone writes “How would you explain this [technical thing] to your grandmother?”
Tip: Charles' Rules of Argument

1. Don't go looking for an argument
2. State your position once, speaking to the audience
3. Wait for absurd replies
4. Reply one more time to correct any misunderstandings of your first statement
5. Do not reply again
6. Spend time doing something fun instead

Scenario: What could an ally do?

One of your coworkers asks another coworker to stop saying "crazy." The second co-worker has never heard this request before and doesn't understand it, and gets angry at the first coworker. When pointed at the code of conduct, the second coworker says they can't see anything in the code of conduct about saying "crazy."
Tip: Have a concise code of conduct with examples

Have a short, clear, concise code of conduct that focuses on what **not** to do

Specifically list common forms of oppression

Put everything else (values, how to be inclusive, etc.) in separate documents

Hand over any dispute over CoC violations to an expert

Scenario: What could an ally do?

On a company Slack channel, a co-worker responds to a suggestion of yours with, "That's so gay!" and a smiley face emoji.
Tip: Read Captain Awkward

Advice blog that answers questions on social interaction from an awkward, geeky perspective

Great for "How do I get someone to stop doing something without upsetting anyone?" type of questions (hint: someone is already upset)

http://captainawkward.com
Scenario: What could an ally do?

On a professional mailing list you belong to, a semi-famous colleague who came out as trans a year ago starts a discussion. In the response thread, another person repeatedly mis-genders them by using incorrect pronouns (e.g. “She tried to argue X...”)
Tip: Charles' Rules of Argument

1. Don't go looking for an argument
2. State your position once, speaking to the audience
3. Wait for absurd replies
4. Reply one more time to correct any misunderstandings of your first statement
5. Do not reply again
6. Spend time doing something fun instead

Scenario: What could an ally do?

When discussing which of two final candidates to make an offer to, a co-worker says, "I know we agreed experience is more important for this position, but the younger candidate has a degree from Stanford, which I think makes them better than the older candidate with ten more years of experience."
Tip: Bias interrupters

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Detailed list of bias interrupters for workplace systems:

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Scenario: What could an ally do?

At a party at work, a male manager makes a joke about how much sex another male coworker must have had in order to have so many children. Everyone is holding an alcoholic drink.
Tip: Why talking about sex at work is harmful

Talking about sex is sexual activity - need consent!

Double standard for straight sex and gay sex

"Family size" talk can be racism & religious discrimination

Some racist stereotypes are about sex or genitals

Fertility, pregnancy, adoption can be highly emotional
Tip: Why talking about sex at work is harmful

Strong pressure to "be cool" about sex
Assumes parents are cis and straight
Double standard for sex for men and women
Sex talk => objectification & harassment of women

Take-away: Save talking about sex for outside of work
Tip: Myths about alcohol and bad behavior

The immediate physiological effects of alcohol are:

- Loss of coordination
- Sleepiness
- Difficulty multitasking

Everything else (violence, sexual advances, rude comments) is voluntary and under conscious control:

http://www.sirc.org/publik/drinking4.html
Tip: Countering cultural messages about alcohol

Don't serve alcohol at all (surprisingly popular!)

Serve high quality non-alcoholic beverages

Serve at same stations with same prominence

More tips on serving alcohol in an inclusive manner, by Kara Sowles: