



*Resource Guide for Starting a **Rainbow Support Group***



Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong

*Rainbow Support Group of Massachusetts
A project of Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong
Established October 2004*

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Introduction

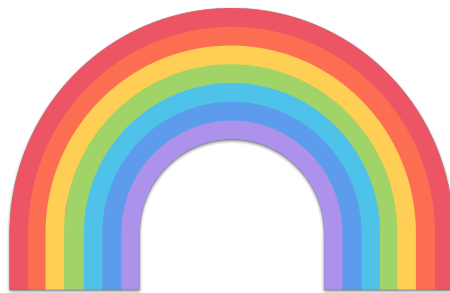
Rainbow Support Group of Massachusetts **A Project of Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS)**

The goal of the Rainbow Support Group is to provide opportunities for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals with developmental disabilities to find their voice, be heard and be supported in a safe, friendly environment. The Rainbow Support Group holds support group meetings and gives training on supporting LGBTQ+ people with developmental disabilities.

Pauline Bosma is a self advocacy leader and the founder and coordinator of the Rainbow Support Group. Pauline hosts a monthly online support group, does outreach to organizations and individuals, including DDS area offices, helps to organize regional groups, provides training and technical assistance and coordinates communication among the different groups and the statewide project. Oscar Hughes is the Rainbow Program Support.

MASS provides self advocacy group training and support, logistical and organizational support, and handles all funds. Additional support is offered on an as-needed basis. Regional host providers support individual groups by providing an advisor/group facilitator, meeting space and in-kind support.

For more information, visit the Rainbow Support Group website:
www.wearemass.org/rainbow-group



Starting a Rainbow Support Group

1. Bring the idea to your agency or organization administration to get support and permission to move forward.
2. Design a flyer and send out invitations or notice of the meetings. Contact the Rainbow Support Group at MASS if you would like a template to use for your flyers.
 - a. Make sure you put the name of the contact person, the phone number and an email address so people can let you know they are interested or call to ask questions.
3. Get in touch with your local service providers and area DDS office to share the flyer and find people who are interested in the group.
4. Find a space where people will be comfortable. Sometimes, meeting around a table isn't as comfortable as meeting in a room with chairs or sofas. The space should be accessible to people with all different types of disabilities. Having a kitchen nearby for snack time is a good idea.
5. Find an advisor who will lead the group meetings. The advisor will:
 - a. Organize the meetings (For example: dates, times, advertising, keeping track of names and phone numbers of participants, looking for an intern to help out)
 - b. Facilitate the meetings to help get conversations going
 - c. Find a counselor who will be available to the group as needed
 - d. Bring in speakers if the group wants to learn something
6. Make a schedule of meetings. Most groups will meet once per month. Think about what time will be best for participants. Usually, an

- evening meeting is best. One or 1.5 hours is a good length for a meeting. Include a social time with snacks.
7. Buy snacks and prepare the room.
 - a. For online meetings, prepare a virtual meeting link and send the link to group members.
 8. Decide if staff will be allowed into the first meeting. After that, the participants should make their own rules. (See “Ideas for Running a Rainbow Support Group” on the next page.)

Ideas for Running a Rainbow Support Group

1. There should be group agreements so everybody is treated fairly.

Rainbow Group Agreements

Accept everyone for who they are 

Respect each others' ideas and opinions 

Be kind to each other 

- Keep negative thoughts to yourself

Take turns speaking so everyone has a chance to share 

All information is confidential 

- Keep in mind Pauline, Fran, and Oscar have to report abuse

Mute your mic if you have background noise 

*Official Rainbow agreements,
approved by Pauline Bosma*

Some other suggestions for group agreements are:

- a. No intimate activities at the meeting, like kissing or massaging.
 - b. All questions are welcome.
 - c. Listen to whoever is speaking.
 - d. Decisions are made by the group. If people disagree, a vote will determine the decision OR continue to talk about it until everyone can agree on a decision.
2. Every Rainbow Support Group is responsible for supporting itself and its activities. You can have fundraisers, including selling candy, have a

tag sale, spaghetti supper, and raffles. You could also ask members to pay a small amount for dues.

3. Have some topics available to talk about. Sometimes it helps to have a plan to talk about a certain thing. It helps people to get comfortable to start a conversation with the group. The group facilitator can help with this. Some ideas for activities and topics are:

- a. What does LGBTQ+ mean?
- b. Topics about sexuality education, like names of body parts, “how to” have intimacy with a same sex partner.
- c. Personal experiences of members. Some of these experiences can be sad, like being bullied or called names. You should also talk about happy experiences.
- d. Sexual Health. This includes keeping your sexual parts clean, preventing HIV/AIDS infections and other sexually transmitted illnesses. Use barrier protection methods to prevent disease.
- e. Laws that affect people who identify as LGBTQ+.
- f. How to meet people.
- g. Planning trips to LGBTQ+ events, like Pride Day.
- h. Self Advocacy. (Contact the MASS office to find out about local groups: www.waremass.org).
- i. The difference between sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
- j. The Genderbread Person <https://www.genderbread.org/>
- k. Domestic violence protection.

Contact Information for the Rainbow Support Group of Massachusetts

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LGBTQ+ Resources

Advocate Magazine
www.advocate.com

American Institute of Bisexuality
<http://www.bisexual.org/home.html>

Elevatus Sexuality Education Training
<https://www.elevatustraining.com/>

Family Acceptance Project
<https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
www.glad.org

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
<http://www.glsen.org>

Gender Education and Advocacy (GEA)
<http://www.genderandeducation.com>

Human Rights Campaign
<http://www.hrc.org>

Intersex Society of North America
www.isna.org

Lambda Legal Services
<http://www.lambdalegal.org>

Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong
www.wearemass.org

Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
www.masstpc.org

Mass Equality
<http://www.massequality.org>

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
www.pflag.org

Planned Parenthood
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

Rainbow Support Group Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/Rainbow-Support-Group-119976291441557>

Survivor Support Packet
<https://www.wearemass.org/survivor-support-packet>

Trans Student Educational Resources
<https://transstudent.org/>

Pauline Bosma

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Guide developed by Pauline Bosma and Pat Carney, C/W Region DDS, Office of Learning and Development
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