

# SESSION C4: BECOMING AN ALLY

What does it mean to be an ally? An ally is someone who:

- ▶ Acts in support of or in coalition with someone else
- ▶ Reinforces, rather than reduces, the power and ability of this person or group

An ally is typically a member of advantaged social groups who uses their social power to take a stand against injustice directed at targeted groups (e.g., white people who resist racist policies, men who challenge sexist language and behavior). An ally works to be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression.

What are the characteristics of an effective male ally? Becoming a male ally is an ongoing process, and not a state of being – it is something we must always continue to do. It requires working together to learn and practice the skills necessary to intervene in patriarchal statements, behaviors, policies and structures that harm, exploit or oppress women and members of gender and sexual minorities. An effective male ally:

- ▶ Listens to and respects the perspectives and experiences of targeted group members
- ▶ Is accountable to the people with whom they are allying
- ▶ Is willing to be confronted about own behavior and attitudes and consider change
- ▶ Takes responsibility for learning about own and targeted group experience, and how gender oppression works in everyday life
- ▶ Recognizes that unlearning oppressive beliefs and actions is a life-long process, not a single event, and welcomes each learning opportunity
- ▶ Acknowledges unearned male privileges received as a result of advantaged status and works to eliminate or change privileges into rights that targeted group members also enjoy
- ▶ Is willing to take risks, try new behaviors, make mistakes and learn from them, act in spite of own fear and resistance from other advantaged group members
- ▶ Believes they can make a difference by acting and speaking out against injustice
- ▶ Acts against social injustice that targets others because it is in their self-interest to do so (as well as in the interest of targeted group members)
- ▶ Takes care of self to avoid burn-out
- ▶ Knows how to cultivate support from other allies