

# reexamining LGBT healthcare

A CLOSER LOOK AT METHODS TO IMPROVE THE  
HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,  
AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) PATIENTS

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*The National LGBT Cancer Network addresses the needs of all  
LGBT people with cancer and those at risk. We accomplish our  
mission through education, training and advocacy.*

## 5 ways to provide culturally competent treatment to LGBT individuals accessing healthcare services

LGBT people often enter the health care system without confidence that they will be welcomed and receive compassionate care. Previous negative experiences with doctors and hospitals have served to make many LGBT people wary of you.

We believe it is YOUR responsibility to create a welcoming environment to this population. Below are some methods that demonstrate that you are supportive, welcoming and open to hearing about the gender identity and sexual orientation of all of your patients.

**1. USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE.** In many clinics, hospitals, inpatient units, etc. male patients are routinely asked, "Are you married, or do you have a girlfriend?" Many LGBT consumers will interpret this as a signal that the care provider is unwilling to hear about relationships that fall outside a heterosexual paradigm, and some of them will be silenced. Using more inclusive language, such as "Are you in a

relationship right now?" or "What kind of people do you tend to have relationships with?" is a simple change that may have far-reaching results.

**2. MIRRORING LANGUAGE.** Not all LGBT people use the same language to refer to their sexual or gender identity. For example, some lesbians refer to themselves as "gay" and some men who have sex with men do not consider themselves gay at all. Similarly, transgender people may have particular words that they are most comfortable using to describe parts of their bodies. Listen carefully and mirror back the same language your patients use. This goes a very long way in establishing trust.

**3. BE AWARE OF SUBTLE SIGNALS YOU MAY BE SENDING.** Many LGBT people at some point in their lives have lost or disrupted relationships with friends, family members, or religious communities over disclosure of their sexual or gender

identity. As a result, many of them are cautious and overly watchful toward any possible clues as to whether you may or may not be accepting and supportive of them. The use of routine language that assumes heterosexuality can unintentionally telegraph a heterosexist point of view. Conversely, hanging even a small pro-LGBT flyer in your waiting room, or posting information about LGBT resources in your community, may make LGBT consumers feel that their disclosures are welcome.

**4. WELCOME AND NORMALIZE LGBT DISCLOSURES.** A tentative disclosure of LGBT identity or experience can be welcomed with a simple "I'm glad you told me that." This can be followed with the same kind of questions that would follow any patient mentioning a relationship or experience, such as "Is he here with you today?" or "Would you like me to include her in our talk now?" It is also helpful to find out how public or private the information is. Some patients may come out to you but have not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to family members, colleagues or friends.

**5. UTILIZE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT YOUR PATIENT'S SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN DISCHARGE PLANNING AND WHEN MAKING REFERRALS.** Remember to include your LGBT patients' romantic partners, as well as their network of friends in treatment planning and discharge. Partners, loved ones, friends, and family can provide crucial information, invaluable support for treatment compliance, and ongoing monitoring of your patient's wellness. Welcoming these collateral contacts and taking them seriously can amplify the effectiveness of your work and generate improved outcomes. Try to have LGBT-welcoming services on your lists of referrals.

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## Gender Terminology

**SEX:** physical characteristics; biological or anatomic sexual markers (hormones, chromosomes, genitalia)

**GENDER ROLE:** The social construction of masculinity and femininity in a specific culture. It involves gender assignment (the gender designation of someone at birth), gender roles (the expectations imposed on someone based on their gender), gender attribution (how others perceive someone's gender), gender expression (how someone presents their gender), and gender identity (how someone defines their gender).

**GENDER IDENTITY:** An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** An individual's emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction to men, women, both.

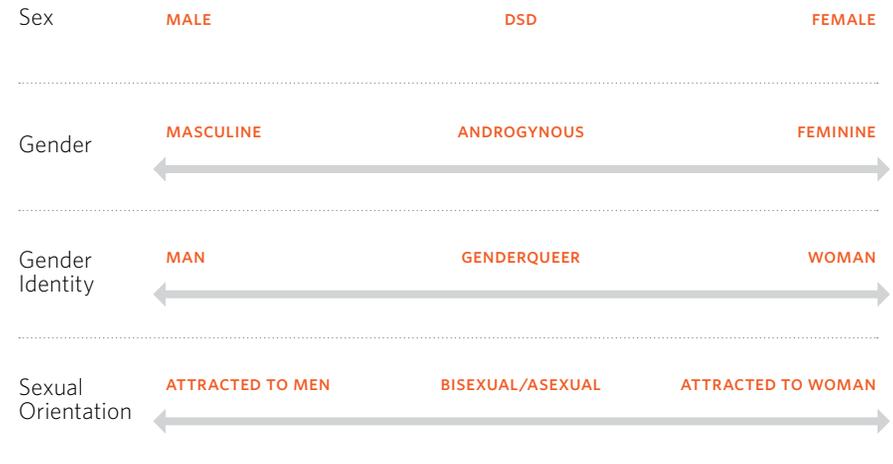
**HETEROSEXISM:** institutional and social assumption of heterosexuality as better and "normal," compared to other sexual orientations, leading to its being privileged and non- heterosexual orientations being oppressed / disadvantaged.

**TRANS OR TRANSGENDER:** Most commonly used as an umbrella term for someone whose self-identification or gender expression challenges traditional notions of "male" and "female." Transgender people include transsexuals, crossdressers, drag queens and kings, genderqueers, and others who cross traditional gender categories.

**TRANSPHOBIA:** The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as transgender.

**TRANSSEXUAL:** A person whose gender identity is different from their assigned gender at birth. Transsexuals often undergo hormone treatments and gender reassignment surgeries to align their anatomy with their core identity, but not all desire or are able to do so.

## Engage, Treat, and Support the Whole Person



The image above shows the broad human range of sex, gender and sexual orientation. Note that in each category, there are more than two choices.

When treating the whole person, it is important for to remember that there are many components to every person's identity and that the experience of being a hospital patient is influenced by ALL of these parts. Patients may simultaneously fear stigma and discrimination for multiple aspects of their identity, including their age, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and socioeconomic class.

LGBT people are not all the same. Consider how different one's expectations of healthcare and hospital experiences might be for a

- 65-year-old Black gay man from Haiti
- Undocumented lesbian mother from Mexico
- 19-year-old Japanese American transgender woman
- 34-year-old White gay CEO who uses a wheelchair to get around

Definitions developed by Brett Genny Beemyn Director, The Stonewall Center, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. 413-545-4826. brettgenny@stuaf.umass.edu.

## Learn More about LGBT Health

### WEBSITES, NETWORKS AND HOTLINES

#### National LGBT Cancer Network

www.cancer-network.org  
info@cancer-network.org  
136 West 16 St. #1E  
New York, NY 10011  
212-675-2633

The National LGBT Cancer Network is the only program in the country addressing the needs of all LGBT people with cancer and those at risk. Our work focuses on education, advocacy and training.

#### Network for LGBT Health Equity

www.lgbthealthequity.org  
lgbttobacco@gmail.com  
617-927-6451

The Network for LGBT Health Equity is working to support the many local tobacco control and health equity advocates in helping to eliminate tobacco and other health disparities for all LGBT people.

#### National Coalition for LGBT Health

lgbthealth.webolutionary.com

The Coalition is committed to improving the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals through federal advocacy that is focused on research, policy, education, and training.

#### CDC LGBT Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health

www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth  
600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30333  
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
TTY: 888-232-6348, 24 Hr/Every Day

Center for Disease Control and Prevention's on-line source for LGBT specific health information.

#### GLBT National Health Center

www.glnh.org

National non-profit organization offering toll-free peer counseling, information, and local resources, including local switchboard numbers and gay-related links.

#### GLBT National Youth Talkline

888-THE-GNLH (843-4564)  
800-246-PRIDE (7743)

Youth Peer Counseling information and local resources, through age 25.

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

#### The National Coalition for LGBT Health

www.lgbthealth.net  
1325 Massachusetts Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-558-6828

Committed to improving the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and communities through public education, coalition building and advocacy that focus on research, policy, education and training.

#### The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association

www.glma.com  
459 Fulton St. Suite 107  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-255-4547

GLMA is the world's largest and oldest association of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) health care professionals. GLMA's mission is to ensure equality in health care for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and health care providers.

#### The Mautner Project

www.mautnerproject.org  
1875 Connecticut Ave. N.W. # 710  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-332-5536

The Mautner Project is committed to improving the health of women who partner with women including lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals, through direct and support service, education and advocacy. Does not provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

### LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

#### The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center

www.gaycenter.org  
208 West 13th St.  
New York, NY 10011  
212-620-7310

6,000 people visit the Center in NYC each week, and more than 300 groups meet there. They provide groundbreaking social service, public policy, educational and cultural/recreational programs for the LGBT community, including the Lesbian Cancer Initiative, the SmokeFree Project and Center CARE Services (Counseling, Advocacy, Recovery and Education)

#### Michael Callen and Audre Lorde Community Health Center

www.callen-lorde.org  
365 West 18 St.  
New York, NY 10011  
212-271-7200

Quality, affordable Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender health facility. General care, dermatology, mammography, STD screening/care, HIV related health services, counseling, community training and more. Service provided regardless of ability to pay.

#### Bronx Lesbian and Gay Health Resource Consortium

www.bronxpride.org  
448 East 149th St.  
Bronx, NY 10455  
718-292-4368

Nonprofit community based organization committed to improving access to quality and culturally sensitive health care for Bronx lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people. Gurlz Kick Ash! Free Quit Smoking and HEALTH LINK LINE: 866-4-GAY-CARE.

#### Rainbow Heights Club

www.rainbowheights.org  
25 Flatbush Ave. 3rd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
718-852-2584

Psychosocial and advocacy organization specifically meeting the needs of LGBT individuals living with severe and persistent mental illness.



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## LGBT & AGING

### Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)

www.sageusa.org  
305 7th Ave. 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
212-741-2247

SAGE offers social services, programs and community-building to LGBT seniors in and around New York City and provides education and advocacy on LGBT aging issues nationwide.

### Griot Circle

www.griotcircle.org  
25 Flatbush Ave. 3rd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
718-246-2775

GRIOT Circle is an intergenerational and culturally diverse community-based organization dedicated to enriching the lives of older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, especially elders of color.

## PEOPLE OF COLOR

### The Audre Lorde Project

www.alp.org  
85 South Oxford St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
718-596-0342

The Audre Lorde Project Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit and Transgender People of Color center for community organizing, focusing on the New York City area. Through mobilization, education and capacity-building, works for community wellness and progressive social and economic justice.

### Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD)

www.gmad.org  
gmad@gmad.org  
44 Court St. Suite 1000  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718-222-6300

GMAD offers a wide range of programs for the black gay community, including HIV testing, support groups, technical assistance, training and advocacy.

### Make the Road by Walking's LGBT Project-GLOBE

www.maketheroad.org  
301 Grove Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11237  
718-418-7690 x1278

In addition to supporting and empowering the LGBTQ community in the outer boroughs and providing a safe space, Globe works with schools in Brooklyn and Queens to address the institutional homophobia that drives students to drop out of school. Globe also fights job discrimination against transgender New Yorkers and promotes community awareness and understanding of LGBTQ discrimination and oppression. *Also see APICHA below.*

## YOUTH

### FIERCE!

www.fiercencyc.org  
147 West 24th St. 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10011  
646-336-6789

A community organizing project for transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two Spirit, queer, and questioning (TLGBTSQQ) youth of color in New York City. FIERCE includes the Education for Liberation Project (ELP), a paid training program which provides comprehensive community organizing, political education, and anti-oppression trainings to our constituency.

### Hetrick Martin Institute/ Harvey Milk School

www.hmi.org  
2 Astor Place, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10003  
212-674-2400 x269  
212-674-8650 (fax)

A comprehensive package of direct services, a high school and referrals for youth ages 12-21.

### YES (Youth Enrichment Services) at LGBT Center

www.gaycenter.org/youth  
yes@gaycenter.org  
208 West 13th St.  
New York, NY 10011  
212-620-7310

LGBT youth program for ages 13-21. YES provides programming for support, leadership skills development and creative self expression.

## HIV/AIDS

### Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS APICHA

www.apicha.org  
infoline1@apicha.org  
Rego Park: 718-896-2500  
Jamaica: 718-739-2525  
Far Rockaway: 718-868-8648

Offers a broad range of services for LGBT adults and youth and has offered trans-specific groups in the past. APICHA's mission is to combat AIDS-related discrimination and to support, empower, and enhance the quality of life of Asians and Pacific Islanders in New York City.

### Housing Works

www.housingworks.org  
57 Willoughby St. 2nd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
212-967-1500  
212-645-8111  
718-827-8700

Provides job training programs, day treatment, and direct legal help to HIV+ clients. Immediate services for homeless and detox referrals. Housing Works also has support groups and a transitional housing program for transgender clients.

### GMHC (formerly Gay Men's Health Crisis)

www.gmhc.org  
450 West 33rd St.  
New York, NY 10001  
212-367-1000

HIV/AIDS organization including direct services, legal services, education, advocacy, testing and more.

## TRANSGENDER

### Gender Identity Project (GIP) at The LGBT Center

www.gaycenter.org/gip  
208 West 13th St.  
New York, NY 10011  
212-620-7310

Professional and peer counseling, community events and organizing, advocacy, support groups and referrals for everyone on the transgender spectrum. GIP offers the trans-care training curriculum for providers and organizations offering services to trans communities. Hours are Monday through Friday, 10a.m. to 6p.m.

### Sylvia Rivera Law Project

www.srlp.org  
147 West 24 St.  
New York, NY 10011  
212-337-8550

SRLP serves low-income people and people of color who are transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming by assisting with identity documents, Medicaid, discrimination in sex segregated facilities, prisoners rights, and immigration. Services in English, Spanish, Hindi.



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Raising Issues: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender People Receiving Services in the Public Mental Health System Alicia Lucksted, PhD Center for Mental Health Services Research Department of Psychiatry, University of Maryland 685 West Baltimore Street, MSTF Building, Suite 300 Baltimore, MD 21201

Tel: 410 / 706-2490 Fax: 410 / 706-0022 Email: [aluckste@psych.umaryland.edu](mailto:aluckste@psych.umaryland.edu). November, 2004. [http://www.rainbowheights.org/downloads/FINAL\\_VERSIONAlicia%20Lucksted.pdf](http://www.rainbowheights.org/downloads/FINAL_VERSIONAlicia%20Lucksted.pdf)

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