



LGBTQ+ Affirmative and Competent Health Providers

Finding a doctor or other health care provider can be a daunting and anxiety-ridden task for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and other sexual and gender minority (LGBTQ+) people. Many LGBTQ+ individuals have experienced discrimination from health care providers, or they have heard of or know someone who has. Experiences and expectations of discrimination can lead to LGBTQ+ individuals putting off needed care, or even worse, deciding not to pursue care at all. This can further exacerbate health inequities already experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals (e.g., higher rates of suicidality, depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder). You can play a role in addressing this unfortunately common problem by vetting providers in your community to ensure you guide LGBTQ+ students and others to affirming and competent health care.

Visual Cues:



There are some cues that may be useful for individuals who may be less confident with directly asking providers and staff about their experience with LGBTQ+ patients. The list below includes items that are easily observable by researching their practices online or by visiting their space. These cues are usually good indicators of LGBTQ+ friendliness but are not necessarily always accurate or indicative of experience and competence when it comes to working with these populations.

1. Single stall restrooms are labeled as gender neutral or universal
2. Forms use gender-neutral language and allow for self-disclosure of information regarding sexual orientation, sexual behavior, gender, pronouns, and name
3. Representations of LGBTQ+ people in marketing materials or waiting room artwork
4. Rainbows or other symbols representing allyship
5. LGBTQ+-specific media, including local or national magazines, in waiting areas
6. Publicly-displayed (either in the office, in print materials, or online) non-discrimination policy inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression



Questions to Ask:

Here are a few questions you may consider asking to help determine if a provider is LGBTQ+ affirming and competent:

1. Do you have policies (e.g., non-discrimination, visitation) that protect and support LGBTQ+ individuals?
2. Do all staff undergo training on supporting and caring for LGBTQ+ patients in culturally-affirming ways?
3. Do you use inclusive forms and surveys that include the following:
 - a. Demographics include sexual orientation and gender identity
 - b. Name and gender pronouns
 - c. Relationship status (instead of marital status)
 - d. Sexual history that does not assume gender of partner(s)
 - e. Inclusive family planning questions (i.e., adoption, insemination, surrogacy)
 - f. Gynecologic History Questions (i.e., not designating this as only for women to complete)

4. Do you collect regular, open, and inclusive sexual health histories from all patients?
5. What services, if any, do you offer that specifically support LGBTQ+ patients (e.g., HIV and STI prevention, transgender-specific health care, behavioral health)?
6. Is your clinic welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people (e.g., signs, reading materials, restrooms)?
7. Do you recruit, hire, and retain LGBTQ+ staff in your clinic?

Facilitated Learning: Providers wishing to gain more education or take the steps to become more LGBTQ+ competent and affirming may be interested in the following on-line training options that offer no-cost continuing medical education units.

- National LGBT Health Education Center Webinars
<https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/lgbt-education/webinars/>
- Human Rights Campaign LGBTQ Training <https://www.hrc.org/hei/lgbtq-training>

Providers may also find this guidance document helpful. The visual cues and questions to ask detailed above are solid prompts for thinking about how to make their spaces and practices more LGBTQ+ inclusive and affirming.

Additional Resources

GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
<http://glma.org>

National LGBT Health Education Center
<https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/>

Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico Provider Directory
<https://www.tgrcnm.org/providers>

Bright Spaces, Welcome Places (Directory of LGBTQ+ Affirming Mental Health Care Agencies in NM)
<http://www.brightspacesnm.org/>

Safe Spaces. Safe Places: Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Environments for Traumatized LGBTQ Youth (Video) <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/safe-places-safe-spaces-creating-welcoming-and-inclusive-environments-traumatized-lgbtq-0>

American Academy of Pediatrics, LGBT Resources:
<https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/LGBT-Resources.aspx>

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