

Creating an LGBTQ Friendly Medical Environment

2019 brings us to the landmark of 50 years since the Stonewall riots in New York City which birthed the movement for LGBTQ rights. Through the years, there have been incredible gains for members of the LGBTQ community, not least of which is the legalization of marriage for this community in places as far flung as Ireland and Taiwan. Organizations such as the [Fenway Institute](#) and the [Mazzoni Center](#) have pushed to educate medical establishments on how to care for members of the LGBTQ community with all their diverse needs. However, the medical community has still been slow to adopt practices that create a welcoming atmosphere for the LGBTQ community when they need medical care. According to a recent poll, an estimated one fifth of the LGBTQ population say that they avoid seeking medical care for fear of discrimination.

Here are some of the things that you can do to help make your office or hospital more welcoming to the LGBTQ community:

Provide a welcoming environment:

- Provide visual cues that your healthcare environment provides a safe place for LGBTQ patients. This can include:
 - handouts about LGBTQ health issues
 - a non-discriminatory policy that is clearly visible
 - or displays of posters organizations that provide services for the LGBTQ population
- Teach your staff to ask every patient their pronoun preferences. Consider creating a script to keep the message consistent.
- Create intake forms that are friendly to the LGBTQ community.
- Ensure that your EMR can be adapted to include information pertinent to the care of the LGBTQ community.
- Acknowledge relevant days of observance for the LGBTQ community such as LGBTQ Pride Day.
- If possible, convert all bathrooms to single occupancy gender neutral bathrooms.

Create a structure to provide standard of care:

- Train all staff and medical providers on how to provide culturally competent care for the LGBTQ community. The Fenway Institute provides free online education for healthcare providers.
- Consider training all staff and medical providers on trauma informed care.

- Collect data to ensure that you are providing appropriate screening and standards of care. See the [GLMA](#) guidelines.
- Network with local and national healthcare providers for LGBTQ specific health needs.
- Advertise your practice on LGBTQ publications and websites.

References:

1. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/03/health-care-providers-need-better-understanding-of-lgbtq-patients-harvard-forum-says/>
2. NYC Unity Project:
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/reports/2017/nyc-unity-project.pdf>
3. AMA website: "Creating an LGBTQ Friendly Office": <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/population-care/creating-lgbtq-friendly-practice>
4. Fenway Institute website: <https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/>
5. Gay and Lesbian Medical Association website:
http://www.gdma.org/_data/n_0001/resources/live/GLMA%20guidelines%202006%20FINAL.pdf
6. Human Rights Campaign website: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/lgbt-inclusive-intake-forms>
7. The National Council for Behavioral Health: <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/areas-of-expertise/trauma-informed-behavioral-healthcare/>