



# **Recruiting, Training, and Retaining LGBTQ-Proficient Clinical Providers: *A Workforce Development Toolkit***

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MARCH 2019



NATIONAL LGBT HEALTH  
EDUCATION CENTER

A PROGRAM OF THE FENWAY INSTITUTE

[www.lgbthealtheducation.org](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org)



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## INTRODUCTION

As lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people increasingly access care at health centers, the clinical workforce needs to be prepared to meet the unique health needs of LGBTQ patients. Finding LGBTQ-proficient providers, however, can present a challenge, especially outside major metropolitan areas. Health centers already contend with a high volume of workforce turnover and vacancies, and only a handful of medical, nursing, social work, or psychology programs offer more than a few curricular hours on LGBTQ health competencies. Nevertheless, health centers nationally are making a commitment to LGBTQ health care, starting with required collection and Uniform Data System reporting of sexual orientation and gender identity data in order to track services and health outcomes of LGBTQ patients. It is therefore critical to employ medical and behavioral health providers who can provide culturally affirming and tailored care for LGBTQ patients. In this toolkit, we provide tips and strategies for:

- Recruiting providers who are either already proficient in LGBTQ health care, or who demonstrate an interest in, and capacity for proficiency in LGBTQ health care,
- Developing the knowledge and skills of providers to care for LGBTQ patients through training and other professional development opportunities, and
- Implementing changes to workplace culture, policies, and processes in order to retain LGBTQ-proficient providers.

# RECRUITMENT

## Job postings and advertisements

Below are recommendations for specific wording on job postings and advertisements that can help attract candidates who are competent and/or interested in providing LGBTQ health care.

- Add language to job postings stating that the health center is seeking candidates with experience in LGBTQ health care, or with a strong desire to learn. For example:

*“We are seeking dynamic candidates with experience in providing care for the LGBTQ community, or who are committed to learning about LGBTQ health.”*

- For all job postings, include an Equal Opportunity Employment statement that includes gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. For example:

*“We are an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and encourage applications from all qualified individuals without regard to race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability or veteran status, or to other non-work-related factors.”*

- Although people of any sexual orientation and gender identity provide excellent care to LGBTQ patients, health centers may wish to show a commitment to hiring a diverse workforce by reaching out to personnel who identify as LGBTQ. Adding a statement to job postings that *“LGBTQ people are encouraged to apply”* can improve the chances that an LGBTQ person will consider the application:
- If an advertisement allows for images, include stock photos of LGBTQ people (e.g., same-gender couples, people with non-conforming gender expression), to further the message of commitment to LGBTQ health.



## Recruitment sources

- In addition to the usual job recruitment platforms, some websites post openings for organizations that aim to recruit LGBTQ employees. Two examples are the Out Professional Network: [www.outpronet.com](http://www.outpronet.com), and Campus Pride Jobs: <https://campuspride.jobs>. Other options can be found on the Human Rights Campaign website: <http://www.hrc.org/resources/lgbt-recruitment>.
- Some colleges and universities host LGBTQ job and career fairs.
- GLMA, which is a national association of LGBTQ health care professionals committed to ensuring health equity for LGBTQ people, offers networking opportunities at its annual conference: [www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)

## Interview process

- When choosing candidates to interview, look for providers who at minimum explain in their cover letter and resume a connection to the LGBTQ community. Even if the candidate does not have relevant LGBTQ health work experience or training, they may have done volunteer work, they may disclose they are themselves LGBTQ, or they may have a close friend or family member who has inspired them to focus on LGBTQ health. If candidates do not articulate their interest or experience, they may not be a good match for the position(s).
- Keep in mind that health care disparities and needs differ substantially among LGBTQ subpopulations. For example, a gay men’s health provider who is well-versed in HIV prevention and treatment may have little-to-no experience in lesbian women’s health care. Transgender health care especially requires unique knowledge, such as gender-affirming hormone therapy. Child and adolescent patients who are LGBTQ have specific needs as well. To ensure job candidates have the experience your patients need, ask questions that delve into their specific skills and knowledge.
- Decide in advance what level of experience you are looking for, and then be sure to ask job candidates about that experience. Keep it open-ended, with questions such as:

*“Tell us why you are interested in this position in particular.”*

*“Tell us about your experience caring for LGBTQ people.”*

If it is difficult to find people with experience in LGBTQ health care, you will need

to gauge how committed the candidate is to learning. Those who have excellent qualifications as a clinician and can demonstrate sufficient interest in LGBTQ health care can be trained to provide excellent care to the community as long as your health center is able to invest time in professional development. The next section provides options for accessing training, educational materials, and other resources on LGBTQ health care.

# TRAINING

## Professional development opportunities for clinicians

- **National LGBT Health Education Center** (Education Center) provides health centers with free access to online continuing education with CME credits on LGBTQ health topics. Primary care and behavioral health clinicians will find introductory as well as more advanced materials to suit their learning needs. E-learning formats include webinars, tele-mentoring, publications, videos, case scenarios, and modules. The Education Center also hosts annual continuing education conferences in Boston, MA. [www.lgbthealtheducation.org](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org)
- **MedEd Portal, the Journal of Teaching and Learning Resource** is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal that disseminates teaching and assessment resources for health professionals, including over 25 publications on LGBTQ health. [www.mededportal.org](http://www.mededportal.org)
- **iCollaborative** is a service of the Association of American Medical Colleges that allows educators and learners to share non-peer reviewed educational innovations that are being developed, implemented, and tested within the health professions. <https://icollaborative.aamc.org>
- **Nurses' Health Education about LGBTQ Elders (HEALE) Cultural Competency Curriculum** is a six-hour in-person continuing education (CE) training for nurses and health care professionals who serve older LGBTQ adults. [www.nursesheale.org](http://www.nursesheale.org)
- **World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)** offers educational conferences annually. [www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org)

## Professional development publications

- **The Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. American College of Physicians, 2015. <https://store.acponline.org>
- **WPATH Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People**. [www.wpath.org/publications/soc](http://www.wpath.org/publications/soc)



- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Healthcare: A Clinical Guide to Preventive, Primary, and Specialist Care**, 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Springer, 2016. [www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com)
- **LGBT Health** - academic journal published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc. <https://www.liebertpub.com/loi/lgbt>
- **Transgender Health** - open access journal published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc. [www.liebertpub.com/loi/trgh](http://www.liebertpub.com/loi/trgh)
- **The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding**. Institute of Medicine, 2011. [www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2011/The-Health-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-People.aspx](http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2011/The-Health-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-People.aspx)
- **Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community: A Field Guide**, 2014. [www.jointcommission.org/lgbt](http://www.jointcommission.org/lgbt)

## Mentorship programs

- As long as your health center has at least one LGBTQ-proficient provider, it is possible to develop a mentorship program for new clinicians. As the program grows, primary and behavioral health care mentors may wish to hold regular meetings with other clinicians to discuss cases and ask questions; this is particularly helpful for clinicians with transgender patients whose health care needs can be unique and complex.
- Mentorship is sometimes available from outside agencies. Tele-mentoring is another option; the Education Center offers a Transgender Health ECHO for health center clinical teams. The ECHO involves monthly live video conferencing sessions that combine brief didactic presentations with case discussions led by participating clinicians.  
[www.lgbthealtheducation.org/transecho/](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/transecho/)

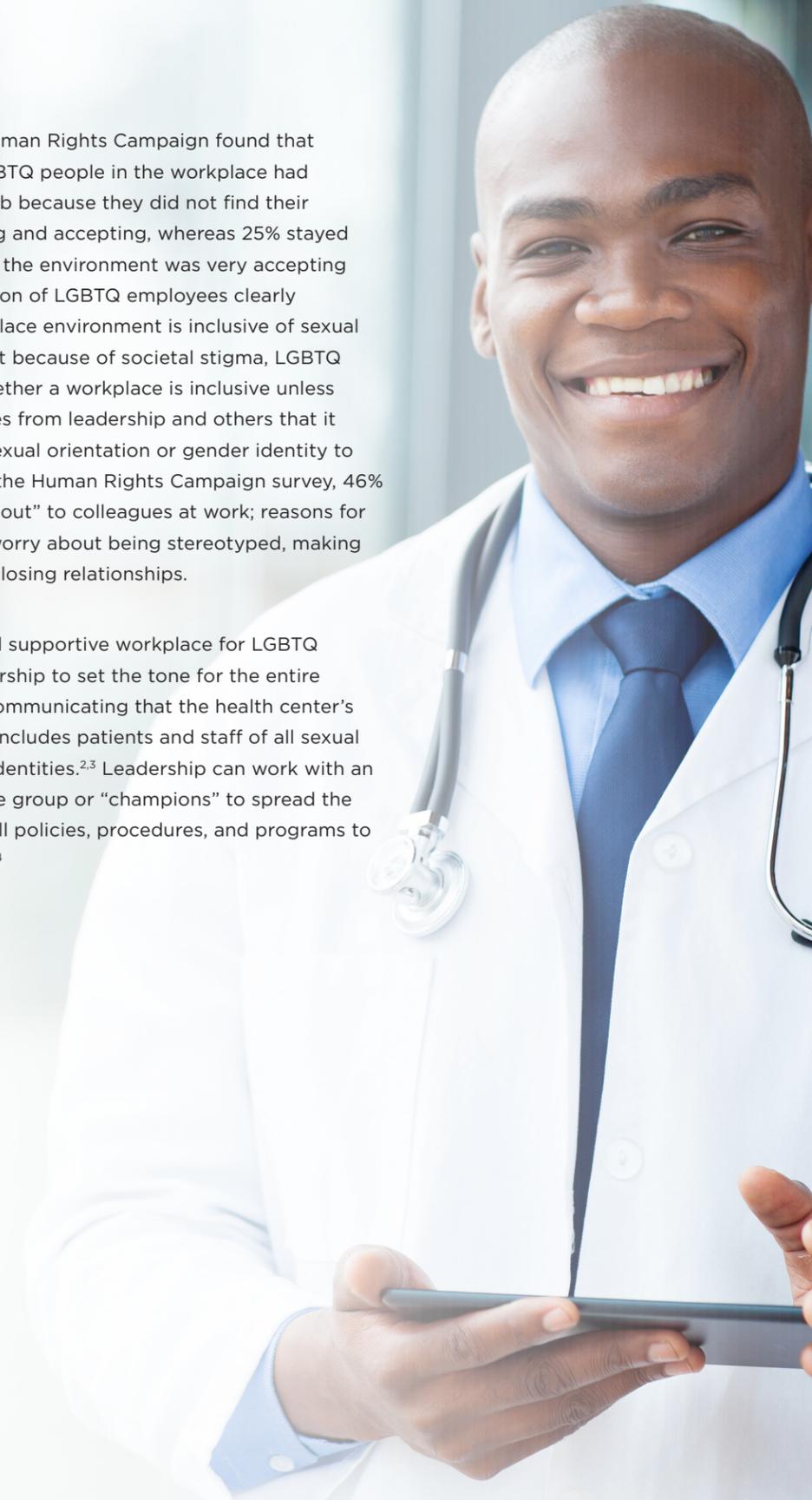
## Training for all staff

- LGBTQ health training can be incorporated into the onboarding process and into annual diversity and inclusion training. Although the training should focus on patient care and communication, staff can be reminded that the lessons also apply to interactions with colleagues.
- Recommended training topics include:
  - Basic LGBTQ terminology and concepts.
  - LGBTQ health disparities.
  - Communicating with cultural humility, including using correct names and pronouns.
  - Preventing and addressing implicit bias.
- The Education Center has an introductory LGBTQ health learning module for staff training.  
[www.lgbthealtheducation.org/lgbt-education/learning-modules](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/lgbt-education/learning-modules)
- Other helpful all-staff training materials can be accessed on the Education Center's publications page ([www.lgbthealtheducation.org/lgbt-education/publications](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/lgbt-education/publications)):
  - **Providing Inclusive Services and Care for LGBT People: A Guide for Health Care Staff.**
  - **Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People: Best Practices for Front-line Health Care Staff.**
  - **Understanding the Health Needs of LGBT People.**
  - **Glossary of LGBT Terms for Health Care Teams.**
  - **Learning to Address Implicit Bias towards LGBTQ Patients: Case Scenarios.**

## RETENTION

A recent survey by the Human Rights Campaign found that approximately 20% of LGBTQ people in the workplace had searched for a different job because they did not find their employer to be welcoming and accepting, whereas 25% stayed in a job *primarily* because the environment was very accepting of LGBTQ people.<sup>1</sup> Retention of LGBTQ employees clearly improves when the workplace environment is inclusive of sexual and gender minorities. But because of societal stigma, LGBTQ people may not know whether a workplace is inclusive unless there are explicit messages from leadership and others that it is safe to disclose one's sexual orientation or gender identity to colleagues. According to the Human Rights Campaign survey, 46% of respondents were not "out" to colleagues at work; reasons for non-disclosure included worry about being stereotyped, making people uncomfortable, or losing relationships.

To fully achieve a safe and supportive workplace for LGBTQ staff, it is critical for leadership to set the tone for the entire health center by clearly communicating that the health center's commitment to diversity includes patients and staff of all sexual orientations and gender identities.<sup>2,3</sup> Leadership can work with an LGBTQ employee resource group or "champions" to spread the message, and to update all policies, procedures, and programs to support LGBTQ inclusion.<sup>4</sup>



## Recommended policies

- Add the terms gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation to employee nondiscrimination policies. Explain that this policy includes using colleagues' correct names and pronouns.
- Ensure that personnel records contain the chosen names and pronouns for employees and their families, so that all communication is addressed appropriately.
- Develop a policy that allows employees to use restrooms based on their gender identity. If possible, also offer single-stall restrooms that do not specify a gender.
- Universally apply dress codes to all genders (i.e., do not specify certain codes for women or for men). A statement can also be added that permits employees to dress according to their gender identity.<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure that anti-bullying policies include bullying based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.<sup>2</sup>
- Prepare guidelines that support the successful and consistent administrative handling of an employee's gender affirmation. Effective guidelines include a communication plan for notifying colleagues about pronouns, names, and other relevant information. The organization should also have a system for changing gender, pronouns, and names on employee records.<sup>2</sup>

### For all policies

- Educate health center staff (especially supervisors) on the new and/or revised policies, explaining the rationale behind them.
- Establish several options for reporting violations of policies, and develop a clear protocol for addressing violations.
- Check for accountability – Are the policies being enforced? Do employees believe with confidence that their supervisors or leadership will do anything about violations?



## Recommended benefits and community programs

Because social norms and policies have long stigmatized and discriminated against sexual and gender minorities, many LGBTQ people may have familial relationships that are not biologically or legally binding. When caregiving situations arise, such as childbirth or adoption by an unmarried partner, or the illness of a close friend that is considered family, it is important to recognize these relationships in family and medical leave policies. These and other benefits that are inclusive of LGBTQ people will help to both attract and retain employees of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

- Expand the Family and Medical Leave policy to include anyone related by blood or affinity whose relationship with the employee is equivalent to a family relationship.
- Ensure that employee health insurance plans cover transgender care, such as hormone therapy and surgeries. It may be necessary to negotiate with the insurer to remove exclusionary statements and add gender-affirming care.
- Encourage the creation of LGBTQ employee affinity groups.
- Partner with a local organization to host events celebrating the LGBTQ community.

To assess your organization's progress in becoming a more LGBTQ-proficient and inclusive workplace, use the checklist in Appendix A.

# APPENDIX A:

## LGBTQ-Proficient and Inclusive Workplace Checklist

	Yes	Partial/In Process	No
Primary care clinicians are given access to and time for training in LGBTQ health competencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Behavioral health clinicians are given access to and time for training in LGBTQ health competencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ competencies are incorporated into diversity and inclusion training for all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employee nondiscrimination policies include gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees can use restrooms based on their gender identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dress codes are not gender specific	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dress codes allow employees to dress according to their gender identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anti-bullying policies include gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear protocols for reporting and addressing policy violations have been established	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidelines on employee gender affirmation have been established and disseminated to supervisors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personnel records include employees' chosen names and pronouns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All staff receive annual training on LGBTQ-inclusive policies and guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervisors demonstrate that they know and understand LGBTQ-inclusive policies and guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health insurance plans cover transgender care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family and Medical Leave policy includes anyone related by blood or affinity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ is incorporated into diversity and inclusion training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ employee affinity/resource groups are encouraged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Events celebrating LGBTQ community and culture are honored	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# REFERENCES

1. Human Rights Campaign Foundation. A workplace divided: understanding the climate for LGBTQ workers nationwide. Available at: [www.hrc.org/resources/a-workplace-divided-understanding-the-climate-for-lgbtq-workers-nationwide](http://www.hrc.org/resources/a-workplace-divided-understanding-the-climate-for-lgbtq-workers-nationwide).
2. Peyton JR. Five tips for creating inclusive workplaces for LGBT employees. *HR Digest*; July 2017. Available at: [www.mranet.org/Member-Benefits/Member-Only-Benefits/Publications/HR-Digest/ID/1252/Five-Tips-for-Creating-Inclusive-Workplaces-for-LGBT-Employees](http://www.mranet.org/Member-Benefits/Member-Only-Benefits/Publications/HR-Digest/ID/1252/Five-Tips-for-Creating-Inclusive-Workplaces-for-LGBT-Employees).
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4. Human Rights Campaign. Establishing an employee resource group. Available at: [www.hrc.org/resources/establishing-an-employee-resource-group](http://www.hrc.org/resources/establishing-an-employee-resource-group).

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This project was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under cooperative agreement number U30CS22742, Training and Technical Assistance National Cooperative Agreements (NCAs) for \$449,994.00 with 0% of the total NCA project financed with non-federal sources. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.