

EXPECT MORE

Everyone Deserves Good Health

7th Annual National LGBT Health Awareness Week

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Living in a largely heterosexist, homophobic and transphobic culture can cause or exacerbate existing mental health problems among LGBT people.

Studies indicate that members of the LGBT community experience mental health problems, including stress related disorders, at a higher rate than the general population. Specifically, lesbians have high reported rates of alcohol and drug dependence; gay men experience disproportionate rates of HIV infections; LGBT youth have higher rates of suicide than their heterosexual counterparts; and Gender Identity Disorder (GID) continues to pathologize and stigmatize transpeople.

Many LGBT people postpone help for mental health issues for a variety of reasons including negative experiences with providers and lack of or inadequate health insurance coverage. Additionally, many mental health professionals do not have adequate training or experience to properly serve LGBT individuals in need of support services. As a result, LGBT people are less likely to receive culturally appropriate mental health assessments, treatment, and support when diagnosed.

We must EXPECT MORE from our government agencies!

- Sexual and gender minorities should be specified and prioritized when funding, designing and implementing programs.
- Suicide prevention programs, pilots and demonstration grants need to focus on LGBT youth.
- Sexual orientation and gender identity demographic questions must be added to all population-based behavioral health-related surveys. Additionally, analysis of data for sexual orientation and gender identity will inform planning, program and policy development to best meet the mental health and substance abuse needs of the LGBT community.

Individuals, organizations, and providers can TAKE ACTION to help LGBT patients and families feel safe and welcome:

- Forms should be inclusive of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and relationship status (e.g., questions are open-ended so patients can designate their own gender, sexual orientation and relationship status).
- Do not make assumptions about patients' sexual orientation or gender identity
- Become culturally competent through ongoing training and treat all people with dignity and respect.
- Know your available LGBTQ community resources; LGBTQ individuals who are supported report lower rates of emotional distress and substance use/abuse.

EXPECT MORE: Mental health matters!

For more information, please see:

American Psychological Association (<http://www.apa.org/>)

Mental Health Information Center (<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>)

National Association of LGBT Community Centers (<http://www.lgbtcenters.org/>)

www.lgbthealth.net



National Coalition
for LGBT Health