

EXPECT MORE

Everyone Deserves Good Health

7th Annual National LGBT Health Awareness Week

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Unfortunately, LGBT people, due to societal stresses, bias and homophobia, are significantly more likely to abuse substances. This often includes regular use of tobacco and alcohol.

- While smoking rates continue to drop within the general population, tobacco use among LGBT people is among the highest rates of any U.S. population group.
 - Adult gay men smoke at rates between 34 percent to 50 percent higher than men in the general population at 23 percent.
 - Lesbians and bisexual women smoke at rates at 25.3 percent higher than heterosexual women at 18.5 percent.
- Smaller studies also show a substantially higher use of drugs
 - Data from a recent Community Health Survey in New York City indicates that 27 percent of women who have sex with women (WSWs) self-report ever using drugs as compared to 6 percent of non-WSWs.
 - Men who have sex with men (MSMs) in New York City report use of crystal methamphetamine at rates of 14 percent compared to very minimal rates among adults in New York State.

Substance abuse issues often hit LGBT youth the hardest. This is exacerbated by the fear of harassment and violence that LGBT youth face in schools and in their communities.

- Based on the Massachusetts Department of Education 2003 Report on LGBTQ Youth Risk Behaviors, “sexual minority” youth are:
 - More likely to use alcohol (60 percent vs. 45 percent) and almost twice as likely to binge drink (44 percent vs. 26 percent) than their heterosexual peers.
 - Almost twice as likely to use drugs at some point (73 percent vs. 46 percent) and to use drugs currently (49 percent vs. 29 percent) as their heterosexual peers.
 - Almost four times as likely to have skipped school because they felt unsafe (15 percent vs. 4 percent) as their heterosexual peers.
 - Twice as likely to report being bullied (42 percent vs. 21 percent) than their heterosexual peers.

Substance abuse treatment programs must be culturally competent so that the needs of LGBT people can be adequately addressed.

EXPECT MORE!

For more information, please see:

Alcohol Screening (<http://www.alcoholscreening.org/>)

National Association of Lesbian & Gay Addiction Professionals (www.gayhealth.org)