



BEST PRACTICES FOR PROVIDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CARE TO THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

- Be affirming and supportive. This means creating a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ clients, where they feel comfortable being themselves. It also means using language, name, and pronouns that are respectful of their identity.
- Creating safe spaces: Mental health environments should be welcoming, nonjudgmental, and safe for LGBTQ+ clients to share their experiences and concerns without fear of discrimination or bias. This includes considerations for administrative inclusivity (i.e., forms, signage, etc.).
- Respecting autonomy: Respect an individual's choices regarding disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Allow them to lead the conversation at their own pace.
- Trauma-informed care: Be aware of the potential for trauma related to LGBTQ+ individuals' experiences of discrimination, bullying, and rejection. Trauma-informed approaches are essential for providing effective care, especially given the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACE).
- Understanding unique challenges: Be knowledgeable about the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people. This includes understanding the impact of stigma, discrimination, and violence on mental health. It also means being aware of the specific mental health needs of different LGBTQ+ populations, such as transgender people and youth.
- Be culturally humble and responsive. This means understanding the different cultures and experiences of LGBTQ+ people. It also means being aware of the different ways that LGBTQ+ people may express their gender and sexual identity. Moreover, the community is not a monolith. LGBTQ+ individuals have multiple intersecting identities, such as race, ethnicity, religion, and disability. Understanding these intersections is crucial for providing comprehensive and affirming care.
- Knowledge of LGBTQ+ health disparities: Understand the higher rates of mental health challenges, substance use, and suicide risk within the LGBTQ+ community, and tailor interventions accordingly.
- Understanding family dynamics: Recognize that family acceptance or rejection can significantly impact an LGBTQ+ individual's mental health. Involving supportive family members in therapy, if possible, can be beneficial.
- Be respectful of confidentiality. This is especially important for LGBTQ+ people, who may be more likely to experience discrimination or violence if their sexual orientation or gender identity is known.
- Gender dysphoria and transitioning: Be knowledgeable about gender dysphoria and the process of transitioning, including medical and social aspects. Support clients who are exploring or undergoing gender-affirming care.
- Support for coming out: Be prepared to provide support for individuals who are coming out to family, friends, or colleagues, as this process can impact mental health.



- Referral sources. Be familiar with resources in the community that can provide additional support to LGBTQ+ clients, such as LGBTQ+-friendly therapists, support groups, and community centers, in addition to gender-affirming care.
- Ethical considerations: Uphold ethical guidelines related to confidentiality, informed consent, and boundaries while respecting cultural and individual norms.

Here are some additional tips for mental health providers who want to provide affirming care to the LGBTQ+ community:

- ✓ Affirming and inclusive language: Providers should use gender-affirming and inclusive language that respects individuals' names and pronouns, reducing the risk of misgendering and creating a safe space for open communication. This includes avoiding language that is heterosexist or cisnormative.
- ✓ Ask about pronouns. It is always a good idea to ask clients about their pronouns, even if you think you know what they are. This shows that you are respectful of their identity and that you are creating a safe space for them. It also helps to introduce yourself with your own pronouns and use pronouns as part of your email signature.
- ✓ Be aware of your own biases. It is important to be aware of your own biases and how they may impact your work with LGBTQ+ clients. This includes being aware of your own assumptions about gender and sexual orientation. Providers should continuously reflect on their own biases, assumptions, and limitations to ensure they are providing unbiased and effective care.
- ✓ Get training. Mental health providers should actively educate themselves about LGBTQ+ culture, terminology, identities, and experiences. This includes understanding the challenges and discrimination that LGBTQ+ individuals may face. There are many resources available to help mental health providers learn more about providing affirming care to the LGBTQ+ community. This includes training, workshops, and online resources. Additionally, stay current with research, guidelines, and best practices related to LGBTQ+ mental health.

You can find more information about training by going to the following:

www.envision-you.org/lgbtq-behavioral-health-training. As a participant in the 2023 CBHC Conference, you are entitled to receive a 25% discount on all training programs. You can use the following code when registering: **CBHC25**.

By following these guidelines, mental health providers can create a safe and supportive space for LGBTQ+ clients and provide them with the care they need.

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