LGBT Health Needs and Disparities in Erie County

About the Human Relations Commission’s Healthcare Equality Index (HEI):

The Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) is the national LGBTQ benchmarking tool that evaluates healthcare facilities’ policies and practices related to the equity and inclusion of their LGBTQ patients, visitors and employees. The HEI 2016 evaluates a total of 2,061 healthcare facilities nationwide.

*HEI-related items designated by “(HEI)”

Healthcare concerns in the LGBT community

- Reluctance to seek treatment due to expectation of poor treatment
- Higher rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- Lower rates of mammography and Pap smear screening
- Higher rates of substance abuse
- Higher rates of unhealthy weight control/perception
- Twice as likely to smoke
- Higher rates of depression, anxiety
- Higher rates of suicide attempt
- Higher rates of intimate partner violence
- Higher rates of violence victimization
- Significantly less likely than others to have health insurance
- Lesbian/bisexual women are less likely to have had a recent mammogram or Pap test
- Decreased access to employer-sponsored health insurance benefits for same-sex partners and spouses
- Sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, are major concerns in some LGBT groups, particularly MSM and transgender women
- MSMs account for 75% of reported primary and secondary syphilis infections
- MSMs account for more than one-third of gonorrhea infections
- Hepatitis C infection transmitted by sexual contact
- Sexual minority adolescents more commonly engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors and misperceive their weight compared to their peers
- Lesbian women have a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity
- Transgender-affirming gynecological care
- Higher burden of substance abuse and mental health disorders in LGBT patients that stem from the need to cope with minority stress
- Missed screening opportunities and the greater burden of some cancer risk factors in LGBT groups
- Social ostracism and family rejection
- Homelessness
- LGBT seniors may harbor greater fears of stigma and discrimination when no longer able to live independently and must move into communal housing arrangements
- Because they are less likely to have children, LGBT elders may have fewer options for family support in the face of illness and disability
Later years may also be more economically precarious for partnered but unmarried LGB individuals, as they do not have access to spousal, survival, or death benefits through Social Security, and thus may be impoverished by the death of a partner.

Areas of Need:

- **LGBT-affirming clinical encounters (HEI)**
  - Provide training to doctors in transgender healthcare (i.e. prescribing hormones)
  - Provide LGBT-focused drug and alcohol treatment
  - Provide Training on specific health concerns of this population
  - Provide training to interact respectfully with LGBT patients, including using patients’ preferred names and pronouns
  - Provide LGBT-affirming training to frontline staff
  - Provide an LGB-focused point person/liaison/patient advocate
  - Provide LGBT-focused behavioral health integration in primary care settings
  - Provide training in trauma-informed medical care
  - Provide HIV/STD/STI testing and counseling
  - Provide PrEP and/or PEP for patients at risk for HIV
  - HIV Care and services
  - Provide LGBT-focused alcohol and substance use treatment
  - Guidelines for room assignments for transgender patients
  - Include anonymous LGBT-specific measures on patient surveys
  - Include questions about LGBT concerns on patient surveys

- **Creating a welcoming environment to LGBT Patients**
  - Revise intake forms to include sexual orientation and gender identity
  - Display welcoming signage in waiting areas and treatment rooms
  - Providing gender-neutral restrooms
  - Providing patient-focused publications (Fenway Health, HRC, etc)
  - Make LGBT knowledgeable and competent providers known to interested patients
  - Develop and prominently display non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (HEI)
    - Patient nondiscrimination policies communicated to patients in at least two ways
    - Patient nondiscrimination policies communicated to staff in at least one way
  - Provide educational brochures on LGBT health topics where other patient information materials are displayed
  - Visitation policies explicitly permit equal visitation to LGBT patients and their visitors. (HEI)
    - Visitation policies communicated to patients in at least two ways
    - Visitation policies communicated to staff in at least one way
  - Explicitly inform patients of their right to designate a person of their choice, including a same-sex partner, as medical decision maker.

- **Health records**
  - Ability to designate a same sex partner as a decision maker
• Health records capture expanded options for relationship status such as domestic partner, life partner, significant other, etc.
• Pediatric health records include expanded options for parental identification beyond "mother" and "father" to be inclusive of same-sex parents and other diverse families
• Ability to capture gender identity different from birth sex/identification documents on medical records
• Inclusion of structured data fields to obtain information on sexual orientation and gender identity as part of electronic health records

- Administration
  • Facilities develop an official plan for reducing LGBT health disparities
  • Develop and communicate a fully-inclusive transgender healthcare policy
  • Facilities have fully LGBT inclusive employment non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity (HEI)
    - Employment non-discrimination policies communicated to general public in at least one way
    - Employee health insurance includes at least one employee health plan that fully covers transition related care for transgender people (HEI)
  • Written policies and procedures that cover gender transition of transgender employees
  • Provide comprehensive health care benefits and COBRA continuation coverage to same sex partners/spouses of benefits-eligible employees
  • Engage in marketing/advertising to the LGBT community
  • Facilities have an officially recognized LGBT employee resource group
  • Provide information about LGBT services and/or health concerns on website
  • Offer FMLA leave or equivalent to same sex partners/spouses of benefits-eligible employees
  • Offer life insurance to same sex partners/spouses of benefits-eligible employees
  • Offer bereavement leave in case of the death of a same sex partners/spouse
  • Include anonymous LGBT-specific measures on employee surveys
  • Include questions about LGBT concerns on employee surveys
  • Commemorate an LGBT holiday, such as Pride, Transgender Day of Remembrance, etc.
  • LGBT focused hiring efforts
  • Participate in, sponsor, or otherwise support LGBT-related events
  • Perform needs assessment engagement with the LGBT community
  • Provide LGBT representation on a governing or community advisory board
  • Meet with local LGBT organizations
  • Support LGBT-related research