

Strategies to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender clients accessing your service can be simple and easy to implement.

- 1** Display educational materials and press that include LGBT people to create a welcoming environment that can indicate that your service accepts LGBT clients.
- 2** Use gender neutral language in client consultations, intake forms and organisational policies to indicate the service's awareness and acceptance of LGBT people, relationships and families.
- 3** Ensure confidentiality and diversity statements are visible to clients accessing the service and these policies are explained during consultations to support clients disclosing sensitive information, such as their sexual orientation or trans history.
- 4** Make links with local LGBT networks, other LGBT inclusive services, useful websites and resources. Breaking down social isolation is a crucial factor in supporting the health and wellbeing of LGBT people.

Establishing inclusive services will ensure that LGBT clients can speak freely and honestly about all health-related matters.

The common experience of discrimination means that the health of GLBTI populations differs from that of the general population. This discrimination leads to health problems that are shared by this group as well as health problems specific to each subgroup. For GLBTI individuals the impact of this discrimination can lead to a poorer general health status, diminished utilisation of healthcare facilities and a decreased quality of health services.
www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/dov/WEEN-5GA2YX



- QAHc**
The Queensland Association for Healthy Communities Inc (QAHc) delivers training to support health and related services provide inclusive services to increase access and improve the health outcomes for LGBT people.
www.qahc.org.au/training

State wide administration 1800 177 434
Brisbane Office (07) 3017 1777
info@qahc.org.au
www.qahc.org.au

QAHc seeks to enable LGBT people to increase control over and improve their health, as a resource for social, economic and personal development and an important dimension of quality of life.

- GLWA**
Free telephone counseling, support and information.
Ph (07) 3017 1717
FREECALL 1800 184 527 (7pm-10pm)
- PFLAG**
Parents and friends of lesbians and gays.
Ph (07) 3017 1739
- Open Doors**
Supporting LGBT youth.
Ph (07) 3257 7660
- ATSAQ**
Transgender support.
Ph (07) 3843 5024 (8am-6pm)

Check out the QAHc website for further contacts and fact sheets – www.qahc.org.au

Look for the **Speak Freely Here resources at your service provider**

An inclusive service allows the client to give the provider all the jigsaw puzzle pieces.



JA 5/09

A resource for service providers



Creating Inclusive Services to support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Clients

**Creating Change
Celebrating Diversity
Maintaining Confidentiality**

QAHc's Creating Inclusive Services Package



Despite positive changes in Australian attitudes towards sexuality and gender diversity in recent years, many LGBT people continue to encounter high levels of discrimination and stigma. As a result most LGBT people don't take acceptance for granted within public or private settings, and this includes when accessing health related services.

Research indicates many LGBT people are concerned that they will receive a lower standard of care if they disclose their sexuality or gender identity to service providers.

There is an expectation that service providers lack knowledge and awareness about LGBT health and wellbeing concerns, and may react negatively towards LGBT clients. This not only results in non-disclosure but also delayed access to both health related services and preventative screening programs. However, when services implement anti-discrimination strategies that seek to treat all clients the same, they do little to break down these expectations.

Treating everyone the same way often means service providers assume that clients are heterosexual, which can prevent clients disclosing their sexuality and gender identity.

The AMA believes that a doctor's non-judgemental acknowledgement of a patient's sexual orientation, gender identity and behaviour enhances clinical care.

www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/dov/WEEN-5GA2YX

A client's life is like a jigsaw puzzle and your job, along with them, is to complete it.



While disclosure may not always be necessary, providing clients with the opportunity to disclose in a safe and welcoming environment will support building rapport and honesty with clients and enable the provision of appropriate and individualised care.

To create safe, welcoming and inclusive services that can encourage disclosure, LGBT clients need to be reassured that:

- the service accepts diverse sexualities and genders,
- confidentiality won't be breached, and
- even if service providers aren't experts they will be respectful of LGBT health and wellbeing concerns.

Service providers don't have to be experts on LGBT health and wellbeing. Nor do LGBT clients require special treatment.

However LGBT clients do require inclusive services. Unlike other characteristics, sexuality and gender identity are not physical characteristics that can always be easily identified. This increases the importance for services to use strategies that provide visible and inclusive messages, encouraging LGBT clients to disclose their sexuality or gender identity, maximising the support service providers can offer.

The AMA acknowledges that a doctor's use of language that assumes that an individual to be heterosexual makes it harder for a person to disclose their sexuality.

www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/dov/WEEN-5GA2YX

Sexual and gender identity are just a few of the jigsaw puzzle pieces that clients may not feel comfortable to give.

Sexuality and gender identity often influence the health and wellbeing outcomes of LGBT clients.

LGBT people share a variety of health patterns, often influenced by the experiences of stigma and marginalisation. These include higher levels of mental health concerns, unsafe drug and alcohol use, eating disorders, obesity, suicide and self harm. Rates of preventative screening for conditions such as cervical cancer and breast cancer among lesbians and anal cancer among gay men are far lower than the general community.

Lesbian, bisexual and gay men's health concerns are far from being restricted to sexual health, just as transgender identities are not linked or synonymous to sexual identity.

While service providers are not expected to be experts, simply having an awareness of the influence sexuality and gender identity have on LGBT health and wellbeing will increase your ability to support LGBT clients.

Mental health problems are statistically over-represented in this population throughout life due to exposure to discriminatory behaviour.

Patterns of drug and alcohol use within the GLBTI community are greater than that of the general population. The increase risk of smoking and alcohol intake is also of concern in relation to cardiovascular risk factors.

www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/dov/WEEN-5GA2YX

When you have all the pieces of the puzzle you can offer a more holistic service to your client.

