



10 Things You Can Do to Be an Ally in Healthcare to Patients Who Are LGBTQ+

Looking for simple ways to start being more engaged and active ally in healthcare? Try using a few of these suggestions to build your ally skills and start creating change.

1. **Get the facts.** Take the time to learn about the healthcare disparities that impact lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) patients and the significance providing culturally competent care can play in positive health outcomes.
2. **Learn the laws.** Be aware of legal issues, as well as local/state/federal policy issues, that could impact a person who is LGBTQ+ in a healthcare setting and legal services they may need.
3. **Use the right words.** Familiarize yourself with the language that patients may use to describe themselves. Language around LGBTQ+ issues is constantly evolving, so try your best to start using new terminology quickly and comfortably.
4. **Ask the right questions.** Instead of asking “are you married”, ask “are you in a relationship”. When taking a sexual history, ask “do you have sex with men, women, or both?” Ask patients about their personal gender pronouns.
5. **Include partners/spouses.** Treat a patient’s partner or spouse as you would any other patient’s husband/wife. Include the partner in consultations, explanations, treatment planning, etc.
6. **Post your inclusive policy.** Signal your support for LGBTQ+ patients by posting a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Make sure it is someplace visible in your waiting room or office as well as on your website.
7. **Watch out for junk science.** Avoid groups that claim to change sexual orientation or gender identity through therapy or prayer which have been proven to be unscientific, ineffectual, and psychologically damaging. They have also been outlawed for minors in numerous states and localities.
8. **Connect with what’s working.** Learn more about local health centers, programs, clinics, etc. that focus on LGBTQ+ health in your city, state, and region. Research organizations such as PFLAG, LGBTQ+ community centers, and youth groups. Do your best to mirror their success.
9. **Encourage learning.** Provide resource, materials, and recommendations so that everyone in your office can access information about culturally competent care for patients who are LGBTQ+.
10. **Come out as an ally.** Click here to learn about how you can become part of the GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality provider database at www.glma.org.

Don’t forget to visit straightforequality.org and read the *guide to being a straight ally* and *the guide to being a trans ally*. Be sure to follow us on Twitter @S4Equality and Like us on Facebook facebook.com/S4Equality.