

LGBT+ Pride Month - June 2020

Compared to the heterosexual population, individuals in the LGBT+ community...

- Face more social stigma;
- Experience greater discrimination;
- Report higher rates of substance use in adolescence;
- Have a greater risk of developing a substance use disorder (SUD) during their lifetime;
- Enter treatment with a more severe SUD;
- Are more likely to experience a psychiatric disorder in addition to their SUD; (co-occurring diagnosis)
- Have an increased risk for HIV; and
- Are at greater risk for suicidal thoughts and attempts, especially when the individual has a SUD.

LGBT+ and Substance Use Disorder

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health in 2018 found...

- 1 in 2 lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals with a SUD struggled with illicit drugs.
- 2 in 5 lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals with a mental illness qualified as having a serious mental illness.
- 6.3 million lesbian, gay or bisexual adults had a mental illness and/or substance use disorder.
- 1.2 million (9% of total population) lesbian, gay or bisexual adults experienced opioid misuse.
- Lesbian, gay or bisexual adults were over twice as likely than the overall US population to experience suicidal thoughts, make a plan to attempt suicide, and attempted suicide.
- 90% of lesbian, gay or bisexual adults with co-occurring mental illness (any) and substance use disorder did not receive treatment. 87.5% of those with a substance use disorder did not receive treatment.

Clinical Considerations:

- **Ask all clients which pronouns they prefer to use**, document this preference as part of their health record, and use the pronouns they prefer in all interactions. By asking all clients, and not just clients who self-identify as transgender, clinician's and staff avoid differential treatment based on gender identity. This will also provide the client the opportunity to express their gender identity without having to find a time on their own, which can be uncomfortable for clients.
- **Avoid making any assumptions** about a person based on their gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. The LGBT+ community is highly stereotyped – clinical settings should be free of any stereotypes to provide clients with a safe and supportive environment to be themselves.
- **Provide specialized groups** based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation – such specialized groups have been shown to lead to better outcomes for clients.
- **Recognize and incorporate** into treatment the individual's experience with discrimination, family problems, violence, social isolation and homophobia/transphobia.

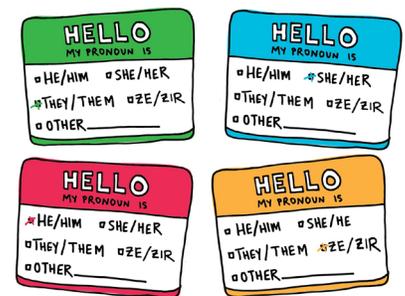


Image Credit: <https://medium.com/@just.elise/queer-abby-lets-talk-about-pronouns-5599ac1f9058>



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Clinical Considerations:

- **Pursue continuing education** focused on working with the LGBT+ community. It is the clinician's responsibility to pursue education to appropriately provide services to clients. It is no longer considered appropriate to ask clients to educate professionals on gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
- **Conduct ongoing screenings** for suicidality due to the population's increased risk.
- **Utilize a trauma informed care approach**, taking into consideration the likelihood the client experienced minority stress, discrimination, separation from family and potentially violence due to their gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.
- **Include LGBT+-friendly photographs/posters** in the facility; Avoid only displaying heterosexual and cisgender individuals in promotional materials and decorations.

Key Terms:¹

- **Bisexual:** An individual who is attracted to others in the same and different gender.
- **Gay:** An individual who is attracted to others of the same gender. Often used to reference a man who is attracted to men.
- **Gender Affirmation Surgery:** Elective medical procedures an individual can pursue to change their physical appearance to more closely resemble their gender identity.
- **Gender Expression:** The external presentation of gender (names, pronouns, clothing, behavior, hairstyle, voice, body characteristics, etc.).
- **Gender Identity:** An individual's internal sense of gender, regardless of which gender the person was assigned at birth. Gender identity is not visible to others. There are more gender identities than male and female.
- **Gender Nonconforming:** An individual whose gender identity and/or expression does not conform to cultural or social expectations of gender.
- **Intersex:** An individual who has reproductive organs/sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of the female or male sex.
- **Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to other women. Some women may choose to identify as a gay woman.
- **LGBT+:** Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The + sign represents the additional identities, such as queer, questioning, and intersex.
- **Pride:** Celebration of LGBT+ communities, with a focus on reducing discrimination and violence against LGBT+ individuals. Pride is held in June each year to commemorate the Stonewall Riots that took place in New York City in June 1969.
- **Queer:** An individual who does not identify as heterosexual or cisgender (a person whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth).
- **Questioning:** An individual who is questioning or experimenting with their gender expression, gender identity and/or sexual orientation.
- **Sex:** Assigned at birth to an individual based on the appearance of external anatomy and bodily characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, and external reproductive organs. There are more sexes than just male and female.
- **Sexual Orientation:** The desire an individual has for emotional, romantic or sexual relationships with others based on gender expression, gender identity, and/or sex.
- **Transgender:** An individual whose gender identity is different than what they were assigned at birth.
- **Transition:** The process in which an individual who identifies as transgender changes their gender expression to align more closely with their gender identity. This can consist of personal, medical and legal steps, such as changing one's name and sex on legal documents.

References

1. It Gets Better Project- <https://itgetsbetter.org/>

Additional Resources:

- American Psychological Association, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health - <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/lgbt-health>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness, LGBTQ - <https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/LGBTQ>
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH), Substance Use and SUDs in LGBTQ Populations - <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/substance-use-suds-in-lgbtq-populations>
- National LGBT Health Education Center, Learning Resources - <https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/resources/>