



Communication with LGBTIQ+ clients

Explain

Why

Information about LGBTIQ+ status is collected, including in order to provide the best service and meet an individual's needs.

How

Information about LGBTIQ+ status is stored, who has access to this information, and the relevant organisational procedures and privacy legislation.

Data collection

✓ Facilitate LGBTIQ+ data recording internally, and advocate for change where datasets are not inclusive.

✓ Ask permission to record the client's details on file – using language that they use – so that they do not have to repeatedly disclose, and to respectfully navigate confidentiality with others.

✓ Remember that gender, sexuality, and the language a person uses to describe themselves can also change over time.

Safety

✓ Be aware that disclosure may be particularly sensitive for LGBTIQ+ clients, may put their safety at risk, and may have contributed to their homelessness.

✓ Ask questions in a space that does not risk outing LGBTIQ+ clients to other service users or staff.

Names and Pronouns

✓ Use gender-neutral greetings and pronouns until you have checked in with the client about their preference, and offer to share your pronouns.

✓ LGBTIQ+ people – especially trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary people – may use different names and pronouns in different circumstances. Some might prefer to have their affirmed name used with trusted staff, but may want their legal name used with relatives, members of their cultural community, or around other clients of the service to avoid being outed.

✓ Check what name, pronouns and/or title/s a client may wish to use in written correspondence, such as referral letters.

✓ Avoid assumptions about the gender or number of intimate partners and caregivers, family makeup, or relationship with family of origin.

Confidentiality

✓ There may be additional disclosure, anonymity, and confidentiality concerns and communication needed for clients in specific cultural, religious, and rural/regional/remote communities, and for people with a disability. Reassure the person that information will not be passed on to other service providers, institutions, or service users, without their consent.

Sample scripts

“We know that everyone is different, so I’m going to ask a few questions about how you identify, such as your cultural background or sexuality. You don’t have to answer these questions if you don’t want to, and I want you to know we keep this information confidential and only ask to ensure we can be respectful of who you are.”

“I would like to ask some questions about your gender so I can be sure that you receive the most appropriate services here, and are treated in a culturally appropriate way with dignity and respect.

Would you mind letting me know your gender identity? And what pronouns (if any) do you use for yourself? For example, I identify as female, and my pronoun is she/her.

How would you like to be referred to with other people and services, and in correspondence such as mail?

Thank you for telling me”.

Intersex considerations

✓ There are many intersex variations.

✓ Many intersex people do not identify with the LGBTIQ+ acronym, nor with the word ‘intersex’, and may prefer to use different terminology. For more information refer to Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA) <https://ihra.org.au/>

✓ Do not conflate confidentiality issues for intersex and trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary people.

Source: *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia*. Funded by the National LGBTI Health Alliance and Pride Foundation Australia. 2020.



Download the complete guide at: www.lgbtihomeless.org.au



Cultural Safety for LGBTIQ+

Why

Some research suggests experiences of discrimination, trauma, substance use, mental health issues (such as anxiety, depression, suicidality, and PTSD), family conflict and violence, and childhood sexual abuse are higher among LGBTQ people who experience homelessness. A sense of isolation from the LGBTIQ+ community is also common. Rates of anxiety and psychological distress are likely to be higher among LGBTIQ+ people with a disability. Minority stress, confidentiality, and anonymity can also be more challenging for LGBTIQ+ people in rural-remote and outer metropolitan areas.

There is often a fear of being re-victimised when accessing services, which may lead some to feel less at risk on the streets. Fear of being rejected from gender-specific services is also common, especially for trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary people.

Safety in services is paramount.

How

✓ PERSON CENTRED

To practice a person-centred approach and minimise risks to physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing, staff need to be adequately trained and confident to have conversations around safety and respond appropriately.

Accommodation

✓ ASK PREFERENCES

Ask about specific accommodation needs or preferences in relation to gendered services. This includes short-term emergency accommodation where there is a high turnover of residents.

Don't ask invasive questions about surgical status or bodies – this is not only potentially offensive and re-traumatising, but it could be interpreted as sexual harassment – and such information should not be used to make decisions regarding accommodation.

✓ ENSURE PRIVACY

Ensure the accommodation has gender inclusive bathrooms and toilets, single stalls, lockable doors, shower curtains, at least one shower that is completely private.

Example Code of Conduct

“Employees must at all times maintain a respectful and appropriate relationship with all clients of this service. They shall deliver quality, inclusive services, regardless of the Resident’s gender identity, age, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, religion, sexual orientation and/or professional background.

Discrimination, harassment, any displays of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and/or bullying of any kind, will not be tolerated within the workplace, and will be dealt with through the performance management and /or existing disciplinary system. Our aim is always the delivery of inclusive and respectful care and services, to all, including people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) communities”.

Adapted from the Lifeview Code of Conduct.

Policies

✓ Ensure that LGBTIQ+ cultural safety needs are addressed in the consumer charter and educate other residents on codes of conduct.

Signage and Messaging

✓ Display welcoming and inclusive signage and information for LGBTIQ+ people, such as flags, books, posters, pamphlets, relevant literature in foyers, waiting areas and other common areas.

✓ Specifically state that homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and prejudice against intersex people are not tolerated.

Follow up

✓ Check-in with clients after they are placed and moving out of crisis to ensure they are not feeling harassed or unsafe, and to promote a continuum of care.

Source: *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia*. Funded by the National LGBTI Health Alliance and Pride Foundation Australia. 2020.



Download the complete guide at: www.lgbthomeless.org.au



LGBTIQ+ Complaints Pathways

Why

Under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, amended in 2013¹, it is unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status. Although religious exemptions and some state-based legislation may allow exceptions, this should not be used as an excuse to reject clients or deny service². Nor should a fear that providing service to an LGBTIQ+ person might make other clients 'uncomfortable'.

The Australian Human Rights Commission provides more information about the Act, as well as examples of direct and indirect discrimination, on their website³.

Internal responses

✓ Respond to discrimination and harassment when they happen, and ensure that appropriate training, resources, and systems review are put in place.

✓ Explain to clients that reporting discrimination and harassment does not affect their position or access to the welfare system.

✓ Include clear information on complaints pathways, ensure that complaints are taken seriously and managed appropriately, and support the complaints process.

✓ Provide options for lodging a formal/informal, internal/external, identified/anonymous complaint at organisational, state/territory, and national levels.

✓ Review complaints pathways and avenues for feedback with lived experience advisory group.

External mechanisms

Referral to the Complaints Commissioner, Mental Health Complaints Commissioner and/or Health Ombudsman in the relevant state or territory.

¹ *Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013*.

² National LGBTI Health Alliance (2016). *National lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex mental health and suicide prevention strategy: A new strategy for inclusion and action*, p. 14.

³ www.humanrights.gov.au

Other Commonwealth Acts

✓ *Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975* prohibits racial vilification and unfair treatment on account of race, colour, descent, nationality, ethnicity, or immigration status⁴.

✓ *The Disability Discrimination Act 1992* prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities, including discrimination on account of being accompanied by an assistant, interpreter, reader, trained animal, or equipment or other aid; it also protects people from discrimination, for example, if they are carers, parents, or friends of people with a disability⁵.

State and Territory Acts

- Victoria: *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- New South Wales: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- Queensland: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- Northern Territory: *Anti-Discrimination Act*
- Western Australia: *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*
- Tasmania: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*
- South Australia: *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*
- Australian Capital Territory: *Discrimination Act 1991*.

Legal support

LGBTIQ+ people can get legal support if they believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex variation.

Source: *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia*. Funded by the National LGBTI Health Alliance and Pride Foundation Australia. 2020.



Download the complete guide at: www.lgbtihomeless.org.au

⁴ *Australian Human Rights Commission (2014). Racial discrimination.* <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/employers/racial-discrimination>

⁵ *Australian Human Rights Commission (2014). A brief guide to the Disability Discrimination Act* <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/brief-guide-disability-discrimination-act>



LGBTIQ+ Client Intake & Data Capture

Why

LGBTIQ+ people who access services may not disclose that they are LGBTIQ+ to staff for a range of reasons. Any information about LGBTIQ+ people that is recorded in a database or on intake and assessment forms, and during evaluation processes, should be gathered in a way that respects their confidentiality, and clarifies that information is being collected to provide the best possible service. This requires managers to ensure that staff are adequately resourced and trained in how to ask questions concerning LGBTIQ+ status sensitively.

Data capture

✓ Ensure data is gathered in a way that respects client

confidentiality, and ensures the client understands how and when information could be shared with other services.

✓ Provide training for service delivery staff in how to ask questions sensitively, and in a way that reassures the client that information is being collected to provide the best service.

✓ Ensure data is stored that reflects the client's name and gender that they identify with.

✓ Forms and data entry fields should include a range of options and cultural variations, as well as a "prefer to self-describe" free text box. This applies to sexual orientation, gender, pronouns, titles, and relationships.

✓ Include intersex variation as a separate question, include a description when asking, and do not conflate with sexual orientation or gender.

✓ Include "prefer not to say" and "don't know" response options.

✓ Advocate for change where prescribed databases are not inclusive.

✓ Monitor data capture over time to ensure quality, accuracy, and inclusiveness of fields.

Examples database fields

Pronouns: She/her, he/him, they/them, name only, prefer to self-describe

Gender identity: Female, male, trans, Sistergirl, Brotherboy, genderqueer, trans feminine, trans woman, trans masculine, trans man, non-binary, questioning/unsure, prefer not to say, prefer to self-describe

Intersex variation: Yes, no, prefer not to say

Sexual orientation: Asexual, bisexual, gay, heterosexual, lesbian, pansexual, prefer not to say, questioning/unsure, prefer to self-describe

From Launch Housing, Victoria

Client intake sample questions

Field	What you would say when asking
Pronouns	"What pronouns do you feel most comfortable with people using to refer to you?" or "What are your pronouns?"
Gender	"What is your gender or gender identity?"
Trans/gender diverse status	"Are you trans or gender diverse? This could include if you are questioning your gender. Being trans or gender diverse means not identifying with the gender assigned to you at birth."
Intersex status	"Intersex is a term for people born with atypical physical sex characteristics. There are many different intersex traits or variations. Do you have an intersex variation?"
Sexual identity	"What terms do you prefer to identify your sexuality?"

From Perth Inner City Youth Service

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LGBTIQ+ Consumer Participation

Why

Valuing consumer participation is important in strengthening connections with diverse communities. In particular, providing multiple opportunities for feedback and input from LGBTIQ+ people with lived experience of homelessness, and engaging with LGBTIQ+ communities more widely – especially people with intersectional identities and experiences – has a critical role to play in developing policies, procedures, and facilities that are accessible, safe, and inclusive.

How

- ✓ Lived experience advisory groups with specific roles;
- ✓ Peer mentoring, leadership, and traineeship opportunities that help build capacity of the LGBTIQ+ workforce;
- ✓ Remember that one person cannot speak for an entire community;
- ✓ Ensure that intersectional identities and experiences are included;
- ✓ Consulting with LGBTIQ+ community groups;
- ✓ Partnering with LGBTIQ+ community groups on new initiatives that promote co-design principles;
- ✓ Reimbursing consumers and community groups appropriately for their involvement;
- ✓ Establishing an LGBTIQ+ portfolio and liaison officer role within mainstream services;
- ✓ Develop and review complaints pathways and avenues for feedback with lived experience advisory group.

Recommended payment rates for consumer representatives

On regular committees, council or Boards (including pre-reading and travel time)

- \$196.47 per meeting of under 4 hours
- \$392.93 per meeting over 4 hours

Less formal involvement – e.g. focus groups, reviewing materials

- \$42.03 per hour including preparation time

Health Consumers NSW position statement

<https://www.hcnsw.org.au/for-health-consumer-organisations/remuneration-and-reimbursement-of-health-consumers/>

Support across the organisation

In order to implement organisational change, support is still required across the whole organisation rather than leaving this to one staff member who might be tasked with the LGBTIQ+ portfolio (and LGBTIQ+ clients should not be referred automatically to this person without discussion, as the member of staff may not have capacity or be able to assist with all issues).

Source: *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia*. Funded by the National LGBTI Health Alliance and Pride Foundation Australia. 2020.



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LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Policies

Why

For LGBTIQ+ inclusion to become a norm within the workplace culture, and for staff to be able to achieve inclusive practice, it is important to recognise diversity and the needs of different groups in organisational policies.

How

✓ Review all existing policies, as well as language used in internal and external communications and resources to ensure they are inclusive of people with diverse genders, sexual orientations, and intersex variations.

✓ Consult with LGBTIQ+ representatives and specialist organisations to ensure they have a voice in policy development and feedback.

✓ Conduct an internal audit on LGBTIQ+ inclusivity to inform quality improvement plan, and link with audits of cultural diversity and accessibility.

Symbols and statements

✓ Include a clearly visible statement of LGBTIQ+ support and flags on the organisation website.

Example diversity and inclusion statement

“All of our guidelines, policies, procedures and practice aim to ensure substantive equality and participation, at all levels of the organisation, regardless of gender identity, age, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, religion, sexual orientation and/or professional background. Our service welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) people”

Adapted from the Lifeview Diversity Statement

✓ Support staff and allies in establishing a Zero Tolerance approach to discrimination.

✓ Add LGBTIQ+ flags, statement of support, and staff pronouns to email signatures.

✓ Celebrate important dates for LGBTIQ+ people (such as Transgender Day of Visibility, Intersex Awareness Day, Pride, and Wear It Purple).

Internal audit questions for managers

1. Are there accommodation options for LGBTIQ+ clients that are culturally safe and consistent with Housing First principles?
2. Is LGBTIQ+ specific support available (if desired by the clients)?
3. Is a Zero Tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment being upheld, and supported through appropriate staff training?
4. Are the building and facilities fully accessible?
5. Are there gender inclusive toilets and clear signage?
6. Do bathrooms have lockable doors?
7. Is there at least one shower that is completely private?
8. Are there safe spaces for people to practice and retain their faith?
9. Are feedback, complaints, and other consumer participation processes supported?
10. Is LGBTIQ+ leadership, diversity, and lived

Accommodation

✓ Ensure bed-based services have gender inclusive bathrooms and toilets, single stalls, lockable doors, shower curtains, at least one shower that is completely private.

✓ Recognise heightened risks for LGBTIQ+ people and additional privacy needs.

✓ Gender-specific services (for example, for women and men) should be inclusive of trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary people, and accommodation offered on the basis of self-identified gender, choice, and risk assessment.

✓ Consider appropriate matches where accommodation is shared.

✓ Ask if they have any additional safety concerns or living arrangement needs.

✓ Ensure that LGBTIQ+ cultural safety needs are addressed in the consumer charter and educate other residents on codes of conduct.

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LGBTIQ+ Referral Networks

Context

Some LGBTIQ+ clients will prefer to access mainstream services, and others will only access LGBTIQ specific services. Specific services are often essential for clients who have histories of trauma or previous discrimination within services.

A. LGBTIQ+ inclusive services

✓ Do not refer clients to any service that claims to be 'queer friendly' without checking how inclusive they are. Build strong relationships with other workers to whom you refer, and vet these services to ensure they are safe.

Questions for services to ascertain inclusivity:

1. How welcoming and inclusive do they think the service is towards LGBTIQ+ clients?
2. Have staff done any LGBTIQ+; trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary; intersex, or other cultural competency training in the past two years?
3. Have staff done specific training for Indigenous, multicultural, and multifaith communities?
4. Are there specific anti-discrimination policies and codes of conduct in place that ensure the cultural safety of LGBTIQ+ clients?
5. Will staff respect clients' confidentiality, and use the name, pronoun and language that clients use?
6. Is there anything other than male/female as gender options on intake forms?
7. If it is a gendered service, is it inclusive of trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary people?
8. Has the organisation undergone any other processes or accreditation (such as the Rainbow Tick) to become more inclusive?
9. Does the service have any LGBTIQ+ specific programs?
10. Is there a clear complaints pathway?
11. Are they aware of these guidelines, and relevant anti-discrimination legislation?

B. LGBTIQ+ specific services

Specific services may be available in your area. Here are some important options to seek out. Others may be listed on the AIDS Council websites in your local area.

Sexual health and HIV

- ✓ Services for PrEP or PEP for HIV prevention.
- ✓ Sexual health services often have special interest and expertise in LGBTQ+ populations.

Gender affirmation health care

- ✓ Access to hormones and surgery, to medically affirm gender or manage an intersex variation.
- ✓ Support to change identity documentation.

Social support and connection

- ✓ Facebook groups specifically for LGBTIQ+ people seeking housing in the private rental market.
- ✓ Groups for families such as PFLAG.

Age specific

- ✓ LGBTIQ+ youth support groups.
- ✓ Visitor support schemes, including online, are also available for LGBTIQ+ elders, coordinated nationally by Silver Rainbow.

National LGBTI Health Alliance

<https://lgbtihealth.org.au/>

AIDS Councils in each state and territory

Vic and SA- <https://thorneharbour.org/>

NSW - <https://www.acon.org.au/>

QLD - <https://quac.org.au/>

ACT - <https://www.aidsaction.org.au/>

WA - <https://waids.com/>

Tas - <http://www.workingitout.org.au/>

NT - <https://www.ntahc.org.au/>

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