

Benefits to being openly supportive of sexual and gender minorities:

Improved and informed care for sexual and gender minorities

Signals to others that your office is knowledgeable about the health risks, essential treatments and prevention information needs of sexual and gender minorities.

Often medical professionals are seen as having a position of power and authority. By being openly supportive they can address all forms of inequality not just anti-gay attitudes.

Offices with an open atmosphere regarding sexual orientation and gender identity often signal to all patients regardless of their sexual orientation that this is an environment where sexual issues can be discussed.



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GLBT and Their Caregivers

**Information
& Resources**



GLBT and Their Caregivers

Reasons for Coming Out to Caregiver:

- o facilitate more appropriate care.
- Relationship dynamics.
- Relationship relevant to care. For example, same-sex co-parents.
- Disclosure of current health status to same-sex partner.
- Request for certain medical procedures.

Difficulty for Disclosure to Caregivers:

- Fear of reduced or substandard care.
- Fear of a breach of confidentiality leading to discrimination.
- The GLBT client's own internalized homophobia makes it difficult to include info about their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Heterosexist assumption on the part of the caregiver. The caregiver gives no indication or acknowledgement that GLBT people exist.
- Fear that their disclosure would reinforce anti-gay stereotypes the caregiver might have about the queer community.

General Negative Responses from Caregivers:

- Indifference from medical professional is not seen as positive.
- Caregiver denied, avoided or ignored the disclosure.

Their sexual orientation becomes focus of diagnosis.

Dismissal of sexual orientation as irrelevant.

Discouraged from being comfortable with sexual orientation by caregiver.

Lack of recognition for partner's status (referred to as friend).

Caregiver responded with misguided statements

Sexual orientation blamed for medical problems.

Heterosexual activity offered as a possible cure for medical problems.

Refusal of care.

Caregiver/Patient confidentiality broken.

Refusal of visitation of same sex partner by caregiver.

Caregivers mocking or making remarks about patient's sexual orientation.

Assume HIV+ status.



Things Caregivers can do to facilitate disclosure of one's sexual orientation or gender identity and to make your office more welcoming:

- Post GLBT-positive health posters.
- Have GLBT-positive literature in your office.
- Display your office's GLBT-positive charters, mission and principle statements.
- Conduct inclusive, open interviews and histories.
- Acknowledge same sex issues in discussions and in-take forms.
- All inclusive in language.
- Non gender specific terminology.
- Questions like ... "are you sexually active with males, females or both?"
- Remain confidential.
- Refer patients to other gay-positive resources.
- Showing interest in seeking out information around gay issues.
- Only refer patients to other gay-supportive care givers.
- Check with the person before documenting on their chart their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Ask your GLBT patients for their feedback on the quality of care they experienced in your office.
- Have your office added to directories of queer positive caregivers.
- Advertise in local queer magazines.
- Examine your own degree of comfort and willingness to learn about sexual and gender minorities. Use that as a baseline for a plan to become a more accepting environment.