

Guidelines...

for Effective and Culturally Competent Care of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People in Recovery from Mental Illness.

- **Use inclusive language.** Ask open ended questions like “Are you in a relationship right now?”, “What kind of people do you tend to have relationships with?” or “Who is important in your life?”
- **Take the first step in demonstrating that you want to affirm the sexuality and gender identity of all your clients.** Even just hanging a Rainbow Heights Club flyer in your waiting room, or posting information about LGBT resources, can help make LGBT consumers feel that their disclosures are welcome.
- **Welcome and normalize disclosures about orientation, identity or relationships.** When you hear about a relationship, or a client’s thoughts or feelings, let them know: “I’m glad you told me that.” You can follow up with “What’s he like?” or “Where did you meet her?” Simple, ordinary questions help build a treatment alliance. Showing empathy (e.g., “That must have really hurt,” or “That’s great, I’m happy for you!”) is also extremely valuable.
- **If someone has a partner, invite them into collateral conversations.** At Rainbow Heights Club, a number of consumers have a long history of decompensations and hospitalizations, and yet have long standing, supportive, monogamous relationships. If you are working with consumers, the person’s romantic partner, as well as their network of friends, are all potential members of your treatment team. They can provide crucial information, invaluable support for treatment compliance, and ongoing monitoring of the consumer’s mental status. Welcoming these collateral contacts and taking them seriously can amplify the effectiveness of your work and generate improved outcomes.
- **Avoid overpathologizing.** Some care providers view any aspect of a consumer’s expression of sexual or gender identity as further evidence of the person’s illness. But efforts to express sexuality and find connections with others are often the locus of a great deal of creativity, resilience, and courage. These qualities deserve our support and admiration. In terms of its effects on the consumer’s physical and emotional health, self-esteem, and relationships.

Excerpted from Rosenberg, S., Rosenberg, J., Huygen, C., and Klein, E. (2005).
No need to hide: Out of the closet and mentally ill, Best practices in mental health:
An international journal, 1, 72-85.



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718-852-2584 • www.RainbowHeights.org