



10 Things You Can Do to Be an Ally in Healthcare

**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. Be ready to refer patients to a good lawyer in case they need to consider issues such as developing a will, parental rights, or experiences with discrimination.
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 the partner/spouse.** 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 the policy.** Signal your support for LGBTQ patients by posting a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression someplace visible in your waiting room or office.
7. **Watch out for junk science.** Avoid groups that claim to change sexual orientation or gender identity through therapy or prayer. These “reparative” or “conversion” therapies 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.** Once you’ve learned a little about terminology and issues, share the information. 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 LGBT Equality provider database at www.glma.org.

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