



10 Things You Can Do to Be a Straight Ally in Healthcare

Looking for simple ways to start being more engaged and active straight ally in healthcare?
Try using a few of these suggestions to build your ally skills and start creating change.

1. **Get the facts.** Have questions? Get answers! There are a lot of resources out there that can help. Go to www.straightforequality.org/healthcare to get started.
2. **Learn the laws.** Be aware of legal issues that could impact a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) person in a healthcare setting. For example, does the partner/spouse have the legal right to make medical decisions for the patient? Does the patient have a will? If a couple has children, do they both have full parental rights? Be able to refer gay patients to a good lawyer in case they need to consider these issues.
3. **Use the right words.** Sometimes when people talk about GLBT people and/or issues, it seems like they're speaking another language. Make sure that you've learned the lingo so you can effectively participate in the conversation.
4. **Ask the right questions.** When you're speaking and on forms, make your patients comfortable by using gender-neutral words like "partner" or "spouse" instead of "husband" or "wife". 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?"
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 GLBT 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 through therapy or prayer. These 'reparative therapies' have been proven to be unscientific, ineffectual, and psychologically damaging.
8. **Train your coworkers.** Once you've learned a little about terminology and issues, share the information. Provide resources and training so that everyone in your office receives cultural competency training on GLBT issues.
9. **Come out as an ally.** Click here to learn about how you can become part of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association's (GLMA's) provider database at www.glma.org.
10. **Pass it on.** Be sure to share [Straight for Equality in Healthcare](http://www.straightforequality.org/healthcare) guide with colleagues.

Don't forget to visit <http://www.straightforequality.org/healthcare> and read *the guide to being a straight ally*.

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