

Best Practices to Create a Welcoming Environment for LGBTQI+ People

Post this sheet on your wall or desk as a helpful reminder.

Reassure the patient of your confidence. Don't out someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

"This is a safe place. What you tell me is confidential."

"If you disclose information about your sexual orientation or gender identity, I will not share it with anybody without your consent."



"When addressing patients, avoid using gender terms like "sir" or "ma'am."

"How may I help you today?"



Don't assume people have an opposite-sex partner or spouse. Avoid using terms like "boyfriend," "girlfriend," "husband," and "wife."

"Are you seeing someone?"

"Do you have a partner/significant other?"

"Are you in a relationship?"



When talking to co-workers about patients, avoid pronouns and other gender terms if you don't know their gender. Just use their name, or gender-neutral words such as "they." Never refer to someone as "it."

"Your patient is here in the waiting room."

"[name of patient] is waiting in the exam room."

"They are here for their 3 o'clock appointment."



Use the terms people use to describe themselves. Mirror the patient's language

If a patient calls himself "gay," do not use the term "homosexual."
If a woman refers to her "wife," then say "your wife" when referring to her; do not say "your friend."

Politely ask when you are unsure about a patient's name and pronouns.

"what name would you like us to use?"

"I would like to be respectful—how should I address you?"

"What pronouns do you use?"



Did you make a mistake? Apologize, and move on.

"I apologize for using the wrong pronoun. I did not mean any disrespect."



Ask respectfully about names if they do not match your records.

"Could your chart be under another name?"

Only ask information that is required.

Ask yourself: What do I know? What do I need to know to treat this patient? How can I ask in a sensitive way?



Works Cited:

1. "LGBTQ Competency Toolkit." *Diverse & Resilient*, 26 Aug. 2022
2. "LGBTQ-Inclusive Language DOS and Don'ts—the Safe Zone Project." *The Safe Zone Project*
3. Reed, Angela. "LGBTQ Inclusive Language in the Workplace." *Premier Nursing Academy*, 5 Feb. 2021
4. *Terms and Phrases to Avoid** - Alberta Health Services.

LGBTQI+ Inclusive Language Overview

Post this sheet on your wall or desk as a helpful reminder.



Instead of **“Sexual preference”**

Say **“Sexual orientation”**

The term “sexual preference” is often used to suggest that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice. “Sexual orientation” is the accurate description of an individual’s attraction towards another person.

Instead of **“Born female”** or **“Born male”**

Say **“Assigned female/male at birth”**

“Assigned” language accurately depicts the situation of what happens at birth.



Instead of **“Homosexual”**

Say **“Gay”**

“Homosexual” often connotes a medical diagnosis and can cause a discomfort with gay/lesbian people.



Instead of **“A gay”** or **“a transgender”**

Say **“A gay/transgender person”**

Gay and transgender are adjectives that describe a person/group.



Instead of **“Hermaphrodite”**

Say **“Intersex”**

Hermaphrodite is a stigmatizing, inaccurate word with a negative medical history.

Instead of **“Both genders”** or **“Opposite sexes”**

Say **“All genders”**

“Both” implies there are only two; “Opposite” reinforces antagonism amongst genders.



Instead of **“Ladies and gentlemen”**

Say **“Everyone,” “Folks,”** etc.

Moving away from binary language is more inclusive of people of all genders.

Instead of **“Transsexual”** or **“Transgendered”**

Say **“Transgender”**

The term “transsexual” is no longer considered affirming. Using transgender as a verb (e.g. transgendered) suggests that being transgender is something that happened to a person rather than reflecting who they actually are.



Instead of **“A sex change operation”**

Don’t ask if it’s not necessary!

If you need to ask, say “gender-confirming or gender-affirming surgeries or procedures” Referring to a “sex-change operation” or using terms such as “pre-operative” or “post-operative” inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to transition. It is considered inappropriate to ask a transgender person about what surgical or other medical procedures they may or may not have undergone unless it is for a valid medical reason.