
Addressing Health Disparities Among LGBT Americans:

The Role of a Public Health Service Officer



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Before We Begin.....

Setting the Tone for Our Presentation



Learning Objectives

- After this presentation, you should be able to:
 - Define terms related to sexual and gender minorities (SGM)
 - Discuss health disparities and challenges in accessing healthcare among SGM
 - Describe effective strategies to engage the LGBT community in a variety of settings as a PHS officer
 - Describe how to create a support working environment for fellow PHS Officers
 - Describe the role of the Commissioned Corp's newest advisory group – the Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Group – in addressing the needs of LGBT Americans

Understanding the LGBT Community: Terms, Definitions and Demographics

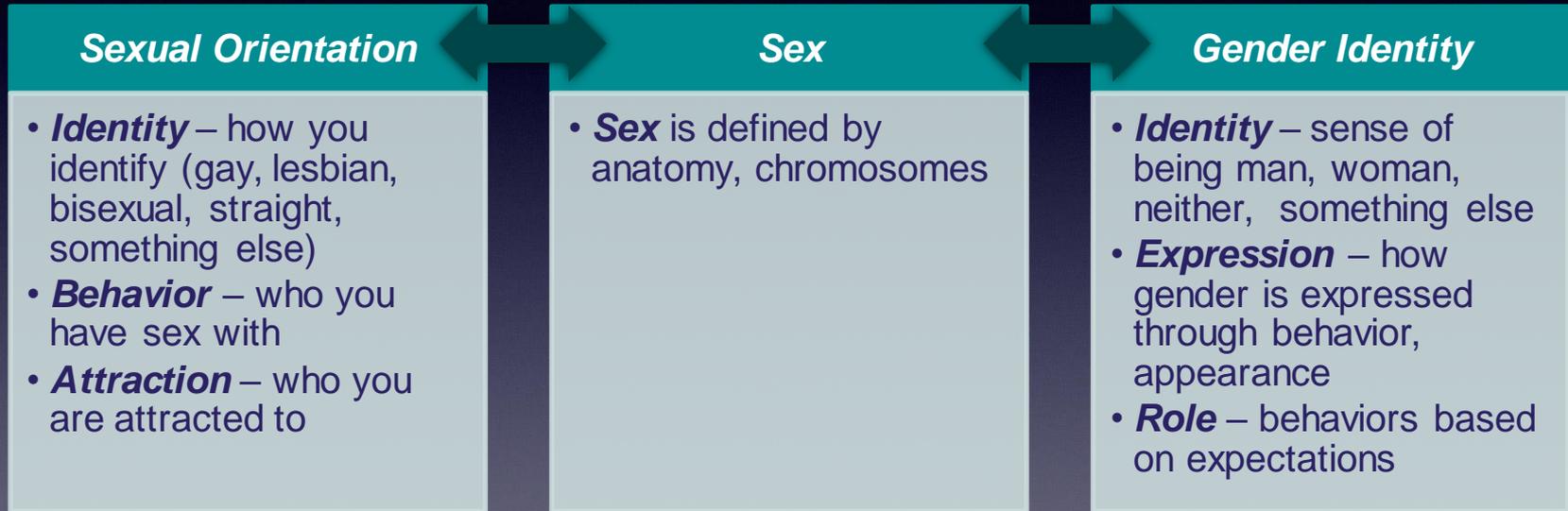
Terms and Definitions – Increasing Health Literacy

LGBT, SGM and SOGI

- ***LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBT2Q, LGBT2QI*** are widely used umbrella terms that are loosely used to describe the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community
- With recognition of the diversity of the LGBT community, the term ***sexual and gender minority (SGM)*** is increasingly being used among researchers and clinicians
- ***Sexual orientation and gender identity*** is a term that is commonly used in research and literature, similar to SGM

Terms and Definitions - Increasing Health Literacy

Sexual Orientation, Sex and Gender Identity



Terms and Definitions – Increasing Health Literacy

Sexual Orientation

- **Gay** – a term used to describe a man or woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to members of the same sex.
- **Lesbian** – a woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to other women.
- **Bisexual** – a person who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to both men and women, though not necessarily at the same time. A bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes, and the degree of attraction can vary as sexual identity develops over time.
- **Heterosexual** – sexual orientation that describes women who are emotionally and sexually attracted to men, and men who are emotionally and sexually attracted to women.

Terms and Definitions:

Sexual Orientation

- **Pansexual** – A sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people regardless of gender identity.
- **Queer** – An umbrella term used by some to describe people who think of their sexual orientation or gender identity as outside of societal norms.
- **Questioning** – Describes an individual who is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Terms and Definitions – Increasing Health Literacy

Transgender

- Someone who is ***transgender*** has a ***gender identity*** that is ***different*** from their ***sex at birth***
 - Transgender man – female to male
 - Transgender woman – male to female

Terms and Definitions - Increasing Health Literacy

Gender Identity



- **Bi-gender** – Describes a person whose gender identity is a combination of two genders.
- **Cisgender** – A person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth correspond (i.e., a person who is not transgender).
- **Gender fluid** – Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed.
- **Gender non-conforming** – Describes a gender expression that differs from a given society's norms for males and females.
- **Genderqueer** – Describes a person whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary.

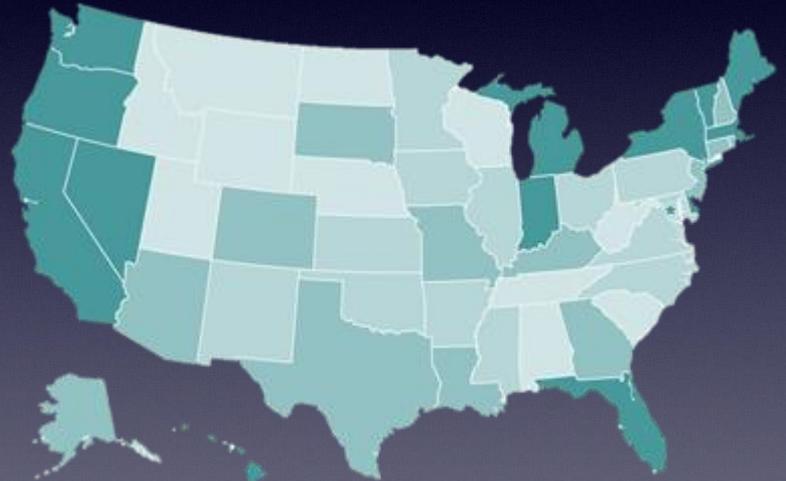
Terms and Definitions - Increasing Health Literacy

Outdated Terminology

Outdated Term	Use Instead
Homosexual	<i>Actual orientation, gay, lesbian, bisexual</i>
Transsexual	<i>Transgender or trans</i>
A transgender	<i>Transgender person</i>
Transgendered	<i>Transgender or trans</i>
Sex change	<i>Gender transition</i>
Sex change surgery	<i>Gender affirmation or sex re-assignment surgery</i>
Hormone therapy	<i>Gender affirming therapy</i>

Demographics

- LGBT identifying individuals live in **99.7% of U.S. counties**
- **4-5%** of individuals in the U.S. **identify as LGBT**
- In the latest census, there were approximately **594,000 same-sex households**
- Approximately **20% of same-sex households are raising children** (more likely in the Southeast)



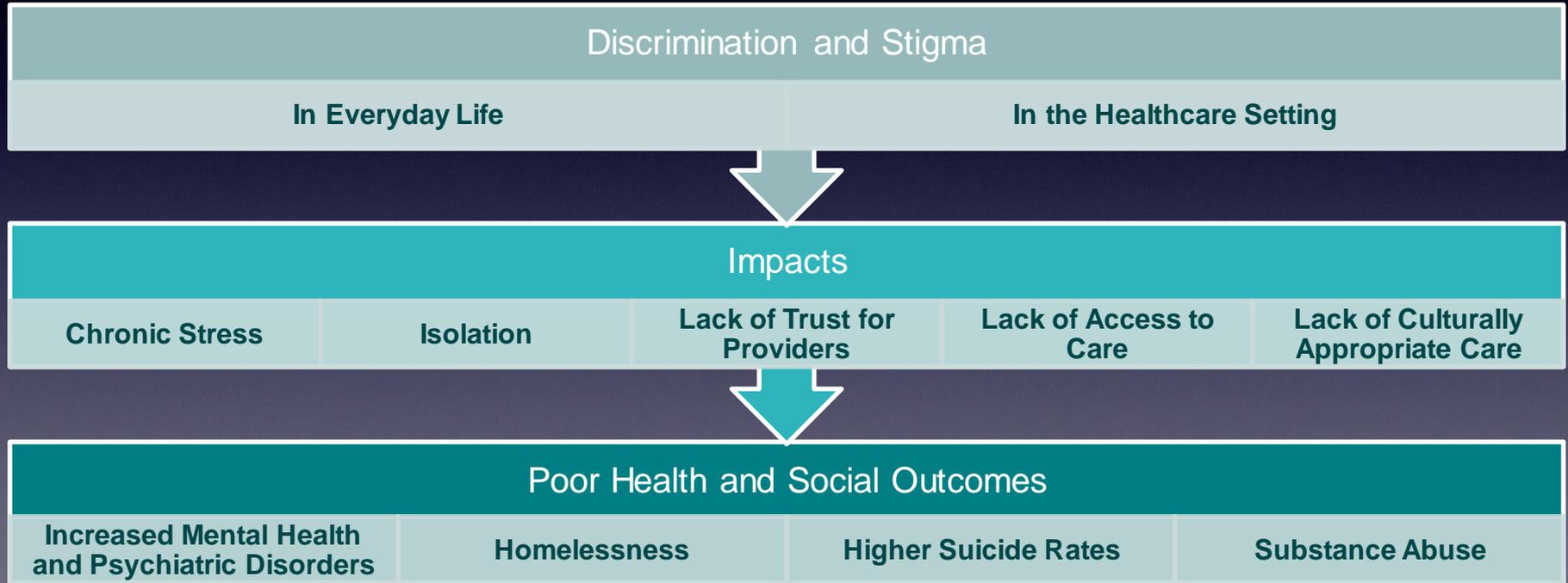
Health Disparities and Access to Care

Health Disparity Definition

- A particular type of health difference that is closely linked to social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disabilities; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.

Framing the Issue:

Importance of Today's Topic



Health Disparities Among Sexual and Gender Minorities

- Higher rates of depression, anxiety, smoking, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, suicide, and suicidal ideation as a result of chronic stress, social isolation, and disconnectedness from a range of health and support services
- Lesbian and bisexual women may use preventive health services less frequently than heterosexual women, and may be at a greater risk of obesity and breast cancer
- Gay men are at higher risk of HIV and other STIs, including viral hepatitis

Health Disparities Among Sexual and Gender Minorities

- Elderly LGBT individuals face additional barriers to health because of isolation and a lack of social services and culturally competent providers
- Lack of support from families or communities drives LGBT youth to be significantly more likely to be homeless
- Transgender individuals have a high prevalence of HIV/STIs, victimization, mental health issues, and suicide and are less likely to have health insurance than heterosexual or LGB persons. Trans individuals are also at higher risk of being unemployed, experiencing discrimination in the workplace, and being victims of violence in the community

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer

General Service Delivery

- ***Don't assume:***
 - A person's gender identity or sexual orientation based on how they look or sound
 - How a person wants to describe themselves or their partners
 - All of your patients/clients are heterosexual and cisgender (not transgender)
- To avoid making assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation use gender-neutral terms and avoid using pronouns.
 - How may I assist you, sir? -or- *How may I assist you?*
 - She is here for her appointment -or- *The patient is here for their appointment*
 - What is your wife's name -or- *What is your spouse's name?*

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

General Service Delivery

- Use patients' preferred names and pronouns
- Someone who is transgender may change their name or pronouns to match their identity (this may be different than those on insurance or identity documents)
- If you are unsure about a person's preferred name or pronoun, simply ask
- If you address someone by the incorrect pronoun or name, apologize and move on

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

General Service Delivery

- Use of pronouns:

Subjective	Objective	Possessive
She	Her	Hers
He	Him	His
They	Them	Theirs
Ze	Zim	Zirs
Sie/Zie	Hir	Hirs

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Clinical Setting

- HHS Office of Minority Health-National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (CLASS)
- Gold Standard for healthcare organizations to provide services that are respectful and responsive to different cultures. 2013 the LGBT community was included in CLASS definition of culture.

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Cultural Competence Definition

- The ability of an individual or organization to understand and interact effectively with people who have different values, lifestyles, and traditions based on their distinctive heritage and social relationships.

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Clinical Setting

- Critical awareness/knowledge: an awareness of one's own knowledge (or lack of knowledge) and biases of LGBT population
- Skills development: effective communication and skills that foster trust with LGBT population
- Organizational supports: systems and policies that facilitate practices that are responsive to LGBT patient needs

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Critical Awareness/Knowledge

- Foster an environment that supports and nurtures all patients and families
- Be aware of misconceptions, bias, stereotypes, and other communication barriers
- Recognize that self-identification and behaviors do not always align

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Skills Development

- Facilitate disclosure of SO/GI through written and verbal communication
- Listen to and reflect patient's choice of language when describing their own SO/GI and relationship with partner(s)
- Provide information and guidance for specific health concerns facing LGBT patients

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Skills Development (continued):

- Become familiar with online and local resources. Seek information to stay up to date on LGBT health topics
- Collect feedback from LGBT patients and their families regarding staff responsiveness

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Organizational Supports

- Develop or adopt a non-discrimination policy that protects patient's based on personal characteristics including SO/GI
- Develop or adopt a policy insuring equal visitation and right to identify a support person of the patient's choice
- Develop clear mechanism for reporting discrimination or disrespectful treatment.

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer: *Organizational Supports (continued):*

- Provide organizational training on culturally competent family centered care of LGBT patient's, families, and communities
- Identify and support staff who have special expertise her experience with LGBT issues
- Develop disciplinary processes that address intimidating/disrespectful/discriminatory behavior toward LGBT patients or staff

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Clinical Setting

- **Electronic Health Records** – Why Collect EHR Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity?
- **Visibility:** LGBT people are often “invisible” to their providers. Most clinicians do not discuss sexual orientation or gender identity (SO/GI) with patients routinely, and most health centers have not developed systems to collect structured SO/GI data.
- **Increase Quality of Care:** Measuring and tracking outcomes since SOGI can play a significant role in determining health outcomes; promoting culturally competent care delivery, and contributing to reducing health disparities overall
- **New Federal Data Requirement:** HRSA added SO/GI data as required elements to be reported yearly in the Uniform Data System (UDS), beginning in Calendar Year 2016

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer: *Disaster Setting*



Housing

- *Ensure LGBT individuals and families have a safe space*



Medical Care

- Apply the same culturally competent care
- Ensure training on special situations such as hormone medicines (transgender), HIV/AIDS medications



Restrooms

- Make sure all individuals have access to restroom and shower facilities consistent with their gender identity



Confidentiality

- Reduce the risk of discrimination and violence against an LGBT individual by keeping such status and information confidential.

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer: *Research Setting*

- Healthy People 2020 SOGI/LGBT Objectives:
 - Increase the number of population-based data systems used to monitor Healthy People 2020 objectives that include at their core a standardized set of questions that identify lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered populations
 - Increase the number of states, territories and the District of Columbia that include questions that identify sexual orientation and gender identity on state level surveys or data systems

Engaging the LGBT Community as a PHS Officer:

Research Setting

- HHS member of the OMB Federal Interagency Working Group on Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys
- Mission: Address lack of data for LGBT populations and the methodological issues in collecting such data.
- Resources:
 - Current Measures of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys- August 2016
 - Evaluations of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Survey Measures: What Have We Learned?- September 2016
 - Toward a Research Agenda for Measuring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys: Findings, Recommendations, and Next Steps

Creating a Supportive Working Environment

Creating a Supportive Working Environment



“Bring your whole self to work. I don’t believe we have a professional self Monday through Friday and a real self the rest of the time. It is all professional and it is all personal.”

-Sheryl Sandberg

Chief Operating Officer, Facebook

Role of SOAGDAG

SOAGDAG Mission

The Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Advisory Group (SOAGDAG) provides advice, consultation, and services to and on behalf of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Surgeon General on the following:



Acting U.S. Surgeon General [@](#) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

June 30, 2015 - Washington · [📍](#)

Today, I signed a charter establishing the first official #LGBT advisory group in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. We take great #pride in ALL the men and women who serve as guardians of our public health. – VADM Murthy

SOAGDAG Mission

- Issues of interest to and concern of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) officers, other sexual and gender minorities (hereafter, “LGBTQ”), and their allies in the USPHS
- Issues relating to personnel policies and practices relevant to LGBTQ officers
- Disparities in health outcomes experienced by LGBTQ Americans
- Provision of LGBTQ-competent health care

Your Role as an Officer

3 Things You Can Do Starting Today

Get informed

- *Health and Well-Being for LGBT Americans – [hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov)*
- *Healthy People 2020 LGBT Health – [healthypeople.gov](https://www.healthypeople.gov)*

Get Training

- *National Center for LGBT Health Education: [lgbthealtheducation.org](https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org)*
- *HRSA Webinar Series*

Get Involved

- *Agency and Department employee resource groups*
- *Sign up for the SOAGDAG listerv*

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