

Tips for working with LGBTIQ+ people



This factsheet is for anyone who is supporting a seriously ill person as part of their work role. You may be a paid carer, support worker, disability worker, aged care worker, aboriginal health worker, prison officer, religious leader, or a health professional. You may also be a volunteer.



We provide tips on how to work with and support people who identify as LGBTIQ+ and help you to use and deliver an inclusive practise to establish rapport and provide a safe space for all.

LGBTIQ+ stands for a diverse range of people including people who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex and queer, and other sexuality, gender and bodily diverse people. For further explanation of those terms please read the [LGBTIQA+ Glossary of Common Terms](#).

Many LGBTIQ+ people have fears about volunteering personal information about their sexuality, gender, or body due to past experiences of discrimination. Person-centred care is inclusive of each person's needs, regardless of any personal beliefs. LGBTIQ+ people are entitled to the same respectful, compassionate and affirming care as everyone else.

Use a person centred approach

- Try and get to know the individual. Ask them if there is anything important that you need to know to ensure that they receive the best care.
- Be aware that LGBTIQ+ people have often had poor experiences engaging with the health system. Previous experiences may have been stigmatising, discriminatory, and traumatic.
- Modify your language to be gender neutral, or simply call them by their name until you know their pronouns.
- Try to be aware of any assumptions you are making about a person's sexuality, gender identity or bodily diversity.
- Be aware that people may not want to share private information with you regarding their gender identity, sexual orientation or if they are intersex. Ensure that you uphold their privacy, dignity, and confidentiality.
- Consider that people have diverse family models that may include multiple partners (polyamorous) or being part of a blended family.
- Ask who the important people are in their life, or who they consider as their family? Important people or 'chosen family' may not always include members of a person's biological family.
- Be aware that if the person is requiring an aged care facility, care in hospital or in a palliative care unit, they may have additional concerns. Ask if they have any specific concerns about moving location of care or if they would like assistance to find an inclusive place.

Show that you value diversity

- Have visual signs or images that show your workplace values diversity (consider using the [You Are Welcome Here Poster](#)).
- Ensure any administrative forms that ask about gender identity or family members are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people.
- Let people know how to make a complaint.

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status under federal law. Same-sex couples are now also protected from discrimination under the definition of 'relationship and marital status'. Read more [About Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status Discrimination](#).





Tips for supporting people who identify as LGBTIQ+

1. Welcome the person and their important others. Invite the person to bring along people who are important to them to appointments.
2. Ask the person questions, such as:
“How would you like to be addressed?”
(which pronouns do you prefer?)
“Is there anything you would like to share about yourself?”
“Is there anything specific I can do to make you feel comfortable or included?”
“What is important to you in receiving good care?”
3. Listen to what the person is saying, what is important and to the terminology the person uses - and then mirror that terminology.
4. Encourage the person to share any concerns they may have and make a plan with the person and support them. People who are LGBTIQ+ may have specific concerns related to finding inclusive services or fear of stigmatization or discrimination.

Other recommended resources

For 11 tips on inclusive practice, download the [LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Palliative Care poster](#).

The [LGBTI and Dementia - Understanding Changes in Behaviour](#) booklet is a must read (even if the person does not have dementia), as it includes a lot of information about the history of LGBTIQ+ in Australia and different understandings and experiences people may have lived through.

[LGBTI+ Health Australia](#) is the national peak health organisation for organisations and individuals who provide programs or services to LGBTIQ+ people. Check out the [Knowledge Hub](#) for a whole range of resources and reports.

[Silver Rainbow Ageing and Aged Care](#) (LGBTIQ+ Health Australia) offers training to aged care services and they also have a visiting service for older LGBTIQ+ people.

The [QLife website](#) offers webchat/counselling for people who want to discuss anything related to LGBTIQ+. If additional support is required this would be a great group to refer.

ACON offers [Palliative Care Support](#).