Best Practices: Working with LGBTQIA+ Individuals

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Objectives

- Gain increased knowledge about the initialism "LGBTQIA+" and its component parts
- Gain increased knowledge about the concept of sexual identity and its component parts, including sexual orientation, gender, and sex assigned at birth
- Examine ways this increased cultural competency can be applied in healthcare and patient/client-based settings, as well as among staff internally, to create more inclusive and accepting environments

Before We Begin:

- You may be presented with information that is confusing, or doesn't fit well with your personal cultural framework. And that's ok! Do your best to keep an open mind.
- We can all learn from each other. Nobody knows everything, but everybody knows something.
- This is a **very** broad overview of an increasingly complex and evolving topic.
- This is descriptive, not prescriptive.

What is LGBTQIA+?

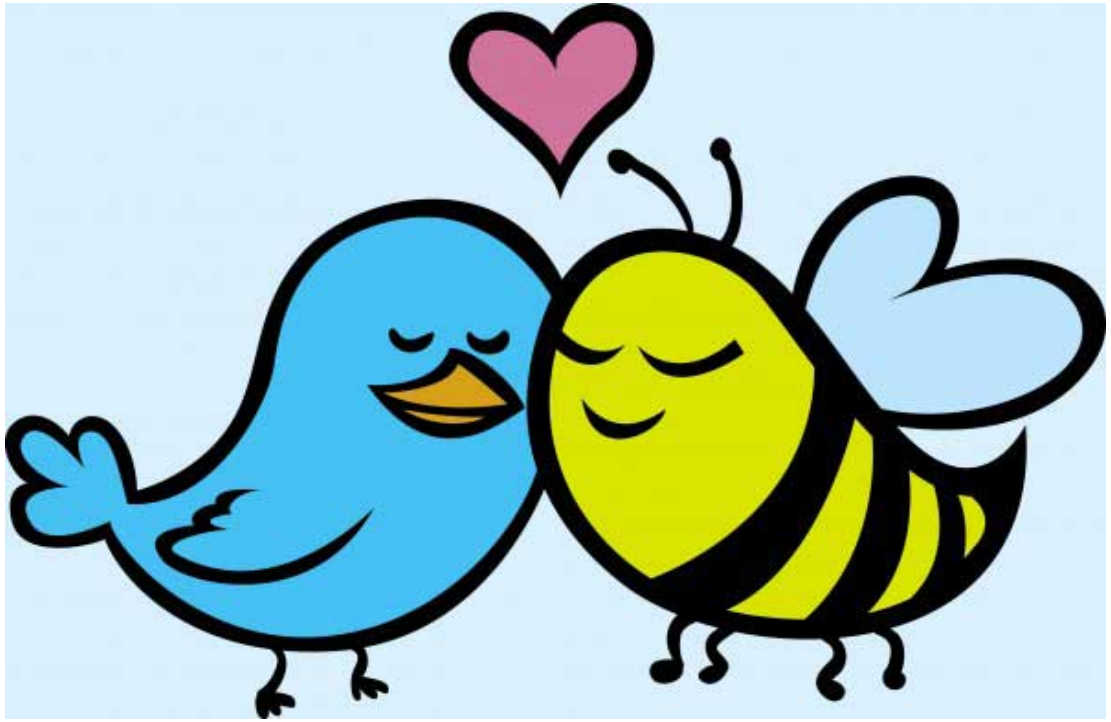
- L
  - Lesbian
- G
  - Gay
- B
  - Bisexual
- T
  - Trans
- Q
  - Queer*/Questioning
- I
  - Intersex
- A
  - Asexual/Agender/Ally
- +
  - The plus represents the infinite other gender identities and sexual orientations an individual might have

*The word "queer" has historically been used as a slur. While some in this community have reclaimed the term, others still find it offensive.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is about who you're attracted to and want to have relationships with. Sexual orientations include gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, asexual, among others…

…many others!



People describe their sexual orientations in a lot of different ways!

- **Straight** – male attracted to female, or female attracted to male
- **Gay** – someone attracted to members of the same sex/gender, typically used by men attracted to men
- **Lesbian** – women attracted to women
- **Bisexual** – someone attracted to people of their own gender, and another gender
- **Polysexual** - someone who is attracted to people of more than two genders, but not people of all genders
- **Pansexual** – someone attracted to people of **all** genders
- **Hetero/homo-flexible** – someone who sees themselves as "mostly" straight or gay, but not exclusively, yet does not identify as bisexual
- **Demisexual** – someone who experiences sexual attraction only after a personal/romantic attraction exists
- **Asexual** – someone who does not experience sexual attraction
- **Allosexual** – someone who experiences sexual attraction
- **Queer** – someone for whom there may not be a good existing word to describe their sexual orientation
- **Androphile** – someone attracted to men, masculinity, or "male-ness"
- **Gynephile** – someone attracted to women, femininity, or "female-ness"

Orientation =/= behavior

- Someone's sexual behavior does not necessarily tell us what that person's orientation might be.
- Some examples:
  - Abstinence
  - MSM/WSW
  - Asexual-sexual partnerships

Gender

- **Gender**: used to describe the socially accepted behaviors, activities, and roles deemed appropriate for individuals based typically (though not always entirely) on their biological sex.

- **Gender Identity:** One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth (Human Rights Campaign).

- **Gender Expression:** External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine (Human Rights Campaign).

Gender Identities can include:

- **Cisgender**
  - When a person's internal sense of gender "matches" their culture's expectation based on that person's sex
- **Trans**
  - When a person's gender identity is opposite to their culture's expectation based on sex
- **Agender**
  - When a person has an internal sense of having no gender
- **Bigender**
  - When a person fluctuates between a traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine identity
- **Genderfluid**
  - When a person's sense of their gender identity "drifts" over time
- **Genderqueer**
  - Used by some people to describe their gender identity when it isn't easily described by existing language

Sex

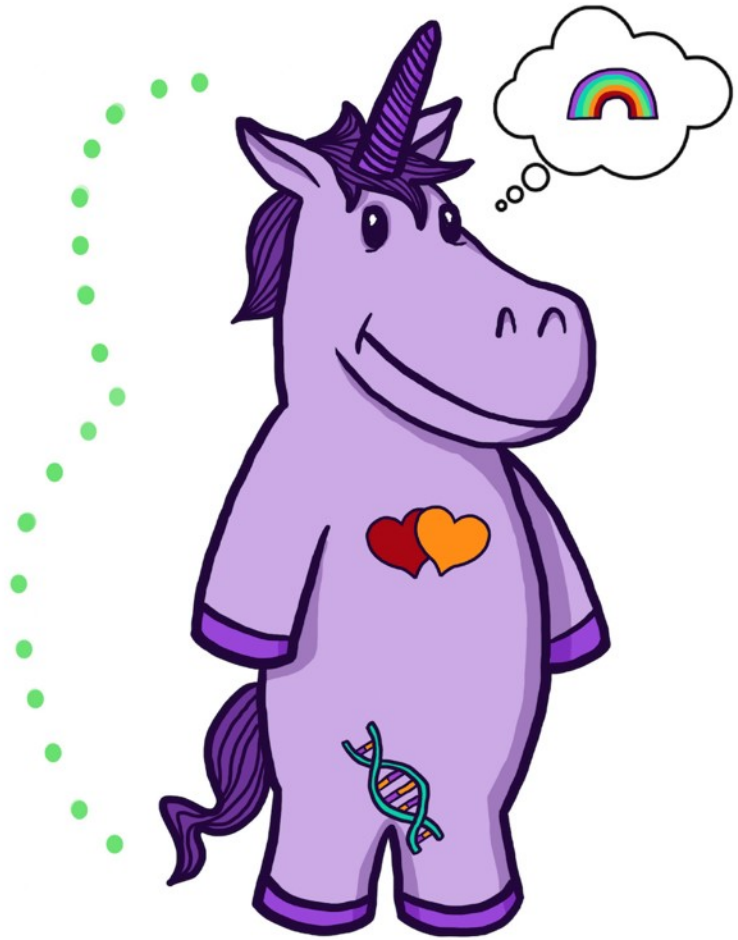
- **Sex, or Sex Assigned at Birth (SAB):** refers to the physiological characteristics and differences in the human body, as expressed through genitalia, hormones, etc.

- Like gender, sex exists on a spectrum.

- **Intersex:** a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the typical definitions of female or male

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



Gender Identity

- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Man/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression/Presentation

- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

Female | Male | Other/Intersex

Sexually Attracted To

- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Romantically/Emotionally Attracted To

- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan

Creating a Welcoming Environment

- Assess your agency to identify needs, barriers, challenges, and strengths
- Develop mission & vision statements that are inclusive
- Assess policies, structures, practices & services
- Staff & volunteer knowledge
- Display symbols of support

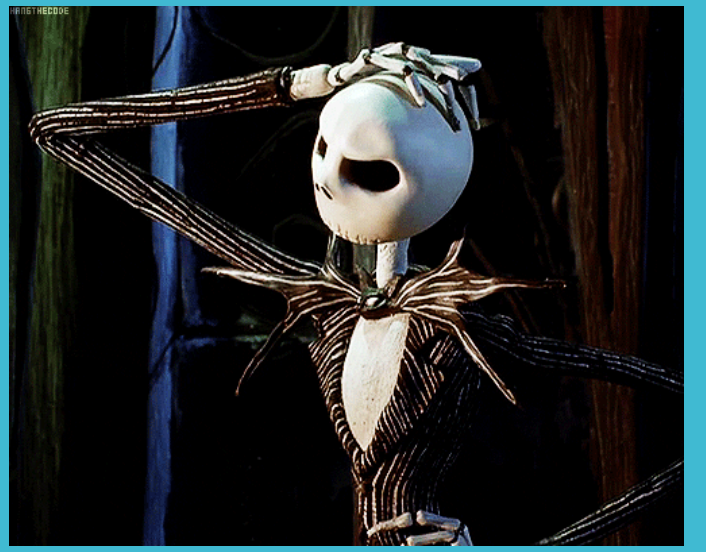
Respectful Communication

- We all make mistakes, but we should do our best to make sure mistakes don't become habits.
  - Practice!
  - Admit mistakes when they happen, but don't dwell on them
  - Ask your team for help if you need it
- Ask *everyone* to share their name and pronouns, as long as they feel comfortable, but don't force it.

Pronouns

- Common examples of pronouns someone may use include:
  - He/him/his
  - She/her/hers
  - They/them/theirs
  - Ze/zir/zirs
  - Ze/hir/hirs
- We can normalize pronoun use by:
  - Using them when introducing ourselves
  - Including them in email signatures, on business cards, etc.
  - Wearing pronoun pins

Is this question appropriate for me to ask?



- If you worry that a question might be inappropriate to ask an LGBTQIA+ patient, flip it!
- Would you ask that same question of a non-LGBTQIA+ patient? If not, it's not appropriate to ask an LGBTQIA+ patient either.
- Examples might include:
  - Who's the man/woman in your relationship?
  - Are you out? What was it like to come out? Etc.
  - What surgeries have you had/intend to have?
  - Are you on hormones/hormone blockers?

Strengthening staff

- Employment nondiscrimination policy for staff and volunteers
- Nondiscrimination policies regarding providing services
- Promote positive attitudes in staff regarding working with LGBTQ populations
- Provide resources, information & training on an on-going basis
- Encourage staff to conduct self-assessments to assess their cultural & linguistic competence
- Confidentiality and privacy, both for staff and clients

- ✓ Provide visual cues in your classroom, office, reception area, etc.
  - ✓ Safe space visuals
- ✓ Hold others accountable when transphobic/ homophobic comments are made
- ✓ Uphold gender nonbinary clients' right to privacy and confidentiality regarding their transgender status (including maintaining confidentiality with unsupportive parents/family members/caretakers)
- ✓ Utilize nonbinary individuals' gender-affirming pronouns in and out of the office
- ✓ Avoid using a person's legal name & gender marker (if different from their preferred name) unless required
- ✓ When a person's legal name must be utilized, maintain privacy to avoid inadvertent disclosure of transgender status to others

Enhancing Service

- Discuss sexual orientation and gender identity issues in a supportive manner.
- Do not assume any client's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Offer services and supports to the entire family of someone who is LGBTQ
- Design or revise agency forms to be gender neutral
- Have safe, non-gendered bathrooms