



LA COUNTY LGBTQ+ COMMISSION

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Best Practices and Guiding Principles Document

Voted and Approved by the Commission on 10/17/25

Acknowledgment and Appreciation

The Los Angeles County LGBTQ+ Commission extends our deepest gratitude to the many County departments, community organizations, advocacy groups, and thought leaders whose expertise and commitment made the development of these **Best Practices and Guiding Principles** possible.

We recognize and appreciate the contributions of our County partners including the Department of Human Resources, Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Office of Violence Prevention, Office of Child Protection, LA County Probation Department, LA County Youth Commission, Human Relations Commission, and the Commission on HIV for their dedication to advancing equity and safety for LGBTQ+ residents across Los Angeles County.

We also acknowledge the invaluable input of community-based organizations and advocates, including Equality California Institute Health Resource Center, Gender Justice LA, Los Angeles LGBT Center, Long Beach LGBTQ Center, San Gabriel Valley LGBTQ Center, Somos Familia Valle, LA Civil Rights Department, TransLatin@ Coalition, Connie Norman Transgender Center, Transgender Strategy Center, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, UCLA School of Public Health, Minority AIDS Project, Lambda Legal Defense Fund, The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, Advocates for Trans Equality, National LGBTQ Task Force, The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA), and The National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging.

Amid a national climate where LGBTQ+ rights and lives are too often under attack, the Commission recognizes the courage and resilience of LGBTQ+ communities. This work is grounded in empathy and compassion, and in the belief that every person deserves to live authentically, safely, and with dignity. The development of these Best Practices and Guiding Principles is not only an act of collaboration, but also a reflection of our unwavering commitment to stand with and uplift LGBTQ+ individuals across Los Angeles County.

The Commission is profoundly grateful for the collective wisdom, lived experience, and professional expertise shared throughout this process. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to ensuring that LGBTQ+ individuals across every age, identity, and community can access affirming, equitable, and culturally responsive care and services in Los Angeles County.

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Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ+ Communities

Introduction

The Los Angeles County LGBTQ+ Commission is committed to ensuring that all County residents receive services that are inclusive, equitable, and affirming of their identities. Too often, LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those who are also people of color, elders, youth, immigrants, or people with disabilities, face barriers when seeking care and support. These Best Practices provide clear guidance for service providers and County agencies on how to build welcoming environments, deliver culturally responsive services, and partner meaningfully with LGBTQ+ communities. By adopting these practices, we can strengthen trust, improve health and wellness outcomes, and affirm the dignity of every LGBTQ+ person in Los Angeles County.

Best Practices

1. Commit to Ongoing LGBTQ+ Training
 - Provide regular training for all staff; including front-line, clinical, and support staff; on LGBTQ+ cultural humility, implicit bias, and trauma-informed care.
 - Emphasize the use of correct names and pronouns, inclusive language, and stigma reduction in every interaction.
2. Practice Cultural Humility, Not Assumptions
 - Ask open-ended questions about names, pronouns, family, and identities—never assume.
 - Recognize intersectionality: consider how race, disability, age, housing status, immigration, and other factors shape LGBTQ+ experiences.
 - Speak in empowering, people-first language that avoids stereotypes.
3. Engage LGBTQ+ Communities as Co-Creators
 - Involve LGBTQ+ individuals in planning, decision-making, and evaluation from the start.
 - Establish advisory boards, leadership councils, and compensated roles to ensure accountability and representation.
 - Build partnerships with community-based organizations, peer networks, and mutual aid groups.
4. Normalize Inclusive and Affirming Care
 - Ensure forms, electronic health records, and systems include options for gender identity, sexual orientation, and pronouns.
 - Provide access to gender-affirming care, inclusive reproductive and sexual health services, and integrated mental health/substance use care.
 - Train staff to avoid identity-based shortcuts and assumptions about behavior, anatomy, or family structures.

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5. Create Safe and Welcoming Environments
 - Display visible signs of inclusion (e.g., Pride flags, multilingual signage, Safe Zone markers).
 - Offer gender-neutral restrooms and ensure staff support their use.
 - Build care teams that reflect community diversity, including LGBTQ+ staff and peer navigators.
6. Advance Equity in Hiring and Employment
 - Use inclusive, bias-free job descriptions and explicitly encourage LGBTQ+ applicants.
 - Partner with LGBTQ+ organizations and community centers to expand outreach.
 - Train hiring committees on LGBTQ+ inclusion and unconscious bias.
 - Ensure workplace benefits (healthcare, leave, retirement) are inclusive of all family structures and gender-affirming care.

Non-Disclosure

Nondisclosure of another person's gender identity is a critical privacy concern that can significantly impact their well-being. Research indicates that the decision to disclose or conceal a stigmatized identity, such as being transgender, is influenced by various factors including safety concerns, fear of discrimination, and the desire to avoid being othered. Nondisclosure can act as both a stressor and a protective mechanism against violence and discrimination, which are prevalent in the lives of marginalized groups. The complexity of transgender outness, including the distinction between disclosing one's gender identity and assigned sex, highlights the unique challenges faced by trans individuals. Additionally, the lack of societal recognition and acceptance of nonbinary identities further complicates the decision to disclose. Therefore, understanding and respecting the reasons behind nondisclosure is essential for supporting the mental health and safety of trans people.

Closing Statement

The LA County LGBTQ+ Commission calls on all County agencies, service providers, and community partners to embrace these Best Practices as a standard for equitable service delivery. When we commit to cultural humility, inclusive policies, and meaningful community engagement, we not only reduce barriers to care but also uplift the voices and experiences of LGBTQ+ residents. Together, we can ensure that Los Angeles County is a place where every LGBTQ+ person is seen, valued, and supported.

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Guiding Principles for Serving LGBTQ+ Communities

Introduction

The Los Angeles County LGBTQ+ Commission affirms that guiding principles are essential to building systems that honor the dignity, safety, and well-being of LGBTQ+ communities. These principles reflect the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ people and provide a foundation for equity, inclusion, and belonging across County services. By adopting these values, providers and agencies can ensure that their work does not simply serve LGBTQ+ residents but affirms their right to thrive.

Guiding Principles

1. Safety Is Foundational to Equity and Belonging
 - All LGBTQ+ individuals, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, age, ability, housing status, or justice involvement—have the right to feel and be safe when engaging with County systems and services.
 - Safety includes physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, freedom from discrimination, and access to trauma-informed care.
 - County agencies and providers must dismantle harmful practices rooted in bias, transphobia, and heteronormativity.
 - Safety is a shared responsibility that requires listening to LGBTQ+ voices and embedding their lived experiences into all levels of system design and delivery.
2. LGBTQ+ Individuals Are Not a Monolith
 - No two LGBTQ+ people are the same. Respecting diversity and complexity is essential to equitable service.
 - Avoid assumptions or stereotypes based on appearance, identity labels, or perceived characteristics.
 - Recognize intersecting identities related to race, language, disability, socioeconomic status, and lived experience.
 - Cultural humility and person-centered care must guide all policies and practices.
3. “Nothing About Us Without Us”
 - LGBTQ+ communities must be active participants in shaping services, policies, and systems.
 - Inclusion must go beyond consultation—it requires structures where LGBTQ+ people, especially those most impacted, hold decision-making power.
 - Excluding LGBTQ+ voices leads to ineffective services and mistrust.
 - Centering lived experience improves outcomes, strengthens accountability, and builds relevance in public services.
4. Healthcare Equity Is a Human Right
 - Every LGBTQ+ person in Los Angeles County deserves access to respectful, affirming, and high-quality healthcare.
 - Discrimination in medical settings—such as misgendering, gatekeeping, or denial of care, must be actively dismantled.

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- Affirming care is rooted in cultural humility, informed consent, and bodily autonomy.
- Safe, inclusive healthcare environments are essential to public health and equity, not optional.

5. Representation Matters: Equity Without Tokenism

- LGBTQ+ representation in the workforce is vital to equity, innovation, and culturally competent care.
- Recruitment should remove barriers, avoid biased job descriptions, and foster inclusion without tokenizing individuals.
- Hiring processes must be transparent, fair, and compliant with anti-discrimination laws.
- True equity ensures LGBTQ+ staff are respected, valued, and supported in the workplace.

6. Access to Affirming Resources and Referrals

- All LGBTQ+ individuals must have equitable access to accurate, affirming, and up-to-date resources.
- Resource directories and referral systems should be vetted for LGBTQ+ inclusivity and relevance.
- Systems of care must uplift tools and best practices from trusted organizations.
- Accessible, culturally competent referrals build dignity, safety, and trust across services.

Closing Statement

These Guiding Principles are more than ideal; they are a call to action. County agencies, contracted providers, and community partners share responsibility for advancing safety, equity, and representation for LGBTQ+ residents. By embedding these values into policies, programs, and daily practice, Los Angeles County can lead with integrity, accountability, and compassion. Together, we can create a County where LGBTQ+ people are not only included but fully embraced.