

# **Guidelines for healthcare providers to enhance the care of lesbian women**

<http://www.dialog.unimelb.edu.au/lesbian/guidelines/overview.html>

## ***Knowledge and understanding***

- Be aware of the impact of sexuality-based discrimination on health.
- Be aware of how health risks and healthcare issues specifically relate to lesbian and bisexual women — sexually transmitted infections, common sexual practices, cervical health, reproductive health, mid-life changes, ageing, mental health, and substance-use patterns.
- Be knowledgeable about lesbian-sensitive referral networks.
- Be knowledgeable about lesbian-specific support and community groups (e.g. relating to lesbian parenting, domestic violence, “coming-out” support and youth support).

## ***Communication skills***

- Use gender-neutral words such as “partner” and other inclusive terms to facilitate disclosure.
- When taking a sexual history, be aware of the fluidity of sexual expression and the “coming-out” process.
- Approach health issues in a sensitive way, to facilitate disclosure of sexual identity, attraction and behaviour.
- Give choice regarding documentation of next of kin and sexual orientation in the health record and letters.

## ***Attitudes***

- Be non-judgemental.
- Avoid the assumption of heterosexuality.
- Avoid common assumptions about lesbians (e.g. that lesbians have never had or don't continue to have sexual relationships with men).
- Be willing to facilitate disclosure of sexuality.
- Be willing to involve lesbian partners in decision-making.
- Be aware of additional barriers that increase stigmatisation, including ethnic minority status, disability, age, or economic status.

## ***Practice environment***

- Train reception staff to be sensitive to lesbian identity.
- Have a written practice policy on antidiscrimination, including the issue of sexuality.
- Design intake forms to be inclusive of same-sex relationships.
- Maintain confidentiality with each patient.
- Display and make available brochures and posters relating to lesbian and bisexual patients.
- Advertise practice services through lesbian and bisexual media.

## **Resources**

### **Clinical Guidelines: Creating a safe clinical environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex clients.**

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, USA. Available from: URL:

[http://www.glma.org/medical/clinical/lgbti\\_clinical\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.glma.org/medical/clinical/lgbti_clinical_guidelines.pdf)  
[GLMA lgbti clinical guidelines \[pdf\]](#)

### **Not 'just' a friend: best practice guidance on health care for lesbian, gay and bisexual service users and their families**

A joint publication of the Royal College of Nursing, UK and UNISON, the UK trade union for public sector workers, 2003. <http://www.rcn.org.uk/london/downloads/notjustafriend.pdf>

[LGB Best Practice Guide not just a friend RCN UK \[pdf\]](#)

### **Not round here: affirming diversity, challenging homophobia**

A training manual for use in anti-homophobia training for service providers.

Authors Kenton Penley Miller and Mahamati, auspiced by Outlink, a project by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and by the Australian Youth Foundation.

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human\\_rights/gay\\_lesbian/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/gay_lesbian/index.html)

[Not round here Anti homophobia manual \[pdf\]](#)

Harrison, Amy E. Primary Care of Lesbian and Gay Patients: Educating Ourselves and Our Students. Family Medicine 1996; 28 (1), pp 10-23.

### **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Education Modules**

Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM)

<http://www.genderandhealth.ca/en/modules/sexandsexuality/index.jsp>