

Best Practices for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Recovery Housing

Ohio Recovery Housing



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Introduction

The Ohio Recovery Housing Best Practice Guide for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Recovery Housing was developed in coordination with many organizations and individuals who want to provide a helpful resource to recovery housing operators. Given the disparate impact of substance misuse experienced by members of the LGBTQ+ community and the high demand for a best practices resource on fostering inclusive housing for LGBTQ+ people in recovery, Ohio Recovery Housing has developed this guide.

As such, this guide serves to provide you with helpful information and resources for providing safe, sober environments and recovery supports for people in the LGBTQ+ community. Ohio Recovery Housing recognizes that there is currently very little information for recovery housing for the LGBTQ+ community, and we aim to continuously update this resource with new and relevant content to ensure that evolving best practices continue to be implemented in recovery houses across the state.

While Ohio Recovery Housing hopes you consider the information listed in the following toolkit, please recognize that the advice given is not legal advice. If you are concerned about legal matters, please contact your local legal aid office. You may also feel free to contact us at any time for information, short-term technical assistance or support. We know that stigma and discrimination cannot be eliminated overnight - the tools, strategies, and best practices in this guide are designed to help you as you address these issues over time. This work is a longer-term process, and Ohio Recovery Housing is here to provide assistance in any way that we are able.

Definitions & Stigma

Language is important. The language we use to talk about addiction and recovery can sometimes be stigmatizing of people in recovery. In the same way, the language we use to talk about the LGBTQ+ community can also be outdated and stigmatizing. The purpose of this section is to empower readers to use appropriate language, while providing information on stigmatizing words that we should remove from our vocabulary. However, we would like to reiterate that best practices for language for the LGBTQ+ community is ever evolving, and we encourage you to stay aware of this fact.

Definitions¹

Lesbian: a term used to describe a woman who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women

Gay: a term used to describe a person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to members of the same gender; usually used in reference to a man emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to men

Bisexual: a term used to describe a person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender and those of another gender

Transgender: an umbrella term for people who don't identify with the sex and/or gender they were assigned at birth

Queer: an umbrella term used by some people to refer to the broader community of diverse sexualities; also, a specific identity used, particularly by younger individuals, to describe a sexuality that is not exclusively straight.

+: an additional portion of the acronym, LGBTQ, which purposefully acknowledges the variety of other sexes, sexualities, and gender identities within the broader community; see below for additional identities that often are referenced with this symbol

Intersex: an umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosomal pattern that isn't neatly classified as typically 'male' or 'female'.

Asexual: a term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction

Aromantic: a term used to describe a person who does not experience romantic attraction

Pansexual: a term used to describe a person who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to people, regardless of their gender identity

¹ Adapted in part from: *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*, 10th edition. 2016. GLAAD. Available at: <https://www.glaad.org/reference>

Non-Binary: a term used to describe someone who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth and who doesn't not identify with the terms, 'man' or 'woman'

Sex: a term, generally 'male' or 'female,' that someone is assigned at birth; this term is most often assigned based upon the external genitalia noted by a medical professional, though sex is comprised of multiple biological elements (i.e. external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, hormones and secondary sex characteristics, and chromosomes)

Gender Identity: a term to describe someone's internal, deeply held sense of their own gender; unlike gender expression, this is not visible to others

Gender Expression: a term to describe someone's external manifestations of their own gender, expressed through things like a person's name, pronouns, clothing, behavior, voice, bodily characteristics, etc.

Sexual Orientation: a term to describe someone's physical, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to other people

Stigma

The LGBTQ+ community is statistically more likely to face a number of challenges, related to medical care, housing, employment, and more. However, it should not be presumed that simply being a member of the LGBTQ+ community implies that an individual has encountered these specific challenges.

Below, we have provided some common examples of challenges that disproportionately do affect the LGBTQ+ community, as they perpetuate stigma. These common problems will help you with understanding the challenges that some of your LGBTQ+ residents might have faced, prior to arriving in your recovery home.

Misgendering and 'Deadnaming'

Misgendering refers to using the wrong gender identity and/or pronouns when referring to someone, and deadnaming refers to using a transgender person's birth name, rather than their chosen name. Each of these create concerns for the both the physical and mental safety of transgender people for a number of reasons, which is why it is critical to use someone's chosen name and pronouns.²

Lack of Access to Healthcare

Across the nation, many LGBTQ+ people report difficulties finding culturally competent and inclusive providers, and the fear of discrimination in healthcare settings can result in greater health disparities within this community.³ Additionally, this issue can be exacerbated for other forms of discrimination (i.e. employment discrimination), which can limit access to affordable health insurance coverage.

² "Pronouns: A Resource." GLSEN. Available at:

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Pronouns%20Resource.pdf>

³ Gates, Gary. 2014. "In U.S., LGBT More Likely Than Non-LGBT to be Uninsured." Gallup. Available at: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/175445/lgbt-likely-non-lgbt-uninsured.aspx>

Issues with Homelessness

In comparison to straight and cisgender youth, LGBTQ+ youth have a 120% higher risk of reporting issues of homelessness, and additional research indicates that LGBTQ+ youth comprise up to 40% of total homeless youth populations.⁴ While there are a variety of reasons for such a high risk of housing insecurity, the most reported reason is being forced from a familial home.⁵ Such challenges can result in a long-term impact throughout adulthood.⁶

Housing Discrimination

Regarding housing discrimination, this can occur in a variety of different forms, including refusing to rent to a LGBTQ+ person, deciding to not renew a lease because of one's sexuality or gender identity, and more. Currently, a number of states offer formal legal protections prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression; however, these housing protections are not codified in Ohio law at this time.⁷ To learn more about your area's local and county ordinances, refer to the link below.⁸

Employment Discrimination

Some LGBTQ+ people, particularly transgender people and LGBTQ+ people of color, experience workplace discrimination, which can limit access to a number of other things like stable housing and comprehensive health insurance.⁹ Currently, the federal courts have issued a number of rulings that offer some protections to LGBTQ+ employees; however, the Supreme Court of the United States is currently reviewing whether or not such laws apply.¹⁰

Lack of Integrated Systems of Care

And finally, the factors listed above, as well as other factors not discussed here, can impact the availability of and access to integrated systems of care, which can provide life-altering support for LGBTQ+ people who experience substance misuse. As such, discussions of these integrated services for the LGBTQ+ community is an area of growing area of importance.¹¹

⁴ "New Report on Youth Homeless Affirms that LGBTQ Youth Disproportionately Experience Homelessness." 2017. Human Rights Campaign. Available at: <https://www.hrc.org/blog/new-report-on-youth-homeless-affirms-that-lgbtq-youth-disproportionately-ex>

⁵ "Our Issue." True Colors United. Available at: <https://truecolorsunited.org/our-issue/>

⁶ "Consequences of Youth Homelessness." National Network for Youth. Available at: https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief_Youth_Homelessness.pdf

⁷ "Housing for LGBTQ People: What You Need to Know About Property Ownership and Discrimination." Human Rights Campaign. Available at: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/housing-for-lgbt-people-what-you-need-to-know-about-property-ownership-and>

⁸ "Municipality Map." Equality Ohio. Available at: <https://www.equalityohio.org/our-work/local/municipal-map/>

⁹ "A Workplace Divided: Understanding the Climate for LGBTQ Workers Nationwide." 2018. Human Rights Campaign. Available at: https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/AWorkplaceDivided-2018.pdf?_ga=2.159838205.1122885376.1580929134-743051626.1579619140

¹⁰ "Know Your Rights." National Center for Transgender Equality. Available at: <https://transequality.org/know-your-rights/employment-general>

¹¹ "Resources for Culturally Appropriate Integrated Services for LGBT Individuals." 2014. Center for Integrated Health Solutions. SAMHSA-HRSA. Dept. of Health and Human Services. U.S. Federal Government. Available at: https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/about-us/LGBT_Webinar_PPT_-_FINAL.pdf

Data

In addition to the discrimination and stigma that many LGBTQ+ people face, this community also reports a number of health disparities related to substance misuse. In this section, we have provided an overview of recent data that indicates the prevalence of substance misuse in the LGBTQ+ community, so that you can build your knowledge base to aid you in providing inclusive services to people of diverse genders and sexualities.

According to the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults were over twice as likely to have used illicit drugs in the past year, compared to heterosexual respondents. Additionally, this survey also noted that prescription drug misuse for this subpopulation was around 10%, compared to 5% of heterosexual respondents. This data also noted that 18 to 25 year old reported the highest prevalence of using these drugs in the past year, and lesbian and bisexual women were slightly more prevalent than gay and bisexual men.¹²

In relation to the transgender community, data from the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (i.e. the largest and most comprehensive survey of the transgender community) noted that 29% of respondents used illicit drugs and/or non-medical prescription drugs in the past month, which is nearly three times the rate of the general U.S. population. Furthermore, transgender respondents working in the underground economy, when compared to respondents not working in the underground economy (for instance, sex work), reported markedly higher rates of binge drinking in the past month (49% compared to 26%), using marijuana (60% compared to 24%), and using prescription drugs for non-medical use (26% to 6%).¹³

When considering the challenges facing LGBTQ+ youth, the data can present even more alarming concerns. According to the CDC, over 75% of LGBTQ teens, by the end of high school, have tried alcohol, and over 20% have misused prescription medication.¹⁴ This data, when taken into consideration with other data sets about LGBTQ+ teen experiences, can present additional challenges, as LGBTQ+ teens are 1) twice as likely to be bullied, excluded, and/or assaulted at school and 2) 40% less likely to have an adult in their family to confide in. These experiences can contribute to other risk factors, such as familial history, behavioral health disorders (depression, anxiety, ADHD, etc.), trauma, and impulse control problems, which may then increase the likelihood of a LGBTQ+ teen misusing substances.¹⁵

And finally, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies' Committee on LGBTQ Health Issues and Research Gaps has noted that a multi-factor model best explains the health disparities faced by the LGBTQ+ community. Rather than simply presuming a minority stress

¹² "Substance Use and SUDs in LGBTQ* Populations." National Institute on Drug Abuse. NIH. U.S. Federal Government. Available at: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/substance-use-suds-in-lgbt-populations#references>

¹³ "The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey." 2015. National Center for Transgender Equality. Available: <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>

¹⁴ "Preventing Substance Abuse Among LGBTQ Teens." Resource Page. Human Rights Campaign. Available at: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/preventing-substance-abuse-among-lgbtq-teens>

¹⁵ "Preventing Substance Abuse Among LGBTQ Teens." Full Report. Human Rights Campaign. Available at: https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthSubstanceAbuse-IssueBrief.pdf?_ga=2.102037379.361447345.1553547637-680092107.1553547637

model of public health explains these factors, they have recommended a model that conceptualizes the importance of minority stress, life course, intersectionality, and social ecology to provide better research and care to the LGBTQ+ community.¹⁶

Recovery Support Activities

Community Involvement

Community involvement and support is an often-over-looked support activity. LGBTQ+ people in recovery have the opportunity to engage in community activities in a variety of ways. This may be in the form of volunteer work, community meetings and coalitions, or social groups organized within the community. These resources will often depend on where a resident lives, where cities such as Cleveland or Columbus may have more options for involvement than residents living in more rural environments. Visit the resource section of our guide to see what is available in your area.

LGBTQ+ Meetings

Depending on a resident's chosen path to recovery, they may choose to attend supportive meetings. In some areas, there may be LGBTQ+ recovery meetings for residents to attend. Have these conversations with your residents and work with your local networks to find what resources exist in your area. A great place to start may be through the Equitas Health Network or local pride coalitions. Please visit the resources section of this guide for an LGBTQ+ meeting finder.

Local Pride Organizations

In addition to LGBTQ+ specific meetings, local pride organizations can also provide useful resources for your residents. While also advocating for the rights of LGBTQ+ people in your local community, these organizations can provide social support for your residents, which is proven to support a more positive self-esteem and a more resilient mental health.¹⁷

Peer Support

Peer support is a critical component of recovery environments like recovery housing. As we already know, peer support is an important element for people in recovery to receive support from others who have similar lived experience. Just as it is important for peer support for people in recovery, it can be important for LGBTQ+ people in recovery to have others with lived experience in their lives. LGBTQ+ peers in recovery may have shared experiences in healthcare, familial relationships, romantic relationships, housing, etc. Please refer to the resources below for identifying LGBTQ+ specific recovery supports in your area.

¹⁶ "The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding." 2011. Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Issues, Research Gaps, and Opportunities. Institute of Medicine. NIH. U.S. Federal Government. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22013611>

¹⁷ McDonald, Kari. 2018. "Social Support and Mental Health in LGBTQ Adolescents: A Review of the Literature." *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, vol. 39, no. 1. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01612840.2017.1398283?src=recsys&journalCode=imhn20>

Integration in Housing Environments

One of the biggest barriers you may face is the stigma enacted by other residents of your recovery home. As with anyone else coming into your recovery home, you want residents to feel safe and included. All residents should be treated with the same level of respect and understanding. A core piece of this is not sharing personal information about residents with other residents. While a resident may choose to share aspects about their gender or sexuality with other residents, it is not the place of the recovery housing operator, staff, or other residents to share this information within or outside of the house.

No matter a resident's history or personal experiences, your recovery home should be a place of mutual respect and acceptance of people from varying backgrounds. If LGBTQ+ residents are feeling stigmatized or are experiencing a sense of push-back from other residents, staff should talk with them about their strategies for coping and work with them to find supportive resources. If a situation arises in the house where residents are feeling stigmatized or discriminated against for any reason, it is important to gather and talk as a group. Peer support, respect, and mutual aid are core features of a healthy recovery community.

Additionally, it is important to remember that language concerning and best practices for supporting the LGBTQ+ community can evolve quickly. As such, you are encouraged to remain open to feedback and to continue professional development to ensure that you have the most accurate and inclusive information to support your LGBTQ+ residents' integration into the housing environment.

Best Practices for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Recovery Housing

Now that you have read through the entire Best Practices for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Recovery Housing Guide, we have collected a list of best practices guidance informed by the previous sections in the guide.

Definitions: *Review the appropriate language for addressing the LGBTQ+ community.*

As outlined in the Definitions and Stigma section of the guide, language is important and ever evolving. Just as you have worked to learn the appropriate terminology to talk about addiction and recovery, you should put in the same effort to learn the appropriate terminology to talk about the LGBTQ+ community. This should be an effort made by both the staff and residents of your recovery home.

Pronouns and Names: *Address a resident by the pronouns and name with which they identify and keep other staff and residents accountable for doing the same.*

An important piece of housing people in the LGBTQ community is addressing your residents with the correct pronouns. As identified earlier in this guide, gender identity is a person’s internal, deeply held sense of their own gender that is not visible to others. As such, individuals will choose to identify by a particular set of pronouns. There are also many different variations of gender-neutral pronouns such as the variations of xe/xem or simply using they/ them, and some residents may use these pronouns, rather than pronouns like he/him or she/her. For transgender residents, it is important to use their preferred name as opposed to their birth name that may no longer use.

The best practice guidance is to provide the opportunity for all residents to provide their chosen name and pronouns on the application and/or intake forms.

1	Full legal name
2	Chosen name (i.e. the name that the person uses)
3	Chosen pronouns (i.e. the pronouns that someone self-identifies with)

Recovery Supports: *Ensure that residents have the opportunity for appropriate recovery support activities.*

Some LGBTQ+ residents may want to engage in LGBTQ+ focused recovery support activities such as LGBTQ+ meetings or having an LGBTQ+ peer supporter. Have these conversations and work with your local networks to find out what resources exist in your area.

Inclusion in the Home: *Make your recovery home a space of safety and inclusion for every resident that comes through the door.*

No matter the background or personal experiences of any resident in your recovery home, ensure that you are creating a culture of inclusion and acceptance. People do not change their opinions over night, but the staff at the recovery housing organization should take the lead in having conversations about accepting people for who they are regardless of their sex assigned at birth, gender identity/ expression, sexuality, race, national origin, ability, or other protected classes.

It is also recommended that you remind your staff and residents that no one can or should be required to answer questions about one’s identity. Remember that just because someone is

part of a certain identity group does not mean they need to answer questions or that they know everything about that identity group. If you are in need of additional information about an identity, it is recommended that you utilize one of the many resources available in this guidebook.

Affirming Gender Identities: Allow people to utilize the spaces that affirm and correspond to their gender identity.

Residents entering gender-segregated housing should be allowed to use the facilities that correspond to their gender identity. For instance, a transgender woman should be allowed access to women's housing, and a transgender man should be allowed access to men's housing. For residents entering housing that is not gender-segregated, they should be asked what room assignments would be most comfortable and accommodating for their needs.

Identities are Complex: Gender and sexuality are just two parts of the complex identities that make up each individual.

The guidance that has been outlined above should serve as a baseline for running more culturally competent housing. However, remember that every individual that enters your recovery home is complex and as such should never be reduced only to their gender or sexuality.

Learning More Information: Continue your own professional development to build upon the process of learning how to support LGBTQ+ people in recovery.

Finally, you are also encouraged to continue your professional development, regarding the best practices to support the needs of LGBTQ+ people in recovery. In the resources section below, there are a number of opportunities to stay up to date with best practices, current trends, and more, and many of the resources that we have provided below are accessible online and free of charge. In short, continue to develop yourself, your recovery environment, and the space for your residents.

Additional Resources

The resources section of this guide is intended to provide readers with additional resources for implementation of the best practices outlined in this guide. Each listing below is linked and as such, this guide is best utilized as an online resource.

[LGBTQ+ Meeting Finder](#)

[Pride Institute](#)

[Trans Equality](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[Trans Lifeline](#)

[Safe Point Ohio- Equitas Health: Overdose Prevention - Naloxone Access Program](#)

[Equitas Health - Location Search](#)

[Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation \(GLAAD\)](#)

[Affordable Care Act \(ACA\) Enrollment Assistance for LGBT Communities - SAMHSA](#)

[The Association of LGBTQ+ Psychiatrists](#)

[A Provider's Introduction to Substance Abuse Treatment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals - SAMHSA](#)

[Behavioral Health Equity - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender \(LGBT\) - SAMHSA](#)

[World Professional Association of Transgender Health](#)

[Trans Ohio](#)

[Equality Ohio](#)

[Fenway Health](#)

[A Brief History of Queer Experience with Addiction and Recovery](#)

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