



**Come Out
for Health**

LGBT Health Awareness Week

March 26 – March 30, 2012

Access to Health Care

LGBT people face numerous barriers in access to health care services. These barriers include lower rates of access to health insurance and fear of discrimination by providers who lack an understanding of LGBT health concerns.

According to a recent national survey conducted by Harris Interactive®, nearly one in four gay and lesbian adults lack health insurance and rates of uninsurance are even higher for bisexual and transgender people. These lower rates of health insurance coverage result from factors that affect many LGBT people and include poverty, unemployment, and job discrimination. Moreover, most employers do not extend health insurance benefits to the family members of LGBT employees, and practices that limit or deny access to coverage on the basis of pre-existing conditions also contribute to low rates of insurance.

Beyond the difficulty of accessing coverage, barriers persist in many health care settings. Health care providers may be insensitive to LGBT health concerns and are often not trained to communicate with LGBT patients. Fear of harassment or concerns about privacy also often lead LGBT people to withhold personal information from their providers. This can include vital information such as sexual orientation, gender identity, prescription medication use, sexual behavior, substance use, and relationship concerns such as domestic violence.

These disparities in access result in worse health for the LGBT community in comparison to the general population. LGBT people often experience increased health risks, such as substance use and violence, as well as higher rates of conditions such as cancer, mental health concerns, and sexually transmitted infections. Without timely access to vital health care, these disparities can be deadly.

What can you do?

- Share your stories with providers and policy makers about the importance of health and access to health care for the LGBT community
- Share the [Gay & Lesbian Medical Association guidelines](#) with your health care providers and help them create a safe and welcoming environment for the LGBT community
- Community health centers & other health facilities can participate in the [Healthcare Equality Index](#)
- Urge providers to become familiar with guidelines for [LGBT cultural competence](#)

Learn more:

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (www.glma.org)

CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers (www.lgbtcenters.org)

WWW.LGBTHEALTH.NET