

BEL Affirming Healthcare Resource Guide

For Studs, Stems & Masculine-Presenting Lesbians

Finding care. Protecting your boundaries. Advocating for yourself.

United in Purpose. Power. Pride.

START HERE

YOUR HEALTH BELONGS HERE

Being masculine-presenting does not make preventive care, reproductive healthcare, sexual healthcare, or mental healthcare less important.

Your healthcare needs should be based on **your body, age, symptoms, medical history, family history, risk factors, and sexual practices**, not assumptions about how you dress, identify, or who you date.

YOUR CARE MAY INCLUDE

PRIMARY CARE

Routine health visits, blood pressure, diabetes, and other preventive care.

GYNECOLOGIC & REPRODUCTIVE CARE

Care based on the reproductive organs you have, symptoms, and individual health needs.

PREVENTIVE SCREENINGS

Age-, anatomy-, history- and risk-appropriate screenings.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Care based on actual sexual practices and risk factors rather than assumptions about sexual orientation.

MENTAL HEALTH

Culturally responsive care that respects your race, sexual orientation, and gender expression.

You take care of everybody else. Don't skip yourself.

BEFORE YOU BOOK

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

A few questions before scheduling can tell you a lot about a provider or practice.

1. DO YOU PROVIDE LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING CARE?

Does the provider have experience caring for masculine-presenting lesbians and other LGBTQ+ patients?

2. CAN MY NAME AND PRONOUNS BE DOCUMENTED?

Will the front desk, clinical staff, and provider be able to see and use them?

3. WILL YOU EXPLAIN WHY AN EXAM OR TEST IS NEEDED?

Ask about its purpose, what will happen, alternatives, and your options before proceeding.

4. CAN I DECLINE, PAUSE OR STOP AN EXAM?

Consent should continue throughout an examination.

5. HOW DO YOU DISCUSS SEXUAL HEALTH?

Does the provider ask about actual sexual practices and risk factors rather than making assumptions based on orientation?

6. CAN I BRING A SUPPORT PERSON?

Ask about support-person and chaperone policies, particularly for intimate examinations.

The right provider should welcome reasonable questions about your care.

USE THIS SCRIPT

YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO SAY

PHONE SCRIPT

“Hi, I'm looking to establish care and have a few questions before booking. Does the provider have experience caring for LGBTQ+ patients, including masculine-presenting lesbians? Can my name and pronouns be documented and used by staff? For pelvic or intimate exams, will the provider explain why an exam is recommended and obtain consent before proceeding? And when discussing sexual health, does the provider ask about actual sexual practices rather than make assumptions based on orientation?”

IF PELVIC EXAMS ARE DIFFICULT

“I experience discomfort with pelvic examinations and may need additional time, explanations before each step, accommodations, or to stop the examination if I become uncomfortable.”

These build directly from the scripts already in the guide.

KNOW THE SIGNS

RED FLAGS

These could indicate that a provider or practice may not be a good fit.

DISMISSIVE ANSWERS

“We treat everyone the same,” without being able to explain how care is individualized.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT YOUR LIFE

Assuming you have a husband, have sex with men, or making irrelevant comments about your appearance.

REPEATED IDENTITY DISRESPECT

Repeatedly ignoring the name or pronouns you've provided.

AUTOMATIC EXAMS

Presenting a pelvic exam, Pap test or other procedure as automatic without discussing whether it is appropriate for your individual needs.

LACK OF CONSENT OR EXPLANATION

Not explaining why something is recommended or pressuring you when you ask questions.

DISRESPECTFUL STAFF

Staring, laughing, making inappropriate comments or becoming dismissive when corrected.

You don't owe a provider continued access to your care simply because you booked an appointment.

YOUR BODY. YOUR CONSENT.

DURING THE APPOINTMENT

Making an appointment does **not** mean consenting to every examination or procedure.

You can:

- ✓ Ask why an examination is recommended.
- ✓ Ask what will happen before it begins.
 - ✓ Ask about alternatives.
- ✓ Request reasonable accommodations.
 - ✓ Decline an examination.
 - ✓ Change your mind.
- ✓ Ask the provider to pause.
- ✓ Tell the provider to stop.

Those rights are already an important part of BEL's original guide and should be much more visually prominent in the redesign.

TRY SAYING:

“Can you explain why you recommend this?”

“What are my alternatives?”

“Please explain each step before you do it.”

“I need you to pause.”

“I don't consent to that today.”

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS TOO

AFFIRMING MENTAL HEALTHCARE

Finding someone labeled “LGBTQ+ friendly” doesn't automatically mean that person understands your experience as a **Black lesbian or masculine-presenting Black queer woman**.

You can interview a therapist before deciding whether they're right for you.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Have you worked with Black lesbians or Black queer women?

Do you have experience with masculine-presenting lesbians?

How do race, sexual orientation, and gender expression inform your approach when they're relevant to treatment?

Do you have experience addressing discrimination, minority stress, or racial trauma?

Do you provide trauma-informed care?

Do you offer telehealth?

Do you accept my insurance or offer sliding-scale fees?

REMEMBER

You are interviewing the therapist, too.

A therapist can be licensed and qualified and still not be the right fit for you.

FIND A THERAPIST

MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTORIES

NQTTCN

National Queer & Trans Therapists of Color Network

<https://nqttcn.com/directory/>

Directory focused on queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color seeking mental-health practitioners.

THERAPY FOR BLACK GIRLS

<https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/>

Directory for finding culturally responsive mental-health professionals serving Black women and girls.

INCLUSIVE THERAPISTS

<https://www.inclusivetherapists.com/>

Directory emphasizing culturally responsive, identity-affirming, and social-justice-oriented mental healthcare.

BLACK FEMALE THERAPISTS

<https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/>

Directory for locating Black women mental-health professionals.

NAMI

<https://helplinefaqs.nami.org/article/304-how-can-i-find-an-lgbtqi-affirming-mental-health-provider>

Information and resources for locating LGBTQI-affirming mental-health providers.

MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER SCRIPT

BEFORE YOUR FIRST THERAPY APPOINTMENT

“Hi, I'm looking for a therapist and wanted to ask a few questions before scheduling. I'm looking for culturally responsive and LGBTQ+ affirming care. Does the therapist have experience working with Black lesbians, Black queer women, or masculine-presenting lesbians? I'm also looking for support with _____. Do they offer virtual appointments, accept my insurance, or offer a sliding scale? If they may be a good fit, I'd like information about scheduling an initial consultation.”

MENTAL HEALTH RED FLAGS

Pay attention if a therapist:

- Treats your sexual orientation or gender expression as something that needs to be fixed.
 - Repeatedly makes stereotypical assumptions about relationship roles.
 - Dismisses experiences of racism, homophobia or discrimination.
 - Attributes unrelated concerns to your sexual orientation.
 - Repeatedly disregards your identity after being corrected.
 - Expects you to continually educate them about basic LGBTQ+ identities.
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AFTER THE VISIT

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

Don't evaluate healthcare only by whether the appointment happened.

ASK YOURSELF:

Did I feel HEARD?

Did I feel BELIEVED?

Did I feel RESPECTED?

Did I feel SUPPORTED?

Were my questions answered?

Were assumptions made about me?

Were my boundaries respected?

Would I feel safe returning?

A first appointment isn't a lifetime commitment.

If the relationship doesn't feel right, you can ask questions, seek another opinion, request another clinician or look for another provider.

FIND PHYSICAL HEALTHCARE

LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING PROVIDER DIRECTORIES

LGBTQ+ Healthcare Directory

GLMA + Tegan and Sara Foundation

<https://lgbtqhealthcaredirectory.org/>

OutCare Health — OutList

<https://www.outcarehealth.org/provider-listing/>

GLMA — Find an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Provider

https://www.glma.org/find_a_provider.php

GLMA — 10 Things Lesbians Should Discuss With Their Healthcare Provider

https://glma.org/10_things_lesbians_should_disc.php

OutCare — Patient & Community Resources

<https://www.outcarehealth.org/resource/>

PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

BEFORE YOU CALL, EMAIL OR USE A PORTAL

Your existing privacy section is good enough that I wouldn't substantially rewrite it. It addresses shared phones, voicemail, regular email, portals, lock-screen notifications and unnecessary sensitive information.

I'd redesign it as a checklist and prominently feature this script:

“Privacy is important to me. Please contact me only at this number/email and do not include details about my care or reason for the appointment in voicemail or messages.”

TAKE CARE OF YOU.

YOU DESERVE BETTER CARE.

Ask your questions.

Know your options.

Set your boundaries.

Find your care team.

NEED HELP FINDING A RESOURCE?

Black Educated Lesbians can help connect community members with healthcare resources and directories.

BEL does not diagnose medical or mental-health conditions, recommend specific treatment, or guarantee the quality or suitability of an individual provider. This preserves the important limitation already included in the current guide.

Black Educated Lesbians (BEL)

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KNOWLEDGE | COMMUNITY | ADVOCACY | WELLNESS

United in Purpose. Power. Pride.