



NATIONAL LGBT HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER

A PROGRAM OF THE FENWAY INSTITUTE



Providing Quality Care to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Patients



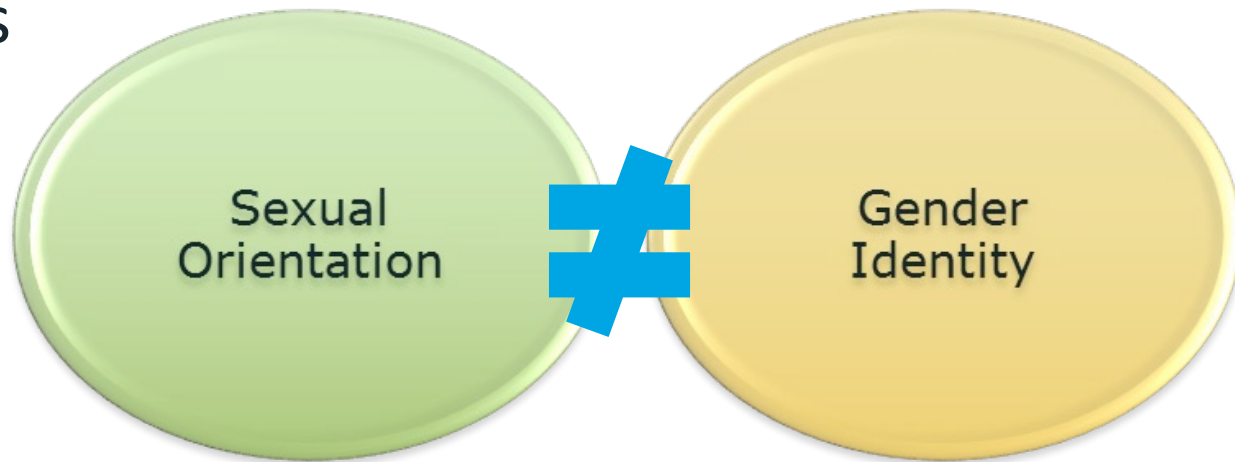
Who are LGBT People?





Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

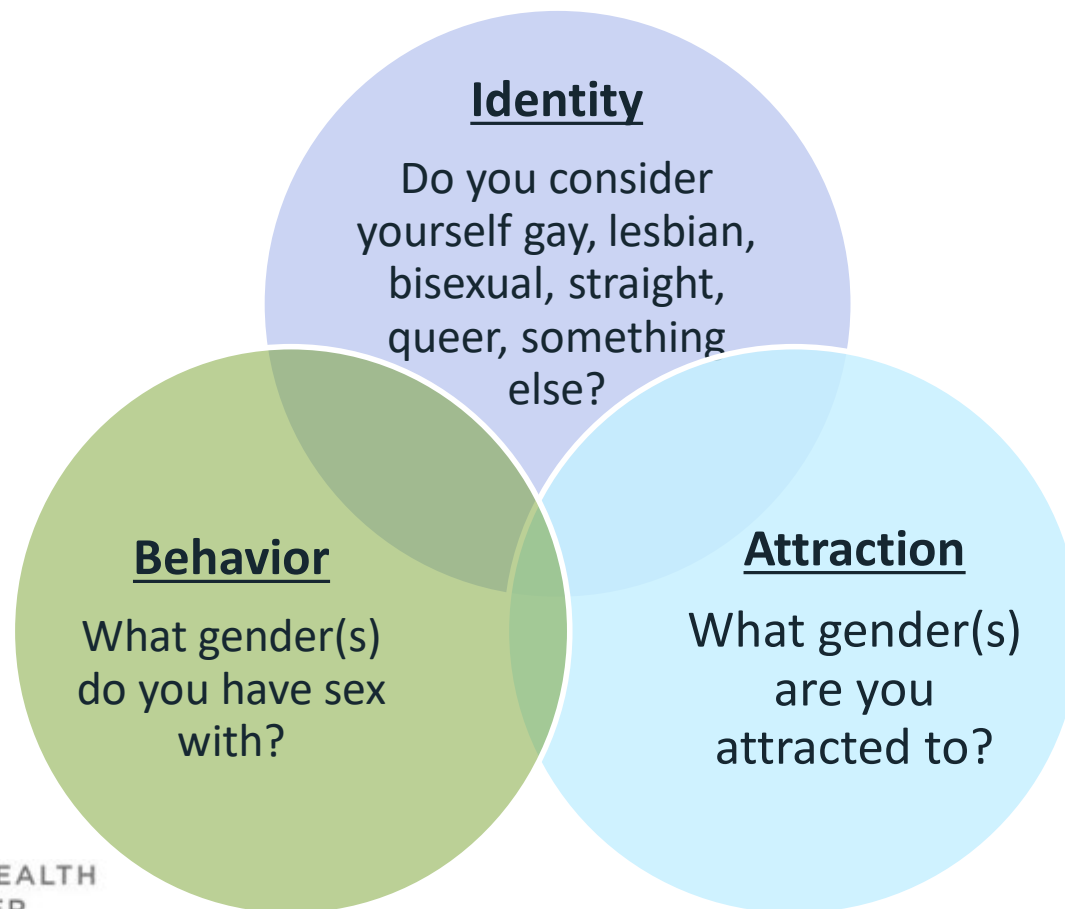
- All people have a sexual orientation and a gender identity
 - How people identify can change
 - Terminology varies
- Gender identity and sexual orientation are separate concepts





Sexual Orientation

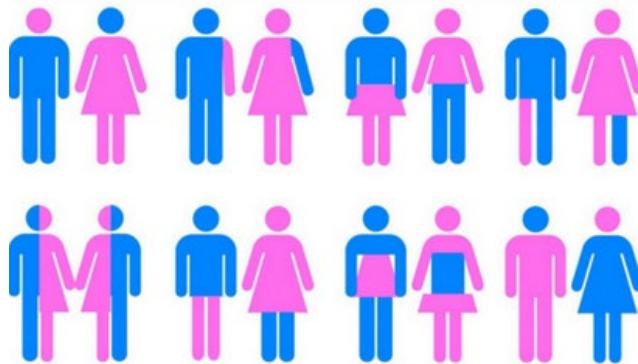
- Sexual orientation is how a person characterizes their physical and emotional attraction to others. It has 3 dimensions:





Gender Identity

- Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being a man/male, woman/female, both, neither, or another gender.





Discrimination is common in the lives of LGBT people...

- Among LGBT people:
 - 39% rejected by a family member or friend
 - 30% threatened or physically attacked
 - 21% treated unfairly by an employer
 - 30% of youth missed at least one day of school in the last month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable

- Among transgender people:
 - 61% physically attacked
 - 55% lost a job due to bias

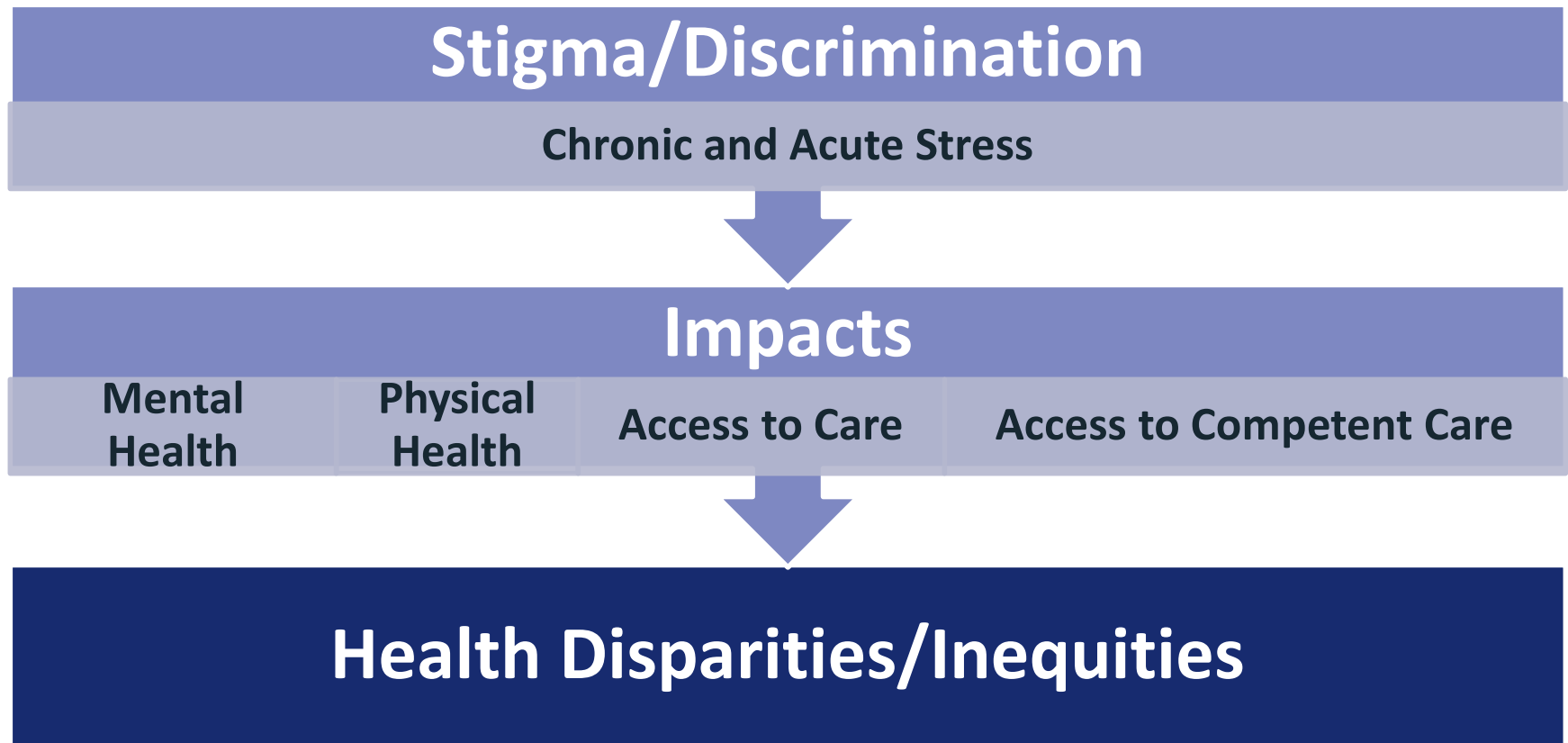


...and in health care

- LGBT patients report that providers
 - Use excessive precautions or refused to touch them (11%)
 - Blame them for their health status (12%)
 - Use harsh or abusive language (11%)
- Transgender patients report
 - Being harassed in a doctor's office (25%)
 - Being denied medical care (19%)



Stigma, Discrimination, and Health





LGBT Health Disparities Include...

- HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Anxiety and depression
- Suicidal ideation and attempts
- Substance use
- Smoking
- Lack of peer or family support, homelessness

Avoiding Assumptions

- A key principle of effective communication is to avoid making assumptions:
 - Don't assume you know a person's gender identity or sexual orientation based on how they look or sound
 - Don't assume you know how a person wants to describe themselves or their partners
 - Don't assume all of your patients are heterosexual and cisgender (not transgender)



Avoiding Assumptions

- To avoid making assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation with new patients, use gender-neutral terms and avoid using pronouns. *For example:*
 - *Instead of:* “How may I help you, sir?”
 - *Say:* “How may I help you?”
 - *Instead of:* “She is here for her appointment.”
 - *Say:* “The patient is here in the waiting room.”
 - *Instead of:* “What are your mother and fathers’ names?”
 - *Say:* “What are your parent(s) or guardian(s)’ names?”
 - *Instead of:* “Do you have a wife?”
 - *Say:* “Are you in a relationship?” or “Do you have a partner?”

Using Names and Pronouns

- Another key principle of effective communication is to use patients' preferred names and pronouns
- Transgender people often change their name to affirm their gender identity
 - This name is sometimes different than what is on their insurance or identity documents
- Transgender people want others to use pronouns that affirm their gender identity

Using Names and Pronouns

- Registration forms should have a space for patients to enter their preferred name and pronouns
- This information should also be included in medical records
- A patient's pronouns and preferred name should be used consistently by all staff

Using Names and Pronouns

- If you are unsure about a patient's preferred name or pronouns:
 - *"I would like be respectful—what name and pronouns would you like me to use?"*
- If a patient's name doesn't match insurance or medical records:
 - *"Could your chart/insurance be under a different name?"*
 - *"What is the name on your insurance?"*
- If you accidentally use the wrong term or pronoun:
 - *"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be disrespectful."*



What about Queer?

- An increasing number of people, especially youth, identify themselves as queer
- Queer usually means having a sexual orientation that is something other than heterosexual
- Although queer has traditionally been an insult, many use this term with pride
- However, the term queer is just being embraced or used by all members of the LGBT community with them now going by the LGBTQ community

Using Identity Terms

- It is important to listen to, understand, and mirror the terms that patients use to describe themselves
- Keep in mind that some people do not like to use any terms to describe their sexual orientation or gender identity



Communication “Don’ts!”

- **Don’t** laugh or gossip about a patient’s appearance or behavior
- **Don’t** use stereotypes or ask questions that are not necessary for care. Examples of “don’ts”:
 - “You’re so pretty! I cannot believe you are a lesbian.”
 - “Are you sure you’re bisexual? Maybe you just haven’t made up your mind yet.”
 - “I see you checked ‘gay’ on your registration form. How’s the club scene these days?”
 - “You look just like a real woman.”

Accountability

- Creating an environment of accountability and respect requires everyone to work together
- Don't be afraid to politely correct your colleagues if they make a mistake or make insensitive comments
 - *“Those kinds of comments are hurtful to others and do not create a respectful work environment.”*
 - *“My understanding is that this patient prefers to be called ‘Jane’, not ‘John’.”*

