

*Dr. Andrew Mendonsa*

PSYCHOLOGY EXPERT | THOUGHT LEADER | VISIONARY | CONSULTANT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2021

Media Contact:

Hilary Reiter

Redhead Marketing & PR

[hilary@redheadmarketingpr.com](mailto:hilary@redheadmarketingpr.com) | 435.901.2071

[www.andrewmendonsa.com](http://www.andrewmendonsa.com)

### **HOW TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE INEQUITY FOR LGBTQ+ PATIENTS**

*In honor of Pride Month Clinical and Forensic Psychologist Dr. Andrew Mendonsa addresses how to better meet the healthcare needs of this diverse population*

SACRAMENTO, CA — As society becomes more accepting of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, the LGBTQ+ community is growing. According to [a 2021 Gallup poll](#), Americans who identify as belonging to this community grew to 5.6% of the total population, up a full percentage point from 2017. While June is a month to celebrate Pride, Dr. Andrew Mendonsa, a nationally respected clinical and forensic Psychologist, is committed to highlighting the healthcare disparities LGBTQ+ patients experience.

“I have seen a gradual, and increasingly positive, evolution in the ways that healthcare providers treat the LGBTQ+ community, from the terminology we use to the ways we communicate with patients, but we still have a long way to go to close the alarming gaps in healthcare for LGBTQ+ individuals,” says Dr. Mendonsa.

Those who identify as LGBTQ+ still experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and substance abuse than the general population. Their suicide rate is also higher than that of heterosexuals. Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth in grades 7-12 are more than twice as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual peers.

They also still experience discrimination from medical doctors and mental health specialists. Indeed, a shocking number of “treatments” that view sexuality itself as a mental health disorder continue to exist in some areas.

Healthcare leaders can better serve the LGBTQ+ community by becoming more educated about the issues they face, and learning how to provide more personalized, considerate, and effective care. Here are four ways to improve.

## Understand Why LGBTQ+ Sensitivity Matters

LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience discrimination in a healthcare setting than the general population, and this can affect how likely they are to receive care when they need it. More than half of LGBTQ+ individuals surveyed in a [Harvard-led study](#) reported experiencing slurs, microaggressions, violence and sexual harassment while receiving healthcare. One in six reported avoiding care because of anticipated discrimination. When healthcare providers are sensitive to this history, they can communicate more effectively with LGBTQ+ clients, establish regular wellness visits, and encourage preventative care.

## Provide Ongoing Education

The LGBTQ+ community is constantly evolving and growing. Ongoing education, whether virtually or in-person, can help you better communicate with clients by learning what questions to ask, what terminology to use, and what health concerns to address. I encourage healthcare leaders to invite members of the LGBTQ+ community for question-and-answer sessions that allow for direct feedback, but there are many formats that allow for effective education, including a host of affordable webinars and other online programs that allow employees to pursue training on their own.

## Create an Inclusive Environment

Your office environment, from the physical space to your admin processes, impact the way your clients feel about their care. Asking patients for their preferred pronouns during intake, for example, is a small way to demonstrate sensitivity toward gender identity. Ensuring that all gender identities feel comfortable using your restrooms, can also go a long way. Simple details in your common areas, such as an LGBTQ+ flag, can further signal to your clients that you are making an effort to be inclusive.

Leaders at mental and behavioral health facilities may also want to consider specialized programs for LGBTQ+ clients. My colleagues at Advanced Health and Education, for example, offer a program called [Perspectives](#), which gives LGBTQ+ clients a weekly platform to share their experiences and offer each other support in a safe, healthy environment.

## Build Your Referral Network

Questions and concerns related to gender identity or sexual orientation can often blur the lines between physical and mental health. Building your referral network of medical doctors,

psychologists, mental health experts and behavioral health specialists who understand the needs of LGBTQ+ clients can help you provide more comprehensive treatment.

Above all, it's important to take a personalized approach. I find this is particularly true in my own field of mental health. Whether a client is experiencing depression, anxiety, trauma or substance use, each will have a unique set of circumstances and goals that inform their treatment. Even as I and others in the healthcare industry strive to provide better treatment to the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, we must continue to see every client as a unique individual.

###

#### ABOUT DR. MENDONSA

As a licensed clinical and forensic psychologist, Andrew Mendonsa, PsyD, MBA, offers a unique perspective on the mental health industry. He has worked in a variety of settings, including juvenile justice, correctional facilities, inpatient psychiatric hospitals, and hospital emergency departments. This varied perspective, combined with his executive experience, gives him a unique voice on a range of topics, from social justice in healthcare to addiction recovery treatments. Dr. Mendonsa's vast expertise has made him a valuable source on a wide range of topics for news outlets such as NBC, ABC, Forbes, Huffington Post, and USA Today. He was also featured in the Mayo Clinic article: "Top 30 Psychology Authors Bringing a Revolution in the World of Mental Health." Dr. Mendonsa is a member of American Psychological Association, American Psychology-Law Society, American Association of Suicidology, Rotary, Forbes Business Development Council, and Sutter Club. For more info about Dr. Mendonsa, visit [www.andrewmendonsa.com](http://www.andrewmendonsa.com).