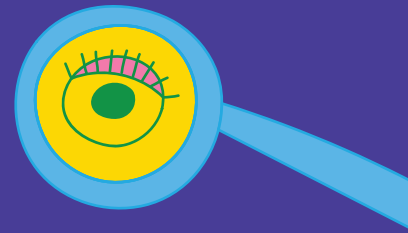


Tip Sheet for Healthcare Providers on 2SLGBTQIA+ Affirming Care



From January to April 2022, the Investigaytors¹ ran a survey, focus groups, and interviews with 2SLGBTQIA+ Albertans to gain a deeper understanding of what leads to positive, affirming healthcare experiences. Now we are sharing this information with you, our healthcare providers. Thank you for taking the time to learn more about how to support your patients!

Why does it matter?

It's important to make the effort to ensure your 2SLGBTQIA+ patients are having positive, affirming care experiences because it can make a tangible difference in their health and wellbeing. Our survey found those who had an explicitly affirming provider rated their general health as 11% better than those who didn't. They were also more likely to have received care that was appropriate for their gender and/or sexual orientation. Affirming care builds trust, and community members shared that they are more likely to disclose health information to providers they've had a positive experience with. On the flip side, those who had non-affirming experiences were less likely to access both preventive and acute care services in the future.

Inclusive intake forms

Our survey participants identified inclusive intake forms as the most important factor in having a positive healthcare experience. Here are some tips for creating one:

- Provide a space for pronouns and preferred name (and make sure all staff are using them if provided!).
- Avoid gendered language (i.e. instead of saying "For women only" when asking questions around pregnancy ask if patients have a uterus).
- If you need to know a patient's gender, provide options outside the binary.
 - Try an organ inventory if you need to know what reproductive organs someone has. This will give you more accurate information than asking if someone is male or female!

Creating a welcoming clinic environment

Accessing healthcare can be stressful for 2SLGBTQIA+ folks. One way to ease this is to create a welcoming clinic environment that lets them know their identity will be understood and respected. Here are a few ways you can do this:

- Non-verbal affirmations such as Pride or Trans Flags, safe(r) space stickers, and pronoun pins.
- Provide an all-genders washroom.
- Have a visible policy of non-discrimination, either on the clinic website or on-site.
- Ensure visible patient resources/pamphlets include 2SLGBTQIA+ resources.
- Train all staff, including administrative staff and healthcare providers, on providing affirming care.

¹ Investigaytors is a research mentorship program run by and for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, which equips participants with the skills to conduct an original research project.

Fostering affirming interactions

While it's wonderful to have an inclusive intake form and a welcoming clinic environment, it's also important that this is backed up by your actions! Here are some thoughts folks shared with us on how healthcare providers can facilitate positive interactions with 2SLGBTQIA+ patients:

- Ask open questions rather than making assumptions - assuming a patient is heterosexual or cisgender can lead to inappropriate care or harmful interactions:
 - One of our focus group participants suggested asking, "What else do I need to know about you that will help me know as much as I can to make the correct healthcare decisions for you?"
- Educate yourself on 2SLGBTQIA+ health (see further resources below to get started).
- Encourage patient autonomy in their care decisions (e.g. trans patients are the experts on what it's like to live in their body and can tell you what may help their dysphoria).
- Provide trauma-informed care:
 - Ask patients before touching them.
 - Ask about the words people like to use to describe their body parts.
 - Pay attention to body language and check in if you notice your patient seems uncomfortable. It's okay to acknowledge discomfort and ask how you can make an experience less uncomfortable.
- Remember that 2SLGBTQIA+ identities intersect with other identities, such as race, ability, and socioeconomic status. Take all aspects of a patient's identity into consideration to provide respectful, targeted care.
- Mistakes happen. Take accountability for mistakes and be willing to learn from them. If you misgender someone, quickly acknowledge it and move on, rather than making it a big deal.

Further Resources

Want to learn more about **providing affirming care**? Check out the Trans Wellness Initiative at <https://transwellnessinitiative.ca>

Interested in becoming a designated **PrEP** prescriber? <https://www.prepalberta.ca> has you covered!

Looking for information on providing **hormone replacement therapy** for your patients? Download "Guidelines for gender-affirming primary care with trans and non-binary patients" by Shelbourne Health and Rainbow Health Ontario at <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Guidelines-FINAL-4TH-EDITION-c.pdf>

For more information about this project, contact the Alberta Investigaytors Program Coordinator at finn.st.dennis@ourhealthyeg.ca.

