

Office of Health Equity Veterans Health Administration Department of Veterans Affairs



CLOSING THE GAP IN LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, & QUEER/QUESTIONING VETERAN PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

Susan Opar, MD, FAAFP¹, Shane Lamba, MPH¹, Lauren Korshak, DHealth(c), MS, ACSM-CEP¹, Salissa Walhers, MSW, LICSW², Heather Sperry, PhD³, Alicia Harding, MSW, LCSW³

¹Office of Health Equity, ²White River Junction VA Healthcare System, and ³Richard L. Roudebush Indianapolis VAMC

INTRODUCTION

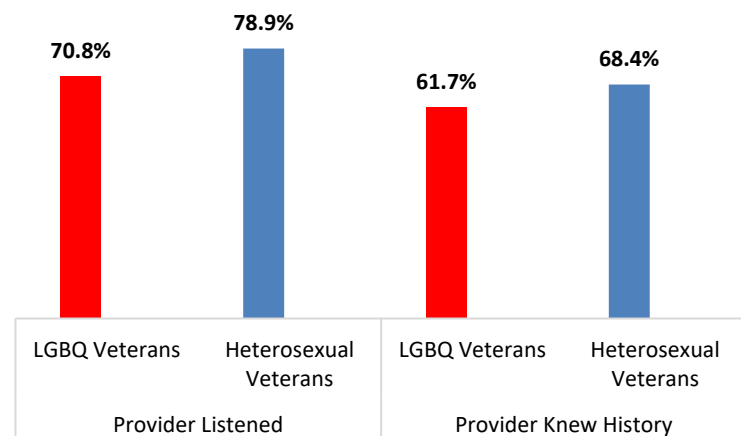
The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer/questioning (LGBQ) Veterans.

The LGBQ Veteran population has been identified as a minoritized group experiencing health care disparities often due to stigma and discrimination (Department of Veterans Affairs VHA, 2022). LGBQ Veterans may also be less likely to have positive healthcare experiences when compared to their heterosexual peers (Lamba *et al.*, 2024).

PATIENT-CENTERED CARE DISPARITIES

In the VA Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients, Primary Care Medical Home (SHEP-PCMH) from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020, Veterans were asked about their satisfaction with how often their VA medical provider listened carefully and seemed to be aware of the Veterans' important medical history information. Compared to heterosexual Veterans, fewer LGBQ Veterans reported that their provider *always* listened carefully to them (70.8% versus 78.9%) and that their provider was *always* aware of important information about their medical history (61.7% versus 68.4%).

Percent of LGBQ and Heterosexual Veterans who Felt that their Providers Always Listened to Them and Always Were Aware of their Medical History, 2019-2020



Source: Lamba S., *et al.*, 2024.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
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IMPROVING PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

VHA policies require that all Veterans' health care is delivered in an affirming and inclusive environment and that VHA employees respect each Veteran's identity. Every VA Medical Center (VAMC) has a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or another related identity (LGBTQ+) Veteran Care Coordinator (VCC). The LGBTQ+ VCC can answer questions, advocate for LGBTQ+ Veterans' right to quality care, handle complaints or concerns Veterans may have about their care, and help Veterans get connected with services. The LGBTQ+ VCC also educates Veterans, VA staff, and healthcare students training at VAMC's about how to provide patient-centered care. A directory of LGBTQ+ VCCs by state and U.S. territory can be found [here](#).

The White River Junction VAMC is a small facility. Despite its size, White River Junction's SHEP-PCMH scores from LGBTQ+ Veterans are one of the best in the country. To achieve this high quality of care, White River Junction partners with local LGBTQ+ centers and organizations to promote visibility of LGBTQ+ Veterans and to encourage them to seek care at VA. They also collaborate with the Richard L. Roudebush VAMC in Indianapolis, IN through their interfacility consults to provide LGBTQ+ Veterans at White River Junction access to LGBTQ+ support groups, programs, and referrals. The White River Junction VAMC also leverages the National Transgender and Gender Diverse E-Consult to connect providers at White River Junction with subject matter experts on transgender health-related medical care.

INTERFACILITY CONSULTS FOR LGBTQ+ VETERANS: RICHARD L. ROUDEBUSH VAMC

The Richard L. Roudebush VAMC began offering an interfacility consult for LGBTQ+ Veterans in Fiscal Year 2021. This interfacility consult (IFC) provides affirming services including speech pathology, endocrinology, prosthetics, and sexual health care to LGBTQ+ Veterans when they are not readily available at their home facility. The IFC also connects LGBTQ+ Veterans to one of multiple LGBTQ+ groups offered by the Richard L. Roudebush VAMC, including PRIDE In All Who Served, Honest Open and Proud HOP, LGBTQ+ Support Groups, Transgender and Gender Diverse Support Groups, and an LGBTQ+ Resiliency Group. Additionally, the Richard L. Roudebush VAMC offers a Transgender and Gender Diverse prosthetics IFC for 15 other VAMC's to enhance access to gender-affirming prosthetic items for Veterans across the nation.

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>

For more information about the LGBTQ+ Health Program's Patient Education Materials visit: https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VA_LGBT_Outreach.asp

References

Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration (VHA). (2022). VHA Directive 1340: Provision of health care for Veterans who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer. Retrieved from https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/directives/VHA_DIRECTIVE_1340.pdf#.

Lamba S, Jones KT, Grozadanic T, Moy E. Differences by Sexual Orientation in Patient-Centered Care Outcomes for Veterans Utilizing Primary Care Services at the Veterans Health Administration. *LGBT Health*. 2024. (online ahead of print). <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2023.0224>