

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



HEALTH DISPARITIES AMONG LGBT VETERANS

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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, including LGBT Veterans.

The language of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community is expansive and continuously changing. The use of the acronym “LGBT” in this brief is intended to be inclusive of all sexual and gender minority individuals.

HEALTH DISPARITIES

LGBT Veterans are at a disproportionate risk for suicide and other poor health outcomes (Mereish, et al., 2012), due in part to barriers in accessing services and lack of social support (Bryant & Schilt, 2008; Moradi, 2009). Sexual and gender minority Veterans have faced stigma and discrimination, which can affect their health.

LGBT Veterans are more likely to report that their

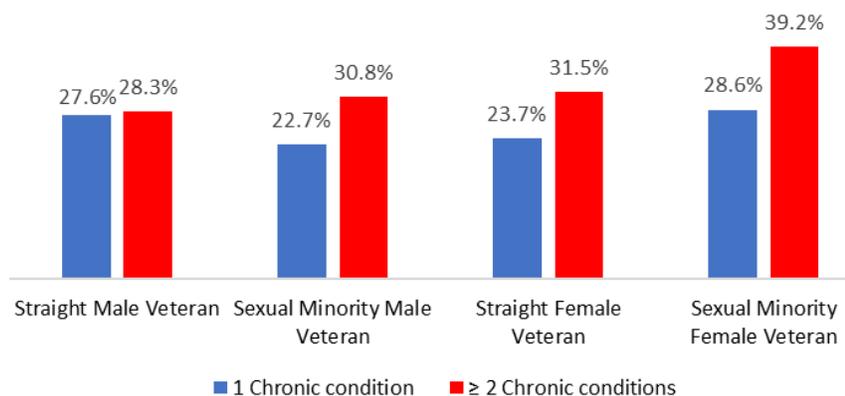
health is fair or poor and that they have multiple chronic conditions. To find data on LGBT and other groups of Veterans, visit:

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/veterans_health_statistics/veterans-health-info.htm.

Respondent-Assessed Health Status



Percent of Veterans with Multiple Chronic Conditions



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REDUCING DISPARITIES AND IMPROVING ACCESS

Barriers to receiving culturally competent healthcare can contribute to worse health outcomes for LGBT individuals. A provider's knowledge of a patient's LGBT status is essential to providing appropriate prevention screening and care.

Provider-focused education and inclusive facility policies are beginning to raise awareness about the unique needs and healthcare disparities facing LGBT Veterans. There is growing support that these methods have contributed to improved LGBT Veteran experience with VHA services (Kauth, et al., 2018). Beyond inclusive healthcare policies and provider training, patient health education is a method for encouraging positive health behavior choices.

PRIDE IN ALL WHO SERVED

The "PRIDE In All Who Served" project strives to address healthcare disparities by directly providing information about unique healthcare needs to the Veteran population. Providing education in a supportive peer environment empowers LGBT Veterans to navigate the VHA system and thus,

reduce healthcare disparities. One area of emphasis is focused on minimizing the risk factors for suicide, which disproportionately affects LGBT Veterans when compared to the general Veteran population.



The "PRIDE in All Who Served" 10-week health education group was developed for LGBT Veterans with a focus on reducing healthcare disparities. Group facilitators follow a session-by-session manual with corresponding Veteran handouts on each topic including information about how to access relevant services within the VHA system. Session content focuses on overall wellness, increasing social connectedness, and empowering Veterans to engage in services related to their personal healthcare needs.

Developed at the Hampton VA, the program has been successfully replicated and evaluated at facilities across the country through a partnership with the Tuscaloosa VA. Support from the VHA Innovators Network enabled quick dissemination to more than 15 facilities in two years.

To learn more about the "PRIDE In All Who Served" project, visit:

<https://marketplace.va.gov/practices/pride-in-all-who-served-reducing-healthcare-disparities-for-lgbt-veterans>

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

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