Working with Clients from the LGBTQ+ Community: Cultural Awareness & Substance Use Care

Don Allensworth-Davies, PhD, MSc, CPRS, CDCA
Associate Professor, Departmemt of Health
Sciences & Human Performance
Cleveland State University

1

Learning Objectives

- Describe how rates of substance use disorders in LGBTQ+ communities are different from other communities.
- Distinguish between gender, assigned sex at birth, and sexual/romantic orientations.
- Understand frequently used terms as indictors of privilege and/or discrimination.
- Learn how to be a supportive ally to members of the LGBTQ+ community.

LGBTQ+ and Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

- 2.1 million LGBTQ+ adults had an SUD
- 1.5 million had both SUD and mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation)
- 5.7 million had mental illness alone.
- 38% of SGM adults report past-year use of marijuana compared to 16% in the overall US adult population.
- More than 1.1 million LGBQ+ adults received medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder in 2018.

Sources: SAMHSA, 2018; Keuroghlian et al., 2015; Blackwell et al., 2020; Medley et al., 2020

3

LGBTQ+ and Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

- 64% of LGBTQ+ adults report alcohol use, compared to 56% of the overall US population.
- Transgender women are more likely to seek treatment for SUD compared to non-transgender people.
- LGBTQ+ have elevated rates of smoking/vaping compared to heterosexual individuals.

Sources: SAMHSA, 2018; Keuroghlian et al., 2015; Blackwell et al., 2020; Medley et al., 2020

LGBTQ+ and Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

Longitudinal study with 1,050 SGM participants (Fish & Exten, 2020)

- Gay and bisexual males aged 18–45 years had the highest rates of AUD
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual females most likely to meet criteria for AUD between ages 45 and 55 years.
- SGM adults who experienced discrimination in past year had greater odds of alcohol use compared to heterosexual peers between ages 23 and 34 years and again from age 42 to 53 years; the association between discrimination and AUD was strongest among sexual minority men.

5

LGBTQ+ Youth (< age 21) and SUD

- 47% used alcohol in the last year
- 29% used marijuana in the last year
- 11% reported having used a prescription drug that was not prescribed to them in the last year
- 11% also reported regular use (defined as daily or weekly use) of both alcohol or marijuana
- Experiencing "conversion therapy," was associated with 25% greater odds of regular alcohol use or regular marijuana use
- Regular prescription drug misuse was associated with nearly three times greater odds of attempting suicide in the last year
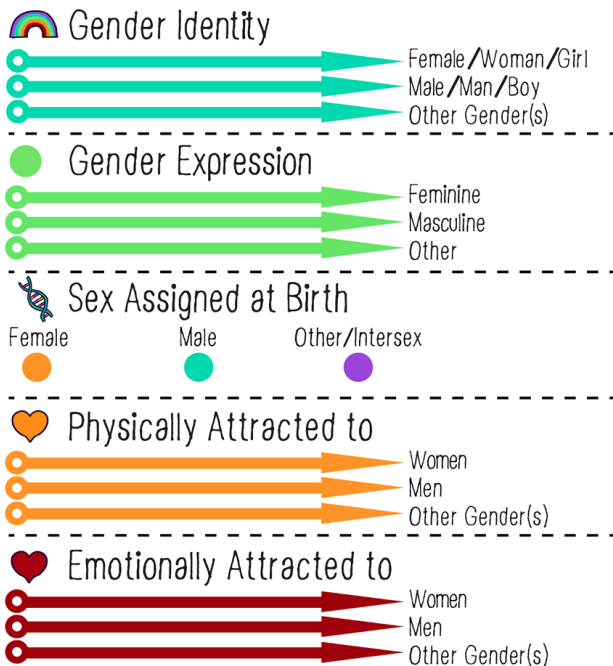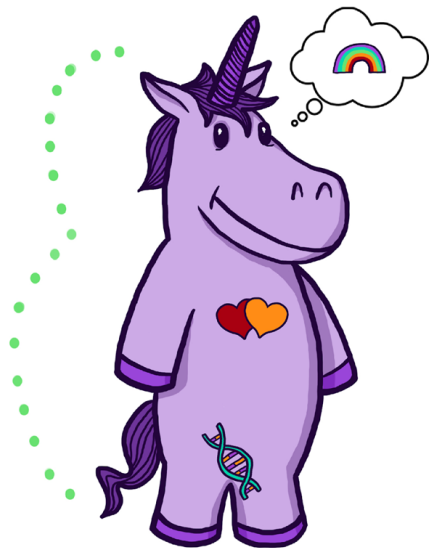
Source: The Trevor Project

Other LGBTQ+ Risk Factors for SUD

- Discrimination/Social Stigma
- Family Rejection
- Lack of Support
- Internalized Homophobia
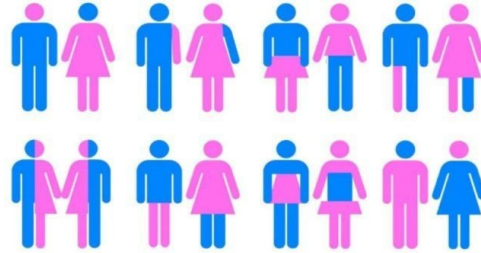
Source: National Drug Helpline

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources

Gender Identity
Female/Woman/Girl
Male/Man/Boy
Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression
Feminine
Masculine
Other

Sex Assigned at Birth
Female   Male   Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to
Women
Men
Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to
Women
Men
Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

8

Breaking It Down

GENDER

Both a personal understanding of self and a systemic creation of masculinity and femininity, including one's gender identity and gender expression.
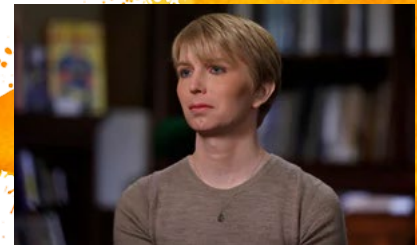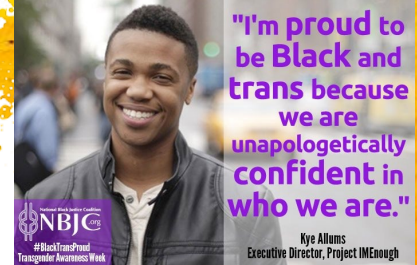
ASSIGNED SEX

The sex one is assigned at birth, based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes.

SEXUAL/ROMANTIC ORIENTATION

Which gender or gender(s) of people a person is sexually or romantically attracted to.

Experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals are often interwoven with other parts of their identities, including:

× Religion	× Nation of origin
× Age	× Family structure
× Socioeconomic status	× Mental/physical ability
× Race	× Immigrant status
× Ethnicity	× Education
× Social circle	× Access to information
× Previous convict status	about LGBTQ+ issues

Cisgender

A person who identifies as cisgender's sex assigned at birth is in alignment with their gender identity.
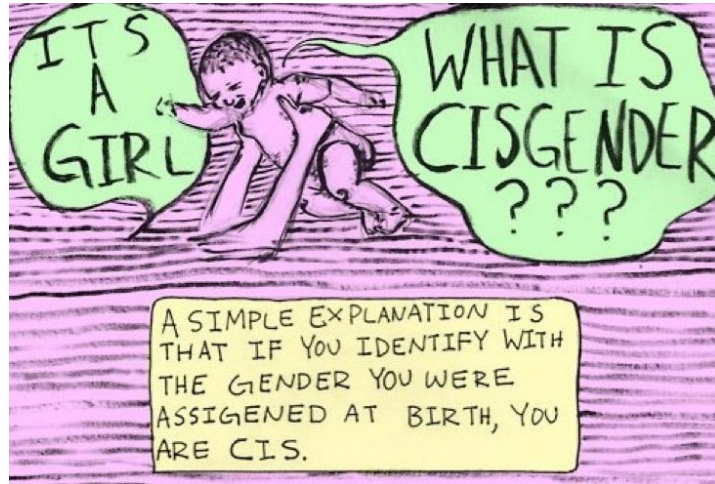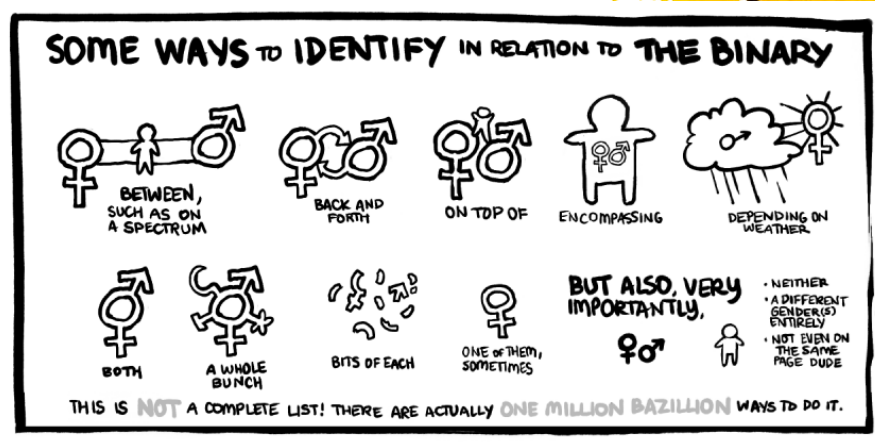

source unknown

Transgender and Trans*

× **Transgender** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the gender they were assigned at birth.

× **Trans*** is a more inclusive term, where the asterisk signifies the effort to include all transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming identities.

13

Non-Binary Identities

× Both a specific identity & an umbrella term for **gender identities outside of the gender binary**

× A non-binary person could be neither man nor woman, multiple genders simultaneously, flowing between genders, or another gender altogether

source unknown

14

Some Trans*Identities May Include...

- Trans woman/man
- Trans feminine/masculine
- Agender
- Genderqueer
- Non-binary
- Gender non-conforming
- Gender fluid
- Two-spirit
- Multigender

Illustration by Paige Mehrer

Pronouns

Correctly using someone's pronouns shows your respect for their gender identity.

When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric (often all of the above.)

he	him	his	himself
she	her	hers	herself
they	them	their/s	themself/ves
Ze/zie	zir	zir/s	zirself

Sexual Orientations

× **Heterosexual:** generally someone who identifies as one binary gender who is sexually attracted to the other binary gender, i.e. straight

× **Homosexual:** generally someone who is sexually attracted to people of the same gender.
  × While many still use and identify with this term, some individuals in LGBTQ+ communities may find it outdated or offensive.

17

Sexual Orientations

Gay: someone who is attracted to people of the same gender. This can be used to communicate sexual orientation, romantic orientation, or both.

× Gay is often used as an umbrella term for anyone who is not heterosexual.

18

Sexual Orientations

Lesbian: a woman who is attracted to another woman. This can be used as sexual or romantic orientation, or both.

Sexual Orientations

Bisexual

A person who is sexually attracted to two or more genders, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Sexual Orientations

Pansexual

A person who is or can be emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of all/any genders, or to people regardless of gender.

Sexual Orientations

Asexual

A person who experiences a lack of sexual attraction or desire for other people.

Asexual or "Ace Umbrella" can be used to refer to anyone who experiences sexual attraction in only some/not all situations.

Sexual Orientations

Queer

A term often used to express identities and orientations outside of societal norms, including anyone who is not cisgender and/or heterosexual. Also used as an umbrella term, or used interchangeably with LGBTQ+.

QUEER

Lesbian   Intersex

Gay   Pansexual

Bi   Asexual

Trans   All Others

www.queerproblems.com
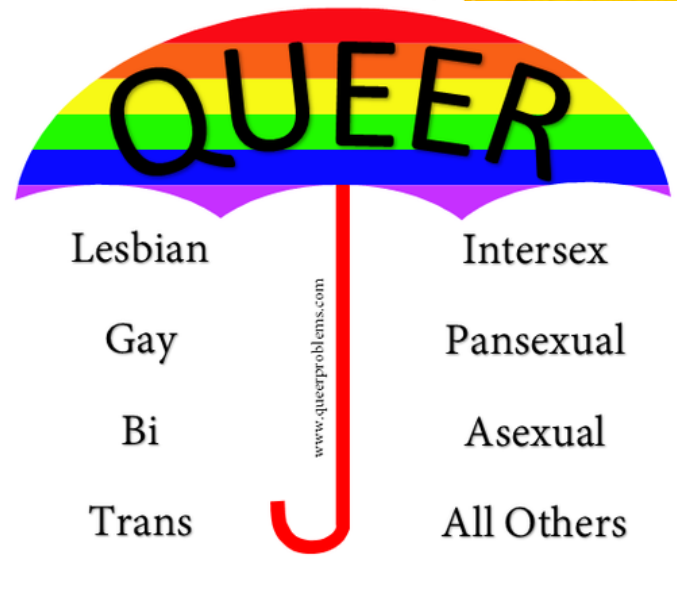
Romantic Orientations

Romantic Orientation describes an individual's pattern of romantic attraction.

Someone's romantic and sexual orientations may be the same or different.

Romantic Orientations

Examples of Romantic Orientations include:

- × Heteroromantic
- × Homoromantic
- × Biromantic
- × Panromantic
- × Aromantic

Aromantic flag:

ORIENTATIONS

a-	romantic	does not experience _____ attraction towards anyone.
	sexual	
gray-	romantic	rarely experiences _____ attraction towards anyone.
	asexual	
demi-	romantic	experiences _____ attraction towards someone only after developing a very strong bond.
	sexual	
hetero-	romantic	experiences _____ attraction towards gender(s) other than their own.
	sexual	
homo-	romantic	experiences _____ attraction towards the same gender as their own.
	sexual	
bi-	romantic	experiences _____ attraction towards the same gender as well as to other gender(s) than their own.
	sexual	
pan-	romantic	experiences _____ attraction towards all genders / regardless of gender.
	sexual	
poly-	romantic	experiences _____ attraction towards multiple (but not necessarily all) genders.
	sexual	

note: orientations are listed in no particular order.

LGBTQ+ Symbols

SEXUALITY
LIFE
HEALING
SUNLIGHT
NATURE
ART
SERENITY/HARMONY
SPIRIT
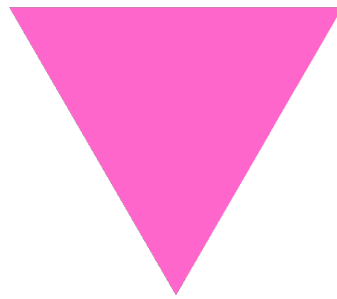
Privilege & Discrimination

Homophobia, **Biphobia,** and **Transphobia** are the hatred or fear of or aversion to people who are **gay or lesbian,** **bisexual,** or **trans*,** and discrimination, intolerance, and prejudice based on this hatred, fear, or aversion.

Privilege & Discrimination

Heteronormativity is the assumption that all people are heterosexual, or the belief that everyone should be heterosexual, and should conform to traditional gender roles.

Heterosexism includes the prejudice and discrimination based on these assumptions and beliefs, and the privileging of heterosexual relationships.

29

Privilege & Discrimination

Cissexism is the belief that there are or should be only two genders, and that gender is intrinsically tied to assigned sex at birth.

Cissexism perpetuates and enforces this gender binary, and erases & invalidates trans* and gender non-conforming people

Allyship *is a process of growth and development.*

No one is perfect, and everyone has to start somewhere!

Allyship: Language

Don't Say	Do Say
"Sexual Preference"	Sexual orientation
"lifestyle"	LGBTQ+ identity
"A homosexual, the gays"	LGBTQ+ person
"Sex change"	Transition
"Biological sex, born a girl/boy"	Sex assigned at birth
"Transgendered, a transgender"	Trans person or transgender person

32

What if I make a mistake?

×   Remember: it's about the **other person's comfort**, not your own.
×   Correct yourself quickly, and then continue with your conversation.
×   If you want to approach the individual about the mistake, bring it up in a one-on-one conversation at a later time.

Acceptable Ways to Correct Yourself

× "I went to the store with her…him."

× "He and I…sorry, she and I went to the movies."

× He's…I mean they're a big fan of Marvel comics."

34

What Not to Say When You Correct Yourself

"She really likes…oh my gosh, I mean he, I'm so sorry. I just don't have it down yet, you need to give me time, I mean I'm getting it, I promise. It's just so hard sometimes and I don't even know where that came from, and I'm so sorry. I've never done this before, it won't happen again…"

Allyship: Labels

Don't assign anyone a label- let them choose what fits, or nothing at all.

Don't make assumptions about what labels are okay or not okay. Some individuals may use labels that make other individuals uncomfortable, such as "queer." Again, let people pick their own labels!

36

Allyship: Coming Out

How can you affirm their experience?

An LGBTQ+ person may have experienced discrimination or rejection when coming out to others in the past.

How can you help facilitate a positive coming out experience?

Allyship: Coming Out

How can you affirm their identity?

Acceptance by others, including family and friends, can be a big part of accepting oneself.

What can you do to help this person feel safe and accepted?

Resources & Support

Coming out can be a difficult process for some, and they may benefit from knowing there are additional supports and resources available to them.

Remember, your role is to support the person coming out to you within the context of your relationship.

Refer them to other resources when needed!

39

Allyship: Action

Individuals who do not hold LGBTQ+ identities may have power that can be used to create space for LGBTQ+ people to speak for themselves.

It is an ally's responsibility to create space for other voices, not necessarily to speak for others.

Allyship: Action

What can you do?

Allyship includes a spectrum of intentional actions! These can include, but are not limited to:

- **Attending events** to celebrate or honor LGBTQ+ populations (Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance)
- **Educating yourself** by reading books, articles, and internet sources on LGBTQ+ communities.
- **Directly intervening** by speaking up when you hear people using language that is discriminatory against LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Include your pronouns** in your email signature.
- **Don't assume anyone/everyone is heterosexual,** use "partner" instead of boyfriend, wife, etc.

Considerations for Your LGBTQ+ Clients

× Conduct confidential client satisfaction surveys that include questions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

× Ask LGBTQ+ clients/families about staff responsiveness to their needs during care planning and treatment and include whether/how these needs were accommodated.

× Encourage LGBTQ+ community input and collaboration by establishing a community advisory board or including LGBTQ+ representation on existing boards.

× Expand marketing efforts to include LGBTQ+ audiences by publishing in LGBTQ+ media.

× Highlight LGBTQ+ specific services, programs, and initiatives on your agency website.

42

References

- Blackwell CW, et al. Use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons: Implications for public health nursing. Journal of Public Health Nursing. Published May 2020. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/phn.12746
- Fish JN, Exten C. Sexual Orientation Differences in Alcohol Use Disorder Across the Adult Life Course. Am J Prev Med. 2020 Sep;59(3):428-436. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2020.04.012. Epub 2020 Jul 23. PMID: 32713615; PMCID: PMC7483372.
- Keuroghlian AS, Reisner SL, White JM, Weiss RD. Substance use and treatment of substance use disorders in a community sample of transgender adults. Drug Alcohol Depend. 2015;152:139-146. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2015.04.008.
- Medley G, Lipari R, Bose J, Cribb D, Kroutil L, McHenry G. Sexual Orientation and Estimates of Adult Substance Use and Mental Health: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. NSDUH Data Review. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015.htm. Published October 2016.
- SAMHSA. 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Adults. No date. Available online. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt23252/7_LGB_2020_01_14_508.pdf

Thanks!

Any questions?

d.allensworthdavies@csuohio.edu

44