

Geisinger

Tips for allies

A resource for our LGBTQ+ community

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Medical Center

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Tips for allies

Best practices

- Support your loved ones' efforts to live a healthy lifestyle.
- Help them connect with LGBTQ+ community via community groups, clubs and online communities. Connection is valuable and protective to LGBTQ+ people. The following are some organizations in our service area:
 - Central PA LGBT Center: centralpalgbtcenter.org
 - Centre LGBTQA: centrelgbtqa.org
 - Coalition for Social Equity (Catawissa): coalitionforsocialequity.org/home
 - NEPA Pride Coalition: nepapridecoalition.org
 - NEPA Rainbow Alliance: rainbowalliance.org
 - PFLAG Danville: pflag.org/chapter/danville

- Take steps to learn more about LGBTQ+ culture, concerns and community. You're responsible for learning how to best love and support your LGBTQ+ family members.
- Is your loved one your minor child? Advocate for them and/or support teens in advocating for themselves. Examples might include:
 - Making sure your loved one knows you love and support them, value their health and their relationships and want them around for as long as possible
 - Examining your own biases and holding others accountable for theirs
 - Encouraging your lesbian teen's healthcare provider to offer her testing for sexually transmitted infections and not assume she is immune
 - Insisting that healthcare providers use your transgender child's or teen's preferred name and pronouns
 - Advocating for your gay son to get the testing he asks for
 - Advocating for your bisexual child, whose sexual behavior should not be assumed
 - Working for equal healthcare benefits and financial safety for your loved one and for other LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ people are at higher risk for suicidal thoughts and attempts. If you have concerns about your family member, ask them directly if they're thinking about hurting or killing themselves. Connect with crisis resources:
 - Trevor Project – Connect to a crisis counselor 24/7/365 from anywhere in the U.S. It's 100% confidential and 100% free.
 - Call 866-488-7386.
 - Text START to 678-678.
 - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – A United States-based suicide prevention network of 200+ crisis centers that provides 24/7 service via a toll-free hotline.
 - Call or text 988.

Tips for new allies

- Educate yourself:
 - See the “Helpful terms” section below for definitions.
 - Check out the Human Rights Campaign's [extensive library of resources](#).
- Acknowledge LGBTQ+ experiences and points of view as valid.
- Reflect and be honest about your own fears.
- Rely on personal experience, not stereotypes.
- Be aware of derogatory comments and ask that they stop.
- Ask questions if you want to know something — but understand that LGBTQ+ people (like anyone) have the right not to answer personal questions.
- Know that everyone has a sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Respect LGBTQ+ people's privacy — “outing” someone is not acceptable.

- Acknowledge partners the same way you would if they were a heterosexual couple.

Helpful terms

Around gender identity

Gender identity: The internal perception of one's gender and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or do not align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer and trans. Don't confuse gender identity with biological sex or sex assigned at birth.

Cisgender: Describes a person whose gender identity aligns with their biological sex assigned at birth.

Transgender: 1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk (trans*) is used to indicate that you're referring to another larger group nature of the term. 2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Note that a trans* person can be any sexual orientation (e.g., straight, gay, bisexual, queer).

Gender expression: The external display of one's gender through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior and other factors, generally understood on scales of masculinity and femininity.

Genderqueer: A gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman or as an umbrella term for many gender-nonconforming or nonbinary identities.

Around biological sex

Biological sex: A medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify a person as female, male or intersex. Often referred to as simply "sex," "physical sex," "anatomical sex" or specifically as "sex assigned at birth."

Intersex: Someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female.

Around sexual orientation:

Sexual orientation: The type of sexual, romantic or emotional/spiritual attraction one feels for others.

Emotional/spiritual attraction: The desire to engage in emotional intimate behavior (sharing, confiding, trusting, interdepending) with someone.

Romantic attraction: The desire to engage in relational intimate behavior (flirting, dating, marriage) with someone.

Sexual attraction: The desire to engage in physical intimate behavior (kissing, touching, intercourse) with someone.

Bisexual: A person emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women.

Homosexual: A medical term describing a person primarily emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted to people who are the same sex/gender. This term can be

stigmatizing due to its history and should not be commonly used (use *gay* or *lesbian* instead).

Heterosexual: A person primarily emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted to people who are not the same sex/gender. Also often called “straight.”

Other terms to know

Heteronormativity: The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities.

Homophobia: An umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, hatred, intolerance, resentment, erasure, discomfort) that a person may have toward members of the LGBTQ+ community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ+.

Transphobia: The fear of, discrimination against or hatred of trans* people, the trans* community or gender ambiguity.

Ally: A (typically straight- or cis-identified) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Resources

LGBTQ youth can visit these websites to find healthcare or get more information.

- Questions about your sexual health? Visit Advocates for Youth (advocatesforyouth.org).
- Want support for your friends or family? Visit the TransYouth Family Allies (imatyfa.org) or Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (pflag.org) for lists of organizations and local support groups.
- Want to make changes at school? Find resources at GSA Network (gsanetwork.org) or Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (glsen.org).
- Want to find organizations committed to LGBTQ+ healthcare? Review the Human Rights Campaign Health Equality Index (hrc.org/hej).

Support for youth

LGBTQ youth can find support in places like these:

- Neighborly helps you find free or reduced-cost services in your community. Search for local resources to access food and housing assistance, childcare, transportation, utility assistance, healthcare, financial assistance and other needs (neighborlypa.org)
- Want a safe place to call for information, referrals and support? Try the Peer Listening Line, 617-267-2535 (toll-free 800-399-PEER), or the GLBT National Help Center’s Youth Talkline at 800-246-PRIDE (7743).
- Have you experienced violence or sexual assault? Contact the Safe Homes Project at 800-621-HOPE (4673) or Llámmanos Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-223-5001.
- Have you run away from home or are you homeless? Call the National Runaway Safeline for help at 800-786-2929, or visit (1800runaway.org)

- Are you feeling sad or thinking about hurting yourself? Call the Trevor Project's Lifeline at 866-488-7386 ([thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org)).