

Coming Out to your Providers

Coming out to your provider is an important step in forming a partnership with them to best take care of your health. There are unique health risks that may be different among LGBTQ people compared to heterosexual and non-transgender individuals. Being open with your provider about your identity and sexual orientation and behaviors is the key to overcoming these issues. By knowing the whole person, your provider can provide personalized, relevant care and make appropriate referrals to other providers that are LGBTQ-inclusive, among many other things. Follow these links to learn more about coming out to your provider:

- [Talking to your Provider About Being LGBT](#) by the [National LGBT Health Education Center - Fenway Health](#) explains the importance of coming out to your healthcare professionals and answers frequently asked questions by patients.
- [A Resource Guide for Coming Out](#) offers a structured toolkit for coming out to any important person in your life, which may be useful when interacting with healthcare providers, and [Coming Out to Your Doctor](#) hones in on specific issues related to the healthcare setting. Both are offered by the [Human Rights Campaign](#).

In healthcare, coming out to your provider can also begin a discussion about who among your social support system is important and should be involved in healthcare decisions for you in case of an emergency. Injustices, such as barring access to loved ones or not being involved in important decisions, have commonly occurred due to the lack of recognition for LGBTQ relationships.

Legal documents that explicitly outline your values and wishes in the healthcare setting are called advance directives and may circumvent these issues. A “durable power of attorney for healthcare” will allow your partner to make emergency healthcare decisions if you are not married or in a civil union. Other documents that you may consider gathering for healthcare purposes may include a living will to specify what kind of life sustaining measures should be taken in the event that you cannot express these desires and a will to outline how you would like your assets to be distributed after your death. Discuss with your provider local resources to assist you with this documentation. Primary care providers should have these conversations with all of their patients, but it may be of even more importance when interacting with their LGBTQ patients due to the history of discrimination among the community.