

5 Actions for Providing Affirming Care

1. Culture as Treatment –This can look like incorporating ceremonial life and traditions as part of the birthing process. Invite all birthing parents regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation to be a part of traditional birthing ceremonies. When speaking to birthing parents about having a healthy birth, include talking to them about traditional food ways to help mitigate diabetes, or connection to the land and spirituality as a way to keep their stress and blood pressure down.
2. Self Educate– Like we want western physicians to learn and educate themselves about us as marginalized communities, we also need to educate ourselves about our LGBTQIA+ relatives. It is important for us to be able to identify whether or not we have any type of implicit or unconscious bias in our practice. We want to eliminate aggressions that show up through our body language and statements that may be based in stereotypes.
3. Systems Level Change –Western colonialism introduced the binary gender structure. One way to liberate your clinics from colonial settler mindset is how you collect demographic information. Consider including traditional/historical identities and gender categories as part of your intake form. Also, do your policies and procedures have a non-discrimination policy that clearly outlines protections for LGBTQIA+ relatives. Lastly, systems level change, includes incorporating continual learning opportunities. All employees should be trained on LGBTQIA identity, and how to be affirming.
4. Belonging –Celebrate all parts of the persons identity instead of prioritizing one over the other. Meaning don't just solely focus on the fact that your patient is Indigenous/Native American, but also acknowledge that they are LGBTQIA+ or Two-Spirit. This that part of their identity may be just as equally important to them than their Indigenous heritage. Research has shown that the more marginalized communities are connected to their culture and heritage the more resilient they become AND the healthier they become because they have a community to lean on.
5. Patient Center Care – Make sure you are taking a trauma informed care approach and working with each person from a beginners mind. Approach each person with care. Listen deeply to the needs and concerns, and provide your patient with options based on what they share with you and not what you think they need based off of how you identify them.

