

# Strategic Plan to Address LGBTQ Healthcare Disparities in Montefiore Medical Center (MMC)

2016-2017

## Introduction

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) community has made important advancements in their attainment of civil liberties. However, LGBTQ individuals continue to face barriers that prevent them from accessing culturally competent healthcare and achieving the highest possible level of health. Due to these barriers, LGBTQ individuals experience multiple health disparities. Compared to their heterosexual counterparts, LGBTQ populations have higher rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, obesity, certain forms of cancer, suicide, and tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use. LGBTQ adults are also more likely to delay or avoid seeking medical care due to decreased access to healthcare and fear of discrimination.

Montefiore Medical Center has striven to address these disparities for decades and will continue to work to close these gaps. This plan focuses on five specific areas: organizational climate, associate education, research, patient care, and community outreach. MMC will help advance the wellbeing of the LGBTQ community and will transform Montefiore into a local and national leader in LGBTQ health. This document will serve to annotate its progress to date and map out a plan for future efforts.

## Executive Summary

The LGBTQ communities have disparities in health outcomes resulting from a variety of sources: differential risks and risk taking between the community and the general population, unequal access to health and societal resources, stigma in the community and healthcare institutions, disparities in insurance coverage, and a history of culturally incompetent care. In addition, the LGBTQ population in the Bronx has high rates of undocumented immigration, language barriers, lack of insurance coverage and legal employment discrimination.

While a healthcare institution cannot nullify many of these tremendous challenges, it is in a unique position to address many of them in substantial ways.

To address these health concerns, an interdisciplinary plan has been established to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ populations. The vision of the program is to improve the care of LGBTQ individuals by becoming a local and national leader in LGBTQ patient care, education, research, and advocacy. The plan includes five key areas: **Organizational climate, community outreach, cultural competency training, research, and culturally competent patient care.**

**Organizational Climate:** Increase Support for LGBTQ diversity and inclusion in the workplace setting.

**Community Outreach:** Increase collaboration between MMC its affiliated partners within our health systems and the greater Bronx/ Westchester LGBTQ community.

**Cultural Competency Training:** Enhance associate education in culturally competent LGBTQ healthcare and health disparities.

**Research:** Foster research on the optimal ways to improve the care for LGBTQ populations.

**Culturally Competent Patient Care:** Provide improved patient and family-centered care to the LGBTQ community.

### **Organizational Climate**

LGBTQ individuals face many challenges in healthcare settings, and LGBTQ associates may be fearful of biased treatment. Trepidation precipitated by a hostile environment adversely impacts patient care and the quality of work. Montefiore respects the rights of LGBTQ associates and embraces work, education, and healthcare environments free from abuse, harassment, and discrimination. Montefiore works to ensure healthcare access in the LGBTQ community in many ways, including through the workforce. As the largest employer in the Bronx (with over 30,000 associates), Montefiore provides income and health insurance to Bronxites more than any other institution. Montefiore made history in 1991 as one of the first hospitals to provide insurance benefits to unmarried same sex partners in the country, and continues to support LGBTQ individuals in the workplace and healthcare settings by promoting an LGBTQ-inclusive climate and culture. Fostering organizational climate and visibility will ensure that LGBTQ staff and patients feel fully valued and embraced at Montefiore.

Montefiore is committed to nurturing and supporting LGBTQ diversity and inclusion in the workplace through the following initiatives:

The Montefiore Human Resources department will increase outreach to acquire talent from within the LGBTQ community. One LGBTQ Job Fair was held in 2016, and three more are planned for 2017.
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Human Resources will update its 2016 Summary Description Plan for healthcare coverage to include information regarding our gender transition-related care.
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Human Resources will amend its EEO Statement to include gender identity and expression
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In addition, Montefiore hopes to foster LGBTQ inclusion through the following structural initiatives:

Leaders in LGBT integration have been identified in Human Resources, Clinical Practice, Learning, and Compliance, and have formed the HEI Workgroup. Montefiore will submit the HEI application by September 30, 2016, striving for Leader status by 2017.
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Montefiore will designate an LGBTQ Ombudsman.
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Montefiore has a recognized Transgender employee resource group and resource page for employees and providers housed on the institutional intranet since a recognized transgender resource page for employees and providers housed on our intranet since 2014. And supports local LGBTQ events at the workplace

The Montefiore Trans Health Working Group was established in 2014 with the goal to increase access to and quality of transgender health care within the institution. A team of interdisciplinary health care professionals meets monthly or more frequently as needed to centralize efforts and push programmatic goals forward.

## Community Outreach

The Bronx is home to a thriving LGBTQ community. Numerous community-based organizations (CBOs) work to advance LGBTQ health and wellness within the Bronx community. Montefiore will continue to partner with these organizations to improve access to high quality care and to reduce overall LGBTQ health disparities.

Montefiore will increase involvement in the Bronx LGBTQ community through participation in local LGBTQ events. In 2016, Montefiore participated in the following: - Participated in all PRIDE events throughout NYC (Brooklyn, Queens, White Plains, Bronx, and Manhattan)

- Currently planning a KiKi Ball with Bronxworks
- Participated in the Latex Ball
- Participating in DOH plans for National Gay Men’s HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- Participating in the LCOA for National Latinx HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- Participated in Hetrick Martin Institute’s Talking Tea transgender support group
- Presented at the LGBTQ Task Force’s Creating Change Conference
- Presented at the LGBTQ Youth Summit sponsored by the Mayor’s Office and Hetrick Martin Institute
- Participated in Building Safer Spaces for LGBTQ Youth
- Member of the Bronx Borough President’s LGBTQ Task Force
- Participated in Get Tested Week 2016 at the Christopher Street Pier

In 2017 MMC looks to broaden its participation even further with the LGBTQ community

Montefiore will continue partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs) to assess the ongoing health needs of the Bronx LGBTQ community and identify gaps in care/delivery, and to provide specialty clinical services to the Bronx LGBTQ community. Partner CBOs include Destination Tomorrow, Bronx Defenders, Bronxworks, NY Harm Reduction Educators, and Community Healthcare Network (CHN) and Callen-Lorde Community Health Center (with whom Montefiore is developing Memoranda of Understanding).

Montefiore will increase outreach to affected communities. The Adolescent AIDS Program (AAP), Montefiore Medical Group (MMG) and Center for Positive Living/Infectious Diseases Clinic (CPL) will enhance and scale-up its outreach to MSM and Trans- populations to increase linkage to comprehensive and high quality primary care, HIV care and clinical prevention (e.g. PrEP).

Montefiore will increase outreach/care to uninsured LGBTQ community members. The various outreach specialists and navigators will be aware of the multiple Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) options for uninsured LGBTQ clients throughout the Bronx. We will also increase training/development opportunities for associates on LGBTQ that work in the FQHC sites.

Montefiore will build a LGBTQ website/portal to welcome community members into care, provide options for LGBTQ sensitive and competent care within the institution, as well as links to health and other external resources. This website will also promote external LGBTQ resources to our patients.

### **Cultural Competency Training**

According to the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Health Issues and Research Gaps and Opportunities at the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of The National Academies, one of the largest barriers to accessing quality health care for LGBTQ adults is a lack of providers who are knowledgeable about LGBTQ health needs. Similarly, the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) recognize the need to broaden education in the field of LGBTQ health. In a 2013 report, GLMA recommends professional development opportunities that raise awareness about LGBTQ discrimination and LGBTQ health disparities. Montefiore promotes LGBTQ health education and cultural competency trainings on multiple levels.

Cultural Competency training for parts of the institution has been launched in high traffic areas in 2016, and will expand to other areas in 2017. Frontline staff and managers have attended cultural competency training sessions sponsored by the Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA), which defines cultural competency and addresses disparities in the care of diverse populations, with an emphasis on the LGBTQ community.

Internal e-modules for LGBTQ Cultural Competency training will begin in 2017.

As a participant in The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Annual Healthcare Equality Index (HEI), Montefiore is offering free Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) training to its staff. Associates can choose from more than 50 different online, on-demand training options, including interactive eLearning courses and recorded webinars. Topics range from the basics of LGBTQ patient-centered care to specialized topics for clinicians.

Senior management has already completed HEI training, and this training has been promoted to associates on all levels, through Intranet promotion, email blasts, and departmental flyers.

### **Research**

In response to health disparities in the LGBTQ community, the Institute of Medicine has called for more extensive research to promote further understanding of LGBTQ health as well as develop interventions and programs to address these health disparities. Montefiore, along with the Albert Einstein College of Medicine has created an initiative in gender and sexual minority health research engages in research on the optimal ways to improve care for LGBTQ patients

and their families. Montefiore aims to increase LGBTQ participation in research initiatives and support new areas of research in LGBTQ health by acquiring additional NIH and other funding, and supporting and training students, medical residents, fellows in LGBTQ health research. Additionally, research activities will be informed by community priorities and ongoing community research consultations. Our vision is to build over time a nationally and internationally recognized center for research on LGBTQ health disparities and is being currently supported by multiple departments within the institution.

Montefiore will conduct research activities in 2016-17 on disparities and determinants of care and on developing evidence based models of linkage and retention in health care.

Research activities will be amalgamated into an inter-disciplinary Center for Gender and Sexual Minority Research to address determinants in resource limited settings and among racial/ethnic minority populations.

Transgender focus groups were held in September 2016 to assess community needs and the perception of Montefiore strengths and opportunities in the community, and to provide input into barriers to care in various clinical settings (e.g. primary care, surgery, specialty care, etc.) and obtain formative feedback on development of an ongoing Transgender community advisory board. Results from these focus groups will guide programmatic goals for increasing access to and quality of transgender care at Montefiore, and will guide the creation of a funded transgender community advisory board.

### **Culturally Competent Patient Care**

LGBTQ individuals encounter numerous barriers to care, including negative biases and hostile actions toward LGBTQ patients, provider gaps in knowledge about the health concerns facing the LGBTQ population, and inequitable hospital/clinic policies and practices. Montefiore believes that LGBTQ patients have the right to high quality care, free from abuse, harassment, and discrimination.

Montefiore will work with the billing departments to assure competent billing for transition-related health services. Clients will be given the full scope of options that their plans provide as the plans evolve their coverage. This will be addressed through ongoing training within multiple billing departments.

In 2016, Montefiore has initiated meetings on making EPIC more trans-capable and respectful, and to allow sexual orientation<sup>7</sup>/gender identity (SOGI) collection of data. The expectation is completion of any EPIC builds for this effort by 2017. This will include SOGI clinical data, as well as billing info and organ inventory and staff trainings for this module.

Increase PrEP population from under 75 in 2015 to over 300 by the end of 2017.

Increase transgender care settings from one to three by 2017, and to increase transgender population in Montefiore Medical Center to over 200 clients by 2017.

Bed policy has been amended to meet HEI recommendations in 2016.

Patient Bill of Rights has been amended to meet HEI recommendations in 2016.

Parent Bill of Rights for the Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM) will be amended to meet HEI recommendations in 2016.

Further surgical competence for gender affirming surgery will be developed with plans to offer chest surgery and gender-affirming facial procedures in 2017.

The Transgender Health Work Group (THWG) will write Montefiore Transgender Health Clinical Protocols for gender affirmation, hormone therapy, and surgical interventions.

The THWG has developed a transgender intranet page to enhance care within the institution.

## References

Institute of Medicine. *The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People. Building a Foundation for Better Understanding*. National Academy of Sciences, 2011

Montefiore Human Resources Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy VI-6

Montefiore Medical Center Patient Bill of Rights

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, “What is Cultural Competency?” <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=11> (Accessed September 23, 2016).

When Health Care Isn't Caring: Lambda Legal's Survey of Discrimination Against LGBT People and People with HIV. New York: Lambda Legal, 2010.