

#BeThere

# Connect with your providers. It can save a life.

**Veterans with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), or related identities** may face unique health challenges — including a higher risk for mental health issues and suicidal ideation than their non-LGBT counterparts. If you are a Veteran with an LGBT or related identity, making sure your health care provider knows your sexual orientation and gender identity can improve your access to comprehensive care. VA is dedicated to offering all Veterans high-quality care in a safe, respectful environment. Being open with your provider about your identity helps VA support your whole health.

VA is working to create an environment where Veterans with LGBT or related identities feel comfortable talking openly with providers about sexual orientation, gender identity, and mental and physical health challenges. Your provider should encourage you to share this information as part of standard protocol. But if you aren't asked, it's important that you tell your doctor about your identity so you can get the care that is right for you.

## Tell your provider.

VA's health care professionals have been trained to keep your information confidential, so it is always safe to share your sexual orientation and gender identity with your provider — even if you have not come out to family or friends. Here's a simple way to start the conversation:



**I want to have the best possible care, and I know that my sexual orientation and gender identity are important information for you to have. I want to let you know that ...**



You have the right to speak up if your provider doesn't use your preferred pronouns. Your provider wants you to be comfortable talking about LGBT health issues, so let them know the terms that you use and how you prefer to be addressed.

If you find that you are not comfortable speaking with your specific provider about sexual orientation or gender identity, or you feel as if the provider is uncomfortable with these topics, there are ways VA can help. Each VA facility has an LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator you can reach out to and who can help you find a culturally competent provider. In addition, most VA facilities have an LGBT Veteran webpage that details valuable health information and services. To find out what support and resources your facility offers, visit [www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VAFacilities.asp](http://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VAFacilities.asp).

For more information on talking to your provider,  
visit <https://maketheconnection.net/events/coming-out-health-care-provider>.

For mental health and other resources, visit [bit.ly/ConnectToVA](http://bit.ly/ConnectToVA).

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, text to **838255**, or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

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