



# Called to Care So That **All in the LGBTQ+ Community Have Access to Excellent Health Care**

Called to Care is deeply committed to accessible, quality health care for everyone. Everyone means everyone, inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity.



We know LGBTQ+ patients have long faced barriers to accessing high-quality health care, and we believe it's vital that California's health providers make it a high priority to provide welcoming, affirming and clinically excellent care for every LGBTQ+ patient.

The health-related challenges facing LGBTQ+ patients are clear and compelling. They are significantly more likely<sup>1</sup> than the general population to confront the disparities that underlie health inequity, such as housing and food insecurity, lack of health insurance coverage and regular access to primary care. Many, having faced less-than-welcoming or culturally insensitive care in the past, are understandably reluctant to seek out the treatment they need before their condition worsens. Many have been disproportionately impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. And many transgender individuals, in particular, have faced additional barriers to access to care.

## An Abiding Commitment to Caring for and About the LGBTQ+ Community

To help address these issues, Called to Care supports the approach of California's safety net health care providers—many of which are Catholic health care sites. For more than 165 years, California's Catholic health care providers have served all in need, guided by the founding principles of promoting human dignity, attending to the whole person, and caring for the poor and vulnerable. These providers are offering a welcoming care environment for LGBTQ+ patients by:

- Caring for LGBTQ+ patients guided by principles of service, compassion, respect and inclusivity. Providing staff training, arranging equal visitation for all types of families and striving for an LGBTQ+-friendly environment in all departments.
- Building primary and specialty care programs especially for LGBTQ+ patients to ensure they feel comfortable seeking out the care they may need. When patients need additional expertise or care, a smooth transition is ensured.
- Engaging with LGBTQ+ organizations to help meet the health and social needs of diverse communities by investing in community health organizations that provide direct services to LGBTQ+ people as well as providing training for their health care providers.

## Standing Up for LGBTQ+ Health

Catholic health providers ensure health care services are available and accessible for LGBTQ+ patients. Examples include:

- **Leading Care for AIDS Patients**—Catholic providers were among the first to publicly proclaim the need for compassionate care for AIDS patients—and provide it. When the crisis began in the early 1980s, Dignity Health opened San Francisco's first clinic to care for HIV/AIDS patients. It then founded the CARE Center at St. Mary Long Beach in 1986 to respond to the crisis. This commitment to HIV/AIDS patients continues today: The CARE Center is a Center of Excellence in providing PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) and PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) treatment services.

<sup>1</sup> Claire Gillespie, "6 Major Health Disparities Affecting the LGBTQ Community," *Health*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.health.com/mind-body/lgbtq-health-disparities>



Called to Care So That

## All in the LGBTQ+ Community Have Access to Excellent Health Care

- **Outstanding Transgender Care**—Dignity Health’s nationally recognized Gender Institute at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco provides a broad range of transgender health care procedures and services. Guided by diverse transgender and non-binary community members, the Institute also provides critically needed specialist training and organizes conferences and other opportunities to expand and deepen knowledge of transgender care in the Bay Area and beyond. With support from Providence, Napa Community Health Initiative has sponsored a pediatric provider continuing medical education series on caring for transgender children and their families through Napa Solano Medical Society.
- **Speaking Out Against Bullying**—Dignity Health and Providence were among the co-signers of a powerful statement prepared by the Tyler Clementi Foundation that declares, in part: “We take this opportunity to say to our LGBT friends, especially young people, that we stand with you and oppose any form of violence, bullying or harassment directed at you.”
- **A Long-Term Commitment to Inclusive Care**—All of Dignity Health’s California hospitals participated in the Human Rights Campaign’s 2021 Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) and were recognized for their commitment to inclusivity for LGBTQ+ patients and employees. The HEI has helped participants strengthen policies and practices, develop a process for continued improvement and expand connections to LGBTQ+ people and their families.
- **Providing Connections and Resources to LGBTQ+ Community-Level Groups**—Providence St Joseph Medical Center in Burbank helped fund an LGBTQ+ Mental Health Resource Center operated by the Burbank YMCA. Providence’s Southern California health equity initiative is funding two projects with the Long Beach LGBTQ+ Center to address access to care issues and advance care planning for LGBTQ+ adults. In both Napa and Sonoma, Providence funds the community-based organization (CBO) LGBTQ Connection, with a representative on the Napa Community Benefit Committee.
- **Providence Convenes Trans+ Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC)**—Providence engages with trans patients and their families to better support a holistic approach to health care for this community. As part of this effort, Providence has developed an educational curriculum for all caregivers and a robust clinically focused trans+ education course for clinicians.

“The staff really stepped up... the case managers, mental health providers, medical providers all reached out to their patients to ask if they needed food. Before we knew it, our 70 patients had increased to 150.”

**Tammy Basile**

Registered dietitian and Director of the food pantry at the Dignity Health CARE Center at St. Mary Medical Center in Long Beach, which has served HIV patients for over three decades.

“Providence has demonstrated keen sensitivity and responsiveness to addressing the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community through the formation of its Patient Family Advisory Committee. We’re grateful for the steps this health system is taking to offer the best care possible for the people we serve.”

**Carlos Torres, MPA**

Executive Director, Long Beach LGBTQ+ Center

### Share Your Story

Please share your story about how a Catholic-affiliated provider has made a difference for an LGBTQ+ friend, family member or yourself at <https://calledtocareforall.org/take-action/share-your-story/>.

### About Called to Care

Called to Care aims to improve the health of every person in our state by supporting strong connections between safety net health care providers and the organizations in our communities tackling our most urgent health and social challenges.

*Called to Care is a project of the Alliance of Catholic Health Care, together with members Dignity Health and Providence.*



### Connect With Us.

Connect with Called to Care to help build stronger ties between health care providers and community organizations to address California’s most pressing social challenges.

<https://calledtocareforall.org/register>