

## **Don't accept homophobia and heterosexism in health care providers**

Health care providers are members of the community and as such share a range of views which for some may get in the way of providing a GLBTI sensitive service. However discrimination in the provision of health care in Victoria is unlawful. If you are not happy with some aspect of your health care you are entitled to raise this with the provider and seek a solution. In this situation you may find it helpful to take someone you trust with you to support you and act as a witness if the inappropriate behaviour continues and you wish to make a complaint. You can leave a consultation at any point you choose if you are not comfortable or not being treated with respect.

If you wish to make a formal complaint you can do so through the Health Services Commission. To find out more about the process go to:  
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc/index.htm> or ring 8601 5200 or 1800 136 066

**Gay and Lesbian Switchboard  
9827 8544 or 1800 184 527  
provides telephone counselling if  
you wish to talk over the issues.**

## **Find out more about what is happening in Victoria to make the health care system more sensitive to our needs**

Since 2002 Victoria has had a Ministerial Advisory Committee on GLBTI Health to provide high level policy advice on creating positive change. Information about their work can be found at:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/macglh/>.

As part of this committee's work plan, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria is funded to improve and promote the health and well being of GLBTI people in Victoria by training health care providers and health organisations about GLBTI health needs and appropriate service delivery. GLHV also develops print resources for this work and maintain an on line information clearinghouse as a resource for health care providers, researchers and individuals to use in researching their own health issues.

# **Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria**

# **A Guide for interaction with health care providers**



GLBTI (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex) people are entitled to respectful, appropriate and well-informed health care and to complete confidentiality. They are entitled to discuss the details of their lives with health care providers without needing to self censor or to receive discriminatory treatment. Nevertheless, finding a GLBTI sensitive health care provider/ counsellor is the main reason people search our clearinghouse at [www.glhv.org.au](http://www.glhv.org.au). It is difficult to provide people with this information as there is currently no system in Victoria that accredits health care providers around this issue, but we do have some tips that might help.

### Check out the environment

You may be fortunate enough to happen upon a service that displays relevant posters and other health promotion material, or has gay community newspapers in the waiting room. This is usually a sign that service providers here will be able to meet your needs. However there is always a chance that not all providers at a service are on top of the issues and if you are confident to ask for someone who is GLBTI sensitive this may also help ensure you see the right person.

### Check out the ALSO Directory

The ALSO Foundation puts out an annual directory which lists GLBTI community businesses and services. The directory is published in hard copy and is also on line at [www.also.org.au](http://www.also.org.au). The ALSO Foundation does not “check out” these services or accredit them, but the fact that they have sought inclusion in the directory generally means that they are welcoming of GLBTI people. Other community organisations listed in the directory may also have local information about good providers.

### Use your friendship networks to gather information

Other people’s experiences are often the best and most relevant indicator of a good health care provider and in rural areas, where the choice is limited, this may be the best option. If you have information about a health care provider you have used and found to be good, pass it around your networks as well.

### Shop around

If you need urgent medical attention this is not an option, but if you are looking for someone who is going to care for your health and that of your family long term, you may need to have a few attempts at finding the person who works best with you. Remember that you do not need to disclose any information you wish to keep private and

that you can take time to “suss out” a health care provider before you disclose. GLHV has a health services audit on the clearinghouse [www.glhv.org.au](http://www.glhv.org.au) which you may be able to use as a checklist for a service you are trying out. You should also trust your instincts and not feel you need to make compromises or hide information to ensure you are treated respectfully.

### Advocate

This is not an option for everyone and it is certainly not a good idea if you are ill or distressed. Some people however, find that asking their local health service to become GLBTI culturally competent is a positive way of getting the kind of health care they need. In our work we have found that by far the majority of health care providers are not intentionally homophobic and heterosexist in their approach to clients but are likely to feel under-confident and unsure of what might be required. Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) has posters, brochures and a service audit available on line as a “kit” to assist you in this work. We also provide training for health services and can be contacted on 9285 5382 or [info@glhv.org.au](mailto:info@glhv.org.au)