

Updating the OASAS Client Data System to include Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity- Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is OASAS updating the Client Data System? Why do we need to ask about a client's sexual orientation/gender identity?

Asking questions about sexual orientation and gender identity is important because there are significant documented health disparities affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. While we know about some disparities, there remain wide gaps in research. Gathering sexual orientation and gender identity data in a standardized way will allow us to better understand LGBT health disparities, as well as to improve treatment outcomes for LGBT people.

2. What if the client doesn't want to answer?

These questions, along with all the other questions asked, are designed to capture client information to provide the best treatment and recovery services possible. Providers may worry LGBT people will be reluctant to disclose due to anti-LGBT stigma and prejudice. Some may not be comfortable asking these questions, or lack knowledge on how to elicit this information. This may be true, and as a result not all LGBT patients will disclose their sexual or gender identity. However, this should not prevent providers from asking such questions and trying to gather such data.

3. Where will this information go? What will it be used for?

Patients should also be assured that this information will be kept confidential. It may help put the patient at ease to preface these questions with a statement that these are questions you ask all patients, and that the information is important to helping you provide the best quality care. Most patients are forthcoming with information, particularly once they understand why they are being asked.

4. Our agency is welcoming to everyone, we don't treat people differently because of their sexual orientation/gender identity. Why would we need this information?

A provider's knowledge of a patient's sexual orientation and gender identity is essential to providing appropriate care. By capturing this information, agencies will be able to better develop a treatment plan that fits the client's needs.

5. Will we need to develop special services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people?

Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone is the responsibility for every OASAS provider, in order to create an optimal environment where people can recover from addiction. OASAS will be providing materials and resources on addressing the unique needs of LGBT people for those providers looking for additional information.

6. Will there be training available on the update for my staff?

Ongoing agency training should occur for all staff and include information on working with diverse populations. In 2014, the OASAS Learning and Development Unit is providing multiple sessions to ensure appropriate training opportunities exist for providers, and expect to continue to develop available resources for providers as this change is implemented. Please see "How to Gather Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Clinical Settings" by the Fenway Institute as a vital resource that could be distributed to providers.

http://thefenwayinstitute.org/documents/Policy_Brief_HowtoGather..._v3_01.09.12.pdf

7. Where do I go for more information?

You can learn more in the CDS Instructions and its appendices. For more information about the NYS Interagency LGBT Taskforce, and the multi-agency approach to updating NYS data systems, visit:

<http://www.governor.ny.gov/press/07232014Address-LGBT-Disparities>