

ASSESSING POTENTIAL REFERRALS

For LGBTQ cultural competency

When you are looking for a referral for a client who identifies as LGBTQ, here are three simple questions you can ask a potential referral to learn a lot of information about their level of competency and confidence in working with LGBTQ clients.

1. Has your agency ever worked with someone who identifies as LGBTQ? How did that go?

You might not be able to get honest much information from this question, but you will find out if they understand what “LGBTQ” means. If you are working with a transgender client, ask if they have worked with transgender clients before.

Other things to notice – how comfortable are they talking about LGBTQ identities? Do they use current terminology? Trip over the words? Use the right pronouns? The goal is not to expect perfection, but you’ll get a general sense of comfort.

2. When was the last time the staff at your agency were trained on LGBTQ cultural competency and best practices?

If they respond never or they aren’t sure, that is concerning. If they respond that it was within the past 3 or more years, that could also be concerning. LGBTQ terminology is a constantly shifting language. LGBTQ laws are also changing quickly, along with standards of care, diagnostic standards of gender dysphoria, and best practices.

If they respond that it was within the past year, that is great! You can also ask if it is a part of their new employee orientation and if they offer more advanced trainings beyond a 101 level for staff.

3. Does your agency include “sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression” in your non-discrimination and harassment policy?

This is a quick check to see if they have taken the time to update their policies to match current best practices. Most agencies have “sexual orientation” included already, but might not have “gender identity and expression”. Some agencies may have “sex” or “gender” listed, but this specific language talks more specifically about protections of gender identity as opposed to biological sex. “Gender expression” provides protection for anyone who does not fit into our society’s expectations of what men and women are *supposed* to look or dress like.

If you’re working with a client who identifies as transgender, it is also a good idea to ask about their policies regarding placement based on gender, practices for searches, availability of gender neutral bathrooms, and whether their intake forms recognize more than two genders.