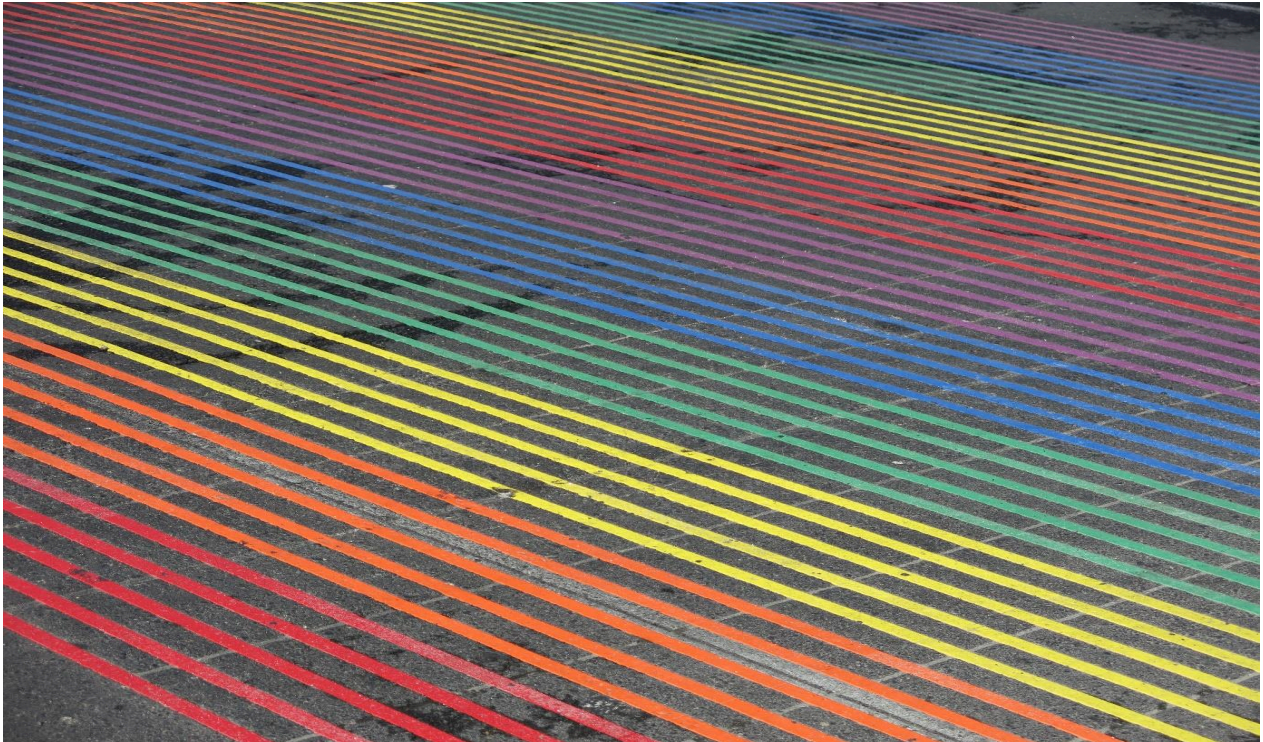




Enhancing Care for LGBTQ+ Clients

Creating an explicitly welcome environment for all patients and employees



“
Plain and simple; we believe in the dignity of all people. Until
everyone is treated equally, our work is not done.”

- *Stu Koman, President & CEO, Walden Behavioral Care*

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Introduction



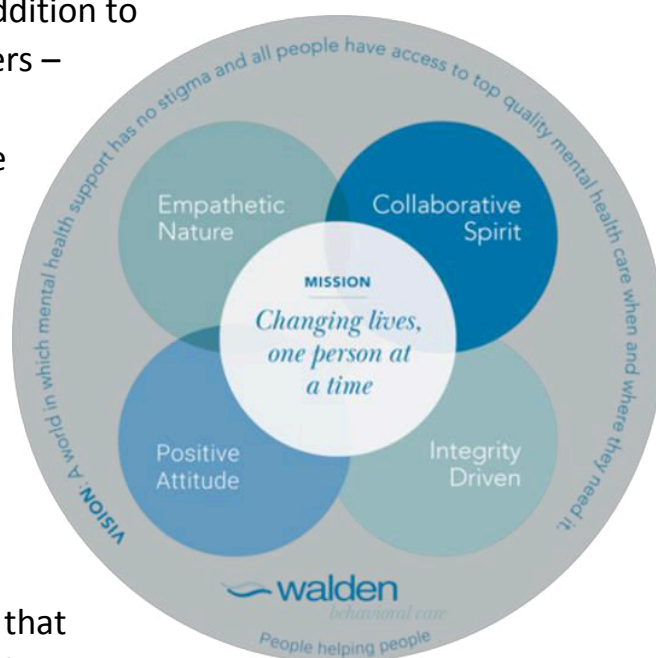
Imagine living in a world where even your healthcare provider's office feels unsafe. Imagine being called by the wrong name, having less access to care because of who you love, or experiencing discrimination for having an identity that isn't universally 'accepted.' This is the unfortunate reality for many LGBTQ-identified individuals.

Here at Walden Behavioral Care, we understand the importance of explicit welcomes, inclusive care, and affirming healing environments. Our mission, to change lives one person at a time, fuels our commitment to alleviating disparities for the LGBTQ+ community. Our goal is to lead the way in providing treatment spaces that feel welcoming to all people. We are hopeful that in continuing to educate, raise awareness, and advocate, that we will be able to live in a world where equality is the standard. Nobody should have to struggle alone, and everyone should have the opportunity to recover.

This document serves to highlight our commitment to respectfully serving the LGBTQ+ community and how we plan to ensure our adherence.

Executive Summary

LGBTQ+ individuals continue to face many barriers when it comes to receiving inclusive medical and psychological care in an environment that feels safe and welcoming. Unique psychosocial stressors, in addition to experiences of discrimination – even by providers – put the LGBTQ+ community at a higher risk of developing eating disorders, and at a lower rate of receiving treatment. Individuals within the LGBTQ+ community diagnosed with eating disorders are also at a higher risk than the general population for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. The Trevor Project found that more than 50% of LGBTQ youths who participated in a national survey had been diagnosed with an eating disorder..



Here at Walden, we are committed to ensuring that all people in our care receive the same, top-quality treatment. To achieve this, we formed an LGBTQ+ Task Force comprised of a diverse group of dedicated professionals who are committed to increasing awareness around LGBTQ+ issues. The Task Force has implemented cultural shifts, including language audits, system-wide mandatory LGBTQ+ trainings, non-discriminatory policies, and extensive community involvement.

To alleviate healthcare disparities among the LGBTQ+ population, the Task Force has identified a **strategic plan** focusing on the following key areas:

- **Explicitly Welcoming Environments**
- **Community-Building** *for employees and patients*
- **Client-Centered Care**
- **Training and Accountability**

The Importance of LGBTQ+ Accessible Care

Individuals within the LGBTQ+ community may face health disparities, discrimination, denial of civil and human rights, harassment, and rejection within their families. It's imperative for adolescents and adults struggling with their mental health to have access to quality services and support systems.

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- In a national study, **40%** of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt. **92%** of these individuals reported having attempted suicide before the age of 25.
 - LGB youth are almost **five** times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth.
 - In 2018, HRC reported at least **26** deaths of transgender people in the U.S. due to fatal violence
 - In a survey conducted by HRC, **42%** of LGBT youth say the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBT people (2016)
 - **4 in 10** LGBT youth say the community in which they live in is not accepting of LGBT people.
 - **77%** of LGBTQ youth report receiving unwanted sexual comments, jokes, and gestures in the past year (2018)
-

Explicitly Welcoming Environment

Walden practices our commitment to eliminating financial, structural, and environmental barriers that might otherwise prevent LGBTQ+ people from accessing trustworthy care through:

- Acceptance of most major insurance plans
- Strategic use of financially supportive community partnerships
- Implementation of the Healthcare Equality Index (HEI)-compliant documents including, but not limited to:
 - An LGBTQ+ inclusive Patient Bill of Rights
 - Bed, bathroom and non-discrimination Policies
 - Electronic Medical Record modifications
- Ongoing staff trainings reviewing best practices and unique considerations of LGBTQ+ clinical and medical care
- The use of all-gender bathroom signs in staff and client spaces
- Ensuring that marketing materials, signage, and partnerships are inclusive, representative, accessible and welcoming to LGBTQ+ people
- Exit satisfaction surveys that include questions specific to the quality of care that LGBTQ+ patients receive here at Walden.



Community Building



Walden recognizes the need for extended awareness and education outside the walls of treatment so that people in recovery have access to LGBTQ+ specific support upon discharge. We work hard to broaden our community network through collaboration with partners, providers, schools, and community centers by:

- *Hosting* annual round tables for community leaders
- *Conducting* focus groups for GSM individuals that have utilized Walden's system of care
- *Creating* a community training exchange program
- *Connecting* LGBTQ+ patients with caring, compassionate and skillful providers
- *Participating* in and *supporting* LGBTQ+ events, such as Pride, Coming Out Day, and Transgender Day of Remembrance
- *Dedicating* free time to promote and ensure the organization's adherence to *non-discriminatory* policies.



Client-Centered Care

Walden is committed to being a Leader that provides relevant, intersectional, evidence-based, and tailored clinical and medical care to our patients and their loved ones. We practice this commitment by

- *Adapting* the LGBTQ+ training for the on-boarding process
- *Developing* new programs and trainings that support diversity and inclusion in the workplace at each different level of care for staff and clients alike
- *Establishing* a system-wide feedback loop so that LGBTQ+ clients have a way of providing feedback and WBC has a way for implementing adaptations
- *Earning* and *maintaining* HEI Status
- *Including* LGBTQ+ books in resource lists provided to clients and their loved ones



Our 'How to be an Ally' Infographic

Training and Accountability

Walden leads diversity and inclusion efforts in the field, in the workplace, and each Walden location by

- *Explicit* education for all employees (*onboarding and annually for current employees*)
- *Training* required within EHR, patient phone screenings, insurance verifications, and policy procedures
- *Supporting* the professional development of LGBTQ+ staff and interns
- *Supporting* LGBTQ+ research
- *Presenting* at conferences
- *Celebrating* and *sponsoring* LGBTQ+ events
- *Hosting* Grand-Round Presentations specific to the clinical and medical needs of LGBTQ+ clients
- *Industry* Leadership providing education to collaborating organizations to develop more inclusive care



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