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## **Walden Behavioral Care earns “*LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader*” Designation in Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s 2020 Healthcare Equality Index**

*Walden Behavioral Care becomes the only dedicated eating disorder treatment company nationwide to earn the designation*

**BOSTON, MA** -- Today, Walden Behavioral Care announced their “LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC). The designation was awarded in the 13th edition of HRC’s [Healthcare Equality Index \(HEI\)](#), released today. A record 765 healthcare facilities actively participated in the HEI 2020 survey. Walden Behavioral Care is the only dedicated eating disorder treatment company nationwide to earn this designation.

People who identify as LGBTQ are disproportionately affected by eating disorders. In a survey consisting of over 1,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13-24 conducted by the Trevor Project and the National Association for Eating Disorders (NEDA):

- 54% reported an eating disorder diagnosis
- 71% of transgender individuals who identified as straight reported having an eating disorder - with anorexia being the highest reported
- 58% of respondents diagnosed with an eating disorder have also considered suicide

“It is paramount that as a company, we provide a welcoming environment for all of our employees and patients. Our goal is to meet people where they are with representation, a kind heart, and an explicitly welcoming and engaging spirit. To do so requires education, training, and assurance at every touchpoint that reinforces this mandate. That is why I am so proud that Walden earned the “LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation” said **Dr. Stuart Koman, President and CEO of Walden Behavioral Care**. “There is great power in what a group of committed individuals can accomplish. This milestone is one important step but certainly not the last to assure we provide equality, diversity, and representation for all who work at Walden or seek treatment here.”

“From the previously unimaginable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the horrific incidents of racial violence targeting the Black community, the events of the past year have brought about so much pain and uncertainty. Yet, even during this moment of profound unrest, we are seeing more of our humanity and resilience come to life. For me, nowhere is that more true than through the tireless dedication of our healthcare providers and the intrepid support and administrative staff members by their sides that show up every day to ensure this life-saving work continues,” said **HRC President Alphonso David**. “The healthcare facilities participating in the HRC Foundation’s Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) are not only on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are also making it clear from their participation in the HEI that they stand on the side of fairness and are committed to providing inclusive care to their LGBTQ patients. In addition, many have made strong statements on racial justice and equity and are engaging in

efforts to address racial inequities in their institutions and their communities. We commend all of the HEI participants for their commitment to providing inclusive care for all.”

Every year, HRC recognizes the healthcare facilities that participate in the HEI for their dedication and commitment to LGBTQ inclusion. HRC also extends its deepest gratitude to these facilities for their courageous fight against COVID-19 and their commitment to addressing racism and injustice. As the final HEI surveys were submitted in March, healthcare facilities were kicking into overdrive to meet the challenges of COVID-19. Many faced a lack of equipment, staffing shortages and surging demand. Two months later, as the fight against COVID-19 continued, the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by police officers thrust America’s structural racism into the spotlight. HEI participants issued strong statements on racial justice and equity, participated in White Coats for Black Lives demonstrations and announced new programs to address racial inequities in their institutions and their communities.

“I have appreciated being part of a company that has listened to the employees and taken the time to learn from patients who have shared their experiences. We began making adjustments and changes based on information shared years ago. Walden understands that what is right is simply good business,” said **Jessie Batchelder, LICSW, Walden’s Director of Utilization Management**. “This ability to question and learn is what differentiates Walden. The number of committed allies has made a big difference here too.”

“As employees, and for our patients, feeling ‘safe’ is not something we can take for granted. We need to actively listen and learn continuously. This is why so many LGBTQ individuals are referred to Walden and seek us out,” said **Emily Slager, LMHC, Walden’s Assistant Vice President of Clinical Operations**. “It feels good deep inside to know how much leadership cares about this.”

In the 2020 report, an impressive 495 facilities earned HRC’s “*LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader*” designation, receiving the maximum score in each section and earning an overall score of 100. Another 193 facilities earned the “*Top Performer*” designation for scoring from 80 to 95 points. With 90% of participating facilities scoring 80 points or more, healthcare facilities are demonstrating concretely that they are going beyond the basics when it comes to adopting policies and practices in LGBTQ care.

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### **About Walden Behavioral Care**

Walden Behavioral Care is a leading mental healthcare system specializing in the treatment of eating disorders. Serving children, teens and adults of all genders and eating disorder diagnoses, we are one of the nation’s only providers to offer a full continuum of care. Since 2003, our promise to you has remained the same: to provide top-quality, evidence-based care that is proven to support lasting recovery. Over the past 17 years, we are proud to have helped more than 22,000 individuals in their recovery journeys. With more than 450 dedicated professionals in locations across Connecticut, Massachusetts and Georgia, we are committed to helping you get the eating disorder support you need and deserve. For more information, please visit [www.waldeneatingdisorders.com](http://www.waldeneatingdisorders.com)

### **About The Human Rights Campaign Foundation**

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is the education arm of America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.