



“We Serve All Who Serve”: Recognizing LGBT Veterans and Their Caregivers Handout

Know Your Rights / Protect Your Rights - To be a good advocate you need to be aware of your rights. Protect yourself by learning about your rights and the rights of your Veteran. Below are some options you can reach out to in order to stay informed.

- VA Office of Diversity LGBT home page provides a wealth of information and resources at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/lgbt.aspx>.
- There are federal laws related to LGBT rights. Each state also has their own laws. It is important to know which rights are covered by the federal government or by the state. Each state does not protect your rights the same. Know your legal rights regarding marriage, housing, employment, healthcare, and benefits.
- To ensure that your rights and your wishes are known complete the documents to protect yourself. Complete an Advance Directive, Health Care Proxy, and Financial Power of Attorney. Complete a release of information to allow your doctors to share information with loved ones.
- The VA honors all types of legal Advance Directives. The Social Worker connected to the healthcare team can help you complete a VA Advance Directive. For further information: http://www.va.gov/geriatrics/Guide/LongTermCare/advance_Care_Planning.asp
If you are not a Veteran, or receive care outside of the VA, you can complete community Advanced Directives. For further information: caringinfo@nhpco.org
- Any Hospital that receives Medicare / Medicaid funds must ensure Advance Directives of LGBT patients are respected. The patient defines who is family and who can visit.
- VA provides benefits to eligible same sex married couples no matter which state they reside. Potential benefits include Veteran pensions, home loans backed by the VA, rights to burial, survivors and Veteran group life insurance, survivor benefits and pensions, G.I. Bill education, and disability compensation. Visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/lgbt.aspx> to learn more.



Connect to Support

- Seek support from the VA Caregiver Support line at 1-855-260-3274.
- Find caregiving information at the VA Caregiver Web site at <http://www.caregiver.va.gov/>
- To locate LGBT affirming health providers and home care agencies consult with:
 - Friends and family
 - LGBT community organizations
 - Local HIV/AIDS service providers who are experienced with caring for LGBT patients
 - Reach out to a Long-Term Care Ombudsman for issues related to community long-term care or nursing home issues. To connect: https://theconsumervoice.org/get_help
- Seek support
 - Maintain family of choice and family of origin relationships
 - Build supports with those who have shared interests
 - Engage in LGBT events and activities
 - Seek counselling as needed
 - Reach out to spiritual leaders or spiritual communities
 - Connect with Caregiver support groups locally or online
 - Contact the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging www.lgbtagingcenter.org

Remember you are not alone. The VA and the VA Caregiver Support line is deeply committed to promoting an inclusive, welcoming, patient-centered care environment for all LGBT Veterans and their families.