Making Sure That LGBTQ People Get Counted in COVID-19 Data

LGBTQ health centers pool their data for the We Count Collaborative to track the COVID-19 experiences of queer people.

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Pride month may be coming to a close, but LGBTQ health and community centers work year-round for their clients. In fact, many are collaborating in a new nationwide effort to analyze the COVID-19 experiences of LGBTQ people, a population known to face challenges in health equity.

The We Count Collaborative: Impacts of COVID-19 on LGBTQ Health research project involves five federally qualified health centers that focus on LGBTQ communities, including many people living with HIV. These health centers will pool their data to help give researchers and advocates a better idea of how the pandemic has been affecting LGBTQ people.

The five participating health centers include:

- Callen-Lorde Community Health Center in New York City
- CrescentCare in New Orleans
- Howard Brown Health in Chicago
- Los Angeles LGBT Center
- Whitman-Walker Institute in Washington, DC

The participating health centers are working with The PRIDE Study, which, according to a press release from the Los Angeles LGBT Center, is the first large-scale, long-term national health study of LGBTQ people. The PRIDE Study is based out of Standford Medicine in California.

“Collecting information on how LGBTQ people are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic helps us to understand how overlapping social stigmas and discrimination can cause illness among people who are often marginalized, and how public health policies can intervene to stop the spread of disease,” said Don Blanchon, CEO at Whitman-Walker Health System, in the press release.

It’s already known that LGBTQ people have experienced more severe COVID-19 outcomes. For a look at why, see “3 Reasons COVID-19 Poses a Higher Risk for the LGBTQ Population” from March 2020. The We Count project will continue to shine a light on how, exactly, sexual minorities are affected by the pandemic.

You can read findings from the collaborative as they become available; they’ll be posted on a special Whitman-Walker We Count webpage.

In other news, LGBTQ community centers across the nation are participating in a study to enroll 2,000 gay and bisexual men in research that could change the eligibility of these men to donate blood. Under current guidelines from the Food and Drug Administration, they must be celibate for three months in order to donate blood. For details on the research, see the POZ article “This Study Might Allow More Gay and Bi Men to Donate Blood.”

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