2011 LGBT Health Awareness Week

March 29, 2011 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

The 9th annual LGBT Health Awareness Week runs from March 28 to April 1, 2011. The National Coalition for LGBT Health organizes the event.

“Come Out for Health” is this year’s theme, encouraging lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to talk openly with health care providers and policy makers.

In a guest blog for The Bilerico Project, Hutson Inniss, executive director of the National Coalition for LGBT Health, writes:

LGBT people are significantly more likely to be uninsured then the general population. In the United States, the ratio of uninsured gays and lesbians to heterosexuals is 2 to 1. For transgender people the uninsured rates are even higher: in a recent New York state study, 21% of transgender people reported having no health insurance at all.

The lack of insurance is a severe barrier to accessing necessary care: 39% of the GLB community delayed diagnostic or treatment services because of a lack of insurance, versus 25% of heterosexual men and women. Fear of discrimination from healthcare

providers plays a significant role: 16% of lesbians and 15% of the larger GLB community said they delayed seeking care because of a fear of discrimination, versus only 3% of heterosexuals.

To coincide with the commemoration of this event, the National Coalition for LGBT Health and the Center for American Progress released a report exploring what health care reform means for LGBT people.

Here's an excerpt:

We investigate four major areas where efforts by LGBT advocates and their allies in each state will be key to ensuring that the new health law delivers the largest possible positive results for the LGBT community when the law is fully implemented by 2014. Specifically, these areas are:

- *Achieving comprehensive nondiscrimination protections in health insurance exchanges*
- *Establishing LGBT-inclusive data collection policies*
- *Recognizing and including LGBT families in all health reform activities*
- *Supporting community-based health interventions that are LGBT-inclusive*

In each of these four areas we include recommendations for federal officials and state governments. Briefly, those recommendations include:

- *Establish comprehensive and LGBT-inclusive nondiscrimination policies and practices in health insurance exchanges*
- *Improve our knowledge base on LGBT health disparities, by including sexual orientation and gender identity demographic questions in federal health surveys*
- *Recognize and include gay and transgender families in the new health law, by making sure that definitions of family are not solely based upon marriage and adoption laws that automatically exclude LGBT families*
- *Create community-based healthcare interventions that are responsive to the needs of gay and transgender people*

To read more about the report and download a copy, click here.

For more information and materials about the event, click here.

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