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MHRB: How LGBTQ communities can find mental health care during COVID-19

SPRINGFIELD, OH (July 2, 2020) – Pride Month wasn't cancelled, and although it's over, Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) wants the local LGBTQ community to know that culturally competent mental health and substance use support providers are available to them now and year round.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Pride Month is celebrated annually each June to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising, a key event in establishing LGBTQ civil rights. This year marks the event's fiftieth anniversary, but many traditional Pride Month celebrations have been postponed or canceled due to COVID-19 public safety concerns. Additionally, LGBTQ populations nationally continue to die by higher rates of suicide and have higher rates of substance use disorders. Brain diseases, which are highly treatable, occur when a person's biological makeup, coping strategies, personality factors, and experiences interact. Such experiences for this population are likely to involve social stigma, bullying, lack of support networks, among other concerns.

“There's a lot of talk during Pride Month about the numbers – how many LGBTQ people experience mental health concerns and live with substance use, and how those numbers are higher than the national average. Due to recent tragedies in the LGBTQ community, and our society at large, such as the rollback of protections in healthcare and the recent death of Riah Milton, there's a risk those numbers will only increase as people are isolated from their normal support network,” said Dr. Greta Mayer, CEO of MHRB. “We want to ensure that the people who are living these experiences know how and where to find help because to us, they are more than just a statistic.”

MHRB provides pathways to care for everybody and every family in its three-county region and facilitates the delivery of quality care, which includes culturally competent care providers and specialists to meet the needs of marginalized communities. However, finding the right care provider can be a particularly fraught process for individuals who identify as LGBTQ due to longstanding societal stigma, and the lack of education and awareness of resources.

Mayer offers these tips for LGBTQ individuals, allies and loved ones who are seeking care:

1. **Start with a Google or directory search.**

Finding help can be as simple as searching “LGBTQ therapists near me.” Many



Pathways for everybody, every family.

mainstream databases, such as PsychologyToday.com and HelpPro.com, list care providers by specialty. LGBTQ-specific directories include The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association’s Provider Directory (https://glmainpak.networkats.com/members_online_new/members/dir_provider.asp) and National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network (<https://www.nqttcn.com/directory>). And, all of the care providers listed on MHRB’s website (www.mhrb.org) offer LGBT support.

2. Look at client focus and specialties for the right fit.

Like every individual, every therapist is unique in their experiences and expertise. Narrowing down the selection by the concerns that matter most to you will help ensure you get the help you need. you will know sooner rather than later if the client-therapist fit is not right for you. Share your concerns and feel empowered to find a new provider.

3. Start with a phone call.

It is a common practice for therapists to do a 15-20 minute phone interview with new clients to see if they would be a good fit. This is your chance to ask questions about information you couldn’t find online, such as insurance coverage and experience with your specific concerns, or anything you’re curious about.

4. Explore other types of activities and services outside of therapy sessions.

Maybe starting one-on-one with a therapist is intimidating or not covered by your insurance plan. Ask if your therapist runs group therapy sessions for specific communities or issues, or if they know any that might be relevant for you. Consult a trusted friend or resource for recommendations.

5. Online-only is always an option.

Depending on your area, you may not be able to find an LGBT-specialized therapist nearby. You still have options – many therapists nationally offer distance therapy through phone calls or online video support.

For anyone experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, immediate support is available:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-8255 (online chat available at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>)
- Crisis Text Line: Text 4HOPE to 741-741
- The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline: (888) 843-4564
- The GLBT National Youth Talkline (youth serving youth through age 25): (800) 246-7743
- The Trevor Project (for young people): (866)-488-7386 or text START to 678-678

“Now more than ever, it’s important that our LGBTQ community members hear us loud and clear: You are not alone,” said Mayer. “We are here for you, to help you stay mentally and physically well, and to offer our support during difficult times.”

For more information about mental health and substance use resources in Clark, Greene and Madison counties, please visit the MHRB website at www.mhrb.org.



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ABOUT MHRB

Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) assists partners, stakeholders, residents, and anyone at risk of mental health issues or substance use concerns in our three-county area, providing pathways to mental health and addiction services. In collaboration with more than 20 care providers, the board advocates for the mental health needs and facilitates delivery of quality care for all ages, regardless of income or ability to pay.

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