



SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ YOUTH THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE CARE:

FINDING AN AFFIRMATIVE THERAPIST



a checklist to support LGBTQ+ youth in finding affirmative mental health care

How to use this tool:

This list is for you, as an LGBTQ+ youth, to help you find affirmative mental health care and aims to support your search by offering key questions and considerations. You can use this list as it is or as a starting point.

At first assessment, does your therapist...



- Ask about your gender identity and sexual orientation?
 - Do the consent and confidentiality forms offer a range of identities?
- Ask for your **chosen name** and **pronouns** on their forms and during the interview?
 - Have they asked you about **where** and **when** it's **safe** to use your chosen name and pronouns?
 - Do they use your chosen names and pronouns?
- Ask you whether it's okay to involve your **parents/caregivers**?
- Have awareness of LGBTQ+ organizations?
 - Are they able to make referrals to queer specific resources and organizations?

Notice/check out...

- The **physical space**:
 - Do you see LGBTQ+ positive signs?
- Their **communications/on the website**:
 - Do they identify their **own pronouns**?



Safety & Privacy

- Do you have a say in who will have **access** to your information?
- Sometimes therapists work in teams to get ideas about how to best serve you in therapy. Can you ask about this process and how your **confidentiality** will be kept?
- Feel comfortable asking about your safety?



Does your therapist...

- Have the right credentials (registered/licensed, education, and training)? Remember, you have the right to ask the therapist about their background and experience.
 - Ask how many years they have been a clinical therapist? How many LGBTQ+ clients have they worked with and for how long?
 - When did they finish their training?
 - Who do they work with to get clinical supervision? If they are right out of school and do not have supervision, this therapist may not have enough real experience to help you. Ethically, therapists should have at least two years of clinical experience after their degree before they open a private practice.
 - Experience working with LGBTQ+ youth?
 - Do you have to teach them about LGBTQ+ issues?
 - Do their answers seem like they're **willing to learn**?
- Seem to **understand the history** and **impact of LGBTQ+ discrimination** and human rights issues?
- Understand the difference between **gender identity** and **sexual orientation**?
- Talk about either staying or coming out of "the closet"? You should not be pressured to come out to anyone.
- Understand all your identities (i.e., gender, sexuality, race, ability) and how they **fit together**?
- Seem open to feedback?
- Make you feel heard and validated?
- Help you...
 - Advocate** for your needs?
 - Have** difficult conversations?
 - Navigate** your various spaces (home, school, sports, etc.)?
- How committed is the therapist to you?
 - Do they **follow-up** if they haven't seen you in a while?
 - Do you feel like you're being well cared for or do you feel like just a number?
 - Do you feel like you have **control and agency**? Are your needs getting met?



This list was compiled by AFFIRM group therapy facilitators who identify as members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and are informed by their extensive experience providing therapy to queer clients and facilitating AFFIRM groups. For more information, visit projectyouthaffirm.org.