Promoting Health Equity and Patient- and Family-Centered Care: Meeting the Health Care Needs of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community

PROJECT SUMMARY

In an effort to promote equitable and patient- and family-centered care, The Joint Commission, with funding from The California Endowment, will convene a one-day stakeholder meeting to discuss healthcare issues and disparities experienced within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community.

The Joint Commission’s vision is that all people always experience the safest, highest quality, best-value health care across all settings. The Joint Commission takes pride in taking a leadership role to promote health equity through its mission and vision, accreditation activities, and research projects. One area of equitable care that has received increased attention in recent years is disparities among sexual minorities. Research has shown that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) individuals and families experience disparities not only in the prevalence of certain physical and mental health conditions, but also disparities in care in terms of lack of awareness and insensitivity to the unique needs of these populations. In order to raise awareness of these disparities, several organizations have made recommendations, yet many hospitals are still struggling to implement them. As a well-known entity within the health care field, The Joint Commission can play a key role in continuing to move the field forward toward more equitable and patient- and family-centered care.

The Joint Commission will convene stakeholders for a one-day meeting to engage in an important dialogue around the health care needs and concerns of the LGBT community. We believe this dialogue and convening can help refine and identify promising practices that hospitals can use to better meet the needs of LGBT patients and their families. The convening will focus around four topic areas:

1. **Policy Issues**: nondiscrimination policies, visitation policies, and decision-making policies, for both same-sex partners and for same sex parents;

2. **Education for Providers**: specific health care needs of LGBT patients, effective communication strategies, intimidating behaviors;

3. **Education for Patients and the LGBT community**: disclosure, specific health concerns, patient and family engagement and community outreach;

4. **Creating a Culture of Safety**: creating and providing a welcoming environment of patient- and family centered care for LGBT patients and their families.

The project team will use the dialogue and recommendations from the convening to produce a white paper or field guide that can assist hospitals in meeting the health care needs of the LGBT community. It is anticipated that this will be available for download from The Joint Commission’s website.

*This is a project of the Joint Commission’s Division of Quality Measurement and Research, funded by The California Endowment. For more information, please contact project staff at lgbt@jointcommission.org.*