

# MISSISSIPPI COLLABORATIVE FOR INCLUSIVE HEALTH CARE

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The **Mississippi Collaborative for Inclusive Health Care** was formed to ensure meaningful access and engagement in care for many who have been invisible to the health care system and experienced stigma and discrimination when seeking or receiving care and services across the state. The particular focus will be on the health needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT), a group which has been shown to experience significant health disparities.

Notable among these disparities are high rates of HIV and AIDS, tobacco use, sexually transmitted infections, alcohol and substance abuse, depression and low rates of routine recommended preventive care. Despite advances in acceptance, for many, simple access to routine primary care is difficult in light of a lack of culturally responsive and affirmative providers.

Succeeding in improving access to inclusive care will mean helping providers and frontline staff in health clinics, community health centers, and hospitals understand the mosaic that presents a true picture of LGBT people and recognizes their needs for quality care. At the outset, if we are to make progress, it must be clear that LGBT people are not a homogeneous group, but that they live at the intersection of their sexual orientation and gender identity and a range of factors including race, ethnicity, poverty, homelessness and language which impact how they think of themselves, and how others may perceive them.

The collaborative is an extension of programs which have already been initiated by a number of groups in the state. We are bringing together our unique strengths to build a strong continuum of care for all. Initial projects will work with core groups of interested health centers and county health clinics that recognize that the health of many depends on the outcomes of this effort. For example, if people at risk for HIV, or in need of support for other health issues feel they are not welcome, they will not seek preventive or care services in community health centers or county health clinics. We will also be working with clinicians in practice across the state. Ultimately it will also be important to do more community education in parallel with our work with health care organizations and individual working in health care so that educated consumers will be more aware of issues of concern and advocate for their needs.

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**Collaborative Members:** Mississippi State Department of Health | Mississippi Primary Health Care Association | University of Mississippi Medical Center: Delta Region AETC-MS; Division of Infectious Diseases; Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities | The National LGBT Health Education Center at The Fenway Institute | My Brother's Keeper Inc. *Member List Last Updated 11/4/14*