



# HEALTHY CHICAGO LGBT COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN



March 2012



City of Chicago  
Mayor Rahm Emanuel



Chicago Department of Public Health  
Bechara Choucair, M.D., Commissioner

# HEALTHY CHICAGO

TRANSFORMING THE HEALTH OF OUR CITY

## Message From The Mayor

Dear Fellow Chicagoans,

Chicago is the best place in the country to start a business, create quality jobs, and to raise a family. A key part in ensuring Chicago continues to thrive as we move forward is to make our city a healthy place to live and grow. This was the goal of *Healthy Chicago*, the city's first public health agenda that we unveiled last year, and the comprehensive action plan here before you brings us closer to this goal.

Chicago's strength is in the diversity of its communities, and all Chicagoans should have access to the care and information they need to live healthy lives and contribute fully to the vibrancy of our city. That is why we have developed a comprehensive action plan to address the specific health needs in the LGBT community.

Development of this Plan was led by the Chicago Department of Public Health, in conjunction with partners and Chicagoans invested in the health of the LGBT community in our city. The plan's success is not measured by an announcement, however; it is measured by our ability to meet these goals, engage the community, and expand access to vital resources needed to lead a healthy life in Chicago.

I commend Commissioner Bechara Choucair and his team for their work on this plan and I invite you to join us in making Chicago a healthier city for all.



Rahm Emanuel

Mayor, City of Chicago



# HEALTHY CHICAGO

TRANSFORMING THE HEALTH OF OUR CITY

## Message From The Commissioner

Dear Friends,

The LGBT Community Action Plan serves as a road map to address the health needs of Chicago's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community (LGBT). It is also a supplement to *Healthy Chicago*, the City of Chicago's public health agenda that identifies 12 priority areas for action including tobacco use, obesity, violence prevention and access to care.

The Community Action Plan was put together with the help of community based organizations, health providers, partners and stakeholders who have the same dedication that the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) does to the overall health of our city with a keen understanding of the health challenges faced in the LGBT community.

The Plan outlines strategic ways to address disparities in health status and health care access in the LGBT community. Together, we can achieve these goals making Chicago a healthier city for residents in every neighborhood.



Bechara Choucair, M.D.

Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health



# LGBT Community Action Plan

## OVERVIEW

Chicago's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community is distinguished by its diversity – age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status as well as its sexual orientations and gender identities. While many of the health issues facing this community are the same as those in the main stream population, there is strong evidence that LGBT communities experience disparities in health status and healthcare access due to their unique minority status and other factors. Multiple studies have found heightened prevalence of obesity among lesbian women of color;<sup>i,ii</sup> disproportionately high tobacco use in the community;<sup>iii</sup> LGBT students, and especially gender variant students, suffering disproportionately from school bullying;<sup>iv</sup> lesbians at greater risk for some forms of cancer than their heterosexual counterparts<sup>v</sup>; and men who have sex with men disproportionately impacted by HIV.<sup>vi</sup> Health and access disparities are even further accentuated within LGBT communities of color.

Although there are many descriptive and scientifically accurate studies about some health issues impacting the LGBT community, there is still a lack of comprehensive health information about the LGBT community. Without this comprehensive information on patient sexual orientation and gender identity, local and national health agendas will be incomplete and have limited capacity to positively impact public health.

There is an urgent need for additional research and information sharing about the LGBT community.<sup>vii</sup>

Healthy Chicago strategies for the LGBT community must first build on the strengths of the community. These strengths include resiliency in the face of ongoing life stress, an ability to form support structures of acquaintance, a sense of community, and a cohort of community members dedicated to the health of all. These efforts to create a healthy LGBT community must be supported by culturally competent providers, a sufficient knowledge of health issues from scientifically accurate sources, and by culturally sensitive health delivery systems available to help when needed.



# LGBT Community Action Plan

## STRATEGIES

The Healthy Chicago strategies for the LGBT community were developed in conjunction with community and City leaders, community-based organizations and providers. The strategies draw on the resources of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), other City resources, the expertise of community provider partners and the commitment of concerned LGBT residents and allies of the LGBT community.

- ➔ Promote collection of sexual orientation data in electronic medical records prior to the Affordable Care Act mandated date of 2014, and encourage collection of gender identity data. (*Public Health Infrastructure*)
- ➔ Convene and institutionalize a group of researchers who focus on LGBT health for the purpose of sharing findings, informing service delivery, and prompting new LGBT health research. (*Public Health Infrastructure*)
- ➔ Work with the Chicago Commission on Human Relations and the Chicago Police Department's Hate Crimes Unit to improve methods for tracking hate crimes against transgender persons. (*Violence Prevention, Public Health Infrastructure*)
- ➔ Develop and implement a strategy to provide cultural competency training about the LGBT community to health care providers and institutions in an effort to increase access to quality health care. (*Access to Care*)
- ➔ Promote participation in LGBT health electives for Chicago area medical students. (*Access to Care*)
- ➔ Conduct bullying training for school staff and faculty with a focus on how LGBT students are disproportionately impacted and on appropriate interventions in schools to end all forms of bullying. (*Violence Prevention*)
- ➔ Increase the scope, availability, and methods of tobacco cessation efforts in the LGBT community. (*Tobacco Use*)
- ➔ Empower the LGBT community to address violence by publicizing resources for reporting violence, holding seminars on proven strategies to avoid violent situations, and informing community members of sources of victim assistance. (*Violence Prevention*)
- ➔ Deliver targeted, culturally competent obesity risk and preventive behavioral interventions to lesbians and bisexual women. (*Obesity Prevention, Heart Disease & Stroke*)
- ➔ Promote the adoption of breastfeeding among lesbian mothers. (*Healthy Mothers and Babies, Obesity Prevention*)
- ➔ Support LGBT organizations in the adoption of policies that increase access to healthy foods, encourage physical activity, and limit tobacco use. (*Obesity Prevention, Tobacco Use, Heart Disease & Stroke*)
- ➔ Increase knowledge of the risks of cancer and instill confidence in lesbian women to seek out appropriate preventive care from culturally sensitive providers. (*Cancer Disparities, Access to Care*)
- ➔ Include sexual orientation and gender identity indicators on CDPH's impending citywide community health survey, and other data collection instruments, in an effort to better identify health disparities among the LGBT community. (*Public Health Infrastructure*)
- ➔ Provide educational information to housing managers and apartment landlords about living with neighbors that are HIV positive and for employers of workers that are HIV positive as well as educators of HIV positive students. (*HIV Prevention*)
- ➔ Promote the inclusion of same-sex couples in programs aimed at healthy pregnancies,



childbirth, and early childhood health. (*Healthy Mothers & Babies, Access to Care*)

- ➔ Provide educational information to parents regarding the creation of healthy, supportive home environments for children with alternative sexual orientation or gender expression. (*Adolescent Health, Violence Prevention*)
- ➔ Advocate for increased State funding to include support of LGBT persons suffering from anxiety, suicidal ideations, or other conditions. (*Access to Care*)

### **CDPH will continue to implement the following ongoing strategies:**

- ➔ Conduct behavioral surveillance surveys on men who have sex with men, and share reports with health care providers and LGBT health researchers. (*HIV Prevention*)
- ➔ Partner with LGBT-serving organizations to provide enhanced HIV prevention and HIV screening services targeted to the LGBT community, and ensure linkage to care for persons identified as HIV-positive. (*HIV Prevention*)
- ➔ Dedicate resources to incorporate LGBT health into planning, outreach, and public information activities. (*Public Health Infrastructure*)
- ➔ Partner with LGBT community providers to identify and treat persons with sexually transmitted infections. (*Access to Care, HIV Prevention*)
- ➔ Maintain community task forces on LGBT substance abuse issues. (*Violence Prevention*)

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<sup>i</sup>Boehmer, U., et. al. (2007). Overweight and obesity in sexual-minority women: Evidence from population-based data. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(6), 1134-1140.

<sup>ii</sup>Yancy, A., et. al. (2003). Correlates of overweight and obesity among lesbian and bisexual women. *Preventive Medicine*, 36, 676-683.

<sup>iii</sup>American Lung Association. (2010). *Smoking out a deadly threat: Tobacco use in the lgbt community*. Retrieved from <http://www.lungusa.org/assets/documents/publications/lung-disease-data/lgbt-report.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup>Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. (n.d.). *Chicago public high schools differential risk factors for lesbian, gay, bisexual identified students 2005 youth risk behavior survey results*. Retrieved from

[http://www.illinoissafeschools.org/page\\_attachments/0000/0008/2005\\_CYRBS.pdf](http://www.illinoissafeschools.org/page_attachments/0000/0008/2005_CYRBS.pdf)

<sup>v</sup>Cochran, SD. (2001). Cancer-related risk indicators and preventive screening behaviors among lesbians and bisexual women. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(4), 591-597.

<sup>vi</sup>2011 Chicago Department of Public Health HIV/STI Surveillance Report November 30, 2011 available at [http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/pol\\_plan\\_report/alerts/2011/dec/2011\\_hiv\\_surveillancereport.html](http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/pol_plan_report/alerts/2011/dec/2011_hiv_surveillancereport.html)

<sup>vii</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, Office of Research on Women's Health. (2010) *Moving into the future with new dimensions and strategies: A vision for 2020 for women's health research*, Vol II – Regional Scientific Reports. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health



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To get involved in the Healthy Chicago movement email CDPH at [HealthyChicago@cityofchicago.org](mailto:HealthyChicago@cityofchicago.org).



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