

“I Don’t Want to Have to Educate Them”: Findings from the 2020 Larimer County Sexual Health Assessment

Overview

Larimer County Department of Health and Environment (LCDHE) conducted a community needs assessment in Spring 2020 to provide the first overview of residents’ perceptions and experiences receiving sexual healthcare in Larimer County, Colorado.

Topics included: experiences with sexual healthcare; barriers to accessing quality sexual healthcare; experiences with sexual violence; sexual behaviors; and demographic questions. Additional topics for transgender or gender nonbinary participants were negative experiences with medical providers and perceptions about inclusiveness.

LCDHE partnered with the Colorado School of Public Health at the University of Northern Colorado, Comprehensive Sex Education Alliance (CSEA) partner organizations (i.e., Sexual Assault Victims Advocacy Center, Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains), and other community partners (i.e., NoCo Equality, Pride Resource Center, Estes Valley Crisis Center, Salud Family Health).

Study Aims

Aim 1: Provide the first overview of Larimer County residents’ perceptions and experiences receiving sexual healthcare.

Aim 2: Better understand the sexual healthcare experiences of LGBTQ+ residents and the availability of LGBTQ-competent sexual healthcare in Larimer County.

Aim 3: Identify ways to improve access, quality, and inclusiveness of sexual health services in Larimer County.

Method

Adult participants were recruited for an online survey via Facebook posts boosted to reach Larimer County residents and recruit people with ‘LGBTQ+’ and/or ‘Transgender’ interests. The survey was available via Survey Monkey in English and Spanish for two weeks in April 2020. The online setting supported confidentiality and privacy and enabled the reach of the survey to expand to residents throughout the county, including more rural areas. Participants had the option to enter a drawing for 1 of 10 \$50 e-gift cards. There were 466 respondents included in this analysis (ages 18-64). Most identified as cisgender female (79%) or cisgender male (12%), with 43 (9%) identifying as transgender or nonbinary. Almost half (48%) self-identified along the LGBTQ+ spectrum. The vast majority (91%) identified as White. This survey overrepresents individuals with access to technology and from within certain social media networks. Caution should be used when generalizing from this small sample to all transgender/non-binary residents.

Full reports are available from LCDHE via email.



GLOSSARY

Transgender describes people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth, which may include expression (masculine, feminine, other) or other behaviors.

Gender non-binary, or gender non-conforming, describes people whose traits, identities, or behaviors do not neatly line up with traditional male/female roles.

Gender identity describes how a person thinks and feels about their own gender.

LGBTQ is shorthand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer. LGB and Q refer to sexual orientation.

Sex is a biological status assigned at birth (male, female) based on organs, hormones, and chromosomes.

Sexual orientation is a person’s physical, emotional, or romantic attraction to another.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

REPRODUCTIVE & SEXUAL HEALTHCARE

- Larimer County participants need and are using sexual health services. They value these services and believe they are beneficial to public health.
- Knowledge and comfort varied by type of service.
- Barriers to care included insurance coverage, cost of care, and perceptions of stigma and judgment. These barriers limit access to sexual health services.
- Planned Parenthood was frequently mentioned as a crucial resource.

SEXUAL & PARTNER VIOLENCE

- Just 51% knew where to get sexual violence services in Larimer County.
- Participants were most aware of community organizations like SAVA Center for support resources and services, followed by university resources/CSU.
- Most survivors of sexual assault/violence knew their perpetrator to at least some degree of familiarity.
- 26% of survivors had reported their assault to police (in or out of Larimer County). Of those who reported, 87% said that they were uncomfortable/very uncomfortable with the process. Future surveys should explore specific reasons for discomfort.

TRANSGENDER & NONBINARY EXPERIENCES

- There is a negative perception of available sexual health services for transgender/ nonbinary individuals in Larimer County.
- About one-third of participants reported best practices (e.g., asking for pronouns). Participants felt Larimer County sexual healthcare providers were not knowledgeable or competent with LGBTQ+ sexual healthcare provision.
- Less than half of the transgender/nonbinary participants agreed/strongly agreed that they could receive transgender health services near where they live (44%) and that they were comfortable getting those services (40%).
- Many transgender/nonbinary participants do not feel safe or welcome: 61% reported fear of negative reactions from a sexual healthcare provider, with another 12% saying they somewhat feared this.

Recommendations

- Efforts to increase knowledge about available sexual health services, improve comfort, and increase affordability are essential. Creating a guide or brochure about existing affordable options could be a good starting point.
- An awareness campaign should be created so Larimer County residents can be knowledgeable about sexual violence resources before they need them.
- Sensitivity training around sexual violence in general and about LGBTQ+ identities in particular could improve the relationship between law enforcement and those seeking support for sexual violence experiences.
- A website highlighting available LGBTQ+ friendly sexual health resources may reduce fear and other barriers to care.
- Sexual healthcare providers in Larimer County should be trained in LGBTQ+ competent care and best practices should be adopted. LGBTQ+ patients should not be burdened with having to educate providers.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“While I feel comfortable doing those things myself [seeking sexual healthcare], I do feel that Larimer County as a whole has a lot of reservation and judgment in regards to these topics, so many I know do not, and I understand why.”

“Sex education needs to be taught more and in more depth. The judgment when attempting to pick up condoms, birth control, or the morning after pill is intense.”

“It’s hard to know if they [providers] will be educated/ knowledgeable about the topic and I don’t want to have to educate them.”

“No trans person in Northern Colorado feels safe.”