



# Enhancing the Experience of LGBTQIA+ patients and families on Labor and Delivery

*Jordan Francke, MD and James Damron, MD*

March 2025



Labor and delivery can be an intimidating place for any patient seeking obstetric care, but patients within the LGBTQIA+ community may face additional challenges. Most obstetric and anesthesia providers are committed to delivering respectful, affirming care to all patients, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. As a patient, you have a right to receive non-judgmental care. Here are some helpful tips and information that may improve the experience of LGBTQIA+ patients and families navigating an obstetric care experience.

**(1). Please do share your preferred name(s) and pronoun(s) with your nursing staff, obstetric providers, and anesthesia team.**

Many electronic medical records (EMRs) let doctors and nurses use your preferred name, nickname, and pronouns. Sharing these preferences helps make sure they are used consistently, especially when you have different providers during a shift. In obstetrics, people often use gendered words like “mother,” “mom,” “woman,” “female,” “miss,” or “ma’am.” If these terms make you uncomfortable, tell your care team. Some gender-neutral words include “birthing person,” “patient,” “laboring person,” “parent,” or “intended parent.” If you like these terms better, let your team know.

**(2). Do share information about your family roles, family structure, and support network.**

Patients often have many different types of support systems. Some patients may have a doula, family members, or multiple partners they want at the delivery. Others may want to deliver alone or might not have a support person to be with them. LGBTQ+ patients may have a “chosen family” made up of friends and allies they trust, even if they aren’t biologically related. It’s important to tell your care team who your support people are and who you want present during delivery.

If you need a Cesarean delivery and can stay awake with an epidural or spinal anesthetic (a shot in the back), a support person is often allowed in the operating room. However, each hospital has its own rules, and in some emergency situations, support people may not be allowed for safety reasons.

Many hospitals also give a “baby ID band” or bracelet to both parents, or to the birthing patient and one chosen support person. These bracelets give access to the nursery or NICU where the baby may go after delivery. It’s helpful to think about who your support people will be and share this information with your care team.

**(3). Sharing complete and accurate medical information is important to assist providers in administering safe care.**

It’s important to tell your providers about all important parts of your health history. Your medical history can affect your treatment options in the hospital, especially in emergencies. For example, if you’ve had gender-affirming care, like surgeries, chest binding, or hormone treatments, this information can help your medical team give you the best care.

**(4). You may see “safe space” stickers or special LGBTQIA+ designations on provider name tags at certain institutions.**

Some hospitals may have signs to show they are safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ patients. These can include stickers or decals on doors and windows, inclusive forms, or special symbols on a provider’s name tag. If you don’t see these, it doesn’t mean the location isn’t safe, but it can feel comforting when they are there.

**(5). You are the most critical person on the obstetric care team, and your feedback is important.**

If you feel unhappy or unsafe with the care you’re receiving, try to share your concerns with someone at the hospital you trust, if you feel comfortable. This could be your obstetrician, a resident physician, a nurse midwife, a chaplain, a nursing supervisor, an anesthesia provider, or the hospital’s patient advocates in person or by phone.

On the other hand, if a provider or the obstetric team did an excellent job giving respectful and inclusive care, let them know! Sharing positive feedback helps improve care for future LGBTQIA+ patients.