



What is the Healthcare Equality Index (HEI)?

The HEI is a biennial online survey. Created in 2007, the HEI has been designed to meet the needs of all healthcare organizations seeking to provide optimal care to LGBTQ+ patients and to meet [CMS and Joint Commission requirements](#) related to this underserved population.

What's involved in participating?

Organizations answer a series of questions about LGBTQ+ policies and best practices and are required to upload supporting documentation to validate many of their responses. Participating organizations will receive a summary of their score after the HEI staff has reviewed their submission and will have an opportunity to provide additional information or supporting documentation to address any deficiencies.

What is the HEI scoring criteria and how do you achieve HEI?

The [HEI scoring criteria](#) rates hospitals and healthcare facilities on policies and best practices in LGBTQ+ patient centered care in four key areas: [Non-discrimination and staff training](#); [Patient services and support](#); [Employee benefits and policies](#); and [Patient and community engagement](#).

Criteria 1	The Non-Discrimination and Staff Training criteria represents policies and practices that are considered foundational to LGBTQ patient-centered care. This criteria encompasses what was previously considered the “Core Four Leader Criteria.” All questions in this section are scored and must be met in order to attain any tier of designation.
Criteria 2	The LGBTQ Patient Services section is designed to familiarize an organization with the best practices from The Joint Commission and other sources to enhance care to LGBTQ patients. Four subsections comprise this criteria: LGBTQ+ Patient Services and Support; Transgender Services and Support; Medical Decision Making; and Patient Identification and Data Collection. These criteria subsections are divided into two scoring sections for Criteria 2.
Criteria 3	Employee Benefits and Policies criteria focuses on the employee as much as the patient in providing inclusive care. These questions don’t only cover health insurance benefits, but also address employee resources groups, LGBTQ-inclusive hiring efforts, transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits, employee transition support, and much more.



Criteria 4	The Patient & Community Engagement criteria focuses on community outreach and promotion to let the LGBTQ community know you are a welcoming and affirming facility, working toward LGBTQ inclusion.
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Learn more on the [HEI 2024 Scoring Criteria](#).

What kinds of organizations can participate?

The HEI is open to all healthcare organizations in the U.S. with 100 or more employees, whether inpatient or outpatient, network or individual facility. Inpatient facilities are particularly encouraged to participate, and constitute the majority of participants.

Clinic organizations with multiple locations such as FQHCs (and FQHC look-alikes), Planned Parenthood Affiliates and other similarly structured organizations are eligible to participate - however, they have special guidelines related to meeting the training criteria.

Why should our organization participate?

LGBTQ+ patients face very significant challenges in healthcare: 56% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people report experiences of serious discrimination in healthcare, while 70% of transgender people report serious discrimination. In response, CMS and The Joint Commission have issued [requirements](#) for LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion, and expert recommendations have now emerged for LGBTQ+ patient-centered care.

The HEI enables healthcare organizations to assess their own policies and practices vis-à-vis these requirements and recommendations, and equips them with the training and resources they need to remedy gaps. It also enables organizations to receive [public recognition](#) for their commitment to equity and inclusion

When is the next HEI?

The HEI is a biennial survey. The survey is conducted in odd years (typically beginning around June) and the report is published in even years.

The next HEI report will be the HEI 2024 and the survey for that report will be out in June 2023.

More information available at:

<https://www.thehrcfoundation.org/professional-resources/about-the-hei>