

**A Comprehensive System  
of Change to Create  
Inclusive Healthcare  
Environments**



# The South African LGBTQI+ Healthcare Equality Program

The South African LGBTQI+ Healthcare Equality Program is a groundbreaking initiative designed to support LGBTQI+ inclusive environments in healthcare facilities in South Africa.

This comprehensive one-year program engages healthcare facilities at all levels, from district and facility management to all staff at facilities including clinical and administrative staff. It offers three CPD-accredited half-day workshops to assist healthcare facilities in the effective implementation of LGBTQI+ inclusive policies and practices.

Ongoing progress is supported through individual facility site visits, ensuring continuous guidance, evaluation, and meaningful community engagement for LGBTQI+ inclusion.



LGBT+ Health Division, Desmond Tutu Health Foundation  
J52, Old Main Building, Groote Schuur Hospital, Observatory, Cape Town

## Background

Discrimination against and marginalisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) individuals remains widespread in South Africa. This population faces disproportionately high rates of health issues, including HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), poor mental health, and violence-related injuries.

Despite their heightened vulnerability, LGBTQI+ people often lack access to essential health services such as HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP),

mental health support, and gender-affirming care. These service gaps, compounded by systemic discrimination within the health system, further entrench disparities in both access to and quality of care.

The South African LGBTQI+ Healthcare Equality Program, designed by the LGBT+ Health Division of the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation (DTHF), is a response to these challenges.

## Aim

This program aims to create LGBTQI+ inclusive healthcare environments in healthcare facilities in South Africa through organisational change

that promotes equality, collaboration and access to appropriate health services for the LGBTQI+ community.

## Implementation Steps

- 1. Meet with the healthcare facility management** to assess the LGBTQI+ inclusivity of existing services.
- 2. Deliver three half-day CPD accredited workshops** at healthcare facilities to increase awareness of LGBTQI+ concepts and health needs and to promote empathy and respect for the LGBTQI+ population.
- 3. Identify Inclusivity Champions** to promote LGBTQI+ inclusivity in health facilities.
- 4. Draw up and implement action plans** for LGBTQI+ inclusive practices and services.
- 5. Engage with the LGBTQI+ community** to promote dialogue, inclusion and uptake of health services in their geographical area.

## Approach

Our approach involves collaboration across all levels of the health system:

- 1. Facility Staff:** We engage with administrative and clinical staff as well as facility management to identify and respond to their individual and collective learning needs around LGBTQI+ inclusivity.
- 2. Health Managers:** We work with operations, clinical, and program managers to plan and implement training, and enhance LGBTQI+ inclusivity in the health system.
- 3. Support Services:** We collaborate with teams responsible for policy development, electronic data systems, data collection, quality improvement, and health promotion to strengthen the broader system's capacity to support LGBTQI+ inclusive care.
- 4. Local LGBTQI+ Community:** We actively involve LGBTQI+ community networks and organisations to build local capacity and facilitate stakeholder engagement between healthcare facilities and the communities they serve.

## Program Outline

Led by skilled facilitators, this program delivers essential training through three workshops—covering Gender and Sexual Diversity, Organisational Change, and Gender-Affirming Care.

These workshops are CPD accredited by the University of Cape Town for the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

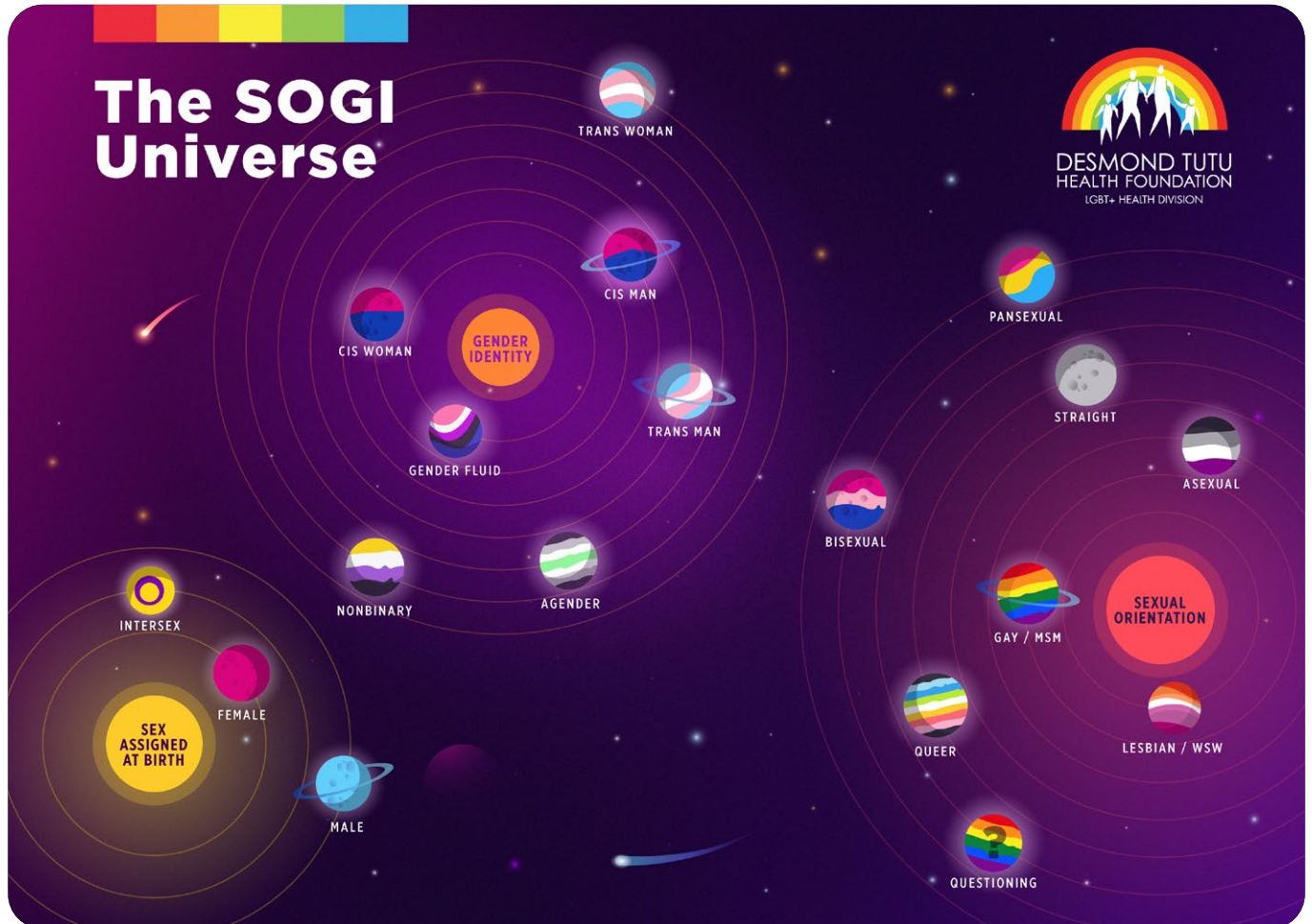
## Workshop 1

# Gender and Sexual Diversity Workshop – The SOGI Universe

CPD Points: 3 Ethics / 1 Clinical

This workshop aims to increase participants' understanding of key concepts such as sex assigned at birth, gender identity and sexual orientation, and sensitise participants to issues relating to gender diverse youth, homophobia, transphobia, and the systemic barriers LGBTQI+ populations face in accessing healthcare.

**Target:** All healthcare facility staff.



The SOGI Universe is an educational resource designed to enhance understanding of concepts related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI). As an open-access tool, it is available to all users seeking to promote inclusion and expand knowledge of SOGI-related topics.

## Overview of Workshop 1

- Introductory Talk:** Dive into the SOGI Universe to break down what sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, and gender identity really mean.
- Get Interactive:** Use a fun worksheet to match terms with meanings and test participants' understanding of the SOGI universe.
- Real Voices:** Hear firsthand from transgender youth about their journey and experiences with gender dysphoria and transphobia, social transition and accessing gender-affirming healthcare.
- Let's Engage:** Explore key issues like homophobia, transphobia, and the healthcare barriers LGBTQI+ people face in South Africa.
- Team Challenge:** Work through healthcare scenarios in small groups and tackle the tough questions about access, bias, and inclusion.

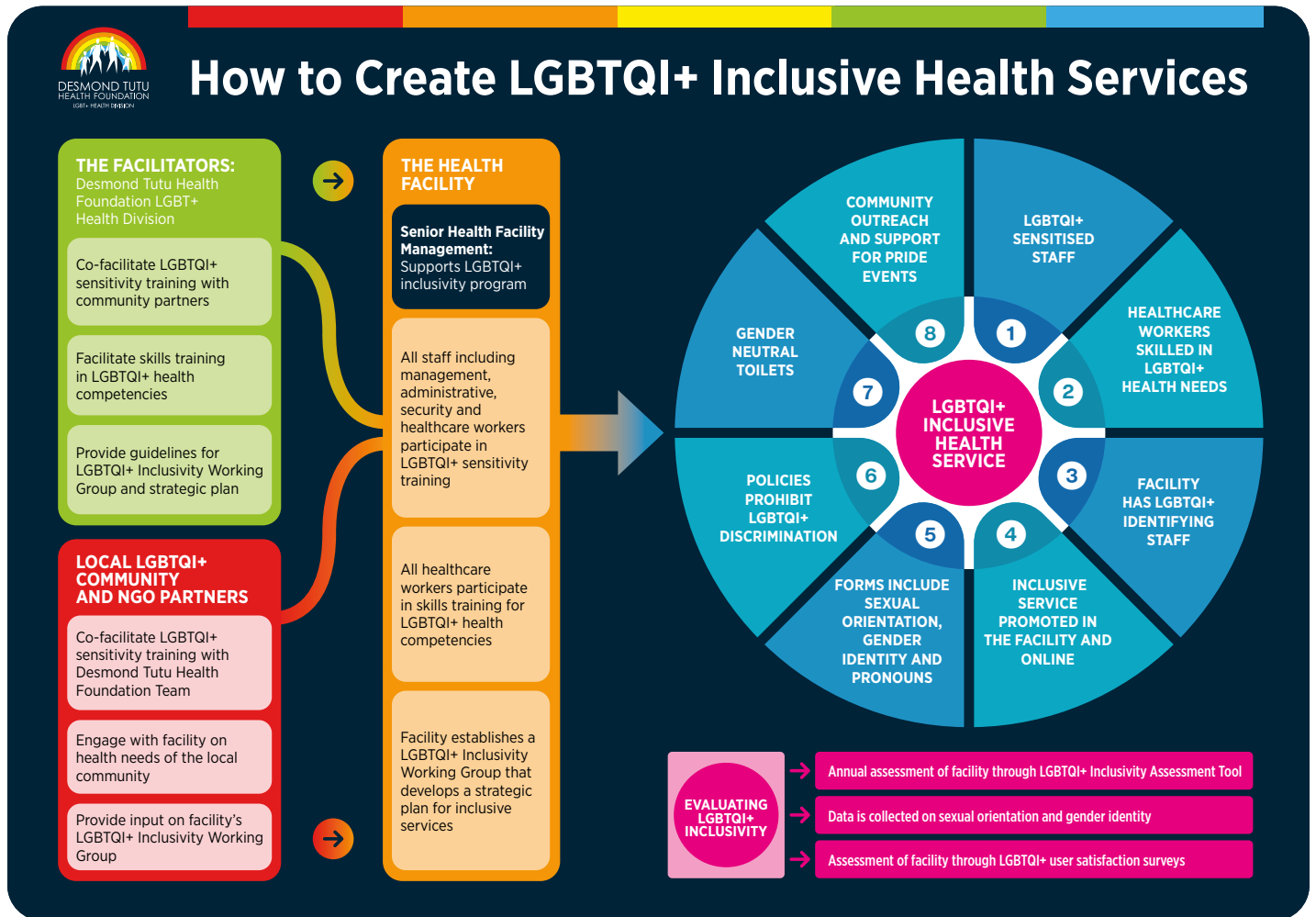
## Workshop 2

# Organisational Change - Strategies to Create LGBTQI+ Inclusive Health Services

This workshop aims to improve participants' understanding of why LGBTQI+ inclusive health environments are essential. It also introduces the concept of strategic planning to facilitate organisational change at healthcare facilities.

**Target: All healthcare facility staff.**

CPD Points: 4 Clinical



## Overview of Workshop 2

- Quick Recap:** Go over key SOGI ideas from Workshop 1.
- Being an Ally:** Talk about what LGBTQI+ allyship looks like in real life, especially in healthcare, and why it matters.

- Making Services Inclusive:** Explore the eight building blocks of LGBTQI+ inclusive care using a practical flowchart.
- Assess Your Space:** Use a simple assessment tool to reflect on how welcoming and inclusive your facility is, and what could be better.

## Workshop 3



# An Introduction to Gender-Affirming Care for Healthcare Providers



CPD Points: 1 Ethics/3 Clinical

This skills workshop, led by experts in gender-affirming care, offers an overview of the key components of gender-affirming care in both primary and tertiary healthcare settings.

**Target: Clinical staff.**

## Overview of Workshop 3

-  **Understanding Youth Needs:** Gain evidence-based insights on supporting trans and gender-diverse youth from an expert Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist.
-  **Care with Consent:** Explore the ethics of gatekeeping, informed consent in gender-affirming healthcare, hormone therapy, and treatment options in South Africa with an expert medical doctor and lead author of the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society gender-affirming healthcare guidelines.

-  **Beyond Hormones:** A short talk on surgical options and referrals to allied health services including psychotherapy, voice training, and nutrition.
-  **Hands-On Practice:** Work through real scenarios in small groups focused on helping trans and gender-diverse clients access hormone therapy.

## Healthcare Facility Visits & the LGBTQI+ Inclusivity Plan

Facility visits from DTHF facilitators during the program implementation include:

- 1. Baseline Assessment:** Conducting an LGBTQI+ Inclusivity assessment with facility management to understand priority areas for improvement.
- 2. Inclusivity Planning:** Collaborating with Inclusivity Champions and Facility Managers to create an action-oriented LGBTQI+ Inclusivity Plan with clear timelines.
- 3. Referral Letter Writing for Gender Affirming Care:** Guiding clinical staff through the Groote Schuur Hospital Transgender Clinic referral process using real-life case scenarios.
- 4. LGBTQI+ Healthcare Equality Dialogue:** Planning the annual LGBTQI+ Healthcare Equality Dialogue as an opportunity for staff to share experiences and connect with local LGBTQI+ community members and NGOs to raise awareness about inclusive services.
- 5. SOGI Recap & Basic Facility Assessment:** Revisiting SOGI knowledge and conducting a basic facility assessment to allow staff to ask questions and reflect on changes implemented in their facility.



## Lead Facilitators

The workshops are facilitated by a team of experienced trainers from the DTHF LGBT+ Health Division which is based in Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town.



**Lynn Bust, Research Project Manager & Program Lead**, oversees implementation and research for the LGBTQI+ Healthcare Equality program. Holding a Master of Public Health degree, she is dedicated to fostering inclusive LGBTQI+ environments and played a pivotal role in developing the LGBT+ Health Division's sensitisation tools.



**Savuka Abongile Matyila, Program Coordinator**, is responsible for coordination of the program including liaising with healthcare Facility Managers to schedule training sessions and facility follow-up visits, as well as co-facilitating workshops. Savuka is a human rights activist with an academic background in Philosophy, Sociology, Gender, Religion and Health in theology, emphasising intersectional advocacy and empowerment of LGBTQI+ voices in African communities.



**Amelia Mfiki, Community Liaison Officer**, is the lead on all community outreach programs for the LGBT+ Health Division. With a background in social work and extensive experience in leadership and public speaking, she brings valuable community engagement expertise to the workshops.



**Olivia Welte, Research Assistant**, is responsible for co-facilitation of workshops and facility follow-up visits, as well as administration of CPD points and certificates to workshop participants. Olivia is a queer feminist scholar with background in Sociology, Gender Studies, Social Development and Politics & Governance.

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## Facilitation of the Gender Affirming Care workshops



**Dr Simon Pickstone-Taylor** is a **Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist** and head of the Gender Identity Development Service Red Cross Children's Hospital. He has a special interest in Gender Diversity particularly in young people and has worked with gender diverse youth in the USA, UK and South Africa.



**Dr Anastacia Tomson** is a **GP at My Family GP** & lead author of the HIV Clinicians Society Gender Affirming Healthcare Guideline for South Africa. She has years of experience as a clinician in the public and private sector and conducts workshops and seminars that provide sensitisation and competency training on LGBTQI+ issues with a focus on Gender Affirming Care.

## Program Development to Date

This training program has been successfully developed and is currently being rolled out in key geographical areas in South Africa. Initial sessions have been successfully conducted in the Eastern Health District of Cape Town, with a focus on City of Cape Town Primary Healthcare facilities, The program is also being implemented in Beaufort West

and elsewhere in the Central Karoo Region, with a focus on Provincial Department of Health facilities. A series of comprehensive workshops have also been delivered to community and health NGOs in Cape Town and East London, all of which have been well-received.

***“A very big thank you from Life Choices for running the LGBTQI+ sensitivity training with our staff earlier this month. The staff loved being introduced to the SOGI universe. They appreciated having an opportunity to openly discuss things that they were unsure of and reflect on themselves and the experiences of the young people they work with.”***

**Mignon Hardie**

Managing Director, Life Choices,  
on the Gender and Sexual Diversity Workshop

***“I think this workshop is excellent. This topic is not something we were taught much about in medical school. I really appreciate being taught by two experts in the field with so much experience. I learned that every patient is on their own journey and every journey is going to look a bit different. This was a really great and informative session, it took a lot of the fear and confusion out of this topic.”***

**Dr Chantel Schreuder**

Medical Officer, Gugulethu Research Offices,  
Desmond Tutu Health Foundation, on the  
Gender-Affirming Care Workshop

***“Stakeholders have come back, after attending the SOGI workshop indicating that they now have a better understanding on how to approach a person that falls within the LGBTQ+ community in terms of how to address them and even learning new words such as Cis- Man / Cis - Women and what is gender dysphoria. These types of conversations should continue to take place on a regular basis, but I want to thank and applaud your organisation for answering the call, without hesitation. We in Central Karoo thank you.”***

**Mark John De Bruin**

Regional Co-Ordinator: Central Karoo,  
Community Development Worker Program,  
Western Cape Government



**DESMOND TUTU  
HEALTH FOUNDATION**  
LGBT+ HEALTH DIVISION

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The Fenway Institute (USA): Ten Strategies for Creating Inclusive Health Care Environments for LGBTQIA+ People

Pride in Health + Wellbeing (AUS): Health and Wellbeing Equality Index (HWEI)

World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Guidelines Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8

Southern African HIV Clinicians' Society gender-affirming healthcare guideline for South Africa. Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine

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