To develop LGBTQ+-affirmative therapeutic relationships, people working in mental health programs need to keep the following in mind:

- Remember that providing culturally competent care (including LGBTQ+-affirmative care) is an ongoing process, not something static to be achieved and finished.

- Educate yourself about common prejudices, many of which come from historical, invalid assumptions within mental health professions and U.S. society at large.

- Understand that LGBTQ+-affirmative staff and programs must be informed about the professional literature, communities and cultures relevant to clients’ lives, but need not be LGBTQ+ themselves.

- Know that even well-informed, people who live with mental illnesses and providers live in heterosexist environments. Therefore, like other prejudices, awareness and active affirmation does not preclude homophobia and transphobia cropping up in one’s views and behaviors.

- Recognize that, with the complexities of human sexuality and gender identities, there may be misunderstanding and friction about LGBTQ+ issues and other issues. Programs and staff should state this forthrightly while beginning therapeutic relationships and remain active and open to discussing it.

- Respect that LGBTQ+-affirmative mental health workers may nonetheless not meet a person’s needs in other ways.

- Understand that mental health providers who themselves are LGBTQ+ may be able to draw from this commonality in working with LGBTQ+ clients, but they may also face challenges such as higher expectations, conflicting views or identities, assumed agreement and common prejudices in some LGBTQ+ communities about each other.

- Know that due to the small size of many LGBTQ+ communities, an LGBTQ+ staff-person and an LGBTQ+ client may find themselves in the same (social, political, cultural) circles, may encounter each other in community settings, and may be acquainted with more of each other’s associates than a therapy dyad of differing sexual orientations/gender identities or one in which both are heterosexual.

- Acknowledge and address the tendency of some healthcare providers to view LGBTQ+ identities as beleaguered or tragic because of the challenges of living as an LGBTQ+ person in current society – thereby ignoring or discounting many of the very positive aspects of these identities.