Mental health is a state of psychological well-being. It involves how we think, feel, and act as we cope with life, how we manage stress and interact with others, and how we make life decisions. For several reasons, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community suffers from poorer overall mental health compared to heterosexuals.

Why do members of the LGBTI community have more mental health concerns?

Members of the LGBTI community may

- Have to cope with stigma, discrimination, or violence
- Have negative feelings about themselves because of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Feel isolated or lonely
- Feel that they must hide their sexual orientation or gender identity.

What are the most common LGBTI mental health issues?

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Substance abuse
- Thinking about or attempting suicide.

**Depression**

Depression is when feelings of sadness, loss, guilt, or anger interfere with everyday life for long periods of time. Lesbian women are 2 times more likely and gay men are 3 times more likely to have depression compared to heterosexuals.

Symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling agitated, restless, or irritable
- Changes in appetite, concentration, sleep, or energy
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, guilty, or self-hating
- Losing interest or pleasure in doing things you once enjoyed
- Thinking about death or suicide.

**Anxiety**

Anxiety is when constant worrying interferes with everyday life.

Symptoms of anxiety include:

- Feeling restless or edgy
- Tiring easily
- Having trouble concentrating or feeling as if your mind is going blank

(continued)
• Feeling irritable
• Having tense or tight muscles
• Having trouble sleeping.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

PTSD can occur after experiencing a traumatic event involving the threat of injury or death.

Symptoms of PTSD include:
• Reliving the traumatic event through flashbacks, upsetting memories, or nightmares
• Feeling detached or numb from feeling
• Lack of interest in normal activities
• Difficulty concentrating
• Being startled easily
• Feeling more aware, irritable, or angry.

Substance abuse

Substance abuse refers to the unhealthy use of illegal or prescription drugs. Lesbian and bisexual women have higher rates of nicotine and alcohol use throughout their lives. Gay men are more likely to smoke and use stimulant drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine.

Symptoms of substance abuse include:
• Using one or more substances on a regular basis
• Increasing use of substances to feel the same high
• Planning activities involving substance use in advance

• Lying to or avoiding friends or family to use substances
• Major changes in mood or behavior
• Frequent hangovers or blackouts

Thinking about or attempting suicide

Depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse can all contribute to an increased risk of suicide. Over half of adolescent lesbian and bisexual women and nearly 3 in 10 adolescent gay and bisexual men have attempted suicide.

Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital

Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital serves patients with depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse, and other problems. Our patients receive compassionate, personalized, world-class care that focuses on the whole person. For more information, call (615) 327-7000 or (800) 365-2270, or visit our website at www.vanderbilthealth.com/psychiatrichospital.