APPLYING TO PSYCHIATRY
Perspectives from LGBTQ Residency Directors for LGBTQ medical students

August 23, 2020

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
Hear about the four programs represented on our panel from the Program Directors themselves:
- Brown University
- The Medical University of South Carolina
- The Cambridge Health Alliance
- University of California, San Francisco

ADVICE FOR APPLYING
Applying to psychiatry residency as an LGBTQ applicant is a unique experience.
Hear from our four attending psychiatrists about their experiences as LGBTQ psychiatrists, their specific advice for applying to psychiatry, and a selection of specific questions to ask programs.

IMPACT OF COVID-19
The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the residency application process this cycle.
Hear from our program directors about how COVID-19 has affected their specific programs.
Hear advice from Program Directors about applying in this challenging time.

MEDICAL STUDENT COMMITTEE OF THE AGLP

Committee Chair: Allison Rhodes, MD/MPH Candidate
To get involved, come to our monthly meetings, on the last Sunday of every month at 5:00p EST. For more information, please contact Allison Rhodes at allison.rhodes2@gmail.com
39 psychiatry residents - 9 PGY-1’s  
- Tradition of therapy and research  
- Forward thinking in our approach  
- Collegiality  
- Rigorous program  
- **Who does best?** People who are passionate about psychiatry and what interests them about it. Those who want to be helpful and have a constant state of learning.

David R. Beckert, MD, Associate Program Director  
The Medical University of South Carolina  
- 14 general PGY-1’s, 2 med-psych PGY-1’s, and 1 neurology-psych PGY-1  
- Large academic program with a large public university hospital  
- Balanced - something different for everyone  
- Pretty strong addiction research program  
- Research track option

Marshall Forstein, MD, Program Director  
The Cambridge Health Alliance  
- 8 PGY-1’s  
- The public sector academic program of the Harvard psych system  
- Diverse patients - 60 different languages in our patient population  
- Well-known for trauma and addiction division  
- Famous for psychotherapy training - residents see their patients for 3 continuous years in outpatient  
- **Who does best?** Curious, passionate people who are committed to social justice, committed to the public sector, and committed to health and equity.

Erick Hung, MD, Program Director  
University of California, San Francisco  
- 64 residents - 16 PGY-1’s  
- When you come to train here, you are training in a hub for innovation  
- Three different systems - VA, large county hospital, and tertiary university hospital  
- Social justice - we are at the intersection of cutting edge research and caring for our county and state  
- Longitudinal patient relationship for 4 years  
- Areas of distinction - LGBT Health, R25-funded Research Track  
- U.C.S.F. = "You Can Stay Forever"
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LGBT HEALTH TRAINING

Charleston is a small town, but it is a major draw in the area. Everyone in-between RDU and Atlanta comes to us. Conservative viewpoints drive marginalized populations to Charleston, where they get their medical care. We partner with a local community organization called "We Are Family," which helps questioning adolescents.
- David R. Beckert, MD

We are involved in a number of collaborations with an interdisciplinary approach: trans clinics, surgeons, mental health practitioners, and everyone at the table. You will see a lot of LGBTQ patients, and you can also pursue additional electives in LGBTQ health.
- Erick Hung, MD

There is the True Self Intensive Outpatient Program, which serves 18-26 year olds in the LGBTQ community. A lot of residents also train in the adolescent clinic and in the trans health clinic. The population of diverse young people in Providence, Rhode Island, really demands this level of care from the psychiatric hospital. And residents are leading the way to help expand and make everyone feel seen and heard at Brown.
- Tracey M. Guthrie, MD

At CHA, we get to work with a very diverse LGBT community. You have exposure to seminars in the curriculum, working in the gender and sexuality clinic, and working with LGBT patients in the other clinics. Living in Massachusetts makes it easy for you to live and be celebrated.
- Marshall Forstein, MD

ADVICE FOR LGBTQ APPLICANTS

Psychiatry is the most LGBT-friendly specialty in medicine. Be yourself, and don’t be afraid to ask questions of the program you are applying to.
You are the one in the driver’s seat - you can reveal as much or as little as you like. Decide how important different aspects of your life are. Being transparent is only to your benefit! If you get an uncomfortable vibe, it’s probably not a good fit.
- David R. Beckert, MD

Emphasize authenticity. Be yourself and embrace that!
- Erick Hung, MD

Be authentic, and be total. You are more than this one identity - you must bring all of your identities forward. Evaluate if you feel you can be in that program. You want to be comfortable, and you also want to be trained to be an excellent psychiatrist. Luckily, you have an embarrassment of riches in terms of how many great programs there are.
- Tracey M. Guthrie, MD

We are looking for people who are authentic and real, and really working on who they are and who they will become. If you go to a program and they question your identity, why would you go to a place that would just tolerate you and not celebrate you? Programs want to know not only who you are, but how you came to understand who you are. When applying, think about: what is your dynamic formulation for yourself? How did you become who you are? Make sure that you understand what you’re looking for in the program - it doesn’t just have to be LGBT focused.
- Marshall Forstein, MD

Questions to ask programs:
- Tell me about the number of LGBT residents and faculty at your program.
- What supervision options are there?
- Are there support groups for residents of different identities?
- Do residents have access to psychotherapy themselves?
- How are homophobic patients or transphobic colleagues handled?
IMPACT OF COVID-19

The South was hit on a delayed scale by COVID-19. The program has had to make adaptations to how they run things. Outpatient visits are virtual and meetings are virtual. We have also been trying to beef up our website and the information that is there.
- David R. Beckert, MD

While COVID-19 has impacted us all, it has also improved the process in some ways. It saves money to not travel. With virtual recruitment, make sure to talk to people. Don’t just watch the videos. Pay attention to the things that matter the most - get to know people. And figure out if the values and mission of the program are aligned with your values and your mission.
- Erick Hung, MD

With this application cycle, I think it’s going to be ok. Programs’ number one fear is that applicants won’t get to know us. Your fear as applicants is that you won’t be able to get to know us. And things work out well when both parties are trying hard to work towards the same goal. We have been asking residents for advice for this cycle, and they have come up with great things. Know that we are in it together, and we are not just sitting in judgment of you. We are also trying to put our best foot forward for you, too. Reach out to your alumni organizations and try to talk with more people at different programs.
- Tracey M. Guthrie, MD

Unless you’ve really screwed up in medical school, we are looking for people who are authentic and real, and really working on who they are and who they will become. With COVID-19, we may get more applications than ever before. But virtual applications reduce class and privilege in a good way as well - you can now all apply to whatever programs you want to. Try to contact at least one LGBT resident at each program to have a conversation about their experiences.
- Marshall Forstein, MD

SELECTED Q&A

How should we approach discussing our experiences?
We have to read many concise bulleted applications. We are interested in quality over quantity. And perseverance, commitment, and passion. If you did so many different things, I would worry about when you studied! I am interested in someone who has been a Big Brother for years - that shows commitment and dependability. In psychiatry, we want to see you for who you really are.

I am a double minority as a gay person-of-color. What do you suggest for black and queer residents?
Connect with role models and peers in your program and across the health system. Look for identity caucuses and resident diversity committees. See what programs are doing to improve.

Will being a trans applicant automatically be controversial?
No. But in some ways, you are a trailblazer. Talk to people who have successfully navigated this program. Get the inside scoop.