

Exeter Hospital Named 2024 ‘LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader’

Hospital earns top honor for inclusive care to patients, visitors and community

Exeter, NH – Exeter Hospital, part of Beth Israel Lahey Health, has earned the distinction of “LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader” for 2024, the highest honor awarded by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC) in its annual Healthcare Equality Index.

The distinction recognizes Exeter Hospital for its inclusive care for LGBTQ+ patients, visitors and employees.

A record 1,065 health care facilities participated in the 16th iteration of HRC’s 2024 HEI survey; only 36% (384 facilities) achieved the “LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation. Exeter Hospital is the only facility in New Hampshire as well as in the tri-state region of New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont to receive the top honor.

“We are honored to be recognized as a ‘LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader’ by the HRC’s Healthcare Equality Index,” said Debra Cresta, president, Exeter Hospital. “Diversity and inclusion are an integral part of the culture at Exeter Hospital, and this recognition reaffirms our unwavering commitment to providing inclusive, affirming and equitable care to all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We will continue to advance programs and policies that are respectful of our patients as well as of our colleagues and community members.”

Exeter Hospital earned perfect scores in four categories: Non-Discrimination and Staff Training, Patient Services & Support, Employee Benefits & Policies, and Patient & Community Education. The hospital was credited for its LGBTQ+-inclusive patient, visitation and employment non-discrimination policies; offering at least one health plan that covers medically necessary services for transgender people; and its community outreach and promotion efforts to the LGBTQ+ community to further awareness that the healthcare facility is a welcoming and affirming setting. Exeter also received an unblemished rating in the area of Responsible Citizenship

HEI is the leading national benchmarking survey of health care facility policies and practices dedicated to the equitable treatment and inclusion of LGBTQ+ patients, visitors and employees.

“The Healthcare Equality Index is helping people find facilities where welcoming policies and practices are the standard,” said Kelley Robinson, president of the Human Rights Campaign. “We know that LGBTQ+ people – especially our trans family – continue to face discrimination in the doctor’s office. No one should have to put their health on the backburner for fear of mistreatment in a healthcare facility or by their doctor.”

The index scores facilities on more than 60 criteria for LGBTQ+ patient-centered care, including staff training, patient services and support, employee support and benefits, discrimination protections, and a public commitment to equality.

Key highlights from the health facilities report include:

- **Targeted Health Disparities Reduction Plans:** Encouragingly, 71% have an official plan for reducing health disparities that specifically includes LGBTQ+ patients in addition to race, ethnicity and linguistic concerns.
- **Bias Elimination and Welcoming Interactions:** Just over half (53%) have a policy or policies that specifically outline procedures and practices aimed at eliminating bias and insensitivity, and ensuring appropriate, welcoming interactions with transgender patients.

- **EHR SOGI Data:** Major increases are seen in the number of healthcare facilities collecting sexual orientation and gender identity-related data in their Electronic Health Records systems. Seven of the eight relevant data points had double-digit increases.
- **Pronouns in Electronic Health Records:** The ability to collect and display a patient's pronouns rose from 44% to 74%. This is an important tool to help prevent misgendering a patient.
- **Community Engagement and Support:** 92% took part in or supported one or more LGBTQ+ related events or initiatives in their service area.

This year's HEI comes as as non-LGBTQ+ adults to be "treated unfairly or with disrespect by a doctor or healthcare provider" in the last three years, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. The impact of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation combined with a history of discrimination in healthcare settings has the potential to cause even more LGBTQ+ people to delay or avoid seeking healthcare, which makes the HEI even more salient for those looking to find LGBTQ+-inclusive care, the HRC says.

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About Exeter Hospital

For more than 125 years, Exeter Hospital has been integral to the health and wellness of communities in the Seacoast Region. The hospital opened in 1897 as a small cottage hospital on Pine Street in Exeter with accommodations for 10 patients. Since then, Exeter Hospital has grown into a 100-bed community-based acute care hospital that also provides extensive outpatient services. For more information about Exeter Hospital, please visit www.exeterhospital.com.

Exeter Hospital is part of Beth Israel Lahey Health, a health care system that brings together academic medical centers and teaching hospitals, community and specialty hospitals, more than 4,700 physicians and 39,000 employees in a shared mission to expand access to great care and advance the science and practice of medicine through groundbreaking research and education. For more information about Beth Israel Lahey Health, please visit www.bilh.org.

About the Human Rights Campaign Foundation

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is the educational arm of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people. Through its programs, the HRC Foundation seeks to make transformational change in the everyday lives of LGBTQ+ people, shedding light on inequity and deepening the public's understanding of LGBTQ+ issues, with a clear focus on advancing transgender and racial justice. Its work has transformed the landscape for more than 15 million workers, 11 million students, 1 million clients in the adoption and foster care system and more.