

From the Portland Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/portland/blog/health-care-inc/2014/03/cover-oregon-not-accessible-for-gay-and.html>

Cover Oregon ‘not accessible’ enough for gay and transgender Oregonians, groups contend

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Cover Oregon is being asked to give customer service staff additional training for working with LGBTQ Oregonians.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning/queer Oregonians face unique challenges to accessing the Cover Oregon marketplace, three organizations told the health exchange's board.

"Unfortunately, Cover Oregon is not an accessible marketplace for all Oregonians," reads a March 5 memo from Basic Rights Oregon, Cascade AIDS Project and Q Center. "In Oregon, we know that lesbian, gay and bisexual adults are 5 percent less likely to have insurance coverage than their heterosexual counterparts, and transgender adults nationally are 25 percent less likely to have insurance coverage."

At the same time, LGBTQ people face severe health disparities. Lesbian, gay and bisexual adults in Oregon live with chronic illnesses at higher rates than heterosexual adults (41 percent vs. 33 percent), while transgender adults report staggering rates of suicide ideation.

"LGBTQ individuals are underserved generally in health care and we're excited about the potential to work with Cover Oregon and with Affordable Care Act implementation to make sure our communities are accounted for," said Tash Shatz, interim program director at Basic Rights Oregon.

Representatives of the groups also spoke at Cover Oregon's Thursday board meeting.

"They were receptive to hearing more," said Neola Young, who is with the Q Center. "I expect we'll get some response."

The organizations' memo outlined several problems for Cover Oregon to address:

Incorrect processing of applications with same-sex partners.
Incorrect processing of transgender Oregonians' applications, due to lack of clarity about the correct sex marker or name to use when documentation is incongruous. This leads to denial of access to preventive care.

Failure among call center staff to prioritize applications of HIV positive people set to lose insurance coverage through high risk pools.