

## ***CrescentCare and Partners Launch Research Collaborative on COVID-19 Outcomes for LGBTQ People***

***The We Count Collaborative brings together data on more than 45,000 LGBTQ patients from front-line healthcare providers in a nationwide research and data-sharing project to protect the health of LGBTQ communities.***

In order to bridge the gap in knowledge about COVID-19 health experiences, including rates of infection and outcomes, for LGBTQ people, five federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) that specialize in reducing barriers to care for LGBTQ populations – along with The PRIDE Study, the first large-scale, long-term national health study of LGBTQ+ people – created a research collaborative called “The We Count Collaborative: Impacts of COVID-19 on LGBTQ Health.” The We Count Collaborative is made up of five FQHCs: [Whitman-Walker Institute](#), [Callen-Lorde Community Health Center](#), [CrescentCare](#), [Howard Brown Health](#) and the [Los Angeles LGBT Center](#); and the [Stanford Medicine-based The PRIDE Study](#) with a collaborating site at the University of California, San Francisco. These organizations are all on the front lines of the country’s response to the COVID-19 crisis and therefore can collect real-time data that is crucial for this project and future public health policy recommendations.

As COVID-19 first started to ravage communities in 2020, LGBTQ-health focused organizations advocated for the collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data to understand the full health needs of the public.

“Collecting information on how LGBTQ people are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic helps us to understand how overlapping social stigmas and discrimination can cause illness among people who are often marginalized, and how public health policies can intervene to stop the spread of disease,” said Don Blanchon, CEO at Whitman-Walker Health System – which oversees the Whitman-Walker Institute.

This advocacy continued throughout 2020 culminating in an open letter to the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO) to ensure outreach to LGBTQ communities and requesting that sexual orientation and gender identity data collection be a mandated part of COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts.

“It is essential that LGBTQ communities are supported through this pandemic including access to COVID-19 diagnostics, treatment and life-saving vaccinations,” said Jason Halperin, infectious disease physician at CrescentCare and the medical director of its COVID-19 clinic and vaccination program. “Gathering data to understand barriers is vital to improving our health system.”

With the CDC’s 2021 report of sexual minority persons experiencing higher rates of underlying illnesses that are related to severe outcomes of COVID-19, data tracking on the health impacts of COVID-19 in LGBTQ communities is more imperative than ever. Whitman-Walker Institute, Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, CrescentCare, Howard Brown Health and Los Angeles LGBT Center are uniquely positioned to track and report on this data as well as advise on best practices for addressing the health needs of LGBTQ communities.

Eleanor Sarkodie, Manager of Data Analytics at Whitman-Walker Institute said, “The We Count Collaborative is leveraging the inclusive data collection policies at our individual FQHCs to capture the unique circumstances and distinct needs of LGBTQ persons, providing critical information that allows policymakers, researchers and health professionals to quantify, describe and make policy recommendations based on the impacts of COVID-19 on LGBTQ communities.”

Get updates on the research and findings of The We Count Collaborative by visiting [whitmanwalkerimpact.org/wecount](http://whitmanwalkerimpact.org/wecount).

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**About Whitman-Walker Institute:** [Whitman-Walker Institute](#) is one of the country’s premiere organizations focused on advancing the health and wellbeing of people facing barriers to quality care, particularly LGBTQ people and people living with HIV, through the strategic integration of clinical expertise, research acumen, quality education and policy change. The Institute endeavors to remain grounded in community by seeking feedback and promoting ideas that reflect the lived experiences and identified needs of those we serve. The Institute conducts cutting edge research and engages in evidence-based education and policy advocacy to end the HIV epidemic, eliminate health disparities, and promote wellness and resiliency. Through such work, we empower all persons to live healthy, love openly and achieve equality and inclusion.

**About Callen-Lorde Community Health Center:** [Callen-Lorde](#) is the global leader in LGBTQ healthcare. Since the days of Stonewall, we have been transforming lives in LGBTQ communities through excellent comprehensive care, provided free of judgment and regardless of ability to pay. In addition, we are continuously pioneering research, advocacy and education to drive positive change around the world, because we believe healthcare is a human right.

**About CrescentCare:** At [CrescentCare](#), we bring caregivers and the community together as partners, building on over 35 years of impact through our founding organization, NO/AIDS Task Force. We offer a broad range of health and wellness services to the Greater New Orleans region, offering comprehensive health and wellness services, advocating for empowerment, and safeguarding the rights and dignity of all individuals to build a stronger, healthier, and more equitable community.

**About Howard Brown Health:** [Howard Brown Health](#) envisions a future where the health and wellness of LGBTQ people is affirmed with healthcare as a human right; where progressive social policy and enlightened societal norms uplift the lives of LGBTQ people and their families; and where affordable, accessible, and culturally competent care from non-judgmental healthcare professionals is available and provided to all who seek it.

**About Los Angeles LGBT Center:** Since 1969 the [Los Angeles LGBT Center](#) has cared for, championed, and celebrated LGBT individuals and families in Los Angeles and beyond. Today the Center’s nearly 800 employees provide services for more LGBT people than any other organization in the world, offering programs, services, and global advocacy that span four broad categories: Health, Social Services and Housing, Culture and Education, Leadership and Advocacy. Despite our size, scope, and determination to meet the growing demand for our services, we remain a lean, fiscally disciplined organization, earning a four-star Charity Navigator rating for six consecutive years. We are an unstoppable force in the fight

against bigotry and the struggle to build a better world, a world in which LGBT people can be healthy, equal, and complete members of society.

**About The PRIDE Study:** The Population Research in Identity and Disparities for Equality (PRIDE) Study is a community-engaged, online, national, longitudinal, dynamic, prospective, cohort study of self-identified LGBTQ+ people. Founded in 2017 to counteract the lack of data describing the health-related needs of LGBTQ people, The PRIDE Study engages, recruits, and enrolls adults living in the United States who identify as LGBTQ+ to collect and report demographic, physical, mental, and social health data and outcomes. The PRIDE Study is based in Palo Alto, California and is a study of Stanford University School of Medicine in partnership with the University of California, San Francisco.

**About UCSF:** The University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) is exclusively focused on the health sciences and is dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. It includes UCSF Health, which comprises three top-ranked hospitals, as well as affiliations throughout the Bay Area. Learn more at [www.ucsf.edu](http://www.ucsf.edu), or see our [Fact Sheet](#). UCSF is a collaborating site of The PRIDE Study and the home of the [Center for Sexual and Gender Minority Health](#).