

CHAPTER 10

**SUBSTANCE USE AND LGBT
FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS**

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The inclusion of family members in substance use treatment has been found to improve outcomes. However, very little guidance has been published on LGBT families in treatment, and at present we must rely on existing treatment models that have been nuanced to address the issues pertinent to LGBT family needs.

OVERVIEW

Substance use disorders affect both the individual user and his or her family; consequences include eroding trust, boundary violations, financial concerns, interpersonal violence, and enabling behaviors. Family engagement of one form or another in treatment for substance use problems has a long history. It is now recognized that family therapy is an important modality for an individual with a substance use disorder, and family-systems theories are relevant when addressing the effects of substance use by one or more family members.

Research on family involvement for LGBT substance users is sparse, and there are additional issues that traditional families do not experience and rarely even consider that must be factored into treatment decisions. First, the definition of family is more expansive for LGBT members. Second, unresolved family-of-origin issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity are common. Third, the coming-out process and community disclosure might affect treatment. Finally, one or more family members might be struggling with their sexuality and/or gender identity. It appears that most prevailing models of family therapy can be tailored to LGBT family and couples' dynamics.

KEY TERMS

Family therapy; systems theories; enabling; homeostasis; intimate partner violence; COLAGE (People with a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer Parent); Behavioral Couples Therapy (BCT); elected families; LGBT parented families; disclosure; unresolved family-of-origin issues; unresolved partner and parental minority stress

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NOTES TO CHAPTER 10

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