

Documenting the Experience of Queer Parents in the NICU

Fri, 05/05/2023 - 00:00

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“During my internship with Saul’s Light this semester, I had the opportunity to pursue a new project that encompasses the experiences of Queer parents navigating the NICU. The goal of this initiative is to develop a Queer peer mentor program for parents that identify as LGBTQIA+ and to provide resources, mentorship, and solidarity from a community that understands the experiences and barriers that Queer parents face while navigating the NICU and providing any emotional, psychological, or financial support they may need.

I had the desire to pursue this project because I wanted to explore the intersections between the Queer identity and Reproductive Rights & Health. Before I started this project, I had a bit of prior knowledge of the barriers that Queer individuals face in their interactions with the healthcare system regarding gender pronouns and the visibility of their identities. However, after educating myself more, I learned that there are deeper barriers beyond that as well. Queer people are not represented in the healthcare system and the quality of their healthcare is also influenced by their own sense of personal safety, visibility, and comfortability with their healthcare providers. Another barrier for Queer individuals is the assumptions that healthcare providers make about their LGBTQIA+ identifying patients because it is harmful to assume that all their patients are cisgender or heterosexual. Therefore, they are not being inclusive of the diverse identities that patients hold. Assumptions such as these also cause harm because providers will make assumptions about the roles Queer parents have in their families. Keeping some of these barriers in mind, I wanted to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Queer parents, specifically in the NICU.

After I did my own research, I created a survey to capture the experiences of Queer parents in New Orleans. I wanted to gain knowledge about their interactions with healthcare providers and the ways Queer parents have navigated pregnancy and the NICU, and whether they have felt supported or affirmed in the process. I also used the survey to get a sense of what types of support Queer parents need the most during their interactions with the healthcare system and how Saul's Light could better serve Queer parents. This project is very meaningful to me because it is important that Saul's Light can support and meet the needs of all families and parents."