



EDC & Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness Co-Host Webinar on LGBTQ+ Communities and Eating Disorders

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 1, 2021) – On June 29th, the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action and The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness cohosted a webinar entitled, “Our Bodies, Our Communities: Supporting Individuals with Eating Disorders,” in honor of Pride Month.

The webinar, attended by over 150 people, educated the eating disorders community, LGBTQ+ community, allies, and U.S. Congressional staff on issues related to eating disorders among LGBTQ+ populations. It included information on health disparities, prevalence, prevention, warning signs, how to talk to a loved one, support/referral to care, as well as information aimed at improving LGBTQ+ individuals and their loved ones’ understanding of these disorders. A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

The first panelist, Jerel P. Calzo, PhD, MPH, who serves as an Associate Professor of Public Health at San Diego State University, and as a Core Investigator at the Institute for Behavioral and Community Health, discussed the importance of data collection when it comes to highlighting the prevalence and burden of eating disorders and disordered eating behaviors experienced among the LGBTQ+ communities. “Data are fundamental; the act of asking questions seems so simple but is radical and revolutionary...we need to ensure these identities are acknowledged, rendered visible, and that we recognize the lived experiences of all people,” said Dr. Calzo. Jerel shared his deep gratitude for the advocates and researchers who prioritize asking questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, and disordered eating on health records and in community surveys.

“Language is the way we start to respect people,” said Schuyler Bailar, Author, Activist, Life Coach, and the first Trans Athlete on a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I men’s team. Schuyler educated viewers on the background behind terminology related to the transgender community. He shared that being able to listen and have curiosity are central to learning about trans folks.

An important component of the webinar involved training attendees on warning signs and best practices for supporting their loved ones in the event of an eating disorder. Rachel Rifkin, LMHC, MA, EdM, an Eating Disorder and LGBTQ+ Counselor and Consultant representing the Alliance for Eating Disorders, the leading national nonprofit organization providing help, support, and access to care for anyone experiencing an eating disorder, stresses that “eating disorders are not necessarily seen. Collectively we need to challenge that stigma now.”

“The Alliance is humbled and excited to join the Eating Disorders Coalition, to be a part of this critical conversation. It is important that we hold space for and affirm folks - no matter who they love, how they identify, or where they are on their eating disorder recovery journey. Unique and varying intersecting identities sometimes cause LGBTQ+ folks to be at higher risk of developing eating disorders, and antiquated systemic issues exacerbate barriers to care,” said Johanna Kandel, Founder & CEO of the Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness.

“Each of us has the opportunity to give gifts to the world and receive those gifts. We at the EDC hold space for all communities and are honored to put the spotlight on the LGBTQ+ community tonight,” said EDC Board President Chase Bannister, MDIV, MSW, LCSW, CEDS. “We have to speak to each other, with each other, directly inside our communities, within and without, because there is so much information that is constantly changing.”

The EDC and the Alliance would like to thank everybody that attended the event, and together look forward to continuing the conversation to help bring awareness and support to all communities experiencing eating disorders.

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a Washington, DC-based, federal advocacy organization made up of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can also be found at eatingdisorderscoalition.org.

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Media Contact: Emily Rosenberg: erosenberg@eatingdisorderscoalition.org