

Mar 14, 2023

## Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island certifies 10 more sites as LGBTQ Safe Zones

*Practices to achieve designation include five Lifespan and Coastal Medical sites and three Pappas OPT physical therapy locations*

**PROVIDENCE, R.I.** (March 13, 2023) – Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI) has designated 10 more healthcare sites as LGBTQ Safe Zones, certifying that the providers have demonstrated care designed to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ patients.

New Safe Zones are designated twice a year and the latest additions includes five sites that are part of Lifespan and its affiliate, Coastal Medical:

- Hasbro Children’s Hospital Adolescent Medical Clinic, which provides specialized care in sexual and reproductive health, gender-affirming services, and eating disorders
- Hasbro Children’s Hospital Rehabilitation Services
- The Miriam Hospital Infectious Disease Department
- The Miriam Hospital’s Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Clinic
- Coastal Medical Consultants in Cardiology

Lifespan’s ongoing partnership with BCBSRI in receiving Safe Zone certification is a testament to their commitment to safe, affirming, and inclusive care for LGBTQ+ people. These are the first Miriam Hospital and Hasbro Children’s Hospital locations to receive Safe Zone certification, which provide a broad range of services meeting specific needs of the LGBTQ+ community. Last fall, 19 Coastal Medical sites were designated Safe Zones and the total number of Coastal Medical Safe Zone sites is now 22.

Since the BCBSRI LGBTQ program began in 2016, 80 facilities have achieved Safe Zone designation.

“We understand that feeling respected and safe is critical to the LGBTQ community which has historically experienced mistreatment and discrimination in healthcare settings,” said Scott Gowrie, Safe Zone program lead. “We’re pleased that our Safe Zone program continues its steady growth and now includes a broad range of

providers. This latest cohort importantly includes several major providers that offer gender-affirming care and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island including practices that specialize in serving adolescents.”

Safe Zone sites including primary care, behavioral health, oral health, palliative care, older adult care, pediatric care, physical rehabilitation, child and family services, organizations serving individuals who have experienced sexual assault, domestic abuse and substance abuse, and more.

The other members of the latest cohort of new LGBTQ Safe Zones are:

- Pappas OPT Physical, Sports and Hand Therapy (locations in North Kingstown, Lincoln and Woonsocket)
- Suzanne Lowe, certified nurse midwife, in Johnston
- JStone Therapy, adult clinical therapist Julie Stone, in North Providence

Certification requirements for BCBSRI LGBTQ Safe Zones include staff training specific to the care of LGBTQ patients, protection for patients and staff from discrimination based on gender identity or expression, gender neutral bathrooms, inclusive forms and procedures, and a public commitment to connecting with and serving the LGBTQ community.

BCBSRI solicits applications for LGBTQ Safe Zone designation twice a year. To learn more about the program, or if you are a provider or practice looking to become certified as a BCBSRI LGBTQ Safe Zone, visit [bcbsri.com/providers/safezone-program](http://bcbsri.com/providers/safezone-program).

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