Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice (QACP) Online Course, August/September 2025

Unfortunately, we are not proceeding with the online Organizational Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice Course at this time, as we have received an insufficient number of organizations sending a team of their mental health practitioners (MHPs) to participate.

MHI is happy to announce that we are offering an online individual QACP course. Whether you are an MHP practicing individually or part of an organization, you are welcome to apply for this training.

Read below to learn more -

The Mariwala Health Initiative (MHI) launched the Queer-Affirmative Counselling Practice (QACP) Course in January 2019, starting with 22 participants. As of May 2025, the program has successfully trained 800 mental health professionals (MHPs) who have completed the QACP course. Additionally, QACP has expanded its impact through collaborations with government agencies and international educational institutions.

To be part of the upcoming Online QACP Course, read below!

"An apology, in essence, has two dimensions, namely the acknowledgment of having done a wrong and the expression of a willingness to atone for it[1]*."*

Sec 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalised non-normative sexualities, was read down on September 6th 2018. The judgment went beyond the detached language of the law to uphold the Right to Love for queer people. It acknowledged the oppression of a section of people pushed to the margins due to their genders and sexualities and stated that 'History owes them an apology'.

The judgment also centres on collective responsibility. For too long, the mental health community has been complicit in upholding oppressive structures of gender binarism and heteronormativity by providing a "cure" for the non-normative. When we speak of being queer affirming, we are beginning to challenge these structures that pathologise and discriminate against queer persons and participate in promoting their wellbeing in a deliberate and affirming manner.

[1]Alternative Law Forum, (2018). Right To Love, Navtej Singh Johar v/s Union of India: A Transformative Constitution and the Rights of LGBT Persons, Available at: http://altlawforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/RightToLove_PDFVersion-1.pdf

How might we, as mental health practitioners, contribute, generate and operationalise ways to make amends? This 6-day training is an opportunity for us to reorient ourselves to an anti-oppressive therapeutic practice. The training covers both perspective-building to recognise inequalities and their impact on mental health, and also provides tools to address distress and promote the well-being of LGBTQIA+ persons. These perspectives and tools will support practitioners to modify their ongoing practice to make it queer-affirmative.

Eligibility:

This course is open to Mental Health Practitioners, viz. Psychologists, clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and psychiatric social workers, preferably with experience of working with queer-identified clients/their families.

Course schedule: 6 days

Dates

Module 1 - 21st, 22nd and 23rd August 2025(Thursday to Saturday)

Module 2 - 18th, 19th, and 20th September 2025 (Thursday to Saturday)

Timings

9.00 AM to 5.00 PM every day.

Medium of Instruction: English

Mode of Training: Online (Zoom)

Curriculum:

1. Understanding gender & sexuality-related norms
2. Interrogating gender-sexuality as social structures
3. Exploring sexuality in the personal and professional/ clinical context
4. Paradigms informing Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice
5. Working with Queer individuals and queer-related distress
6. Working with Queer individuals and their interpersonal relationships, addressing issues with family, peers and intimate relationships
7. Understanding the psy diagnostic frameworks from a queer affirmative lens
8. Operationalising Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice - queering some of the traditional

approaches to clinical and counselling practice

***Please note:** This course will focus on both queer and trans mental health concerns, however, will not cover specifics related to gender affirmative therapies (GAT) or medical transition services for trans persons. Participants will be provided with links to resource materials related to GAT.

Registration Fee: Subsidised fee by MHI: 20,000 INR

Last Date for Applications: 20 July 2025

How to apply?

Apply for the course by filling out the Google Form here by 20 July 2025.

For more information:

For further questions, please write to qacp@mariwalahealthinitiative.org with the subject line **QACP Online August - September 2025**.

Selected applicants will be informed by 31st July 2025.

A limited number of scholarships are also available for mental health practitioners. Please indicate whether you'd like to avail of a scholarship in the application form. You can also email MHI (qacp@mariwalahealthinitiative.org), with your reasons for seeking a scholarship, so that your request can be assessed.

Please note that scholarship requests are assessed only after the registrations are closed and the participants are selected.

Faculty:

Shruti Chakravarty, PhD, (cis woman; pronouns: she, her) has 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector as a mental health practitioner, researcher, trainer, and social worker. Her areas of engagement have been mental health, gender and sexuality, from a rights-based perspective. She has an independent therapeutic practice based in Mumbai, has in-depth experience working with LGBTQIA+ clients in the therapeutic space, and has co-authored Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice (QACP): A Resource Book for Mental Health Practitioners in India. She has completed her PhD on the subject of queer intimacies from Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Shruti is Chief Advisor at Mariwala Health Initiative

(MHI, and also faculty at the Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice course run by MHI. She also leads the training vertical at MHI.

Pooja Nair (ciswoman, pronoun: she) has been part of the non-profit sector for almost 15 years. She has an MPhil from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and has worked in the areas of life-skills training, curriculum development, gender, sexuality, and mental health. Additionally, Pooja is a consultant therapist with Mariwala Health Initiative. She is faculty at their flagship Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice Course, as well as co-author of the QACP Resource Book for mental health practitioners in India. She is also the MHI Project lead on their collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Government of Kerala on the Queer Inclusive Health Systems initiative.

Gauri Shringarpure (ciswoman, pronoun: she/her) is a queer mental health practitioner based in Thane, with a private practice. She is an experienced gender and sexuality trainer, having led sessions for colleges and the National Service Scheme (NSS). Gauri is a faculty member for the Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice Course run by Mariwala Health Initiative. She is also a positive psychology coach and regularly conducts workshops on mental health and self-care. In addition, Gauri works with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, focusing on their mental health needs. With over 25 years of experience, she is also a seasoned consumer behaviour consultant and researcher.