



# BEST PRACTICES WITH LGBTQ+ OLDER CLIENTS AND PATIENTS

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**sage**

Advocacy & Services for  
LGBTQ Older Adults

**We refuse to be invisible**

A Program of EqualityMaine



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- The Importance of Affirmative and Inclusive Health Care for LGBTQ+ Older Adults
- Barriers to Care for LGBTQ+ Older Adults
- Putting it All Together – Solving Problems on the Front Lines

# LGBTQ+ OLDER ADULTS

- It is critical that the unique needs of LGBTQ older adults and the people who care for them are taken into account and addressed now.
- Lifetime of discrimination and social stigma, as well as institutionalized discrimination in health care, employment and social services.
- LGBTQ older adults are significantly less likely to access medical and social services than their non-LGBTQ peers. This can lead to a delay in care, premature institutionalization, and even premature death.



# STRUCTURAL STIGMA

- Societal conditions, cultural norms, and institutional policies that adversely affect minority populations.
- Structural stigma is associated with Identity concealment, poor health behaviors, psychological distress, and psychiatric morbidity.
- Incomplete and inconsistent patient Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI) data collection needs to be addressed.

# THE HEALTH CARE CLOSET

- Many LGBTQ+ older people are afraid to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity to their health care provider.
- LGBTQ+ older people of color are even less likely to disclose their status.
- LGBTQ+ older people feel uniquely vulnerable in the health care system.



# BARRIERS TO CARE FOR LGBTQ+ OLDER ADULTS

- 52% have concerns about discrimination or prejudice affecting quality of care; 35% lesbian, 40% gay men, 35% bisexual, 66% transgender
- 57% have concerns about healthcare providers not being sensitive to LGBTQ+ patient needs
- 42% are concerned about having adequate family and/or social supports to rely on as they age
- 73% do not have access to LGBTQ-specific services for older adults
- 26% feel they cannot freely discuss all healthcare issues with their PCP; 39% bisexual, 30% transgender

# EQUAL ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Lifetime of discrimination
- Lack of legal and societal recognition
- Reliance on chosen family
- Lack of competent, inclusive health care
- Those living with HIV face additional stigma and privacy concerns



# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to support LGBTQ+ older people
- Expand LGBTQ+ specific programming and target outreach to the community
- Creating a safe space
- Things not to say or assume



# INCREASING LGBTQ+ SENSITIVITY

- Include chosen name and legal name as well as a blank space for gender on intake paperwork.
- Establish an effective administrative policy for addressing discriminatory comments or behavior.
- It is inappropriate to ask the genital status of a transgender patient if it is unrelated to their care.
- Don't judge.

# LONG-TERM CARE EQUALITY INDEX

- There are currently between 1.5 and 3.8 million adults over the age of 65 in the US who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and the number is expected to double by 2030.
- No one should fear rejection or discrimination when seeking the care they need.
- Most long-term care communities lack LGBTQ+ inclusive non-discrimination policies.
- The LEI exists to support long-term care communities to adopt LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and practices.



# SELECT RESOURCES

- Maintaining Dignity – Understanding and Responding to the Challenges Facing Older LGBT Americans (AARP)
- The State of LGBTQ Dignity 2020: A Supplement to Maintaining Dignity Pre-Covid 19 (AARP)
- Primary Care of LGBT Patients (American Medical School Student Association Committee on Gender and Sexuality)
- Public Attitudes Toward Aging Sexual and Gender Minorities Around the World (SAGE)
- Master Plan For Aging 2021 (California Department of Aging)
- Local Community Advocacy – Advocating for the Needs of LGBT Older Adults Receiving Aging Services (SAGE)
- LGBTQ Aging – The Case for Inclusive Long-Term Care Communities (SAGE & HRC)
- Housing, Health, and LGBTQIA+ Older Adults 2021 (National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center)
- Serving Diverse Elders – Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion in Service Planning and Delivery
- Disrupting Disparities – Solutions for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers Age 50+ (AARP)
- Long-Term Care Equality Index 2021 (HRC & SAGE)
- LGBT Aging 2025: Strategies for Achieving a Healthy and Thriving Older Adult Community in Massachusetts (The Fenway Institute)
- The State of the LGBTQ Community in 2020 – A National Public Opinion Study (Center for American Progress)





**THANK YOU!**

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