

# Best Practices for Working With: **LGBTQ Older Adults**

# 3 million

It is estimated that there are nearly 3 million LGBT people age 50 and older. By 2030 these estimates will rise to nearly 7 million. While no precise data exists on the number of transgender older people, it is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands nationwide. Here are some best practices for working with LGBTQ older adults.



## **LGBTQ PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE**

Presume your agency has LGBTQ clients.

Even if no one has openly identified as LGBTQ always work from the premise that you have LGBTQ clients.

## **SEE LGBTQ PEOPLE**

Don't assume that treating everyone the same, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity will make LGBTQ older adults feel safe or welcomed.

More often than not, treating everyone the same translates to treating everyone as heterosexual and glossing over the particular challenges LGBTQ older adults may face.

## **ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

Questions like, "Tell me about yourself" and "who is important in your life" help the caregiver learn about the resident's history and support network. It will lead to open lines of communication that build a culture of inclusion.



## **MIRROR LANGUAGE**

LGBTQ seniors may use words like "friend" or "roommate" to describe their significant other. Mirroring this language sends a message of respect and communicates interest and openness.

## **HOLISTIC APPROACH**

Sexual orientation and gender identity are only two aspects of identity. In addition to sexual orientation and gender identity, each client brings with them their racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage, as well as their unique individual history. Be aware that LGBTQ older adults of color may have particular needs based on their sexual and gender identities, as well as their racial and ethnic identities.



## **REPRESENTATION MATTERS**

Make sure your marketing materials, on-line and in print, feature diverse people. Marketing materials should include same sex couples, transgender, and non-binary people.

## **INCLUSIVE POLICIES**

Make sure your organization's policies around gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and HIV status, are effectively communicated and consistently enforced. Ensure that the policies are easily accessible to your clients and the community.



## **TRAINING**

Effective training is the foundation for excellent care. Select trainers with proven expertise in LGBTQ topics and ensure the content reflects a comprehensive perspective and addresses diversity in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Office of Community Partnerships

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/partnerships/](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/partnerships/)

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