



Providing education,
tools and resources
to improve the quality
of life of LGBT people
as they age



Training to Serve is a program
of JustUs Health.

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CREATING AN LGBT WELCOMING SERVICE

We all hope to be welcomed when we walk through a door, yet we know LGBT older adults fear, and sometimes receive, poor service and abuse when looking for help. The 2012 survey of Twin Cities lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults¹ showed fewer than one in five believed they would receive sensitive services if a provider knew they were members of the LGBT community. This fear often keeps elders from seeking services and can make their situation worse.

How do you signal your service is LGBT welcoming?

We know that most LGBT baby boomers and older adults would prefer to use the services of providers that welcome everyone, including LGBT clients. They look for signals that indicate a service is LGBT friendly such as:

Interpersonal communication & behavior signals

- Partners and same-sex spouses are acknowledged and included in care discussions.
- Provider practices good body language that is supportive and does not show surprise, shock, or other negative emotions when LGBT status is revealed

Intake and interviewing signals

- Intake form language includes options for diverse sexual orientations and gender identities

Onsite visual signals

- LGBT artwork or images of same-sex couples
- Rainbow stickers or other LGBT recognized signage
- Prominently posted inclusive or non-discrimination statements

¹2012 Twin Cities LGBT Aging Needs Assessment Final Report available at www.trainingtoserve.org.

10 SIMPLE THINGS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN DO...

- Include articles on LGBT topics or clients in your newsletter
- Make LGBT resources such as the LGBT Aging Resource Guide available to your clients and families
- Update assessments and forms to include LGBT welcoming language relating to sexual orientation and gender identity
- Include visible anti-discrimination statements on materials or in your office
- Train staff on LGBT aging sensitivity
- Use same-sex couples or transgender clients in marketing materials
- Advertise or list your organization in publications used by the LGBT community - this includes employee recruitment
- Create materials from your organization specifically for LGBT clients and families
- Hang rainbow or inclusive/safe space signs in public areas
- Sponsor LGBT community events to increase visibility within the LGBT community



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LGBT SENSITIVE INTAKE

You have one opportunity to make a first impression. In providing services, that often means your intake and assessment process.

Top 5 things to think about when conducting an intake...

1. BODY LANGUAGE

Help the client feel at ease – be conscious of your body language and signals you’re giving. Don’t express surprise when sexual orientation or gender identity are part of the discussion.

2. INTERVIEWING

Avoid using pre-determined questions to “assess” a person’s situation. Instead, invite a conversation with openended questions allowing the sharing of a person’s story, such as:

- Tell me about the people who are important to you. Where do you get your support?
- Tell me about your living situation. Who shares the household with you?

3. PRONOUN AND LANGUAGE

Mirror the words used by the person you are interviewing.

- Address someone that identified as transgender by preferred name and pronoun, regardless of their biology or legal ID.
- Do not assume that a client has a significant other or that if they do, the individual is a different gender.

4. VALIDATION

Regardless of your beliefs, acknowledge a person’s emotions. Validate emotions being experienced without judging.

5. SEX AND AGING

Don’t be afraid to talk about intimacy, relationships and sex if these topics are relevant to the services you provide.

LGBT SENSITIVE FORMS

Sexual orientation, gender identity and sexuality are important parts of all of our lives. While it may be difficult to change forms that are required by funders or government agencies, you may be able to change the way you ask questions to hold a conversation. Some of the questions may include:

Sexual Orientation

Which of the following do you identify as?

Heterosexual/Straight Lesbian Gay Man Bisexual Other

Gender Identity

OPTION 1: ONE QUESTION APPROACH

1. Which of the following do you identify as? Female Male Other

OPTION 2: TWO QUESTION APPROACH

1. What sex were you assigned at birth? Female Male Other

2. What gender do you identify as? Female Male Other

If the answers to 1 and 2 are different, it is likely that the individual may identify as transgender.

Other Questions

1. How do you feel about your sexual orientation/gender identity?
2. How long have you known this about yourself? (When did you come out to yourself?)
3. Who have you told and what kind of responses have you received?
4. Is there anything about your sexual orientation/gender identity you would like to discuss?
5. Are you sexually active?
6. Have your sexual partners in the past been men, women, both, or some other gender?
7. What does "safe sex" mean for you?
8. Are there any questions or concerns about sexual activities you would like to discuss?
9. Are you involved in a significant relationship currently, or have you been in the past?
10. Are your relationships satisfying? Are there any concerns that you would like to discuss?

LGBT AGING TERMS AND CONCEPTS

1. Sex assigned at birth: Objectively measurable organs, hormones and chromosomes.

Intersex: Refers to a person who has both sex characteristics. This may be noticeable at birth or become apparent after puberty. Intersex replaced the term hermaphrodite.

2. Sexual orientation: Who you are physically, spiritually and emotionally attracted to, based on sex/gender in relation to your own.

Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to other women.

Gay man: A man who is attracted to other men.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to women and men.

Straight: A person attracted to someone of the opposite sex.

3. Gender identity: Refers to a person's internal sense of their gender (male, female, or a gender that falls on a continuum between male and female).

Genderqueer: A person who was assigned to either the male or female gender at birth who identifies as either both male and female or neither male nor female.

4. Gender expression: How you demonstrate your gender through the ways you act, dress, behave and interact

5. Pansexual: A person who is attracted to all genders.

6. Asexual: A person who is not attracted to others.

7. Transgender: This term refers to people whose gender identity differs from the gender they were assigned at birth, some of whom modify their bodies through sex reassignment surgery, hormones, or other medical interventions to bring their body into alignment with their sense of themselves. Transgender may also refer to people who express their assigned gender in unconventional ways.

Transwoman: A person who is a biological man, assigned the male gender at birth, whose gender identity is female.

Transman: A person who is a biological woman, assigned the female gender at birth, whose gender identity is male.

Cisgender: Refers to a person whose gender identity is consistent with the gender they were assigned at birth. (Cis is Latin for "on the same side as")