

**National
Resource
Center**



ON LGBT AGING

**Creating Safe and Inclusive Services
for LGBT Older-Adults**

Ruben Rivera-Jackman, MNPL, GMHS, PSC

(206) 701-5435

ruben.jackman@shag.org

Introductions And Welcome

- This presentation has been developed by the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging.

www.lgbtagingcenter.org

Please Refer to Handout 1

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Presentation Goals

- Brief Overview (1 hour)
- More comprehensive workshop is available for organizations that want to develop more inclusive services for LGBT older-adults.
- Kudos to Aldercrest



Presentation Goals

To increase awareness and empathy amongst health care and social service providers about the issues and needs of LGBT older-adults.



Presentation Goals

Designed to help you continue to do the things you do very well already, while enhancing your ability to extend this same great care and service to LGBT older-adults.

Thank you for the role you all play as advocates for the aging.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Why would it be important for health, human, and social service providers to be aware of, and have empathy for, the needs of LGBT older-adults?

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Awareness and Empathy

Many aging services providers see no need to discuss LGBT aging issues because:

1. “What someone does in the bedroom is none of their business.”



Awareness and Empathy

Many aging services providers see no need to discuss LGBT aging issues because:

2. “They don’t want to discriminate.”
3. “They don’t want to make people feel uncomfortable.”

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Awareness and Empathy

While well-intentioned, it leaves many LGBT older-adults feeling that they must hide who they are, in order to take advantage of health, housing, and social service programs.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Distrust of Health Care and Social Services by LGBT Older-Adults

LGBT older-adults have been found to be **5 times** less likely to seek health and social services than their heterosexual peers because of fear of harassment and discrimination.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Distrust of Health Care and Social Services by LGBT Older-Adults

In a study by the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights (AAPHR), **67%** of doctors and medical students report that LGBT patients are denied care or receive substandard care.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Distrust of Health Care and Social Services by LGBT Older-Adults

About **25%** of transgender people report being denied equal health care, or being refused treatment outright, with Latino Transgender people reporting the highest rate of unequal treatment.

Please Refer to Handout 2

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Important Terms

- To begin this presentation, we need to be clear about the terms we're using.
- Terms are crucial because finding out how the person describes him or herself and then using their language are primary ways of conveying respect and openness.



Important Terms

- There has been an evolution over the years with terminology and the way it is used to describe LGBT people and aging adults.
- It is important to be aware that terms may have different meanings based on the person's age, life experience, and cultural heritage. (example: Queer)



Important Terms

- It is important to know which words carry positive or negative undertones.
- For example, the term “**homosexual**” should be avoided because it has taken on negative connotations because of its previous use to denote mental illness.
(**APA, 1973 and DSM II, 1987**)

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Important Terms

- LGBT
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual Please Refer to Handout 3
- Transgender

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING

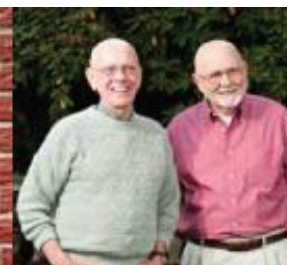


Statistics on LGBT Older-Adults

- In 2010, there were between 1.6 and 2.4 million gay and lesbian elders in the U.S.
- Every state has self-identified LGBT citizens, ranging from 1.7% of the population of North Dakota to 10% of the District of Columbia.

Please Refer to Handout 4

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Statistics on LGBT Older-Adults



Outing Age

PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES AFFECTING
GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ELDERS

by Sean Cahill,
Ken South
and Jane Spade

the
Policy
Institute
of the
National
Gay and
Lesbian
Task
Force
Foundation

By 2030, estimated 2-7 million Americans aged 65 and older will identify as LGBT.

(Outing Age)

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Statistics on LGBT Older-Adults

LGBT older-adults live in most, if not all, communities throughout the country, therefore it is important to develop empathy and learn about best practices to make it safe for LGBT older-adults to seek health and social services, and to receive quality care.

(2010 U.S. Census, 99% of counties)



LGBGT Aging Demographics

- 4.1% of adults in U.S. identifies as LGB, currently around 1.6 million, expected to double to 3 million by 2030.
- Ethnically and economically diverse.
- Isolated, invisible or marginalized, even within their own communities.



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

A key issue affecting organizations that work with older-adults is NOT that they don't want to work with LGBT older adults, but they often don't think they have any clients or patients who are LGBT.

Let's explore this a bit...

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

Thinking that you have no LGBT
clients is an assumption.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



*Do not assume that
all older-adults are
Heterosexual.*

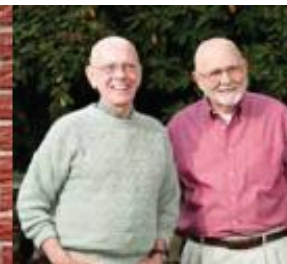
National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

If you believe that you are not currently working with any LGBT older-adults, you may be working with LGBT older-adults who are not comfortable sharing that aspect of their identity. (Silent Generation)

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

- If you aren't currently working with LGBT older adults, you probably will be soon.
- Baby Boomers will refuse to go back into the closet.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



We Want to Prevent LGBT Older-Adults from Going Back into the Closet



**National
Resource
Center**
ON LGBT AGING



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

Often, individual staff members and organizations make additional assumptions in their practices and policies that unintentionally exclude or have a negative impact on LGBT older-adults who are trying to access services.

Let's explore this a bit...



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

- Service providers assume they can identify any LGBT adult who is accessing their services. (gaydar)
- Please Refer to Handout 5

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

By not asking about sexual orientation or gender identity, healthcare and social service providers believe they are ensuring that the organization does not discriminate against LGBT people.



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

Because our culture often desexualizes all older-adults, healthcare and social service providers may think it does not matter if an older-adult is LGBT.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



More than 60% of individuals over 60 have sex at least once a month



Hopefully this is not your first reaction!

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Common Assumptions Made in Health and Social Services

How might these assumptions
affect the LGBT older-adult who
needs to access your services,
or is using your services?

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Stigma

- Came of age in a very different time.
- Many led secret lives or married and had children to fit in.
- Homosexuality considered psychiatric disorder until 1973.
- Homosexuality considered criminal until 2003.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Stigma

- Less than 50% of LGBT Baby Boomers expect healthcare professionals will treat them with dignity and respect.
- 12% of lesbians have absolutely no confidence they will be treated respectfully.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Social Isolation

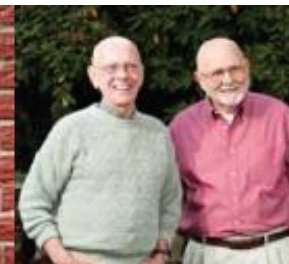
- Twice as likely to live alone, twice as likely to be single, and 3 to 4 times less likely to have children and many are estranged from their biological families.
- Become isolated over time from their broader communities: places of worship, work settings, as well as, from friends and family.





Social Isolation

- Smaller support networks, debilitating feelings of loneliness and depression, deterioration of physical and mental health.
- Higher disability rates, higher poverty rates, struggles with economic security.
- MH concerns as a result of a lifetime of discrimination that has had psychological costs.





Social Isolation

- Experience ageism within the LGBT community itself, increases their risk of social isolation.
- Many who fought for the right to be openly gay in mainstream America, now face a new challenge: remaining openly gay in old age.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

Lack of recognition and fear of Discrimination by:

- Society
- Aging Service Providers
(health, housing, social services, etc.)
- Families of Origin





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

- Among the most invisible of all Americans.
- Grew up in the 1930s, 40s, and 50's were forced to accommodate and stay in the closet.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

Aging services have historically been hostile to the aging LGBT community, resulting in fear and avoidance of aging services. LGBT seniors face more barriers due to the lack of provider knowledge and training, inequitable policies, and lack of resources.





Fears of Harassment and Discrimination

- Few aging service providers plan for, or conduct, outreach to the LGBT community and few are prepared to address acts of discrimination aimed at LGBT older-adults by staff or other older people.
- Often face harassment or hostility when frequenting senior centers, volunteer centers, foodbanks, or places of worship.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Negative Consequences

LGBT older-adults delay seeking necessary health care, sometimes indefinitely, and can lead to premature institutionalization in nursing homes and long-term care facilities, or premature death.





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

- Face anti-gay discrimination in housing, public accommodations and medical treatment.
- Discrimination based on ageism, transphobia, and homophobia.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

Many LGBT Baby Boomers do not want to jeopardize their safety by being out to care providers who may not understand them, so they make the choice to go back in the closet as they get older.





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

LGBT older-adults who are still in the closet have a great fear of people finding out. When they think of a nursing home, which will now be their home, it can be scary. It means people will see their personal things: their books, pictures, and photographs that may represent them as gay. For many home has always been the one place they didn't really have to hide.

**National
Resource
Center**
ON LGBT AGING





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

- For many doing without seems preferable to opening up their home to strangers who may not agree or understand their life.
- Increased risk for unaddressed healthcare needs, social isolation, depression, alcohol and substance abuse, low self-esteem, low self-worth, and suicide.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging

- Many do not have the same family support systems as their heterosexual counterparts.
- While many are close to their families of origin, some have been rejected and have less support.





Unique Challenges to Successful Aging



Many rely primarily on partners and close friends for social support.

Family of Choice vs. Family of Origin.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Sexuality Among Older-Adults

- STD rates among 45- to 65-year-olds have nearly tripled over the past decade. (CDC)
- Number of new HIV infections is growing faster in individuals over 50 than in people 40 years and under., (CDC)
- As of 2015, 50% of men living with HIV in the U.S. are 50 years of age or older.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Historical Events – Self-Reflection

- ✓ Take a few moments to think about the historical events in this country or in other parts of the world that have shaped your life.
- ✓ Note how old you were when those happened.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



The Impact of LGBT History on LGBT Older-Adults

- Came of age at a time when there was great prejudice and violence against LGBT.
- Medical and religious labels of “mental disorder” and “moral aberration” validated this prejudice.
- LGBT people of color had to deal with both racism and prejudice about being LGBT.

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



LGBT Older-Adults Case Studies

Next we will look at some case studies of LGBT older adults, to consider the possible impact of these assumptions on their health and social service needs.

Please Refer to Handout 6

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Short Brainstorm

- Read your assigned case study together
- Discuss the following question:
What kind of health or social services would this person benefit from?
- Jot down your answers
- 5 minutes



Historical Events

- Moon landing
- Challenger Disaster
- Assassinations
MLK/JFK/Malcolm X,
RPK/Harvey Milk
- AIDS Crisis
- Civil Rights
Movement/Selma
- 911
- Obama's Election
- School Shootings



LGBT Historical Timeline

What kinds of impact might these events have had on the person in your case study?

Brief reporting out (5 minutes)

Please Refer to Handout 7

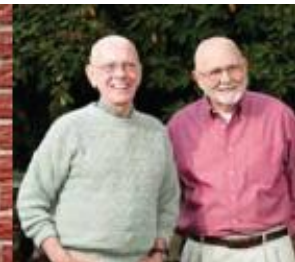


Creating Safe and Inclusive Services for LGBT Older-Adults

Inclusive Services for LGBT Older-Adults 10 Ways to Begin

Please Refer to Handout Page 10-11

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Additional Training Offered

Part 1 (4-hours) and Part 2 (8-hours) modules

- Learn about the culture, needs, and concerns of LGBT older adults
- Consider why LGBT older adults are less likely to access needed services

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING



Additional Training Offered

Part 1 (4-hours) and Part 2 (8-hours) modules

- Develop best practices for safety and inclusivity for your organization
- Develop tools and education to better serve the LGBT older adults who currently access or need services



You can learn more by

- Contacting *Ruben Rivera-Jackman*
(206) 701-5435
www.ruben.Jackman@shag.org
- Downloading additional resources at
www.lgbtagingcenter.org
- Reading more about NRC trainings at
www.lgbtagingcenter.org/about/training.cfm

National
Resource
Center
ON LGBT AGING

