

Supporting LGBTQ Elders

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Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors
of Abuse - Seattle, WA

Welcome!

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Introductions

- Name
- **Your role**
- One thing you like about yourself **or** one thing you are good at!

Our Mission

The Northwest Network increases our communities' ability to support the self-determination & safety of lesbian, bisexual, trans and gay survivors of domestic & dating violence through advocacy, organizing and education. We work within a broad liberation movement dedicated to social & economic justice, equality and respect for all people & the creation of loving, inclusive and accountable communities.

Programs & Services

- Community Advocacy Program
- Queer & Trans Youth Program
- Community Engagement
- Training & Technical Assistance

first things first.

LGBT²Q²HTSI

‘Gay Alphabet Soup’ Decoder solving the age-old question: “But what should I *say*?”



**What words have you heard
used respectfully in your
community to refer to non-
heterosexual, and non-gender
conforming people?**

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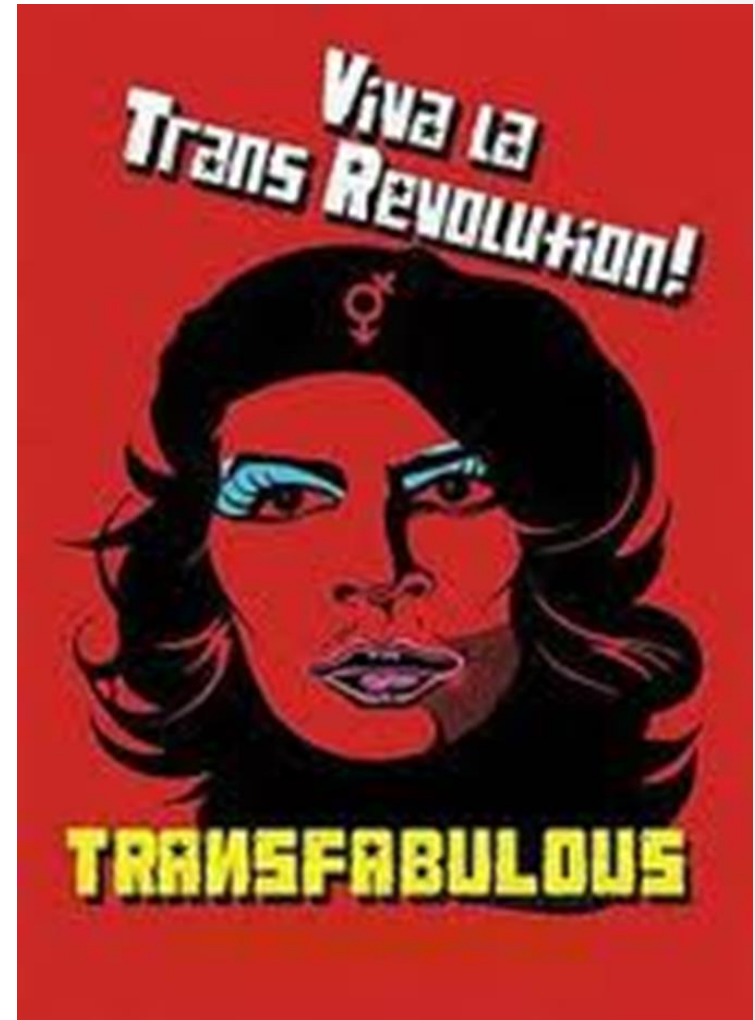
Some notes on language:

- Almost every word that has been **used by us** respectfully, has been **used against us** hatefully.
- Use the language people use to **describe themselves**.
- The **words** people use may **change** over time.
- These words reflect a **great diversity** of experience and identity.
- Tension of “**Insider vs Outsider**” words.
- “**Camp**” as an LGBT community characteristic.



Transgender or Trans*

- An umbrella term referring to people who in some way defy traditionally acceptable ways of expressing gender (i.e. what a society says it means to be a “man” or a “woman”). *Some may identify as trans*, non-binary, FTM, MTF, genderqueer, gender variant, etc.*



Sex

Biological traits that society associates with being male or female



Gender

Cultural meanings attached to being masculine & feminine, which influence personal identities

E.g. Man, Woman, Transgender, Intersex, Gender Queer, among others



Sexuality

Sexual attraction, practices & identity which may or may not align with sex and gender

E.g. Heterosexual, Homosexual (Gay or Lesbian), Bisexual, Queer, among others



There is no singular trans* experience

- People choose to express and affirm their gender in various ways
- Gender is not static or binary
- Trans* folks navigate different barriers and have access to more/less resource & safety based on privilege and identity



Video Discussion Questions

- What are your biggest takeaways/insights after watching this video?
- Personal reflections?
- What do you want or need to learn more about?

Understanding Systemic Barriers Exercise

In your small group, please brainstorm as many examples as you can of how **LGBTQ elders might encounter differential treatment** when interacting with these systems

Building an Anti-Oppression Analysis

In order to effectively create organizational cultures that prevent harassment and respond to incidents in a meaningful & effective way, **we have to build an analysis around systemic oppression** in order to understand its impacts in our workplace and within our services.

We need to commit to being lifelong learners!

A Common Response

**“We treat everyone
the same.”**

The same as whom?

reframing the conversation:

FROM	TO
why are people LGBTQ?	what are the obstacles to LGBTQ elders survival and equality?
what are LGBTQ elder's lives like?	what does discrimination look like?
how do LGBTQ people feel about themselves?	how do we dismantle the systems of oppression that target trans* and LGBQ elders?

Interrupting Homophobia & Transphobia

DO:

- Say something every time you hear a homophobic/transphobic remark
- Know the policy on harassment at your organization
- Report the incident
- Check in with person(s) targeted by the remark about what or if they need anything
- Attempt to engage the person who made the remark
- Know history of oppressive remarks
- Model behavior you think will create a safer environment
- Make yourself available for questions

DON'T:

- Ignore/minimize the situation
- Assume you know the sexual orientation/gender identity of the person who made the remark or the targets(s) of the remarks
- Assume that everyone in the room is straight/gender normative
- Feel like you need to disclose your sexual orientation/gender identity

Building a Cultural Context for LGBTQ Elders

Historical context for today's LGBTQ Elders

- Homosexuality as mental illness; involuntary commitment, forced “therapies”
- Police entrapment & violence, targeting of community spaces and individuals
- Sodomy laws & criminalization
- Early years of HIV/AIDS pandemic
- Gender Dysphoria in DSM

Building a Cultural Context for LGBTQ Elders

LGBTQ Elders today:

State & Municipal Laws impacting LGBTQ communities

- Anti-discrimination laws
- Parenting & adoption laws
- State-wide relationship recognition & protections

Building a Cultural Context for LGBTQ Elders

LGBTQ Elders today:

Social & Community Support

- Lack of acceptance in mainstream aging programs
- Invisibility in broader LGBTQ community
- Housing discrimination in senior communities

Building a Cultural Context for LGBTQ Elders

Reliance on informal “families of choice” for social connections, care and support.

Today, about 80% of long-term care in the U.S. is provided by family members, and more than two-thirds of adults who receive long-term care at home depend on family members as their only source of help.

By contrast, LGBT elders are more likely to be single, childless, and estranged from biological family—relying on friends and community members as their chosen family.



LGBT
senior pride

“For our community, **elder abuse is even more pervasive**, primarily because our elders are even more vulnerable than their heterosexual counterparts. Having lived in the closet for most of their lives, **many of our elders have become accustomed to substandard treatment**. Through a lifetime of living in the shadows, many of our seniors have learned not to ask questions, not to question authority, and to never, ever tell. **Bluntly put, our seniors are primed for abuse.**”

-Sgt Judy Nosworthy, LGBT Liason, Toronto Police Department

Nosworthy, J. (2003, February) "Gay Elder Abuse." GayWired.com

Elder Abuse & Exploitation

Intimate Partner Violence

- LGBTQ people experience variably higher rates of IPV
- Isolation relating to homophobia & transphobia
- Lack of visibility of abuse within LGBTQ communities
- Lack of culturally specific DV services; fear of bias in receiving support from mainstream DV programs

Elder Abuse & Exploitation

Violence & Exploitation from family and caregivers

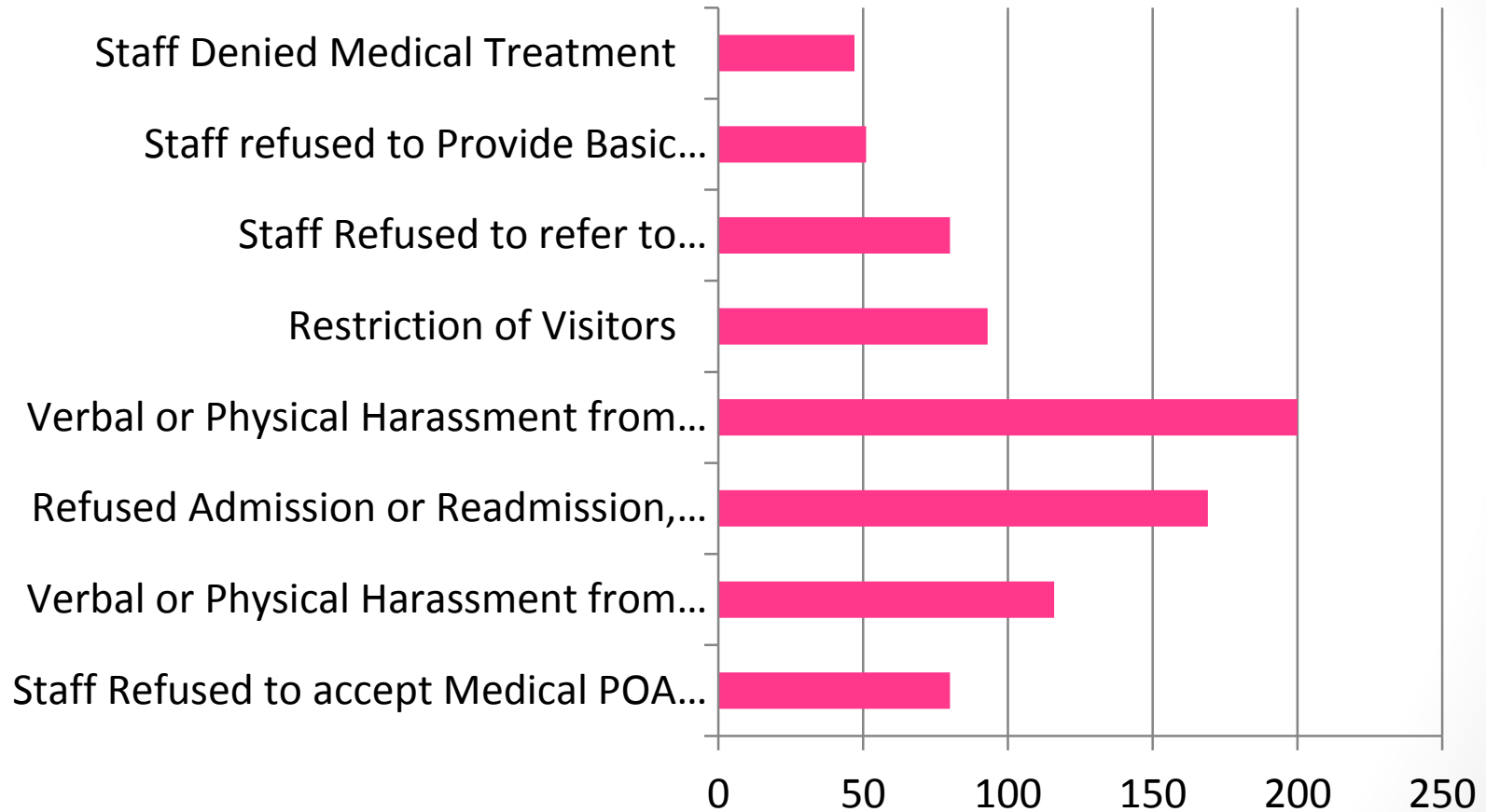
- Fear of/and experiences of bias or violence around disclosing sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status
- Financial exploitation
- Self-neglect
- Legal rights afforded to biological family, who may not be supportive

Elder Abuse & Exploitation

Discrimination & Abuse in Long-term care facilities

- Fear of being out and vulnerable
- Abuse or neglect by staff
- Isolation and discrimination from residents
- Lack of respect for the importance of chosen family, medical decision-making
- Experiences of neglect, abuse, lack of gender affirming services for Transgender elders

Of 853 Total Reported Experiences of Violence or Discrimination based on Resident's Real or Perceived Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation



Advocacy for LGBTQ Elders

- Offer LGBTQ –specific training to senior service organizations and long-term care facilities
- Work to create a welcoming space for LGBTQ Elders by ensuring forms, reception areas, outreach materials, etc are inclusive of LGBTQ people’s lives & relationships



Advocacy for LGBTQ Elders

- Provide education and information about protections offered under the federal Nursing Home Reform Act
- Build partnerships with LGBTQ organizations to offer programming of interest to LGBTQ Elders and allies.



Advocacy for LGBTQ Elders

- Ensure gender affirmative services & care for Transgender seniors
- Partner with local anti-violence service organizations to develop resources & referrals for LGBTQ elder abuse survivors
- LGBTQ focused trainings for Ombudsmen Programs.



Resources

- **SAGE – Services & Advocacy for LGBT elders**
<http://www.sageusa.org/>
- **National Resource Center on LGBT Aging:**
<http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/>
- **The Task Force Aging Initiative:** <http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/>
- **LGBT Elder Initiative:** <http://www.lgbtei.org/>
- **National Center for Lesbian Rights Elder Law Program:**
http://www.nclrights.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issue_elderLaw
- **Lambda Legal:** <http://www.lambdalegal.org/>
- **National Center for Transgender Equality:** <http://transequality.org/>
- **National Senior Citizens Law Center:** <http://www.nsclc.org/>
- **Senior Services Seattle:**
<http://www.seniorservices.org/lgbt/Home.aspx>



Thank you!

The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors of Abuse

Have additional questions? Please Call:

206-568-7777

www.nwnetwork.org

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