LGBT AGING
CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT
How many LGBT 65+?

1.5 million
History Matters
Messages

- Sick (1973)
- Criminal (2003)
- Immoral/Anti-Family/Evil
- Threat to Security and Morale
Impact

- High Risk for Isolation/Concealment
- Unique Financial Challenges
- Health Risks
- Reluctance to Access Services
- On-going Social Discrimination
Isolation

- 10x less likely to have a crisis contact
- 2x more likely to live alone (especially true of women)
- 2x more likely to have no life partner
- 4x more likely to have no children
Gay and lesbian seniors have lower income
LGBT Seniors face Social Security Inequities

- Non-LGBT couples
- Gay couples
- Lesbian couples
Other Financial Challenges

- Employee pension
- Tax-qualified retirement plans
- Employee health insurance
- Veteran’s benefits
- Inheritances
Health Disparities

- LGBT people experience poorer health than their non-LGBT peers.

- LGBT people 50+ report problems such as diabetes and asthma at rates similar to those usually found among people a decade older.

- HIV/AIDS not addressed in older populations.

- Little research or data is collected.
Formal Care Systems
Healthcare Inhospitability

- 2006, less than 50% baby boomer LGBT people assumed healthcare providers would treat them with respect

- LGBT seniors are 5x less likely than non-LGBT peers to access social services

- Are institutionalized earlier than their heterosexual peers
Do you feel that an **LGBT older adult can be open** with the staff of a nursing home, assisted living or other long-term care facility about her/his sexual orientation and/or gender identity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBT Older Adults</th>
<th>Non-LGBT Older Adults</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No or Not Sure</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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*Source: LGBT Older Adults in Long-Term Care Facilities: Stories from the Field, 2012*
Of the 289 service providers who answered the survey, 247 felt that LGBT older adults were not safe coming out or were not sure that they should come out.
Older LGBT Adult Expectations

- Total respondents: 649
- Abuse/neglect by staff: 346
- Isolation by residents: 500
- Discrimination by residents: 526
- Discrimination by staff: 578
System Challenges

- Professional lack of knowledge around LGBT health care issues, especially transgender issues
- Nursing homes are particularly hostile
- Caregivers offered little support (i.e. Family Medical Leave Act, Default decision-making laws)
Ongoing Social Challenges

- Aging services providers uninformed and unwelcoming
- Few LGBT-specific resources
- Shunned by ageist LGBT community
- Housing discrimination
Older LGBT Strengths
Resiliency

- Strong coping skills from dealing with discrimination
- Crisis-competency
- Strength through adversity
- Related to comfort with “outness”
Social Support Networks

- Chosen or constructed family

- Community identification and participation
Experience as Change Agents

- Resistance to gender stereotypes (especially women)
- Many not only watched but also created change
- Willingness to take risks for change
Rich Theological Insights

- Blessings and diversity of human sexuality
- Meaning of family and faithfulness
- Honoring of friendship
- Justice and liberation
Tips for Success
Tips for Success

- Use the name and pronoun preferred by the elder
- Be aware of the lack of legal protections for LGBT elders and their potential impact
- Ask about friends, career, significant people
- Utilize the chosen family/friends of LGBT elders
Tips for Success

- Remember that not all couple relationships are heterosexual. Use the terminology used by the LGBT elder.

- Be familiar with local community resources

- Examine your own stereotypes and biases

- Be an advocate
Notes and Resources

Graphs and figures within the presentation are taken from:

*Improving the Lives of LGBT Older Adults* by LGBT Movement Advancement Project (MAP) and Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders (SAGE). published in 2010

*LGBT Older Adults in Long Term Care Facilities: Stories from the Field*, a report issued by National Senior Citizens Law Center, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, SAGE, Lambda Legal, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Center for Transgender Equality, 2011.

See also:


Carol Wise, Executive Director

**Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests**