

# Creating Safe Spaces for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Seniors



# Introduction



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# Workshop Objectives:



- Overview of Los Angeles LGBT Center & Senior Services
- Options for ways that you can adapt your work environment to create a safe space for LGBT Seniors
- Coming out process for older adults and how it affects treatment planning
- Explain the mental health disparities that affect LGBT older adults and how they might present in the treatment setting



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# What do LGBTQI mean?



The sexual minority community using the first letter of the word that denotes identity to name its community.

L=Lesbian

G=Gay

B=Bisexual

T=Transgender

Q=Questioning or Queer

I=Intersex



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# The Los Angeles LGBT Center



- First LGBT organization to be granted “non-profit” status.
- We are a service, advocacy, community health center
  - Health Clinic, pharmacy, mental health clinic
  - HIV/STD prevention programs
  - Drug rehabilitation programs
  - Youth and Family Services
  - Lifeworks
  - Cultural Arts and Leadership Lab



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# 50+ Senior Services



## - Four Locations

### ○ **The Village**

- Community Center- Case Management and Activities
- Food Pantry, Crisis intervention, Veteran Services
- 4,000+ clients, 600 Veterans

### ○ **Residential Services: Triangle Square & AMRC**

- Senior Independent Affordable Housing 100+ units
- Case Management and Activities

### **MCC in SF Valley**

- ✦ Weekly activities for Valley residents.

### **Mi Centro/Boyle Heights**

- ✦ Serving East LA/Boyle Heights LGBT Community
- ✦ Weekly Activities and Case Management



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# 50+ Senior Services Programs



## - Activities

- Support Groups for men, women and trans
- Healthy living (Dance, Yoga, Acupuncture)
- Prom (over 200) and Holiday party (300+)

## - Case Management

- Referral based
- Housing search assistance
- Employment Assistance through the LA Dept of Aging OWEPP Program

Supportive Services in Permanent Housing  
Triangle Square and AMRC



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# Triangle Square Apartments





# Triangle Square Apartments Population



- ▶ 104 units – 96 one bedroom units, 8 two bedroom units
- ▶ 35 (33%) of units set aside for HIV/AIDS, Homeless or At Risk of Being Homeless
- ▶ 36% of the residents are living with HIV/AIDS
- ▶ 99% occupancy rate since opening in 2007
- ▶ Average age of resident is 75
- ▶ 70% of all residents live at or below poverty level
- ▶ 85% of the residents are living with at least one chronic condition
- ▶ 32% of the residents have HUD vouchers



# Anita May Rosenstein Campus



- The Los Angeles LGBT Center's Anita Mae Rosenstein Project will be complete in 2019 and will provide up to 100 affordable housing units within what will be the first intergenerational campus for the LGBT community



# Anita May Rosenstein Campus

Creating  
intergenerational  
opportunities for  
connection, and  
sharing between  
seniors and youth



## Site Plan



# Population



- There is no precise figure of how many seniors are LGBT. The best estimates are that by 2030 the US will be home to 2-7 million LGBT seniors or approximately **3-8% of seniors are LGBT** (Cahill, South & Spade, 2001; Sullivan, 2011).
- **Fastest growing group in the US** according to the US Census. Latest data reports a 3% increase in same sex households in US, general population growth 1% during same time period (Gates, 2010).



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# In California



- A conservative estimate is that there are approximately 861,000 lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women living in California. There are no figures on percentage of transgender men and women.
- There are approximately 109,000 same-sex couples living in California.
- **Latinos and Latinas represent 25% of same-sex couples** in the LGB population (Gates & Ramos, 2008).



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# LGBT History



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# LGBT Seniors: Three Generations



- GI Generation: Oldest of the Old born 1901-1924
- Silent Generation: Old born 1925-1945
- Baby Boom Generation: Young Old and Middle Age born 1946-1964

These three generations experience life very differently, for LGBT seniors some of the differences are dramatic.



# LGBT History



The History of the Movement has a number of historical markers:

- Pre-Stonewall Era
- Stonewall Riots
- Declassification of homosexuality as a personality disorder by APA



# Nancy' Story



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8dty3jQbHo>

# Why does it matter?



- **Different generations have different life experiences**, just like all seniors. For LGBT seniors, the history of oppression is tangible.
  - For the oldest and old seniors forced institutionalization was a real threat.
  - Imprisonment for impersonating the opposite sex (such as women wearing suits) happened.
  - Loss of job and family of origin was a threat and something that occurred in the lives of many.
  - Isolation was common—especially because many thought they were the “only one” who may be LGBT.



# Vocabulary



- **Lifestyle** (negative) vs. **Identity** (who you are)
- **Homosexual** (clinical) vs. **LGBT** (identity)
- **Preference** (choice) vs. **Sexual Orientation** (identity)
- **Sex Change** (inaccurate, offensive) vs. **Transition** (accurate for all transgender people)

# Transgender



## GENDER

Psychological awareness or  
Internal awareness  
Expression: how a person  
Communicates his or her identity  
Gender role: what roles are we  
socialized into believing are male  
or female?

VS.

## SEX

Based on anatomy  
Chromosomal



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# Trans vs Cis Gender

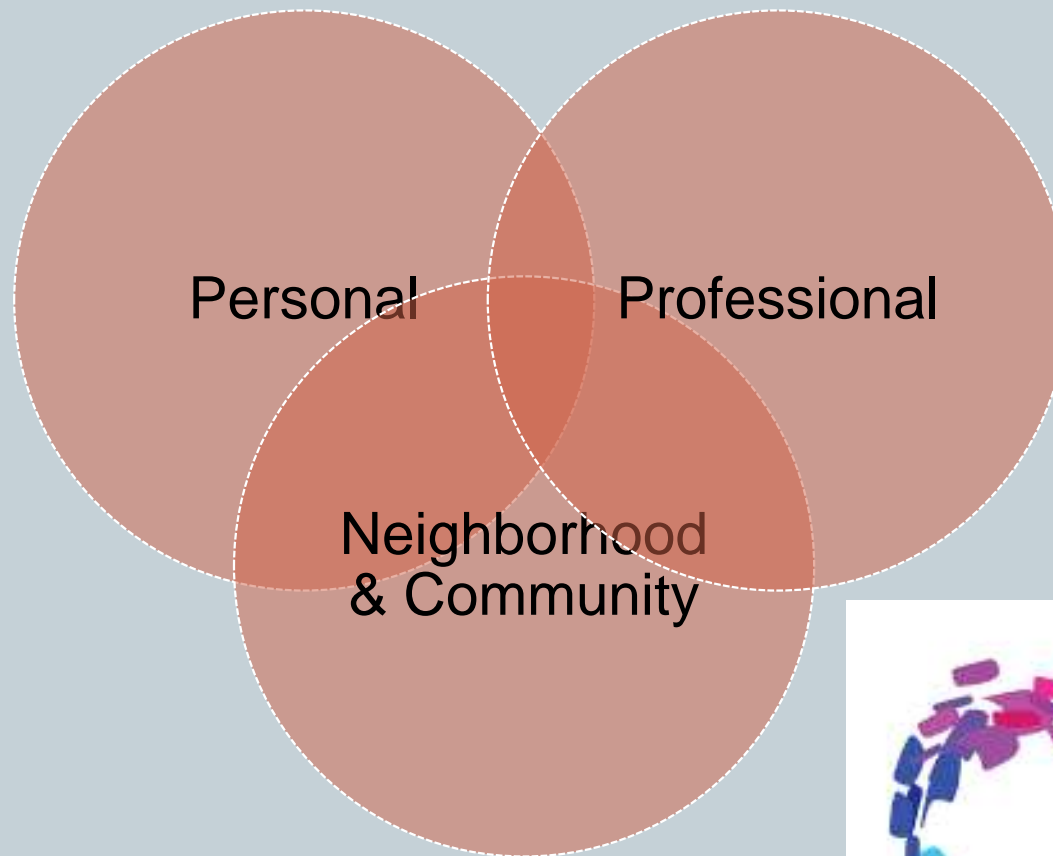


- When you are born the doctor and society decide what gender you are. As we get older we decide if we agree with the gender assigned to us
- Agree- Cis gendered person agrees with society.
- Disagree- Transgendered person does not agree with how society defines their gender.

# Coming Out is a complex decision for older LGBT adults.



Areas of life that an LGBT person chooses to be out or in the closet.



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# Life complexities for LGBT seniors



1. Closeting vs. Coming out (again & again)
2. Isolation (by choice and for protection) and lack of familial connections
3. Real or perceived homophobia and transphobia in healthcare or social service institutions



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# Transgender Seniors



- Transgender seniors who transitioned more recently
  - Often lose their social networks they had before transitioning
  - Often lose their jobs and income
  - Need assistance with name and gender changes
- Transgender seniors who transitioned years ago
  - Often have expressed they are no longer “transitioning” and may not identify as “transwomen/men”
  - Established more social networks since transition
- Gender and Sexuality are not mutually exclusive
  - Gender does not dictate sexuality
  - Some of our clients are transgender lesbians for example



# Transgender Seniors



- Experience less accommodating emergency housing
  - Shelter system often Christian
  - Misgender clients
- More open discrimination in housing
  - Clients outright denied housing independently
  - In skilled nursing clients are forced back into the closet and forced to wear clothes of different gender.
  - Some nursing homes, assisted living locations discriminate against HIV positive seniors or feel ill-equipped to address their long term health and medical needs.

# Aging With Pride Study



## **Aging and Health Report** -Karen *Fredriksen-Goldsen*

- Nearly one-half have a disability and nearly one-third report depression.
- Almost two-thirds have been victimized three or more times.
- Thirteen percent have been denied healthcare or received inferior care.
- About one-third do not have a will or durable power of attorney for healthcare.

# Aging With Pride Study



- 31 % report Depression, 53 % report Loneliness
- Nearly four out of ten LGBT older adult participants have contemplated suicide at some point during their lives.
- Employment Discrimination: 22% not being hired
- 21 % not given a job promotion, 14 % being fired
- 5% of LGBT have been prevented from living in
- their desired neighborhood as a result of their
- actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender
- identity.

# Aging With Pride Study: HIV



- 9% of all LGBT older adult participants are living with HIV disease
- More than one in five bisexual older men and nearly one in seven gay older men have HIV. These
- By 2015, half of the more than 1.1 million Americans living with HIV are projected to be age 50 or older
- 13% who participated in the study have been denied healthcare or provided with inferior care.
- More than 20% do not disclose their sexual or gender identity to their physician.

# Aging With Pride: Violence



- 68% Verbal abuse, 43 % physical violence
- 27% being hassled by the police
- 23% have had an object thrown at them
- 20% have had their property damaged or destroyed.
- 19% have been physically assaulted (i.e. punched, kicked, or beaten)
- 14% threatened with a weapon
- 11% sexually assaulted
- 23% have been threatened with disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity

# Aging With Pride Study: Resilience



- 91 % engage regularly in wellness activities
- 82% participate in moderate physical activities
- 38% attend spiritual or religious services or activities
- 89 % felt positive about belonging to the LGBT community



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# Federal Rules



## **Federal Rules for Medicare and Medicaid**

HHS announced guidance and enforcement of patient's rights to appoint person of their choice include same sex partner to make medical decisions and to choose who has visitation rights including same sex partner.

## **HUD**

HUD now includes gender identity and sexual orientation protections in housing discrimination. This rule went into effect March 2012. However, LGBT is not included as a protected class in designated housing.



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# California Law

Discrimination against LGBT seniors is prohibited in state-funded programs and services. State law also protects registered domestic partners when one partner dies.

- **AB 2920** - Older Californians Equality and Protection Act: Ensures that the California Department of Aging includes programming for LGBT seniors as part of its services.
- **SB 1729** – LGBT Senior Care Training: Requires licensed health professionals who have constant interaction with seniors in nursing homes and senior care facilities to receive training to better understand how to foster an environment that is free from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



# What you can do!



- Physical Environment
- Practice
- Language



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# Physical Environment



- Include signage/marketing at the facility that are LGBT friendly
- Ensure language on all agency forms is LGBT friendly (e.g., use “partner” or “partnered” as a marital status term)
- Update your agency’s nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies to be LGBT-inclusive



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# Practice



- Assess your own comfort level with LGBT issues and seek resources to enhance your knowledge and understanding
- Don't assume heterosexuality or sexual inactivity
- Respect a person's identity. Never **“out”** a senior! Make sure to ask in what areas of their life they are out.
- Ask open-ended questions about senior's family



# Practice



- Make nonjudgmental statements
- When client's disclose their sexual orientation assure them they are safe to disclose
- Protect your client's confidentiality
- Ask questions related to their situation- not your personal curiosity.
- Know your rights and responsibilities as a service provider and know the rights of your clients



# Language



- Be respectful by addressing a client by the name and pronoun they use, regardless of their biology or legal identification
- Use gender neutral language about a person's significant other
- Ask open-ended questions about senior's family
  - ✦ Who shares a house with you?
  - ✦ Where do you get support?
  - ✦ Who is important to you?



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# Questions?



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# Contact Information



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