

For professionals providing services to seniors: How to be inclusive and supportive of LGBT seniors*

I. Practice Equality

- Establish a non-discrimination policy for your agency/ program/ facility that includes sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Make sure that the policy is well known by posting notices and including information in handbooks and other materials. Clients and staff members need to know about the policy and how it is enforced.

II. Provide Training

- All staff members should receive continuing training on diversity issues and cultural competency.
- Cover issues related to both sexual orientation and gender identity.

III. Provide inclusive materials

- Make sure that intake, assessment, and information forms are inclusive of all family forms
- Use terms such as “significant other” and “partner,” rather than “husband,” “wife,” or “spouse.”
- Broaden the definition of caregiver by simply asking for “other care provider” and a description.
- Make sure that form choices are broad enough to include a variety of families and caregivers.

IV. Create a welcoming environment

- Use inclusive language (partner, significant other, circle of care).
- Welcome “chosen family” members in the same way that biological/legal family members are welcomed. Include chosen family in the decision making process.
- Make symbols of acceptance and diversity visible in your agency/program/facility.
- Invite in speakers, show films, offer presentations on LGBT issues.

V. Learn about the LGBT Community and Resources

- Make the staff familiar with LGBT organizations and resources in the area and the New York State LGBT Health and Human Services Network Senior Issues Workgroup.
- Participate with LGBT community leaders in collaborations/networking.

VI. Identify a Consultant

- Identify a staff person who can be consulted about LGBT issues or problems.
- Where possible, create networks of support for consultants – with others inside and outside of the agency.

**These guidelines are based on the New York State Office for the Aging’s list of Critical Questions for Senior Housing: Gay and Lesbian Concerns (<http://seniorhousing.state.ny.us/questions/q08b.htm>).*

**These guidelines are based on the New York State Office for the Aging's list of Critical Questions for Senior Housing: Gay and Lesbian Concerns (<http://seniorhousing.state.ny.us/questions/q08b.htm>).*