

LGBTQ+ Aging & Maltreatment Concerns

2021 Big Sandy Domestic Violence & Elder
Abuse Awareness Conference

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Session Objectives

1. The audience will explore challenges faced by LGBTQ+ elders accessing healthcare and how to overcome those obstacles.
2. The audience will learn about LGBTQ+ elders experience with abuse/neglect.
3. The audience will learn positive language that affirms the dignity of LGBT elders.
4. The audience will learn how to identify strengths of the LGBT elder client.
5. The audience will learn how they can make changes so that their agency is more inclusive of the LGBT elder client population.

What is a Long-Term Care Ombudsman

- Ombudsman [om-buh dz-muh n] is a Swedish word for advocate. A long-term care (LTC) ombudsman is an advocate for individuals and their families who need the services of a LTC facility.
- LTC Ombudsmen are trained to impartially investigate and resolve concerns of residents in long-term care facilities. They also provide information and refer residents to additional community resources when appropriate.

What do LTC Ombudsmen do?

- Protect the rights of residents in LTC settings
- Identify, investigate and work to solve problems
- Regularly visit residents
- Inform and help residents exercise their rights
- Provide information and assistance to community
- Monitor government actions affecting residents

All services and programs are free of charge to residents and their families.

State of LTC

- Residents in LTC are approximately 70% female
- Average age is 80 years or older
- Approximately 15% are relatively young
- 69% are using Medicaid
- 14% are using Medicare for rehabilitation
- 50% have a type of dementia
- Residents with psychological diagnoses increased 17% between 2003-2008. Residents needing psychiatric care is increasing.
- 67% of LTC facilities are for profit

LGBTQ+ Older Adult Population

By 2030: As many as **7 million**

- Twice as likely to live alone (80% age alone)
- Four times less likely to have children (90% none)
- May not have traditional family support
- May be isolated from LGBT community
- More Likely to face poverty and economic insecurity
- Five times less likely to access senior services



LGBTQ+ Aging Studies & Reports

- 27% of LGBTQ+ baby boomers had significant **concerns about discrimination** as they age and there are reports that LGBTQ+ older adults encounter violations of their rights when seeking long-term care services and supports.
- Incidents of abuse are often unreported or unidentified; however, 89% of individuals responding to a recent survey felt that staff would discriminate against an LGBTQ+ elder who was out of the closet.
- Negative treatment, including verbal and physical harassment, by other residents was the most commonly reported problem by respondents.
- 2/3 of LGBTQ+ seniors report being victimized 3 or more times in their life

Distrust of Health Care & Social Services by LGBTQ+ Older Adults

- 5 times less likely to seek health and human services than their heterosexual peers because of fear of harassment and discrimination.
- In a study by the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights, 67% of doctors and medical students report that LGBTQ+ patients are denied care or receive substandard care.
- 1/4 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.
- Less than half of LGBTQ+ baby boomers believe healthcare professionals would treat them with dignity and respect.
- Transgender people report places of care and services to be places of verbal harassment and physical attack. Undocumented non-citizens, African-American, and Asian transgender people face the highest rate of harassment and attack.



RESIDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO

Receive adequate appropriate care

Participate in their care

Refuse medication and treatment

Make personal decisions

Reasonable accommodations

Privacy and Confidentially

Be treated with respect and dignity

Be free from abuse

Self-determination

File a complaint

Visits

Transfer and discharge rights

Abuse Neglect and Exploitation

KRS 209.020

"Abuse" means the infliction of injury, sexual abuse, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or punishment that results in physical pain or injury, including mental injury.

"Neglect" means a situation in which an adult is unable to perform or obtain for himself the goods or services that are necessary to maintain his health or welfare, or the deprivation of services by a caretaker that are necessary to maintain the health and welfare of an adult.

"Exploitation" means obtaining or using another person's resources, including but not limited to funds, assets, or property, by deception, intimidation, or similar means, with the intent to deprive the person of those resources.

Are LGBTQ+ older adults more likely than non-LGBTQ+ adults to experience elder abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation?

- We still do not have data that can answer that question, but we do know that between 2% and 10% of all older adults experience abuse, and that LGBTQ+ older adults have additional specific vulnerabilities.
- Studies show that transgender persons have the highest risk of victimization (i.e. physical abuse, sexual abuse, homicide). 43% have been victims of violence or crime.

A Deeper Look

Tactics

- Abuser threatens to “out” the older adult
- Abuser says authorities won’t believe the older adult
- Victim fears “spending the rest of my life alone”
- Victim may be easier to isolate
- Society says, “This is the best you can expect”
- Victim has history of self-reliance, fears authorities

Know
signs of
abuse &
neglect

Be
observant

- Physical or mental changes that might be due to overmedication or under utilization of prescribed drugs;
- A sudden change in behavior;
- A marked deterioration in the older person's appearance or housekeeping;
- A sudden negative change in the older adult's financial status;
- Dehydration, malnutrition, poor personal hygiene, or untreated health problems;
- Hazardous, unsafe, unsanitary, or unclean living conditions;
- Unpaid bills or substandard care being provided even though adequate financial resources exist;
- New people or previously uninvolved relatives appearing in the older person's life, particularly if they seem overly interested in the older person's finances;
- Inappropriate and/or inadequate clothing; and
- Absent or "lost" medical aids like eyeglasses, hearing aids, and dentures.
- If the person is uncommunicative, unusual behaviors such as avoiding or acting fearful around a particular person may be a sign of abuse.

How to help

- Report abuse to Adult Protective Services 1-800-752-6200
- When abuse/neglect is suspected of a licensed LTC resident also contact KY Office of Inspector General
<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/os/oig/Pages/default.aspx>

- Safety Planning
- Be willing to “go with”
- Be resourceful

Check out

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dpp/apb/Pages/publications.aspx>

For assistance with prevention or reporting contact the LTC Ombudsman Program 1-800-372-2991 www.ombuddy.org



“What is one thing I can start doing differently to better serve LGBTQ+ older adults?”

PROJECT visibility

Concerns of LGBTQ+ Elders

- Fear of “who will care for me?”
- Elders wanted to know what providers were friendly
- Elders felt there was a need for sensitivity training
- Bottom line—they want to be treated with respect and dignity



Elver, lived in a group home

PROJECT visibility

Positive language affirms

- Lesbian – A woman who is attracted to women.
- Gay – A man who is attracted to men.
- Bisexual – A man or woman attracted to both genders.
- Transgender – A person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth
- Queer - Queer is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual, hetero-normative, or gender-binary.



Annie,
Project Visibility's
Narrator

PROJECT visibility

LGBTQ+ Elder Strengths

- Share a common culture
- Self Reliant
- Creates own support network
- Have developed coping skills in dealing with a hostile environment



Rainbow Elders at Boulder Pride

PROJECT **visibility**



Doctor Anna Wegleitner, MD Project Visibility film.
View film trailer on YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rigbG6iFa7o>

Elements of Competent Services for LGBTQ+ Elders

- Create inclusive infrastructure
- Create a safe and welcoming environment
- Develop effective communication skills

Resources

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging www.lgbtagingcenter.org

SAGE www.sageusa.org

Local LGBTQ+ Community Centers [Find a CenterLink Member in our LGBT Community Center Directory \(lgbtcenters.org\)](http://lgbtcenters.org)

Boulder County Area Agency on Aging, Boulder, CO www.projectvisibility.org