

LGBT Seniors & Elder Care

Few senior providers are prepared to prevent or adequately address problems faced by their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elder clients, such as **hostility and discrimination by staff and other clients or residents.**

LGBT seniors have unique needs.

Failure among providers to recognize and accept differing identities and orientations, cultural values and family/support systems often **leads to isolation, neglect, or abuse.**

Past abuse creates strong barriers.

After decades of enduring rejection, stigmatization and mistreatment, **many LGBT older adults feel fearful** of asking for help when they need it most. Some either return to “the closet” or deny themselves needed care altogether.

LGBT elders are a hidden population.

Many older adults do not openly identify themselves as being LGBT. Providers often either do not ask, or **make assumptions about a person's orientation/identity.** These and other signs of non-inclusion—from signage and images, to form language and restroom policies—affect access to care.

LGBT seniors remain vulnerable.

In a recent nationwide survey of LGBT elders in long-term care, **43%** reported instances of mistreatment, and only **1 in 4** believed it was safe to share their identity or orientation with staff.¹

LGBT-dedicated services matter.

In another national survey, 68% of **Houston-area LGBT seniors** stated that “services specifically targeted to LGBT people” was important when choosing providers. 95% agreed that an “open and affirming social environment” was also important. Housing, mental health, medical care, financial/legal planning and nutrition were their top unmet needs.²

1. National Resource Center on LGBT Aging.
<http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources>

2. University of Washington Caring and Aging with Pride.
<http://caringandaging.org>