

Older LGBT Adults

Aging in place or Aging in the closet: Barriers and Challenges when aging as a LGBT individual



Purpose

To provide education on the unique barriers and challenges LGB and T aging adults face when seeking senior services and knowing why this information is important.



Goals

- To identify barriers and challenges older LGB and T adults face
- To identify best practices
- To identify key components to implementing best practices
- To identify key roles professionals may take when assisting aging LGB and T older adults

Identify barriers and challenges older LGB and T adults face



- Older LGB and T adults living in care facilities are in the closet
- The remaining older LGB and T adults from the silent generation and pre-stonewall riots are either living in isolation at home, or in a care facility.
- LGB and T older adults do not seek our senior services due to fear or reprisal
- They remain in the closet during their sunset years, as a way of protection:
  - Fear of harassment, discrimination, abuse, neglect, and mistreatment from staff

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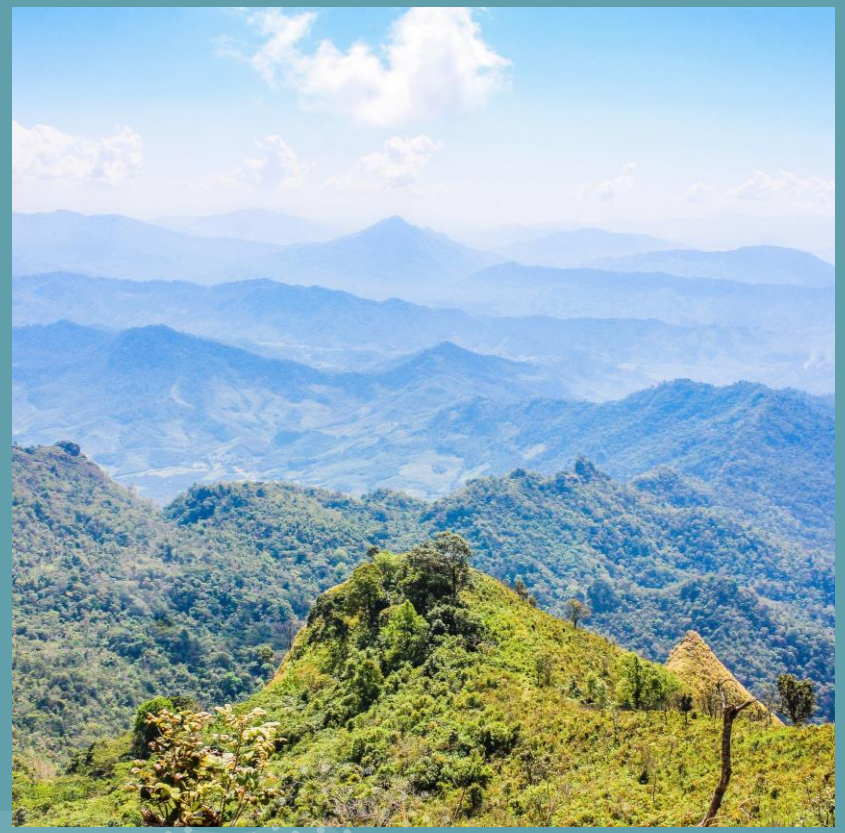


Identify best practices

- Conduct a community needs assessment for older LGB and T adults living in LTCFs, and within the community; anonymous and confidential.
- Stay up to date with research on older LGB and T adults
- Community outreach with known LGBTQIA+ affirming organizations
  - Discuss collaboration: Intergenerational programs which focus on older LGB and T adults and LGBTQIA+ youth
  - Partnering with LGB and T affirming Gerontologist's, clinicians, or all-inclusive elder care providers
- Identify areas within your organization that need to reflect inclusivity:
  - policy, intake forms, inclusive language, educational trainings, introspection.

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Identify key components to implementing best practices



- Community outreach – identify and connect with others advocating for older LGB and T inclusion

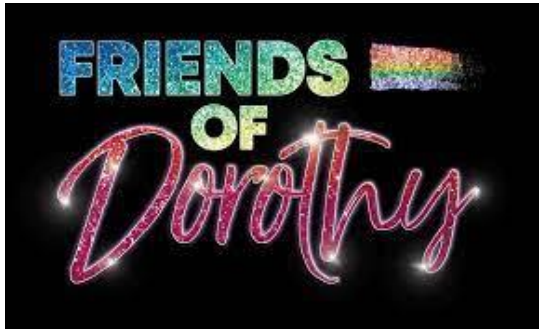
- Policy reform – organizational policy changes, intake forms with inclusive language

- Educational trainings – offer educational seminars for staff, residents, and community members

- Introspection – look deeper into your own implicit bias and address the discomfort within yourself.

- Acceptance – understand LGB and T older adults are here and are not actively or openly seeking senior services due to fear of abuse, discrimination, harassment and neglect











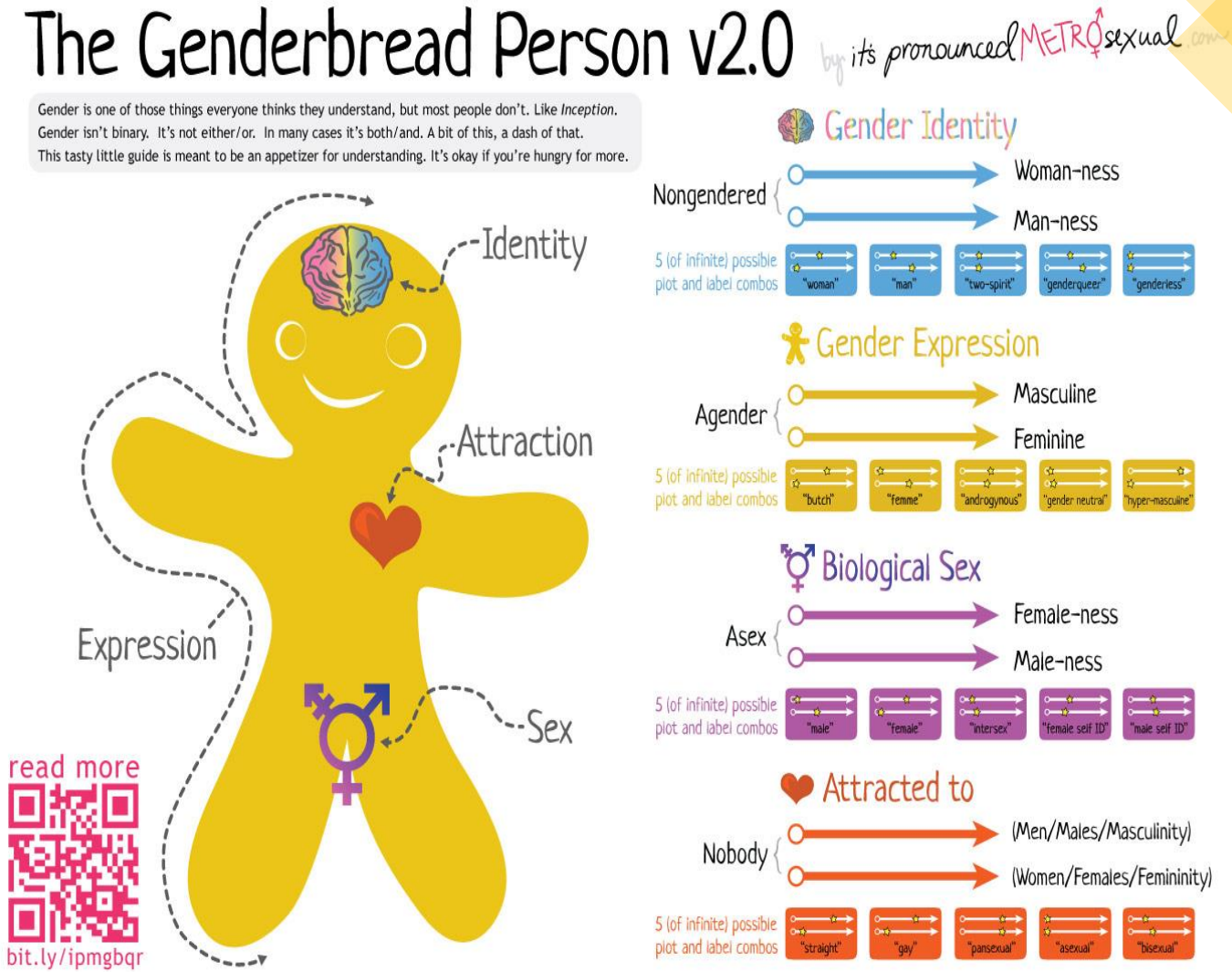
Identify key roles professionals may take when assisting aging LGB and T older adults

- Ask inclusive questions
- Show support with inclusive imagery within and around the spaces you provide services in
- Do NOT make assumptions about lifestyles
  - Many older LGB and T adults have biological children and were in a hetero-passing relationship
  - Many older LGB and T adults are still sexually active – sexual health is important – but know when the questions are relevant to the presenting concern and when they are fueling your own curiosity.

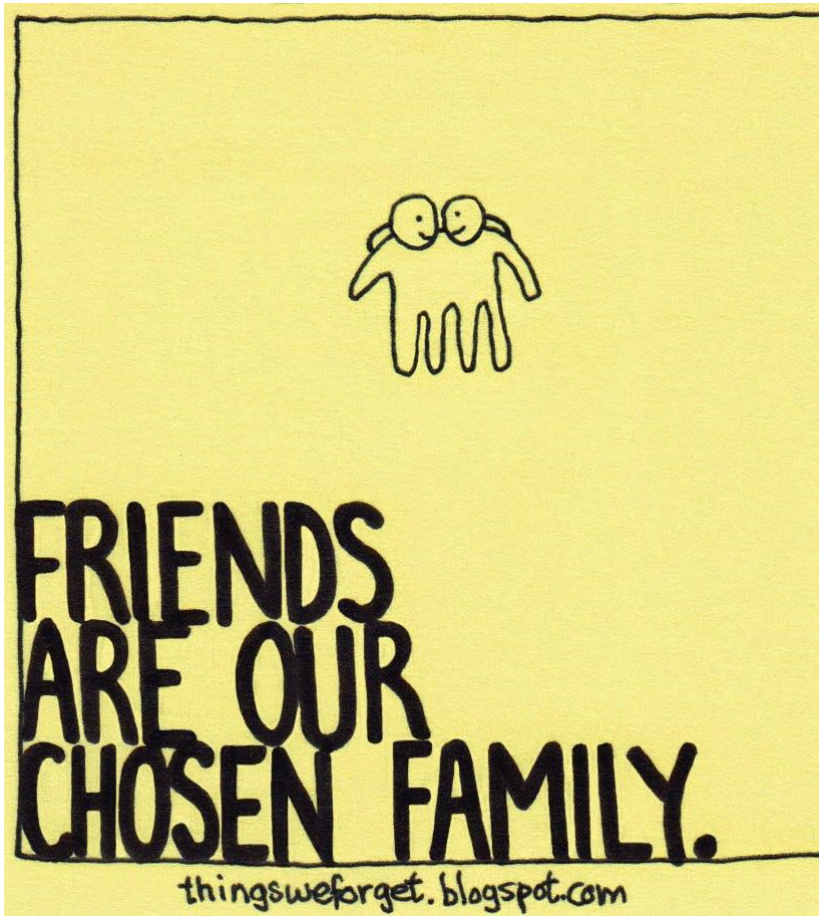
Educate yourself and your staff – remember a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity does not exclude them from being human. Treat an older LGB and T adult with dignity and respect

Additional Information

- Older LGB and T adults do not always disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity
- There are older Transgender adults who transition later in life, there are older LGB adults who do not disclose until later in life
- Survival **means** staying hidden and never disclosing your sexual orientation or gender identity
- Acknowledge this demographic exists. Then we must work harder to gain their trust, so we can provide senior services and support to older LGB and T adults.



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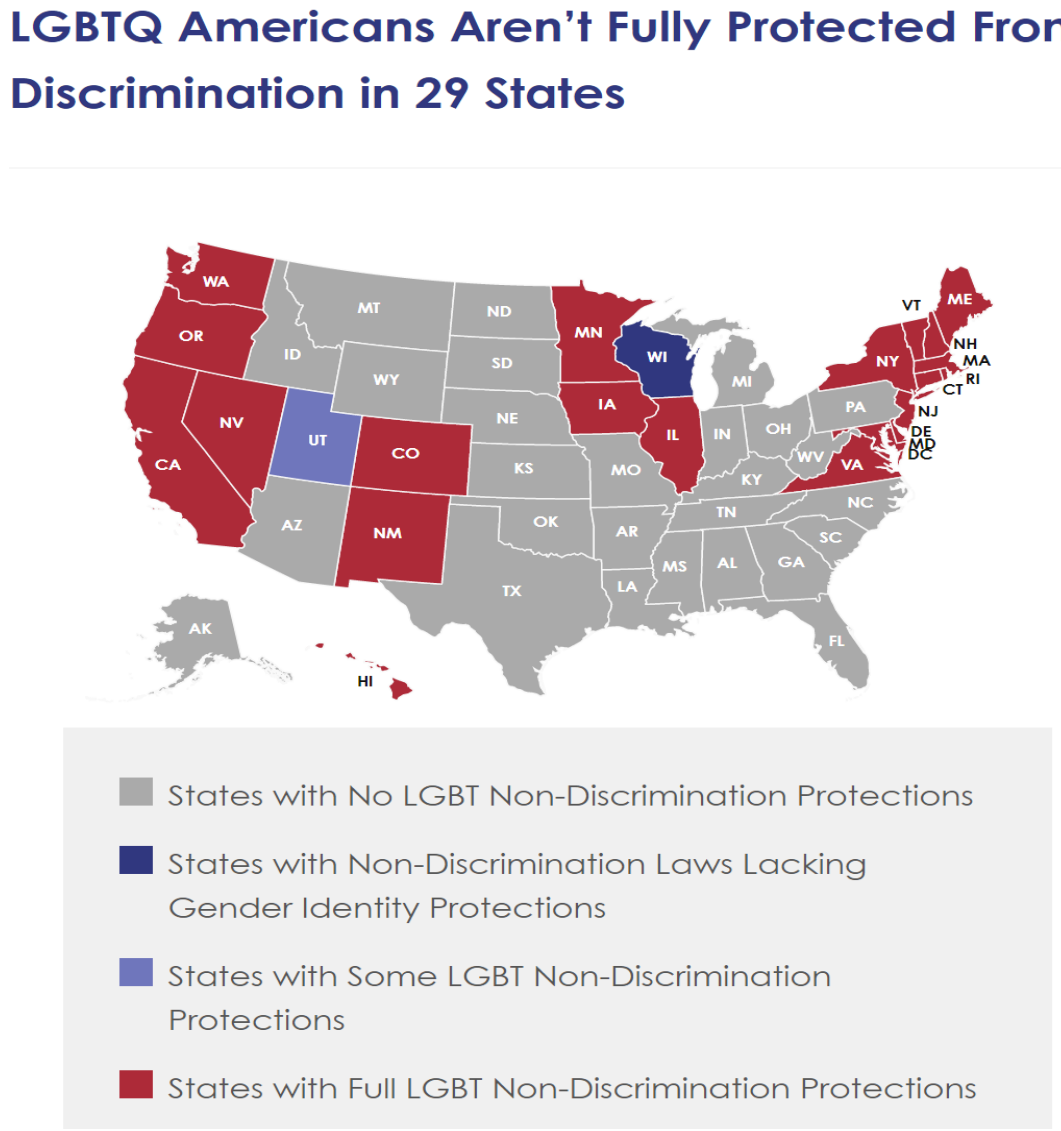
Sad Facts

- Less likely to have children to care for them
- Less likely to live with others
- Most "chosen family" caregivers are the same age
- Many live in isolation, due to living alone
- Many have been victimized before
- Biological families may have disowned them after disclosure

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Sad Facts

- 29 States do not have LGBT protection; meaning LGBT older adults in those states can LEGALLY be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Higher rates of depression
- Die sooner than their heterosexual counterparts
- More likely to be excluded and dismissed once they disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Estranged from biological children after disclosure
- A lifetime of being someone who is not authentically you, and then having to die hiding your authentic self
- Never being able to share your stories about your life and hiding a colossal part of who you are.



QUESTIONS





Jennifer Horn, MSW

Family Caregiver Support Center – Care Planner
PPACG Area Agency on Aging
(719) 471-2096 ext. 108
www.ppacg.org/aging

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References

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