

PRIDE Month



More than five decades after the Stonewall Riots of 1969, June is recognized as PRIDE month, a time dedicated to uplifting voices of the LGBTQ community which for too long were silenced. It is a time of celebration of LGBTQ culture and recognition of accomplishments of LGBTQ individuals such as Gilbert Baker, an American artist, gay rights activist, and U.S. Army veteran, who designed the now famous rainbow LGBT flag in 1978.

Still, unconscious, implicit, and institutional bias continue to effect LGBTQ individuals in ways many people never have to think about. Additionally, older adults who identify as part of the LGBT community are experiencing health disparities as they age after a lifetime of being invisible, underserved, and under resourced. Disparities run the gamut beginning with access to care and include higher rates of substance abuse and misuse, higher rates of mental health conditions especially anxiety and depression, higher rates of social isolation, higher rates of sexually transmitted infections, and higher rates of cervical cancer.

What can be done? Become a sage care credentialed provider. This creates access for AAA staff to obtain training in providing culturally competent care to older individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Partner directly with LGBTQ+ providers; one AAA created "office hours" at an LGBT center where AAA staff could meet with potential clients to discuss services available which may enhance their lives. Create social groups for LGBTQ+ older adults; particularly in remote areas where social opportunities may not be as plentiful, perhaps partnering with neighboring AAAs to create a regionally based social opportunity for LGBTQ+ older adults. Invite feedback to enhance AAA services specifically from this community; send public hearing notices directly to LGBTQ+ providers, include these providers on email lists, create partnerships with these providers and cohost events, etc.

Resources:

- National Resource Center on LGBT Aging
The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging is the country's first and only technical assistance resource center aimed at improving the quality of services and supports offered to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults.
www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/index.cfm
- SAGE
A national advocacy and services organization that's been looking out for LGBT elders since 1978. 877-360-LGBT <https://www.sageusa.org/>
- The West Michigan Area Agency on Aging has created a new resource guide for older LGBTQ adults. <https://www.aaawm.org/uploads/files/document/lgbt-senior-guide.pdf>
- This article from The American Society on Aging looks overcoming barriers to care for LGBT seniors with Alzheimer's.
<https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/Generations%20Overcoming%20Barriers%20for%20LGBT%20Elders%20with%20Alzheimer's.pdf>