

## Protecting LGBTQ+ Residents

Current estimates state that there are nearly 3 million lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others (LGBTQ+) people age 50 and older, and this number is expected to rise to approximately



7 million by 2030.\* In addition to the typical challenges of aging, LGBTQ+ nursing home residents face many additional challenges, including an increased risk of mistreatment.

This month's issue explores some of these challenges and offers ways to help staff protect LGBTQ+ residents.

**Staff who learn to effectively communicate with LGBTQ+ residents and how to best meet their needs help protect these residents, as well as aid in the prevention of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.**

\*[https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/Sage\\_GuidebookFINAL1.pdf](https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/Sage_GuidebookFINAL1.pdf)  
(SAGE, 2020)

## Types of Discrimination

**LGBTQ+ residents experience discrimination in many forms and fear of prejudice by others may keep them from seeking help and services.**

LGBTQ+ residents may be denied visitors of their choice or not allowed to share a room with their partners.

Transgender individuals may be placed with residents who don't conform to their gender identity or preferences.

Staff may use names or pronouns that don't match the way that resident wants to be referred to.

LGBTQ+ residents and their partners may be denied the right to participate in making decisions about their medical care and life.

Isolation is a big risk factor. Due to isolation and being more vulnerable, LGBTQ+ residents may face a greater risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

[Research Brief: Mistreatment of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Elders]

## Transgender Older Adults

Transgender definition: *a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.* (Merriam-Webster)

Many transgender older adults have experienced mistreatment and discrimination in long-term care settings. Some examples include: denial of personal care, physical and psychological abuse, being "outed" against their will, and being refused admission. Among other things, these may result in lack of services for them and puts them at risk of self-neglect.

Transphobia ("social prejudice against transgender persons") increases the risk of abuse and violence against transgender people.

Forty-three percent of transgender people have experienced some form of physical violence or abuse, and an average 80% have experienced harassment or verbal abuse.



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## Unique Needs of LGBTQ+ Residents

Service providers should be aware that the effects of a lifetime of stigma, discrimination, and violence put LGBTQ+ older adults at greater risk for physical and mental illnesses.



These effects include: social isolation, depression and anxiety, poverty, chronic illness, delayed care seeking, poor nutrition, premature death, and more.

By creating a warm and welcoming home for your LGBTQ+ residents, staff will be better able to provide person-centered care, and residents will feel like it's a safe place to be themselves.

[https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/Sage\\_CollDataGuidebook2016.pdf](https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/Sage_CollDataGuidebook2016.pdf)



## Practical Tools for Staff

**Prejudice and hostility encountered by LGBTQ+ residents make it difficult for them to feel at home. The following tips can help create a more inclusive, homelike environment:**

- ⇒ Use each resident's preferred name and pronoun (e.g., he, she, they). When in doubt, ask.
- ⇒ Use the same terminology that couple uses (e.g., partner, roommate, spouse) when referring to the other member of the couple
- ⇒ Connect LGBTQ+ residents to resources and supports (e.g., LGBTQ+ groups, counselling services, etc.)
- ⇒ Stay person-focused: Ask what types of services they want or need
- ⇒ Expand your definition of "family" to include friends and other support people in their lives
- ⇒ Remember that every LGBTQ+ resident is so much more than their sexual or gender identity
- ⇒ Privacy is of utmost concern—It is not your information to share with others.
- ⇒ Recognize signs of abuse, neglect, and exploitation—and believe residents who report any mistreatment
- ⇒ Request training/in-services to learn more!

## Learn More...

**Research Brief: Mistreatment of LGBT Elders** is an informative fact sheet. Find it at: <https://ltcombudsman.org/uploads/files/issues/ncea-lgbt-factsheet.pdf>

The **NCEA** provides the latest info on research, news, training, best practices, and resources on elder abuse, neglect and exploitation to professionals and the public. Visit: <https://ncea.acl.gov/>



**SAGE** is a national organization that offers supportive services and consumer resources to LGBTQ+ older people and their caregivers. For more information, click on: <https://www.sageusa.org/>



**The National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging** focuses on improving the quality of services and supports offered to lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender older adults, their families and caregivers. Visit: <https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/>



**Residents' Rights and the LGBTQ+ Community** (fact sheet for residents). Go to: <https://ltcombudsman.org/uploads/files/support/lgbt-residents-rights-fact-sheet.pdf>

## To Report Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation

Of a nursing home resident by a staff member:  
Call State of Michigan **LARA: (800) 882-6006**

Of an older adult living at home, in assisted living, adult foster care, home for the aged, or a nursing home, by anyone who is *not* a staff member:

Call **Adult Protective Services: (855) 444-3911**

If you think a crime has occurred: Call your local police/sheriff department (and LARA)—If the danger is immediate, call 911

**It's very important for staff to watch for signs of elder abuse and take appropriate steps to prevent and report your suspicions.**



**Thank you for protecting *all* residents.**

## For More Information

Long Term Care Ombudsman: (517) 394-3027  
Tri-County Office on Aging: (800) 405-9141

The *Michigan Elder Justice Initiative (MEJI)*'s **Excellence in Caring** newsletter is published with grant funds from the **Tri-County Office on Aging**.

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