

# A Collaborative Response to the Unique Challenges Facing LGBT Older Adults



# What is LGBT?

- **Lesbian** - a woman whose primary physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women.
- **Gay** - a word to describe anyone, mainly men, who have primary physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to someone of the same sex.
- **Bisexual** - a person who is physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to both men and women.
- **Transgender** - an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.



# LGBT Older Adults are Less Likely to Access Support Services

- Assumption that all older adults (seniors) are heterosexual
- Lack of inclusive LGBT language used in intake forms and/or organization's forms
- Life experiences of distrust of government programs and services



# A Lifetime of Stigma

- Has lived most of his/her life closeted
- Disrupted lives- due to coming out
- Severed connections to families of origin
- Fewer, less secure opportunities to make a living and save for retirement
- Fear of accessing health and community services-civic engagement



# Families of Choice

- Families and social networks are critical to successful aging
- LGBT older adults (older gay men particularly) are significantly less likely than their heterosexual counterparts to be in partnered relationships and/or have children—two groups most frequently called upon to provide care.





# Inequalities Under the Law

- Marriage advancements have not reached all states and leave most LGBT unable to access Government programs and safety nets.
- LGBT People are less likely to have insurance (or partner benefits) and a regular source of care.
- Lack of inclusion in Government funded Aging service



# Best Practices

## Create a welcoming environment

- Use of Language – written and oral
- Organizational policies and procedures inclusive of LGBT people
- Reflection of LGBT people in marketing materials



# Best Practices

- Create and implement consistent programming inclusive of LGBT people
- Collaborate with LGBT network organizations
- Visible organizational inclusiveness with members
- Staff training





# **System Integration Grant**

LGBT Cultural Competency

# INNOVATION

This program was the first time in Georgia that a State led initiative, through a Federal Grant, recognized older adults in the LGBT community as an underserved population and a program was developed in the mainstream aging network of the region to address the needs of these individuals.



# COLLABORATION

*Doug Carl* - big picture and state/  
federal funding structure

*Linda Ellis* – Local SAGE Affiliate,  
community “grassroots”

*Shelly Wender* - I&A program structure, details  
and delivery



# CULTURAL COMPETENCY GRANT

April 2013 to January 2014

## Starting Small with Two Goals

1. Provide Cultural Competency Training to providers in the aging network
2. Provide a culturally competent I&A program to the older LGBT adult



# OUTREACH

## Community Outreach targets included:

- Faith Based Community
- Local SAGE Chapter and other Leisure and Recreation activities
- Community Organizations
- Health Organizations
- Membership Groups





# Got Questions?



## We've got Answers

The Health Initiative is your LGBT stop in the Atlanta Region for access to aging and disability services.

*Housing options*

*Caregiver resources*

*In-home services and adult day programs*

*Emergency financial assistance*

*Home delivered meals*

*Transportation*

*Health and wellness programs*

*And more!*

SAGE Atlanta

**404-688-2524 ext 116**

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www.sageatl.org



You don't have to face the task of finding services for yourself or a significant other alone. Help is as near as your telephone.

Our information and referral professionals can help LGBT older adults and persons with disabilities find the services they need quickly and expertly. Plus, they will treat your call sensitively and confidentially.

### **What is The Health Initiative?**

The Health Initiative provides education, advocacy, support and improved access to care to Georgia's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community. Founded in 1996, we are the largest non-profit organization in the southeast devoted solely to the health and wellness of LGBTQ people.

### **What is SAGE Atlanta?**

SAGE Atlanta is an affiliate of SAGENet and a program of the Health Initiative that works to improve the overall quality of life for LGBT seniors/elders through services, resources, advocacy, and education.

### **Know of a business or organization that wants to be trained in LGBT cultural competency?**

Please contact The Health Initiative or SAGE Atlanta for more information and scheduling.

*These services are made possible by a grant through the Atlanta Regional Commission, Area Agency on Aging*



# BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED

## Older Adults and I&A

- Trust issues
- Wanting LGBT only services
- Financial issues
- Transportation
- Low level of perceived need
- Self-reliance



# BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED

## Providers and LGBT 101

- Scheduling time for the training
- Varied perceptions and opinions on the need for the training
- Management to Direct Service Providers vs. Direct Service Providers to Management
- High Turnover of Direct Care Providers



# LESSONS LEARNED

- I&A best provided by experienced, trained professionals
- Importance of marketing “what I&A can do for you”
- Importance of management buy-in for Cultural Competency training
- Cultural Competency should be a value integrated into the “corporate culture” of provider agencies to be effective





# NEXT STEPS

## Year Two of Grant

- I&A will be in-house at ARC with a referral protocol and direct transfers when appropriate
- Consumer education focus will shift to providing events for the general LGBT community focusing on aging issues and services including AAA/ADRC and Gateway





# NEXT STEPS

## Year Two of Grant

- In addition to the individual provider education, the scope expanded to include “LGBT Cultural Sensitivity Events” which can be formal presentations, information table/booth or breakout sessions at conferences and workshops in Georgia targeting professional organizations



# Statewide LGBT Work Group

Accomplishments and  
Recommendations

# Forming a Diverse Work Group

- Area Agencies on Aging
- Aging Service Providers from the Network
- LGBT Nonprofit Organizations
- LGBT Older Adults
- Universities/Colleges
- State Office of Aging



# Defining the term “safe place” for LGBT older adults

- A place where LGBT are “normalized” within the organization
- Do LGBT older adults feel “physically” safe?
- Use of inclusive language in the organizations forms and policies
- How LGBT older adults are treated by other participants and peers
- LGBT persons are reflected in the organization



# What Does an LGBT Inclusive Organization Look Like?

- LGBT inclusiveness is reflected in the organizations policies and procedures and written documents (forms, registration, etc.)
- An organization incorporates LGBT cultural awareness and training for all staff
- An organization is inclusive in its hiring and employment practices
- An organization demonstrates inclusive programs and services
- An organization demonstrates inclusiveness in its marketing and outreach
- An organization demonstrates its willingness and ability to partner with local LGBT organizations





# Work Group Performance Goals

- Create an organizational self-assessment tool to determine the level of LGBT cultural competency – this includes processes and criteria
- Determine how agencies will be identified within the ADRC and other Aging resource databases
- Determine awareness and training levels that should be required of organizations
- Create resources of LGBT organizations for the Aging Network
- Insure training and educational opportunities are available to the Aging Network



# Recommendations & Actions

1. Support/encourage the use of the LGBT Cultural Competency Self-Assessment for service providers throughout the Aging Network
2. Evaluate/revise all DAS forms for use of words and terms that respectfully reflect the LGBT population.
3. Require ongoing LGBT Cultural Competency Training for all DAS staff, AAA staff, and service provider staff serving Georgia's older adult population
4. Identify LGBT older adults as an underserved population within the State and Area Plans on Aging
5. Raise awareness of LGBT older adults as an underserved population to other State sister departments



# Questions?

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