

Preparing to Engage with In-home Aging Services: Tips for LGBTQ+ People

LGBTQ+ older adults should expect a high-quality healthcare experience (Boyd, 2018). Inviting a service provider into one's home or the home of a loved one can be vulnerable or intimidating (SAGE & National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, n.d.). To reduce anxiety about a service provider entering one's home, LGBTQ+ older adults and their loved ones can use the [National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging's](#) publications "10 Tips for Finding LGBT-Affirming Services" and "Advocating for Yourself and Others: Health and Aging Services." These resources can help you find local, inclusive, and culturally responsive care providers.

Accessing services may look different in rural and urban environments, across state lines and regions, and among individuals with intersecting identities (Nelson et al., 2022). If you cannot guarantee that a provider will be welcoming of you or a loved one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status, the following tips can be utilized to prepare for a service provider entering your home.

Before a Provider Visits:

- 1) **Research Your Provider or Agency:** Check online or have an advocate call to see if the agency trains staff on how to work with LGBTQ+ individuals or if they have an LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination policy.
- 2) **Choose a Trusted Contact:** Identify a loved one or community member who can act as an advocate and be present with you physically or virtually. Communicate with your advocate about your desires if you want to keep certain aspects of your life private. You can use SAGE's LGBTQ+ Advance Care Planning Toolkit.
- 3) **Gather Your Personal Health Information:** Create a "health journal" to keep a list of questions to ask and to document your current medication list or relevant notes from recent medical visits.
- 4) **Define Your Boundaries:** Make a list of what information you are comfortable sharing with a service provider.
- 5) **Know Your Rights:** Review local privacy regulations and laws to remain in control of what information needs to be shared if your area does not have clear LGBTQ+ protections.
- 6) **Review Your Emergency Information:** If you have emergency medical information posted in your home, ensure it only includes essential details that you are comfortable sharing.

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7) **Limit Personal Displays:** If you do not want to reveal aspects of your identity, temporarily remove certain personal items and decorations by placing them in a tote bag or plastic storage bin between home visits. If you have a social media account, do you have it set to private?

During a Provider Visit:

1) **Read Your Intake Documents Carefully:** Make sure you or an advocate understand what information is being asked of you at intake and if there are instructions on what to do if you receive “substandard care” or wish to file a grievance.

2) **Trust Your Instincts:** Listen to your gut and make decisions out of caution to protect you or a loved one from discrimination and harm.

3) **Use Your Advocate:** Invite your advocate to be present. An advocate can help ensure that only necessary information is shared while your care needs are addressed.

4) **Document the Experience:** Take notes or ask your advocate to take notes for you.

5) **Remember Your Boundaries:** Only share information that is directly relevant to the visit or necessary to address your care needs. Avoid providing unnecessary details.

6) **Communicate Your Preferences:** Express your hope and expectation of confidentiality about any personal information shared.

7) **Create a Care Plan:** Ask your provider for an overview or an agenda of your time together to outline your specific preferences, guide the care you receive, and help to avoid off-topic discussions about personal aspects of your life.

After a Provider Visit:

1) **Document Your Experience:** Summarize important notes for future experiences.

2) **Ask for Notes:** Ask your provider for a copy of their notes so you have a record of their perspective of the interaction.

3) **Process with Your Advocate:** Discuss your experience with your advocate if they were present. Compare your perspective with your advocate’s perspective.

4) **Talk with Your Friends:** Reach out to friends in your network who have had similar experiences.

5) **Reflect on Your Experience:** If you have a choice in providers, consider whether you are comfortable receiving services from this provider again or if you want to choose a new provider.

6) Report Discrimination and Mistreatment: Many aging providers will have a grievance procedure for reporting discrimination and mistreatment. Additional resources for support in filing a discrimination and mistreatment complaint may include your state LGBTQ+ Equality organization, LGBTQ+ community organization, state/local office of civil/human rights and state/local adult protective services.

The National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging provides technical assistance and resources. Should you need assistance in locating an office to file a complaint of discrimination or mistreatment, complete and submit the following [Information & Referral Form](#).

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