

# WHY THE LONG-TERM CARE EQUALITY INDEX?

## DEMOGRAPHICS

There are currently between 1.5 and 3.8 million adults over the age of 65 in the United States who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual<sup>1</sup>(LGB) and this number is projected to double by 2030.<sup>2</sup> According to the 2010 census report, 99.3% of counties in the U.S. are home to LGB individuals, and estimates from The Williams Institute indicate that there are hundreds of thousands of older adults who are transgender<sup>3</sup>.

While older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) adults confront the same issues everyone else does when choosing aging services — where to live, how

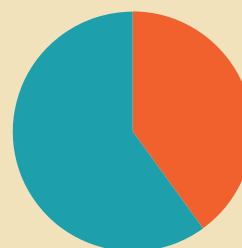
to afford rising costs of housing and healthcare, and how to stay with loved ones — the reality of life in long-term care for LGBT people can be drastically different from their non-LGBT peers. Stigmatization, lack of identity-affirming treatment and experiences of discrimination and violence can lead to avoiding necessary services, chronic stress and increased social isolation among LGBT older adults. Additionally, approximately 20 percent of LGBT older adults are people of color who as a group face increased health disparities, higher levels of stigma and have experienced more LGBT-related discrimination than their white counterparts, leaving them more at risk of not seeking or receiving the services they need.

## CONCERNS OF LGBT OLDER ADULTS REGARDING LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORT

A recent national survey of LGBT older adults by AARP found that more than 60 percent of those surveyed were concerned about how they would be treated in a long-term care setting, including fear that they might be refused or receive limited care; be in danger of neglect or abuse; or face verbal or physical harassment, and being forced to hide or deny their identity once again.<sup>4</sup> Many of today's LGBT elders, particularly those who have faced severe prejudice in their lives, have chosen to remain closeted to service providers. This in turn often leads to service providers that do not realize that they are serving LGBT individuals, so they don't take measures to make their facilities LGBT inclusive. The AARP survey found that more than 82 percent of respondents would be more comfortable if long-term care communities took actions to intentionally affirm LGBT adults.

“WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS I WILL BE GOING INTO ASSISTED LIVING. DUE TO MY FINANCIAL SITUATION, I WILL HAVE TO SHARE A ROOM WITH ANOTHER MAN. THE THOUGHT OF GOING BACK INTO A CLOSET IS MAKING ME ILL. FRANKLY, I'M AFRAID OF TELLING ANYONE THAT I'M GAY.”

—Anonymous, 73 years old, Sylmar, CA



**60%+**  
of LGBT Older Adults are  
concerned about how  
they will be treated in  
long-term care settings

## THE LONG-TERM CARE EQUALITY INDEX (LEI)

SAGE, the world's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older people, and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRCF), the educational arm of the nation's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for LGBTQ people, are joining forces to address these issues by launching the Long-Term Care Equality Index (LEI) to promote equitable and inclusive care for LGBT older people in residential long-term care communities.

SAGE and HRCF believe that most long-term care communities do not want LGBT older adults to face discrimination or have to worry about the care that they will receive. But these communities may be unsure how to protect their LGBT residents from discrimination, provide them with optimal care and extend a warm welcome to allay their concerns. The LEI will encourage and help long-term care communities to adopt policies and best practices that provide culturally competent and

responsive care to LGBT older adults. More than just an assessment, the LEI will provide resources and technical assistance to bring these policies and practices to life.

An exploratory study by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and SAGE revealed that there is great interest by aging-services providers to participate in the Long-term Care Equality Index initiative. Participating aging service providers will benefit by:

- **Learning best practices for LGBT equity and inclusion;**
- **Access to quality training and education;**
- **Gaining assistance with meeting state and federal regulatory requirements, including the new CMS Phase III Requirements of Participation;**
- **Improved ability to develop culturally appropriate marketing for future staff, clients, and funders; and**
- **Public recognition as a leading provider of LGBT welcoming services.**

## A COMMITMENT TO LGBT INCLUSION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

“OUR LGBT RESIDENTS ARE GRATEFUL TO BE AFFIRMED IN THE MIDST OF THEIR COMMUNITY OF CARE AS THEY RECEIVE THE RESPECT AND SUPPORT FROM STAFF. WE HAVE ATTRACTED STAFF TO OUR ORGANIZATION, BOTH INDIVIDUALS WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ AND ALLIES WHO PREFER TO WORK IN AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT.”

### SAGECare Training Customer Rev. Beth Long-Higgins

Executive Director  
Ruth Frost Parker Center for Abundant Aging  
United Church Homes

**Residential Long-Term Care service providers that are interested in participating in the Long-Term Care Equality Index are invited to take the first step by signing the Commitment to Caring Pledge.**

**Learn more at [theLEI.org](https://theLEI.org)** ↗

1. Gallop, 2017.
2. SAGE (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders) and MAP (Movement Advancement Project) 2010. Improving the lives of LGBT older adults.
3. Flores, A.R., Herman, J.L., Gates, G.J. & Brown, T.N.T. (2016) How Many Adults Identify as Transgender in the United States? Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute
4. Houghton, Angela. Maintaining Dignity: Understanding and Responding to the Challenges Facing Older LGBT Americans. Washington, DC: AARP Research, March 2018.