



10 TIPS FOR INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE LGBT COMMUNITY



Advocacy & Services
for LGBT Elders

We refuse to be invisible

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No matter what group or groups, people identify as being a part of, everyone wants to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. People want to feel like they are able to authentically be themselves while participating in life and activities they enjoy. This is no different for people with disabilities who also identify as members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. Sometimes due to a lack of disability access, discrimination, or even a lack of knowledge, people with disabilities often find themselves excluded from various activities within the LGBT community. Here are *TEN* ways to include LGBT people with disabilities in community events and activities.

1. Ensure activities and events are accessible with varying times/dates; in accessible locations with access to public transportation; and make interpreting services available for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
2. Have activities at public places other than bars. Bars are often not wheelchair accessible due to being designated as historical landmarks. The noise and lighting at bars can make bars an unwelcoming space for people with noise/sensory sensitivities.
3. Don't assume that the person spending time, or helping a physically disabled individual at an event is their personal care attendant. (Ex: They could be the person's friend, partner, or spouse).
4. Identify LGBT medical and mental health practitioners where disabled clients can go and feel affirmed as an LGBT person with a disability.
5. During Pride month, when celebrating the richness of LGBT history and all our fierce contributors, make sure to include and recognize LGBT disabled advocates in the community as well.
6. For parades/Pride entries make sure that they are accessible to all participants. (Ex: having walking or rolling lines next to floats; request a shorter route where people with limited mobility can join in the parade; and rent accessible buses and trollies for those with limited mobility/older participants.)
7. Ensure community events are held in accessible spaces and include accessible features for enjoyment by people with disabilities. For a Pride Festival this would include: accessible parking, accessible seating areas along parade routes and entertainment areas, companion/accessible bathrooms (including porta potties) and accessible eating spaces (picnic tables), and having sign language interpreters for entertainment venues.

8. Provide accessible spaces at events for LGBT individuals and their families who have noise/sensory sensitivities.
9. Identify and promote LGBT competent personal care/long-term care identified services in your community
10. Display disability designation/images on your website, activity flyers, and other materials with contact information to request accommodations. (Ex: Disability compliant)

Everyone wants to feel welcome in their community and that they can be themselves, individuals who have disabilities are no different. It is important to be aware of and use these *TEN* suggestions as a guideline when planning, creating or hosting events within the community. This will help people with disabilities who identify as LGBT feel more accepted, included and celebrated when attending events and activities.

About the Author – Christie Carter is the Older Adult Program Coordinator at the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center (www.mkelgbt.org). She has a Masters of Education with a focus on instructional design and is part of both the LGBT and disability communities. She uses her personal experiences in both of these groups to educate policymakers and advocate for the older adults she works with every day.

Additional Resources

National Council on Independent Living

<https://ncil.org/>

Welcome to Pride: A Practical Guide to Making Pride Parades, Marches and Festivals Age-Friendly

<https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/resource.cfm?r=976>

10 Tips for Finding LGBT-Affirming Services

<https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/resource.cfm?r=4>