

Creating Inclusion: Practical Tips And Strategies

Creating an Inclusive Infrastructure

- ❖ Agency procedures and policies are LGBT inclusive for residents and staff.
- ❖ Forms have inclusive language. The word “partner” is an option along with “married” and “single” or “Do you have a primary relationship?”
- ❖ Admission forms explain how confidentiality is protected and who accesses medical records.
- ❖ A system is in place and enforced to maintain confidentiality of client records.
- ❖ Human resource policies include an LGBT non-discrimination policy for hiring and acknowledging partners.
- ❖ Case conferences and records have open-ended and LGBT inclusive questions.
- ❖ Marketing materials contain a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.
- ❖ Your agency/services are listed in LGBT publications and local resource guides.
- ❖ Representatives from your organization speak to LGBT organizations and conferences.
- ❖ Your organization provides orientation training for all staff members on homophobia and LGBT elder concerns.

How to create a welcoming environment:

- ❖ Post a non-discrimination policy in your waiting room or office that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.
- ❖ In your lobby and waiting area, include magazines, brochures and resource guides of interest to LGBT elders.
- ❖ Have LGBT-friendly referrals available if you are unable to serve a client.
- ❖ Treat friends and/or partners accompanying an LGBT client with the same respect given to a spouse or relative.

Develop effective everyday communication skills:

- ❖ Don't assume anything. Do not assume heterosexuality, even when a client reveals they are, or have been, married or have children and/or grandchildren.
- ❖ Let the client give information at their own pace.
- ❖ Ask only what is needed to provide competent care/services.
- ❖ Explain why you need certain sensitive information before asking for it.
- ❖ Apologize if a client is offended by what you ask.
- ❖ Be willing to accept only vague references about a client's personal life.
- ❖ Talk to colleagues who are LGBT or who have experience with LGBT clients.
- ❖ Continue education for yourself by reading and attending LGBT related events.

Ask open-ended questions such as:

- ❖ Tell me about your living situation. With whom do you share your household?
- ❖ Are you currently in a relationship? Tell me about that.
- ❖ Where do you get your support? Who do you turn to in time of need?
- ❖ What people are important to you? Who do you consider to be family?
- ❖ Is there someone you would like to have involved in your care?

Use gender-neutral language:

- ❖ Use gender-neutral language when you do not know the sex of a client's significant other.
- ❖ If a client is using gender-neutral language, they may be trying to conceal their sexual orientation.
- ❖ If you think a client is using gender-neutral language to conceal their sexual orientation from you, do not assume they don't want you to know; however, do not assume that they are asking you to probe further.
- ❖ If a client uses terms that many think are derogatory to describe themselves (i.e., fag, dyke, queer, etc.), do not assume it is okay for you to use these terms. Also, do not assume that these terms have derogatory meaning to all clients. Ask what terms the client prefers.

Encourage all employees to speak up when hurtful language or “off color” jokes are told:

- ❖ Neutral (non-confrontational) response: “I’m uncomfortable when you use those words that way or tell those types of jokes, so I’m going to step out of this conversation.”
- ❖ More assertive response: “I would like to remind you that our company has a non-discrimination policy that says (.....). I believe that language (or that joke) does not conform to company policy. Please stop saying those things.”