SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

• Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults represent a growing population in the U.S.
  • Approximately 1.5 million older adults (ages 60+) currently identify as LGBT; this number is expected to double by 2030

• Lifetime experiences with discrimination, victimization, and stigma affects desire and ability to receive services
LITERATURE REVIEW

• Health disparities
  • High rates of depression and other mental health issues
  • Disproportionate rates of disability
  • Living longer with HIV

• Social isolation
  • Twice as likely to live alone and 3-4 times less likely to have children than heterosexuals
  • Less likely to access support services due to fear of stigma

• Going back “in the closet”
  • LGBT older adults often do not disclose sexual orientation to health and housing providers due to a lifetime of discrimination
LITERATURE REVIEW

• LGBT-inclusive aging services are few and far between
  • A 2010 nationwide survey of state and county aging providers found that only 8% offered services targeted to LGBT older adults and 12% had targeted outreach to this population.

• Aging providers lack knowledge and skills
  • Health and housing providers may be hostile or unaware of this population
  • Higher rates of abuse and neglect among LGBT older adults in care

• High rates of poverty
  • Employment discrimination, lack of marriage equality, being uninsured, gender and racial inequalities, and inadequate family support all contribute to higher rates of poverty among the LGBT community.

• Important to differentiate between cohorts
  • Pre-Stonewall vs. Gay Liberation Era
LITERATURE REVIEW - STRENGTHS

• Crisis competency
  • LGBT older adults feel that challenges in their lives have prepared them for growing older

• “Family of Choice”
  • Although there are disparities in family support, LGBT older adults often rely on a network of close friends or “chosen family” to provide support

• Spirituality

• Wellness activities
DESCRIPTION OF AGENCY: GAY & GREY

Gay & Grey is a program of Friendly House, a non-profit neighborhood and social services agency in Portland, OR.

Programs are open to LGBTQI seniors (and allies) and offer regularly scheduled social events, peer support groups, and resources and referrals related to health and housing.
GAY & GREY MISSION

✓ Raise awareness and educate mainstream senior services providers about the specific needs and diverse cultures of the rapidly increasing population of LGBT seniors in the Portland Metro area.

✓ Utilize findings from event discussions to set goals for the creation of increased social, health and housing resources that meet the needs of LGBT seniors in both the short- and long-term.

✓ Make LGBT seniors and allies aware of current social, health and housing resources for LGBT seniors.

✓ Provide health check services such as blood pressure, blood sugar, bone density screening, etc.

✓ Educate intergenerational participants about the history of the gay community.
PRACTICUM ACTIVITIES

Address the needs of LGBT seniors in the Portland metro area through:

• Social events and educational events
  • Assisted with weekly LGBT senior lunches
  • Planned and facilitated healthy aging with HIV class
  • Coordinate senior programming at Portland LGBT Pride
  • Attended housing advisory committee meetings

• Quarterly newsletter

• Training aging providers
HEALTHY AGING WITH HIV

- Developed and facilitated an eight-week educational and social support class for adults 50+ living with HIV

- Adapted information from *Aging with HIV: A Gay Man’s Guide* by James Masten
PORTLAND LGBT PRIDE FESTIVAL AND PARADE

- Gay & Grey’s participation in the Pride parade helped to increase awareness of LGBT seniors in the greater LGBT community
- Distributed resources to LGBT seniors and their allies
- Staffed the senior tent where seniors could come to eat snacks and rest
AGING PROVIDER TRAININGS

- Assisted with the development of a train-the-trainer for the Oregon Home Care Commission
  - Trainers are now facilitating up to 10 trainings per month on challenges faced by LGBT older adults throughout the state of Oregon

- Senior housing assessment program
  - Rose Villa Assisted Living

- Co-facilitated LGBT competency trainings for Emilie House, an independent living facility
RECOMMENDATIONS

• LGBT Americans Act (amendment to the Older Americans Act)
  • Include LGBT older adults as a vulnerable population
  • Permanently establish the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging
  • Improve data collection and analysis
  • Prioritize research and grant funding for projects which aim to meet the complex needs of LGBT older adults

• Expand aging resources which are LGBT-specific

• Advocate for all aging services providers to receive training
SPECIAL THANKS

Lauren Fontanarosa,
Gay & Grey Program Coordinator

Friendly House staff

Gay & Grey program participants
REFERENCES

