LGBT Aging 101:
What You Need to Know about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Aging

Lisa Krinsky, LICSW
Director, LGBT Aging Project
Goals for today

1. Identify unique life experiences, care concerns and aging challenges facing LGBT older adults and caregivers
2. Increase knowledge of innovative approaches to creating welcoming environments and programming for LGBT older adults and caregivers
3. Understand various opportunities in clinical and macro settings to advance the services, policies and programs that support the wellbeing of LGBT older adults and caregivers
History of the LGBT Aging Project

- Elder Services: *LGBT Issues not on their radar screen*
- LGBT Community: *Elder Issues not on their radar screen.*
- Result: LGBT Older Adults were being overlooked
Our Mission

To ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults and caregivers have equal access to the life-prolonging benefits, protections, services and institutions that their neighbors take for granted so that they can grow older with the dignity and respect they deserve

Equal not Separate

Our goal is not to develop a separate service network for LGBT older adults but to be catalysts of change to make the existing system inclusive of all older adults and caregivers.
How Many LGBT Older Adults?

Today: 1.4 to 3.8 million in U.S.  
(Harley & Teaster, 2016)

2030 estimate: 3.6 to 7.2 million in U.S.  
(Harley & Teaster, 2016)

Three Generations:
- Invisible -- the oldest old
- Secret --- greatest generation
- Proud – baby boomers and beyond
What’s So Different?

Elder Issues
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Medication Costs
- Social Network: Family, Friends
- Income
- Retirement / Work
- Social / Recreational Activities

LGBT Elder Issues
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Medication Costs
- Social Network: Family, Friends
- Income
- Retirement / Work
- Social / Recreational Activities
Aging Supports

Spouse Partner, Children & Grand, Family Of Origin, Faith Community, Local Community, Social Community, Social Services
Aging Supports

- Spouse
- Partner
- Children & Grand
- Family Of Origin
- Faith Community
- Local Community
- Social Community
- Social Services
Aging Supports

- Spouse
- Partner
- Children & Grand
- Family Of Origin
- Faith Community
- Local Community
- Social Community
- Social Services
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>Spouse &amp; Partner</th>
<th>Children &amp; Grand</th>
<th>Family Of Origin</th>
<th>Faith Community</th>
<th>Local Community</th>
<th>Social Community</th>
<th>Social Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Aging Supports: Boomers & Millennials

- Spouse
- Partner
- Children & Grand
- Family Of Origin
- Faith Community
- Local Community
- Social Community
- Social Services
Mainstream Supports

- Public Safety
- Health Care
- Military Service
- Faith Community
- Housing
Mainstream \[\text{Supports}\]

- Public Safety
- Health Care
- Military Service
- Faith Community
- Housing

Entrapment, Harassment
Mainstream Supports

Public Safety

Health Care

Military Service

Faith Community

Housing

Entrapment, Harassment

Mental Illness (until 1973) Institutionalization
Mainstream Supports

- Public Safety
- Health Care
- Military Service
- Faith Community
- Housing

- Entrapment, Harassment
- Mental Illness (until 1973) Institutionalization
- Dishonorable Discharge
Mainstream Supports

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Mainstream Supports

Public Safety: Entrapment, Harassment
Health Care: Mental Illness (until 1973) Institutionalization
Military Service: Dishonorable Discharge
Faith Community: Sin Immoral
Housing: Eviction Harassment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Anna Year</th>
<th>Sarah Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born:</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarthy Trials (1954 )</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonewall (1969)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA/DSM (1973)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Milk Elected (1977 )</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan Mentions AIDS (1987)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ellen” Comes Out on TV (1997)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Marriage is Legal in MA (2004)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Repealed (2011)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMA Repealed (2013)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOTUS: Marriage Equality (2015)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consequences of Distrust in Mainstream Institutions

- Greatest coping strategy: Becoming Invisible
- Strong self-reliance
- Limited circle of support
- “Home” is important safe-haven
Mental Health

- Pathology of Identity: You are Sick and Need a Cure
- 1973 DSM Revision: Homosexuality no longer a Mental Disorder. Change in Policy; Change in Practice?
- Gender Identity Disorder: DSM Clinicians as gatekeepers to hormone/reassignment treatment
- 2013 DSM Revision: GID no longer a Mental Disorder.
- Gender Dysphoria: emotional distress from "a marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender."
HIV/AIDS and Aging

- Disproportionally LGBT and People of Color
- By 2017: Approximately 50% of all people in the U.S. living with HIV & AIDS are over 50 years old

  CDC, 2015

  - Long Term Survivors (infected pre HAART; 20 years with HIV)
  - New Infection (not at risk or ‘should have known better’ → later stage)
  - New Diagnosis (17% of all new diagnosis were 50+)
  - Enormous Cultural Taboo: Sexuality and Aging
  - “who me?” heterosexual transmission & “who cares” in gay/bi transmission
Bisexuality and Aging

- Most invisible element in LGBT spectrum - assumption of identity based on current partner
- Stigma, historical/cultural factors, life history, and context impact self identification
- In comparison with Heterosexuals, Lesbians, and Gays, Bisexuals experience significant Health Disparities including higher rates of self-harm, suicide, depression, anxiety, drug/alcohol use
Elders of Color & Aging

- Lifetime experience with minority stress (multiple minority identities – multiple stressors)
- What does it mean to be LGBT in one’s racial/ethnic community? What does it mean to be old?
- What does it mean to be a person of color in the LGBT community? What does it mean to be old?
- Flashback Sunday – community for LGBT EOC
Transgender Aging

- Transition early in life: some lived “stealth” with no history or context; significant losses
- Transition later in life: after milestones
  - Death of parents, grown children, retirement, divorce
- High rates of unemployment, underemployment, violence, denied healthcare
- Reluctance & fear of health/long term care
## LGBT Baby Boomers as Caregivers

### Most LGBT Caregiving is Horizontal not Vertical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Population</th>
<th>LGBT Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>men/women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% birth/marriage</td>
<td>35% partner/spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16% parent</td>
<td>16% parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9% other relative</td>
<td>9% other relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% non relative</td>
<td>32% friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7% non relative/neighbor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Aging and Health Report: Disparities and Resilience in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Older Adults, 2011*

### LGBT Caregiver Support Group: Safe space for unique experience
Alzheimer’s & LGBT Patients/Loved Ones

- Diagnosis – When and by whom?
  - Diagnosis could be delayed due to lack of socialization/family support and/or fear of doctor visits

- Care – Primary contact? Who manages? Who is informed?
  - Family may be estranged = partner may be ousted
  - May not have family or emergency contact information

- Legal Issues – “next of kin” vs. “family of choice”
  - Estranged/unaccepting family member may not respect relationship or wishes
  - LGBT friends may end up being Health Care Proxy or Power of Attorney
LGBT Cultural Competency Training for Individual Practice

- Individual and Organizational Practice
  - Challenge Heterosexual assumptions
  - Normalize inclusion
  - Consider gender-neutral language and labels
    - Language of times/context
  - Expand definition of family and friends
  - Handle possible backlash as a strong LGBT ally
LGBT Cultural Competency Training for Organizations

- Create inclusive and supportive service delivery systems
  - More than a rainbow sticker
- Enhance professional capacity and cultural competency
  - Diverse backgrounds of workforce and consumers
- Strengthen the collaboration between mainstream providers and the networks that serve the LGBT population
  - Ask what is happening for LGBT older adults?
Clinical and Community Engagement

Clinical
- Coming out as a lifelong event (when/where)
- Intersectionality with other identities
- LGBT caregiving and bereavement support

Community Organizing & Engagement/Programming
- LGBT Pride
- LGBT elders of color
- LGBT senior housing focus groups/task force
Innovative Approaches to Community Engagement of LGBT Older Adults and Caregivers

- LGBT Pride Celebrations
- LGBT friendly community meal sites for older adults – 18 statewide!
- Intergenerational activities – LGBT cultural heritage and affirmation
- PFLAG – Hetero/Cis older adults with LGBT children/g kids
Macro Settings

- Organization, Staff and Program Management
- Civic Leadership and Visibility: LGBT in Aging
- Research inclusive of LGBT older adults
- Ensure policy and Advocacy: Local/National level remain inclusive of LGBT older adults
SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER AGING
Q & A

Are there any unanswered questions that you would like to ask?
For More Information:

Lisa Krinsky, LICSW
Director, LGBT Aging Project
lkrinsky@fenwayhealth.org
(617) 927.6229
www.lgbtagingproject.org