
CHAPTER 7:
IMPROVING THE LIVES OF TRANS OLDER ADULTS



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According to the national Caring and Aging with Pride survey, transgender older adults are a “critically underserved population at heightened risk of physical and mental health disparities often combined with less social and community support.” The same survey found that 40% of transgender older adults have been denied health care or received inferior care due to anti-trans bias.¹ A recent survey of 320 area agencies and state units on aging found that more than one in four reported that transgender older adults would either not be welcomed by local service providers or the agency was unsure of how welcome they would be.² Other research has revealed discrimination and abuse of transgender residents in long-term care facilities.³

In 2011-2012, NCTE partnered with Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE) to develop an advocacy agenda focused on the needs of older transgender people. While the challenges common to LGBT older adults have gained increased visibility in recent years, little study or discussion has focused on the specific needs and challenges facing transgender people as they age. NCTE and SAGE convened an advisory group of advocates and experts to focus on this issue over the course of the year. The advisory group included organizations such as FORGE, the Transgender Law Center, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the Freedom Center for Social Justice, and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, as well as community activists and health providers. The group identified a wide array of key issues for older trans adults, including support from faith communities, cultural competence in aging and long-term care services, Medicare and veterans’ health coverage, research and data collection on older trans adults, and the continued need for employment opportunities as trans people age. The result was a 50-page report, *Improving the Lives of Transgender Older Adults*, which provides an introduction to transgender issues for aging advocates and provides more than 60 recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.

Policy Advances:

- HHS released LGBT cultural competency online training tool for long-term care providers. (2014)
- The National LGBT Aging Resource Center is funded by HHS, an online resource center for older aging LGBT people and service providers. (2010)

Needed Policy Changes

- Congress should reauthorize the Older Americans Act and amend the Act to make explicit that LGBT older adults constitute a group with “greatest social need” and that federally-funded service providers may not exclude LGBT older adults from programs and services.
- Congress should fully fund implementation of the Elder Justice Act, and the Department of Health and Human Services should ensure that programs supported by the law give adequate attention to the vulnerabilities of LGBT older adults.
- The Administration on Aging should clarify through formal interpretive guidance that LGBT older adults constitute a group with “greatest social need” and that federally-funded service providers may not exclude LGBT older adults from programs and services.
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services should revise federal nursing home guidelines to clarify the rights of LGBT residents to freedom from discriminatory abuse, personal privacy and dignity, and treatment consistent with a resident’s gender identity.
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services should revise federal Medicaid regulations to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation in home- and community-based services.
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Administration on Aging should develop and promote additional LGBT competence tools and training for long-term care facility staff, surveyors and ombudspersons, home care providers, and others who work with older adults, and incorporate LGBT rights into consumer education materials.

See Access to Quality Health Care for more on health care policy.

See ID Documents and Privacy for more on Medicare cards and Social Security records.

1 Karen I. Frederickson-Goldsen et al., *The Aging and Health Report: Disparities and Resilience Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Older Adults*, at 5, 31. Available at: <http://caringandaging.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Full-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

2 Kelly Abel Knochel, Catherine F. Croghan, Rajean P. Moore, and Jean K. Quam, *Ready to Serve? The Aging Network and LGB and T Older Adults*, at 12. Washington, DC: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, 2011. Available at: <http://www.n4a.org/pdf/ReadyToServe1.pdf>.

3 National Senior Citizens Law Center, et al., *Stories from the Field: LGBT Older Adults in Long-Term Care Facilities*. Washington, DC: NSCLC (2011). Available at: <http://www.lgbtlongtermcare.org/>.