

STANDING WITH LGBTQ+ OLDER ADULTS

Celebrating the resilience, joy, and history of the LGBTQ+ community through events, socials, and memorials is a powerful way to express love and acceptance.

Everyone deserves the freedom and safety to join in these celebrations.

However, in today's world, we must acknowledge that harmful behaviors may disrupt these inclusive activities and target LGBTQ+ individuals with discriminatory actions.

Disclaimer

While no single guide can solve every challenge, this resource is designed to help your organization assess its safety and prevention measures. It provides practical steps, potential scenarios, and tools to help ensure that your space remains welcoming, safe, and inclusive for LGBTQ+ residents, allowing them to continue to thrive in a supportive environment.

Purpose of this Guide Book:

-  Provide a starting point to navigate complex and discriminatory conflicts
-  Provide basic scenarios of common discriminatory actions
-  Offer resources meant to help care providers protect their LGBTQ+ clients
-  Give providers the tools to stand with LGBTQ+ older adults in the event of a discriminatory incident
-  Offer a one-stop solution to all discrimination
-  Detail every possible situation in which discrimination can occur
-  Permanently end discrimination (*though we wish we could!*)

Why would someone engage in discriminatory actions?

It is difficult to know the motivations of each individual because LGBTQ+ discrimination often stems from the ways a person's beliefs – which are shaped by their socioeconomic status, racial, political, educational, and religious identities – intersect with their understanding of LGBTQ+ identity and experience.

There is an understandable hope that if we could only address why someone feels antagonistic toward another person, we could solve the problem. While it may be possible, it will take time and in moments where an LGBTQ+ person's safety, security, and mental health is at risk, it is important to prioritize the safety of the injured party first. This can become complicated in care settings when chronic pain, cognitive decline, or other issues may exacerbate an individual's desire to discriminate.

How to handle a discriminatory action or incident

There are typically three types of individuals involved in discriminatory behavior.



Aggressor

The individual engaging in discriminatory behavior. This may be a resident, a visitor, or even a family member.



Bystander

The witness or witnesses who observe the interaction between aggressor and target.



Target

The individual the aggressor intends to belittle, harm, or otherwise invalidate.

It is important to take note of the roles members of your community fill in these instances to ensure your team gets the full story.

The First 24 Hours

Recount The Incident

- Discuss everything that happened with all involved parties: the aggressor, the target, and any bystanders who witnessed the incident. Make sure you give the option to collect statements anonymously to assuage the fears of any residents who may be afraid to speak up. LGBTQ+ individuals in particular may avoid filing a statement if it means outing themselves.

Remember

There are always more factors in play than may appear on the surface. During your investigation, keep the following questions in mind:

1. What is happening in the aggressor's life that may have triggered this behavior?
2. Is this their first offense?
3. Is there a history between the aggressor and their target?

The First 48 Hours

Report The Incident

- File a report with your organization's safety and advocacy team.

Best Practices for Reporting

To ensure your staff can quickly and accurately file a report:

- Establish a hierarchy of reporting and maintain an easily accessible document outlining the chain of command for all employees.
- Guarantee that all staff know the location of and have quick access to the proper reporting forms, especially anonymous reporting forms.



Report Documentation Checklist

- Date, time, and location the incident occurred.
- Detailed description of the incident from the intervening provider.
- Written statements from all involved parties.

Within the First Week

Reaffirm

- Design & implement an action plan that offers support services for both the aggressor and the target. This can include support groups and mental health services.
- Depending on the severity of the incident, consider holding a town hall for your residents to discuss the incident and heal together.

Counseling



Support Groups



Town Hall



Moving Forward

Reform

- Your organization's non-discrimination policy
- Safety & prevention measures
- Assess your resources and identify areas of improvement

While it is impossible to develop a policy that completely removes the risk of a discriminatory incident, it is always worth analyzing the cause of a recent event and what, if any, measures can be taken to prevent something similar from happening again.

Important!

It may feel normal to think that “punishment” is necessary in non-violent offenses; however, the healing solution is one that shifts focus from punitive measures and instead prioritizes healing, education, and restoration. To be inclusive to ALL, we must be prepared to educate and empower ALL of those within our community to make more informed, inclusive choices.

Example Scenarios & Solutions

The following is a quick guide on common, non-violent discriminatory acts against LGBTQ+ individuals in long-term care setting. For more complex situations, never hesitate to contact SAGECare at info@sagecare.org to discuss and receive support from our experts.

Scenario

Posters advertising LGBTQ+ inclusive activities – such as a concert featuring an LGBTQ+ band, drag bingo/storytime, or a Pride parade – have been torn down or defaced with slurs and hateful language.

Solution

- Speak with the event organizers to ensure that the event will continue
 - Release a memo or note to your residents affirming your commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion and a reminder that your community is a home for ALL.
 - Encourage individuals who take issue with these events to come speak with leadership directly.
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Scenario

A book club member routinely contributes snide remarks or uses insulting language whenever the book club chooses a book focusing on LGBTQ+ characters or themes. This has made other participants uncomfortable.

Solution

- The program coordinator should speak with the aggressor privately. Inform the participant that non-constructive and mean-spirited comments will not be tolerated.
- Offer the option to skip book club meetings that feature material they do not want to read.
- Reaffirm the club members' right to choose books they want to read.

Scenario

An openly bisexual resident who enjoys painting his nails and wears gender non-conforming clothing has been purposely ignored by other residents. They move tables if he sits next to them, give him the wrong dates and times for events, and prevent him from joining club meetings.

Solution

- Speak with the group and understand why they're isolating the individual. Address their issues and concerns, then ask how they would feel if they were in his position.
 - Speak with the isolated resident. Affirm his right to express his identity, then help him get involved in other community events & activities.
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Scenario

A new resident had shared with their care provider that they are transgender. Another community member discovers this information & begins spreading rumors about the new resident's body, outing them as transgender.

Solution

- First, meet with the transgender resident and affirm their safety; ask what would make them feel the most welcome and safe in their new community.
- Meet with the resident spreading rumors. Ask how they would feel if some of the most private information about their body had been shared with other residents. Ask this resident why they outed their community member and discuss how your community values safety and inclusion.
- Consider a town hall or forum where you can reaffirm your organization's commitment to inclusivity for ALL.

Scenario

A resident refuses to use the correct pronouns for a non-binary staff members. This resident has been reminded multiple times but still refuses.

Solution

- Reaffirm to the staff member that their identity is respected. Offer them the option to be removed from the individual's service and assigned to other residents
- Speak with the resident to understand why they're refusing to use the correct pronouns
- Consider hosting a forum for residents, explaining why pronouns are important.
- Include pronouns on name tags or offer the option to wear a pronoun pin.

Additional Resources

Legal Resources

- Review your state, county, or province's legal protections to refresh your team's knowledge on your client or resident's rights
- Contact a local ombudsman
- Seek legal counsel from attorneys who specialize in elder law

Collaborate with Local LGBTQ+ Experts

- Reach out to LGBTQ+ Centers in your area for more information on local advocacy and consider partnering to provide inclusive, fun events for your residents.
- The National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging has a free and ever-expanding library of research papers and guides on topics such as elder justice, caregiver support, and advocacy. We strongly encourage all of our clients to browse the [free selection on their website!](#)

SAGECare Can Help

SAGECare Consulting

Did you know that, in addition to training, we also provide in-depth, holistic view of your organization to help your team proudly show its commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion. From intake forms to patient interaction, and every policy in-between, we'll empower your team to offer more inclusive and informed care. Visit our website to learn more about [SAGECare Consulting](#).



Auditing



Document & Policy Review



LEI Self-Assessments



Service & Program Support



Marketing & Communications

SAGECare Resident Conversations

It can be challenging to navigate conversations with your residents regarding person-first and trauma-informed care. Let the LGBTQ+ aging experts at SAGECare help you facilitate a safe space for residents to ask questions, learn information, and engage constructively with LGBTQ+ communities. These live webinar or in-person sessions last one hour and empower older adults with the tools and knowledge to create a welcoming space for all within their community.

Contact info@sagecare.org to learn more!