

# Helping LGBTQ people with Dementia and Alzheimer's

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# Considerations

## **Delayed Access to Care**

- Fear of discrimination can delay access to care. Many LGBTQ people are not open to caregivers about their sexual orientation and gender identity because fear of bias.

## **Ageism**

- Remember that LGBTQ are not all young people. They age just like the rest of the population. Many activities for LGBTQ communities are more centered on youth than older community members.

# Recommendations

## **Expand Your Definition of Family**

- For some LGBTQ people family may include those that are not biological family. Make it clear that family does not necessarily mean family of origin or children or partner.

## **See LGBTQ People**

- Don't assume that treating everyone the same, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity will make LGBTQ older adults feel safe or welcomed. More often than not, treating everyone the same translates to treating everyone as heterosexual and glossing over the particular challenges LGBTQ older adults may face.

## **Provide Support**

- Provide access to support groups specifically for LGBTQ caregivers and LGBTQ people living with dementia.

# Recommendations

## **Training**

- Educate your staff on LGBT cultural competency. Effective training is the foundation for excellent care. Select trainers with proven expertise in LGBTQ topics and ensure the content reflects a comprehensive perspective and addresses diversity in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **Mirror Language**

- LGBTQ seniors may use words like “friend” or “roommate” to describe their significant other. Mirroring this language sends a message of respect and communicates interest and openness.

## **Holistic Approach**

- Sexual orientation and gender identity are only two aspects of identity. In addition to sexual orientation and gender identity, each client brings with them their racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage, as well as their unique individual history. Be aware that LGBTQ older adults of color may have particular needs based on their sexual and gender identities, as well as their racial and ethnic identities.