

# Precepting Tips for LGBTQ Aging Care



## Introduction and Purpose of this Tip Sheet

Many LGBTQ older adults have experienced a history in which they have been labeled as immoral, have lacked legal protections, and have been considered as people who have a disease or mental illness. They may have been deprived of the companionship of their partner or spouse when they have had to be admitted to the hospital, or have had little support or assistance after surgical procedures because of their identity, or may even have lost their job because they got married. Today, local, state, and federal protections can still be insufficient to protect LGBTQ individuals from discrimination.

The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide you with some facts, definitions, and ideas for integrating LGBTQ-friendly practices into a welcoming and caring healthcare environment.

### Some Key Terms

<b>Sex</b>	The label you were given when you were born, as listed on your birth certificate. Typically, <i>male</i> , <i>female</i> , or <i>intersex</i> (individuals with characteristics of both or neither sex.)
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Your inner sense of your gender.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Who you are attracted to based upon your own sex and gender, your behaviors, and how you identify yourself.
<b>Gay</b>	A man attracted to men.
<b>Lesbian</b>	A woman attracted to women.
<b>Bisexual</b>	Someone attracted to both binary sexes (male and female).
<b>Transgender</b>	Someone whose gender identity is different than the sex they were labeled with at birth.
<b>Queer</b>	This term can refer to a person’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Sometimes, it’s used as an alternative term to ‘LGBT.’

## Talking with Your LGBTQ Older Adult Patient

For many people, it can be challenging to talk about communities of which we are not a member. However, being authentic, and clarifying to patients that your role is to facilitate the sharing of information about important topics can be more helpful than trying to be the voice or representative of those communities. Humility and asking questions to further your understanding can also assist in creating an honest exchange. If you feel comfortable, offer your own story to help build an open environment and to encourage the sharing of your patient’s story. The tips and ideas below are offered for helping facilitate conversations about LGBTQ aging.



## Teaching Tips

- Remember that language is always changing, including the language used to talk about the LGBTQ community. Inevitably, you will find that students use words or acronyms different from those you are accustomed to. It may be helpful to reinforce with your students that language does evolve, but it's always important to strive to use inclusive language.
- When discussing experiences described in research, it can be useful to frame conversations as carrying the voices of others. If your experience is not as a member of the LGBTQ community, the best thing to do is identify as an ally, and note that you do not share the experiences. However, you wish to amplify the voices of LGBTQ individuals.
- If possible, invite LGBTQ older adults for a conversation with your students. Directly sharing their experiences can often be more profound than enumerating the health, economic, and social disparities experienced by LGBTQ older adults.
- Ask learners to conduct an environmental scan in their clinic using the [LGBTQ Aging Welcoming Assessment](https://mngwep.nexusipe.org/files/LGBTQWA) (<https://mngwep.nexusipe.org/files/LGBTQWA>).

## Remember . . .

- ✓ Sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation are often conflated or blended together—both positively and negatively. However, they are each distinct in the same way that race, ethnicity, and religion and other forms of identity are distinct. For example, the experience of people who identify as transgender is unique from people who identify as lesbian.
- ✓ Although rights for LGBTQ people have increased over time in the U.S., that progress has also been accompanied by a significant increase in anti-LGBTQ policies and legislation enacted in state legislatures across the country. [The Movement Advancement Project](https://www.lgbtmap.org) (<https://www.lgbtmap.org>) is an excellent resource to explore equity across the U.S. This may provide additional opportunity to host conversations about the connection between a person's health and their surrounding environment.

## Preceptor Resources

- American Geriatrics Society Care of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Older Adults Position Statement. (2015). Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 63(3), 423-426. Portico. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.13297>
- [National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging](https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/index.cfm) (<https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/index.cfm>)
- [SAGE Advocacy and Services for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Elders](https://www.sageusa.org/) (<https://www.sageusa.org/>)