LGBT Integration Project

Funded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services - Administration on Community Living / Administration on Aging
ACL sought to expand outreach and education to better serve hard-to-reach populations

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) seniors recognized as underserved

SMP partnered with Equality California Institute (EQCAI) and was awarded the grant
LGBT seniors face some unique challenges
- Homophobia from those outside of the LGBT community
- Ageism from within the LGBT community
- Absence of an informal caregiver system
- Potential isolation and closeted existence of LGBT seniors

All of these reasons make detection of Medicare fraud, error and abuse difficult
Several organizations collaborated on a research study (2010) which surveyed 649 LGBT older adults in LTC facilities on concern of potential issues:

- Abuse/neglect by staff – 346
- Isolation from other residents – 500
- Discrimination by residents – 526
- Discrimination by staff – 578
“I have been haunted for years by what happened to two lesbian friends of mine. They had been “married” for more than 50 years, when they both fell ill. Their families sent them to separate nursing facilities despite all protests. They each shortly passed away. It was heartbreaking!” Vicky E.

“A woman died shortly after I started as a floor nurse in a nursing facility. I learned this story from staff. She had a stroke and could not speak. Her family decided that her partner of 50+ years had no rights to their property, or to see or make decisions for the patient. The family sold their home and got a restraining order against the partner. These ladies were retired school teachers in their 80’s and were never “out.” They had no legal protection in place.” Michelle F.
Real or Perceived Experiences

Number of Instances

- Verbal or Physical Harassment From Other residents – 200
- Refused Admission, or Re-Admission, Attempted or Abrupt Discharge – 169
- Verbal or Physical Harassment From Staff – 116
- Staff Refused to Accept Medical POA from Resident’s Spouse or Partner – 97
- Restriction of Visitors – 93
- Staff Refused to Refer to Transgender Resident by Preferred Name or Pronoun – 80
- Staff Refused to Provide Basic Services or Care – 51
- Staff Denied Medical Treatment – 47
One focus group attendee asked if SMP would have a gay person answering the phone and stated that this is the only way she would feel comfortable calling. (Prior to presentation).

Being sensitive to the fact that the LGBT community constantly negotiates who is safe to be honest with and questions who they can trust.

Many Medicare beneficiaries have lived a life in the closet, or feel they must now protect themselves as they age, and become more reliant on services.

Sometimes discrimination is perceived and may not be the reality.

SMP intends to be inclusive and many LGBT seniors only associate with LGBT groups, churches, community centers (where they know they are accepted). As a result, we must go to where they are.
Specifically Targeted

Manhattan Doctor Pleads Guilty To $8.5 Million Medicare Fraud Scheme

- Dr. ROBERTO AYMAT participated in scheme to defraud Medicare out of approximately $8.5 million through the use of fraudulent HIV/AIDS clinics.
- Billed Medicare for medications never administered or not medically necessary.
- Recruited HIV/AIDS patients eligible for Medicare, and paid them kickbacks.
- Billed Medicare for more than 10 times the number of units of prescription drugs actually purchased.
Priority Activities

1. Disseminate culturally competent SMP Fraud Prevention and Identification Information through media, outreach campaigns, education, community events, etc.

2. In collaboration with EQCAI & SAGE: Develop inclusive materials that speak to the LGBT community.

3. Increase awareness, empowerment, and actions to prevent Medicare fraud among the LGBT population.
Enhance volunteer outreach and provide cultural competency training and support

Include cultural competency training for Ombudsman and RCFE administrators/staff

Expand awareness on agency website
Current Progress

- Redesigned and simplified the SMP Education and Outreach Tracking Form
- Developed a participant survey to collect data regarding impact
- Equality California Institute has begun cultural competency training
- EQCAI (Dr. Marcel Morales) provided cultural competency training to HICAP
3 Focus Groups – Key Findings:

- An SMP Medicare fraud presentation that is LGBT inclusive is more impactful than one that is not.
- Materials that “speak to” the LGBT population are important.
- Knowing in advance that SMP is inclusive helps LGBT beneficiaries feel comfortable and safe to disclose same-sex partnership when relevant.

- Designing new brochure (in collaboration with EQCAI and SAGE)
- Dissemination of SMP Medicare fraud materials has already begun
When a LGBT person discloses orientation, you don’t miss a beat and are able to interact with them just as you would with a heterosexual person.

Some Common Terms and Definitions:
- LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQA, TBLG
- **Coming Out**: To declare and affirm both to oneself and to others one’s identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc. It is not a single event but instead a life-long process.
- **Gender expression**: Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice and emphasizing, de-emphasizing or changing their body’s characteristics. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation.
Terms and Definitions:

- **Gender identity**: The sense of “being” male or “being” female. For some people, gender identity is in accord with physical anatomy. For transgender people, gender identity may differ from physical anatomy or expected social roles. It is important to note that gender identity, biological sex, and sexual orientation are not necessarily linked.

- **In the closet**: To be in the closet means to hide one’s LGBT identity in order to avoid negative social repercussions, such as losing a job, housing, friends or family. Many LGBT individuals are “out” in some situations and “closeted” in others, based on their perceived level of safety.

- **“Aging Back Into the Closet”**: Research suggests that LGBT older adults are less likely than their heterosexual peers to access aging services and to reach out to providers, senior centers, meal programs and other entitlement programs because they fear discrimination or harassment if their sexual orientations or gender identities become known. – SAGE USA

**What Does Cultural Competency Look Like?**
Challenges faced by lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and gender nonconforming individuals include significant barriers in securing employment, a necessary criteria for later qualification for Medicare benefits.

Americans entering retirement, based on their work history their spouses, divorced spouses, widow or widower are eligible for hospital insurance upon turning 65. Same-sex couples were not afforded these rights because their marriages were not recognized.

Effective June 26th 2013, however, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the section of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) which previously barred same-sex couples from qualifying for each other’s federal benefits.

All of this continues to evolve.
EQCAI will continue to provide cultural competency trainings to ombudsman, staff and volunteers

Provide outreach to LGBT organizations, centers, spiritual/religious organizations, and inclusive businesses

Expand media outreach

We will continue to have guidance from EQCAI and SAGE
LGBT Contacts

- EQCAI has given us 26 contacts across the state to start with
- Most are LGBT community and resource centers
- EQCA has provided an introductory letter
- We are also looking to spiritual/religious organizations
- Inclusive businesses
- Inclusive housing
- LGBT groups/clubs
Getting Started . . .

Toolkit

- The Power Point presentation is ready to go
- New brochures
- Introductory letter
- New tracking form
- Participant survey to track impact
- Ongoing training and support
Resources

- Equality California – www.eqca.org
- Statewide LGBT Advocacy Organization

- National Resource Center on LGBT Aging
- www.lgbtagcenter.org/resources – Fact sheets on Medicare and LGBT Issues

- Services & Advocacy for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Elders (SAGE)
- www.sageusa.org – The country’s largest and oldest organization designed to improve quality of life for the LGBT community