



Cultural Competency Training Results: February 2011 – February 2012

In February 2010, Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)—in partnership with 10¹ leading organizations from around the country—received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging. The resource center seeks to improve the quality of services and supports offered to LGBT older adults nationwide. Cultural competence training is part of the National Resource Center’s effort to empower and support providers within the aging network and LGBT organizations to make changes to better serve LGBT older adults and ensure that these older adults have necessary services and supports to successfully age in community.

The purpose of the training curriculum (for aging and LGBT network providers) is to educate staff in aging and LGBT services organizations about the existence and unique needs of LGBT older adults and about ways to address those needs within their organizations. The curriculum was developed collaboratively by staff from the following groups: SAGE, PHI, Openhouse, CenterLink, FORGE Transgender Aging Network, GRIOT Circle, LGBT Aging Project, and included content from ACRIA.

This document highlights results from an evaluation of the trainings delivered between February 2011 and February 2012.

¹ The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging has since expanded its partner organizations to the following 14 national organizations: SAGE (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders), in partnership with American Society on Aging, Centerlink, FORGE Transgender Aging Network, GRIOT Circle, Hunter College, The LGBT Aging Project, National Asian Pacific Center on Aging, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, National Caucus & Center for Black Aged, Inc., National Council on Aging’s National Institute of Senior Centers, National Hispanic Council on Aging, Openhouse, PHI, and Southeast Asia Resource Action Center.

Cultural competency trainings are changing knowledge, attitudes and skills for serving LGBT Older Adults

In the second year of implementing the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, trainers from across the country delivered cultural competency trainings to six hundred people in the fields of older adult services (28 trainings) and LGBT services (6 trainings). Evaluation of the trainings, used pre-test and post-test measures to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and in more advanced trainings, skills of the participants.

Knowledge

There was a high level of knowledge demonstrated after attending the trainings. Knowledge measured both prior to the trainings and after the trainings significantly increased, while other indicators were measured only after trainings were delivered.

- There was a significant increase in knowledge about the history and experiences of older adults who are LGBT.
- After the trainings, participants demonstrated very high levels of knowledge about health and mental health issues of concern among LGBT older adults, and were likely to challenge common assumptions and stereotypes.
- After the trainings, participants showed high levels of knowledge about how to make an environment safe and welcoming to older adults who are LGBT.

Attitudes

After attending the trainings, participants were highly aware of common barriers experienced by LGBT elders in need of services. Compared to their experiences before the trainings, respondents demonstrated...

- Higher levels of comfort with language and common terms related to serving LGBT elders.
- Higher levels of inclusiveness and compassion for the LGBT aging experience.

Skills

Participants who attended the more extensive cultural competency trainings showed an increase in their ability to identify and address potential bias against LGBT elders in their work.

- More extensive components of the training helped nine out of ten participants address situations as they arise within their work settings.

Training participants are diverse

Organizational Affiliations

Training participants come from a wide variety of organizational affiliations and roles. Some are direct service providers to the older adult or the LGBT community, some are supervisors, managers, or agency directors, and some participants support organizations through volunteering, board membership, or serving as interns. Some

participants of the trainings identified themselves as educators, independent consultants, or clients of the organizations hosting the trainings.

The amount of time a training participant has been with an organization varies greatly. People who have been with their organizations for less than one year were as likely to be participants in the aging services trainings as people who have been with their organizations for more than 15 years. The LGBT services trainings were typically attended by people who have been with their organizations for five years or fewer.

Demographics

Age and education level were similar for participants in both aging services and LGBT services trainings.

- Participants ranged in age from their mid-twenties through their mid-seventies, with a median age category of 45-50 years old.
- A large majority of all of the training participants had completed four-year college degrees or graduate degrees.

Aging services participants differed from LGBT services participants in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, and racial-ethnic identity. While aging services trainings were attended by participants who mostly identified as female (approximately two-thirds female, approximately one-third male and one-percent transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming), about half of the LGBT services training participants were male, with a greater representation of transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming participants.

- Approximately one-quarter of participants in aging services trainings identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (or something other than heterosexual) while nearly 90 percent of LGBT services participants identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other (e.g., dyke, queer).

Trainings were attended by a racially-ethnically diverse group of participants.

- More than one-third of participants (36%) were persons of color while 64% identified as white or Caucasian.
- Participants of color identified themselves as African American or Black (11%), Latino or Hispanic (15%), Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian(5%), American Indian (3%), or another race/ethnicity (Arab American or Middle Eastern, East Indian, or multi-racial).

Trainings are receiving high ratings from participants

Nearly all participants reported that the trainings are offered in an environment where they feel safe asking questions, where respect for multiple viewpoints is demonstrated, and that they have learned things they will use in their work. Many expressed an interest in receiving follow-up communications related to LGBT aging cultural competence.