

# Role Play

Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation and  
Gender Identity



## Role Play 1: Let's Move On

**Let's Move On** is an example where the provider asking intake questions does not feel comfortable responding to questions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Provider:** What is your gender?

**Client:** What do you mean, what is my gender? Isn't it **obvious**?

**Provider:** I don't know why they even make me ask this question. Let's move on.

What was your sex at birth?

**Client:** How could it even be different?

**Provider:** Agreed. I don't know what that even means.

Here's another question that I'd like to just skip but they make me ask them all. How do you describe your sexual orientation or sexual identity?

**Client:** Why **on earth** do you need to know what I do in my bedroom?

**Provider:** I am just so uncomfortable with this question. Let's skip it too.

## Role Play 2: Let Me Explain

**Let Me Explain** provides a suggested approach for how the provider can explain what is meant by gender identity and sexual orientation and why it is important to provide the opportunity for people to answer these questions.

**Provider:** Let me start by saying that with any questions that I ask, if you are wondering what it means or why I'm asking, please feel free to ask me questions. We ask everyone these exact same questions to help make sure we get to know our clients and so that everybody receives the best service possible based on their particular needs. You can choose not to answer any question. Your answers are confidential at our office and when this information is sent to the state, personally identifiable information, like your name and Social Security Number, are removed. Instead, just overall numbers and demographic data are sent back so that the state can understand if there are communities in particular where some services are needed more than others.

Does that sound okay to you?

**Client:** Okay, sure.

**Provider:** What is your gender?

**Client:** What do you mean, what is my gender? Isn't it *obvious*?

**Provider:** You know, I used to be confused by this question to. Let me tell you how I understand it. Your gender is how you feel on the inside. So if you feel like a woman, then your gender is female. Some people experience different genders than they may otherwise show the world. I don't want to make any assumptions about how you feel so that's why I'm asking.

**Client:** I see. Well, I guess my gender would be female.

**Provider:** What was your sex at birth?

**Client:** How could it even be different?

**Provider:** Another great question! When people are born, the doctor – or whomever delivers them – say “it's a boy” or “it's a girl.” That would be your sex at birth. If you have a birth certificate, it's whatever sex appears on your birth certificate. You know how we just talked about how gender could be different based on how you feel on the inside – well for some people they start expressing that gender differently outside too. So, for example, some people who are women now were actually told they were male when they were born. Even though their gender is now female, when they were born they were told they were a boy. Again, this information helps us to provide the best possible care and support.

**Client:** Interesting. My sex at birth was female.

**Provider:** Great, thank you. Now how do you describe your sexual orientation or sexual identity?

**Client:** Why *on earth* do you need to know what I do in my bedroom?

**Provider:** I can understand your concern, but I want to assure you that I am not asking about intimate behavior. Rather, sexual orientation or identity helps people describe how they identify in relationships with their spouse, partner, and close friends. It is often assumed that if a person says they are married or in a relationship that their spouse or partner is of the opposite gender. By asking about sexual orientation, I avoid making assumptions and provide the opportunity for people to be open about their relationships and who is important to them. So, for me, as a person working on finding you the best possible services and supports, I ask about all different parts of a person's identity to make sure I understand who I am serving and what needs you may have.

**Client:** Oh, I see. I am married to a man, so I am straight.

**Provider:** Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

## Resources



### For resources on LGBT older adults visit:

- [www.lgbtagingcenter.org](http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org)
- [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org)

### For more information on training visit:

- [www.sageusa.care](http://www.sageusa.care)