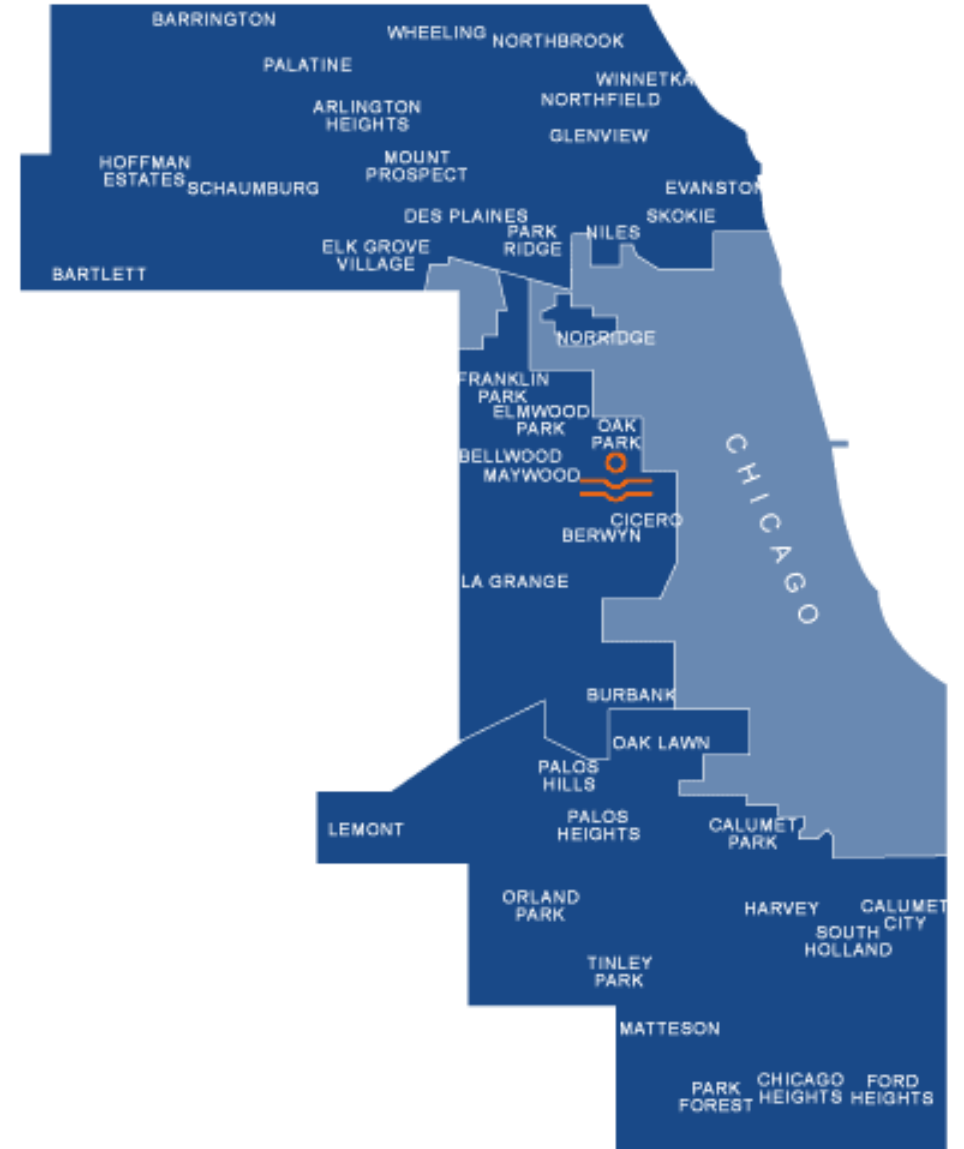




LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Aging Services & Resources for Long-term Care

June 10, 2025

- AgeOptions is the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for suburban Cook County, Illinois
- The older adult population in suburban Cook County:
 - 613,589 older adults and 248,468 caregivers reside in suburban Cook County
 - 15% are limited English Speaking
- Our mission is to innovate, partner and advocate to improve systems and services to strengthen communities so people thrive as they age.





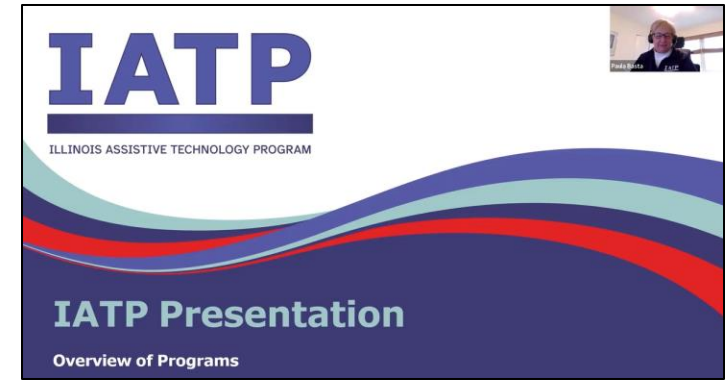
An Inclusive Program for
LGBT+ Older Adults &
Those Who Care for Them

We organize social and informational events that connect LGBT+ older adults and those who care for them to the Aging Network of services and resources to increase their social connectedness and improve their overall well-being.



Program Design

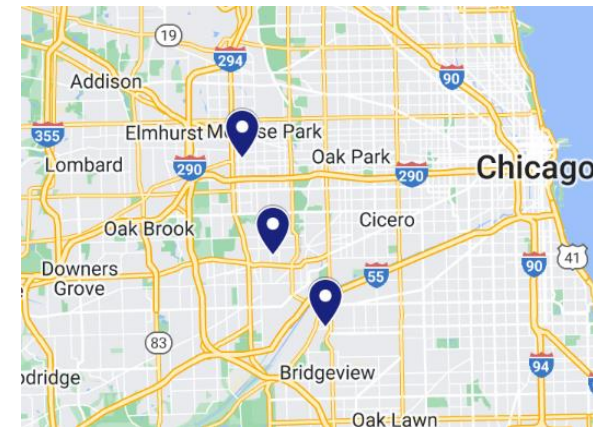
- AgeOptions hosts online informational events featuring speakers on various aging and LGBT+ topics of interest followed by Q&A. We then provide our funded partners with event recordings and discussion guides so they can facilitate their own follow-up events.
- Cafe partners are asked to meet once a month, providing a safe and welcoming space for older LGBT+ adults and caregivers to congregate and learn more about their local resources in whatever format works best for their participants (in-person, hybrid, virtual).



Thrive Cafe Partners

- AgeOptions provides stipends to the community-based organizations and affirming church partners that help us to broaden the scope of inclusive and accessible aging services in in Suburban Cook County

- FY2025 funded partners:
 - West Suburban Senior Center, Bellwood
 - Holy Covenant MCC, Brookfield
 - Pillar of Love Fellowship UCC, Summit



+ Widespread community of collaborators and allies who help us publicize (and often attend) our events



Intergenerational Events

- To combat social isolation experienced by many in our community (made worse by the pandemic)
- To preserve the rich and complicated histories of sexual and gender minorities
- To teach and learn from one another (not just one-way conversation)
- To draw on the joy and strengths of our community members of all ages



Community Agreements

We will practice mutual respect. This includes:

- Using each person's name and pronouns
 - Example: "My name is Nina. I use she/her pronouns. What pronouns should I use for you?"
- Understanding that others may use different language or terms to describe themselves
 - Example: Some folks may identify as queer, while others may find that term offensive - each for their own valid reasons. We must respect all identities even if we do not agree with a term.
- Being mindful of boundaries and personal space when interacting
 - Example: Not everyone is comfortable with physical touch like shaking hands or hugging, so always ask first.

We will value impact over intent. This means:

- The consequences of our words and actions, and how they are perceived by others, are more important than our original intentions, even if those intentions were good.
 - Example: If I step on your toe, it was not intentional, but I still need to apologize for the hurt it caused you and avoid doing it again.

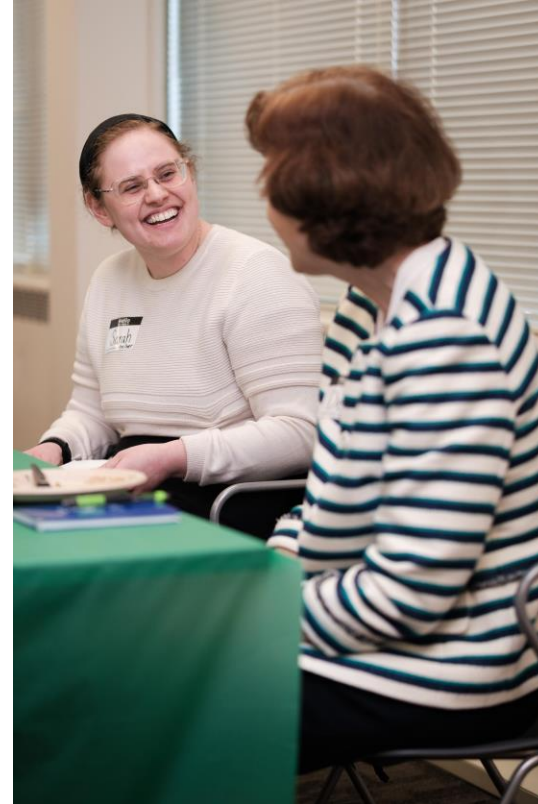
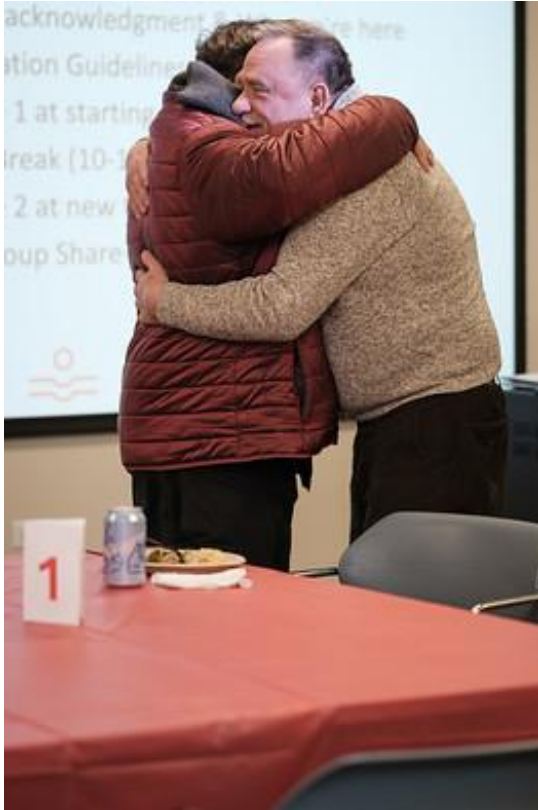
We will make space for all voices. This means:

- We are coming together intentionally across generations. We all bring different knowledge and lived experiences to the table. We all have something to contribute and are open to learning from one another.





Dinner & Dialogue, April 2024





Brunch, November 2024



Trivia Night, March 2025



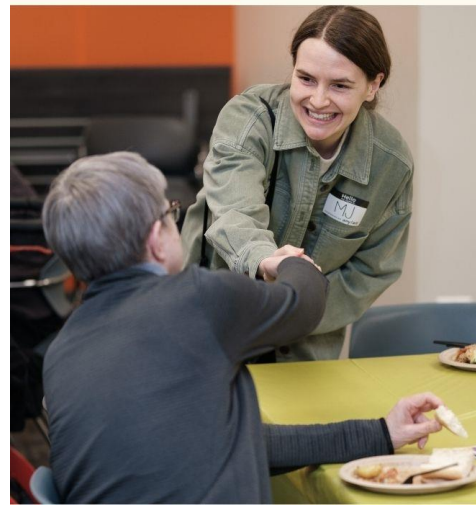
INVITES YOU AND YOURS TO



Friends of Thrive

Past, present, and future Thrive with Pride program participants, partners, presenters, collaborators, LGBTQ+ community members and allies - please join us in celebrating our program's history and envisioning its future together!

- Free, 21+ Intergenerational Social Event
- Mocktails & Food
- Music
- Resource Sharing & More!



FRIDAY, JUNE 13 | 5:30 PM - 8:30 PM
LEVY SENIOR CENTER, EVANSTON
300 DODGE AVE, BOBBY'S ROOM

To learn more, visit ThrivingWithPride.org
or email Nina.Orlowski@AgeOptions.org



Made possible with the generous support of:



Aging Network Training (Pilot)

- In our efforts to broaden the scope of inclusive and accessible aging services in Suburban Cook County, AgeOptions implement an LGBT+ training requirement in the standards for our FY25-FY27 funded agencies.
- Training for leadership, staff and volunteers will include:
 - Key terms and affirming language
 - Acute issues facing LGBT+ older adults
 - Best practices and ideas to put into action



Successes

- Virtual focus group with returning and new participants
- First in-person LGBTQ+ intergenerational events
- Diversifying presenters and topics
- Continue to try new things based on feedback received

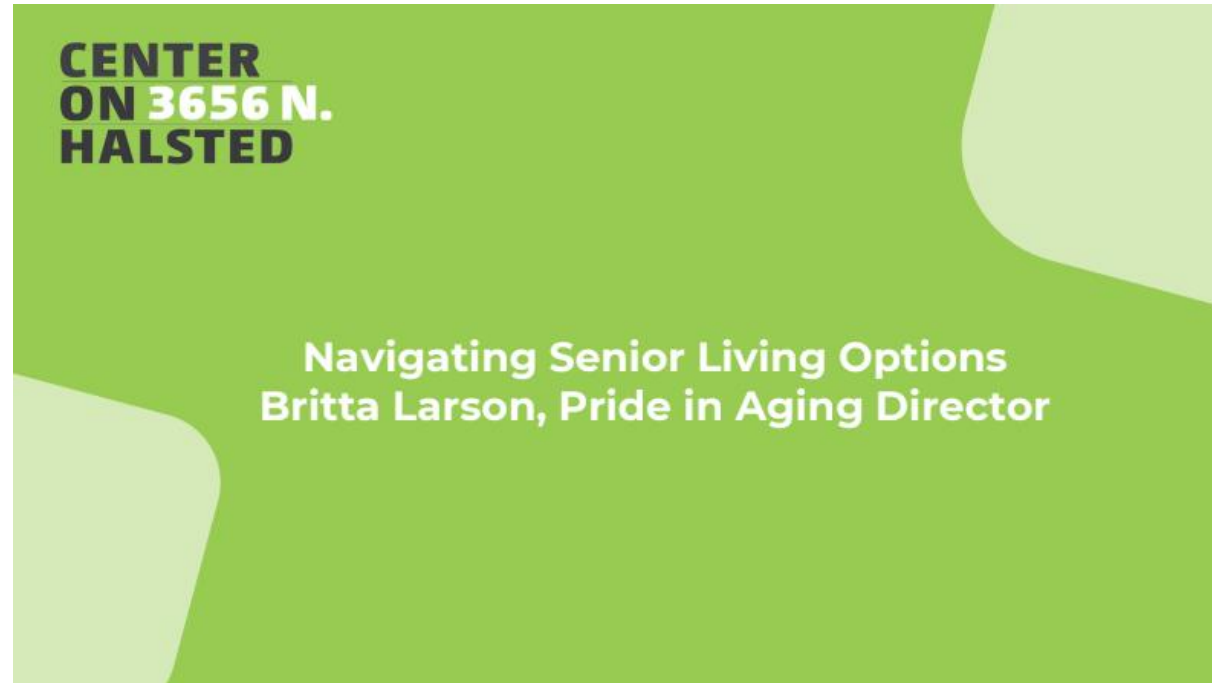


Lessons Learned from Challenges

- Developing registration process and internal safety procedures for virtual meetings
- Getting creative with approaches to outreach
- Collaborating with youth organizations and developing community agreements
- Strengthening existing relationships and trying to imbed support at the organizational level moving forward



Resources for Long-Term Care



Recording: https://youtu.be/OxERbLLTdlk?si=xSXsjFGqO_eP3rNE

Slides: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11HJor2bnKFVqAxKvcZycxIFj0ldlZKkz/view?usp=sharing>

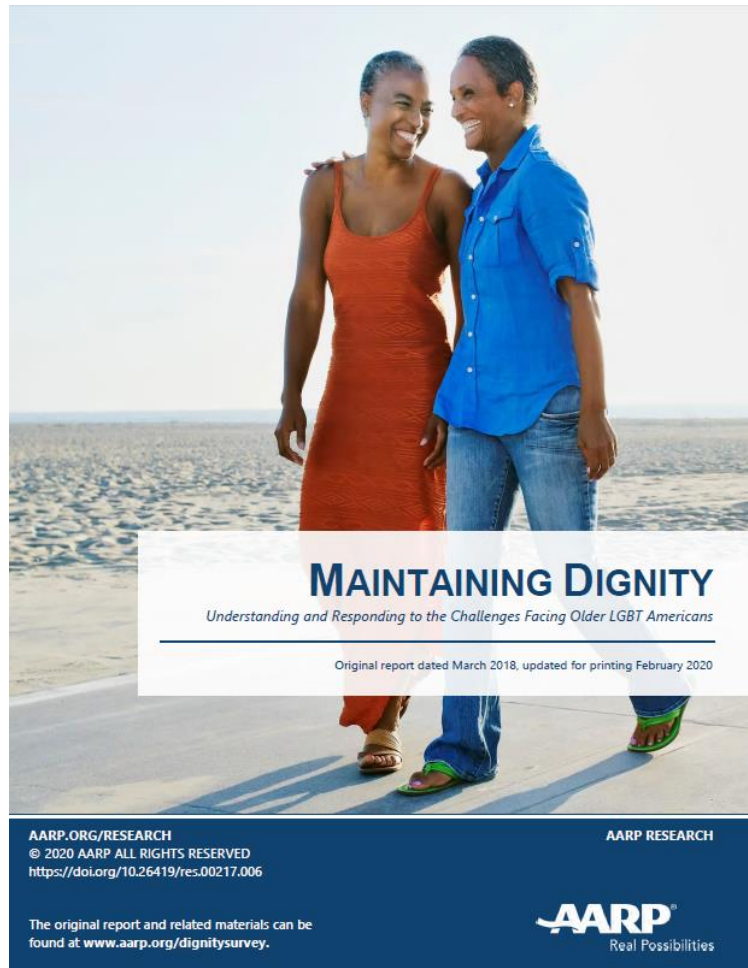


How do we factor into mainstream Long-term Care?



In 2019, Illinois enacted legislation prohibiting discrimination against LGBT+ residents of assisted living and shared housing facilities

You are not alone!



When thinking about long-term care facilities, percent concerned about the following



Would hide their identity in long-term care:

52% of LGB older adults

70% of trans and gender expansive older adults

How to Find an Affirming Community

Look for:



Communities that have signed up for the [Long-Term Care Equality Index \(LEI\)](#), which sets the first national standards for inclusive LGBTQ+ policies and practices in senior housing and residential LTC

Search for communities [here](#)



Communities that have received a [SAGECare](#) certification means that a certain percentage of staff have completed training specific to LGBT older adults.
Bronze→Platinum



Search for communities [here](#)


How to Find an Affirming Community



[Finding an LGBTQ+ Inclusive LTC Community \(2021\)](#)



10 TIPS FOR FINDING LGBT-AFFIRMING SERVICES



Advocacy & Services
for LGBT Elders
We refuse to be invisible

National Resource Center
on LGBT Aging
National Headquarters
c/o Services & Advocacy
for LGBT Elders (SAGE)
305 Seventh Avenue
6th Floor
New York, NY 10001

212-741-2247 phone
212-366-1947 fax

info@lgbtagingcenter.org
lgbtagingcenter.org

The National Resource Center on
LGBT Aging is supported, in part,
under a cooperative agreement
from the U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services,
Administration on Aging. Grantees
undertaking projects under
government sponsorship are
encouraged to freely express their
findings and conclusions.
However, these contents do not
necessarily represent the policy of
the U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services, and
endorsement by the Federal
Government should not be
assumed. All Rights Reserved.

As an LGBT older adult or a caregiver, you and your loved one might be considering home care or long-term care services. However, you might be concerned about finding services and programs that are LGBT affirming. Inviting someone into your home or revealing personal information can be intimidating at any time, and you may be feeling particularly vulnerable at this point in time. It is important to find service providers who understand LGBT issues and can be trusted to provide you with competent, respectful care. Here are ten helpful tips on finding an LGBT-affirming service provider:

1. The best references come from the people you already know and trust. Ask friends with similar circumstances who they have worked with, and whether they felt respected and comfortable.
2. Contact your local SAGE Affiliate or LGBT aging provider, LGBT Community Center, PFLAG chapter or other LGBT organizations and ask for referrals to providers they have worked with in their networks.
3. Look to see if there are service providers that advertise in your local LGBT newspapers and magazines (either print or online) or have signed up as sponsors, members, etc. with local LGBT groups.
4. Reach out to your local HIV/AIDS service providers, who often have close connections to LGBT-affirming home care agencies and other services.

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging Page12

[10 Tips for LGBT-Affirming Services \(2017\)](#)



Questions to Determine a Facility's LGBTQ+ Friendliness

- What is your non-discrimination policy?
- What percentage of residents are LGBTQ+?
- Have staff and management received LGBTQ+ specific certification or cultural competency training?
- Does your site participate in the Long-term Care Quality Index?
- Do you have a LGBTQ+ affinity group?
- What enrichment activities do you offer?
- What are your policies on cohabitation?
- Can I speak with current residents?
- What are their policies on bullying and harassment between residents?

[Source 1](#), [Source 2](#)

Visual, Verbal, Physical cues

Pictures of same-sex couples

Rainbow flags

Prominent displays
of
nondiscriminatory
policies in the lobby
or on the website

Inclusive language
on forms (such as
non-binary gender
options or
acknowledgment of
families of choice)

Finding LGBT Affirming Providers

- Ask friends about their experiences
- Ask trusted providers or organizations who they would recommend

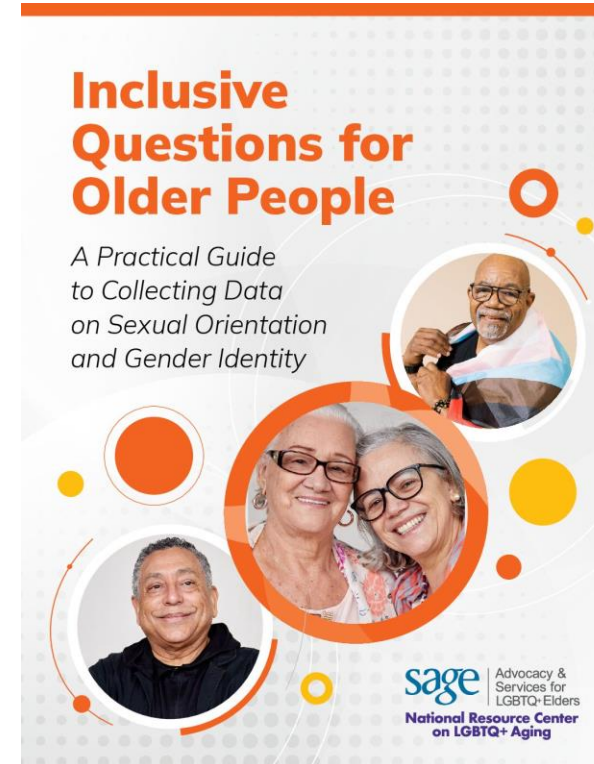




Other resources

- [National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging](#), which lists resources by state.
- [AARP's Prepare to Care guide](#) for caregivers in the LGBTQ+ community.
- [Housing rights](#) for LGBTQ+ seniors who are nursing home residents.
- [SAGE's National LGBTQ+ Housing Initiative](#), which has plentiful housing resources.
- [consumer-housing-one-pager-final.pdf \(sageusa.org\)](#)

Best Practices Guides from NRC



[Source](#)



Advocacy for LGBTQ+ LTC Bill of Rights in Illinois forthcoming!

LGBTQ+ aging advocates commend Massachusetts House and Senate for including LGBTQ+ Long Term Care Bill of Rights in “An Act to improve quality and oversight of long-term care”

August 30, 2024

[Source](#)

Minnesota Introduces Groundbreaking LGBTQIA2S+ and HIV Long-Term Care Protections

Posted May 27, 2025

[Source](#)



Thank you! Questions?

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www.ageoptions.org, www.thrivingwithpride.org

