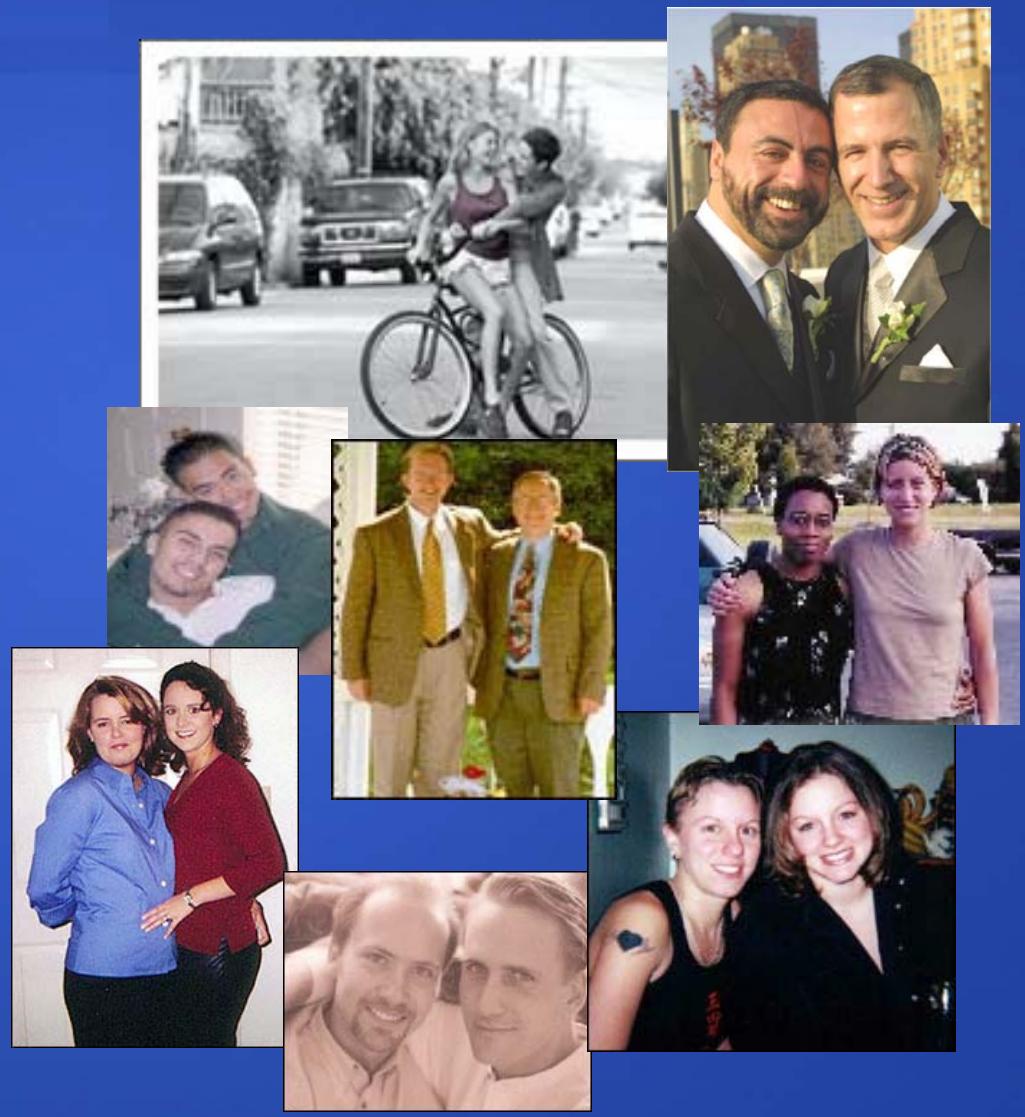
LGBT 101

The Impact of Social Determinants on Health Equity

Health Equity Interest Group
Sherri Paxon
03.12.2009

LGBT Social Determinants

- Families
- Discrimination
- Violence
- Health
- Schools
- Military
- Aging
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Employment
- Geography



Social Determinants of Health

Societal conditions (freedom from discrimination, job opportunities, availability of food, housing, health care access, etc) along with psychosocial factors (social networks, self-esteem, etc) impact the health of individuals and communities. Policies, laws, community interventions and other factors positively and negatively affect the distribution of social determinants to various population groups (based on race, beliefs, sexuality, etc).

The complex interaction of these factors, influenced by the degree of social justice in play, affects health outcomes. Health equity is impacted by the equitable or inequitable distribution of the social determinants, contributing to the status of an individual's health. Recognition of the interplay among societal conditions, health-related behaviors and health care access in health outcomes can improve efforts toward achieving health equity.

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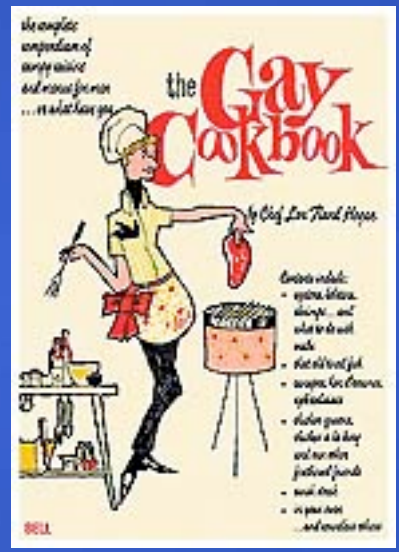
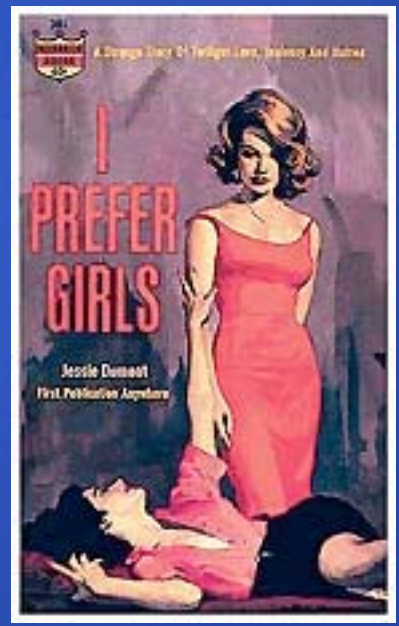
A Bit of Cultural Sensitivity





I don't mind straight people, as long as they act gay in public!

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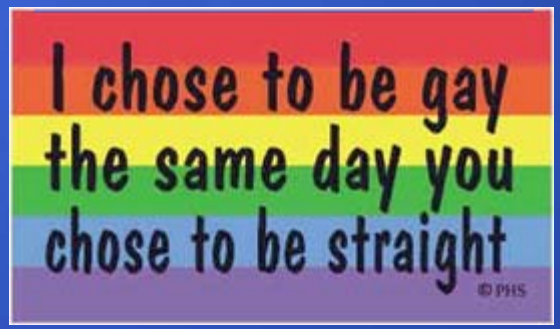
Orientation vs Preference

- Sexual Orientation
  - Emotional and sexual attraction to others of a particular sex
- Sexual Preference
  - Inappropriate - implies choice



Heterosexual vs Straight

- Heterosexual
  - Primary emotional & sexual attraction with the opposite sex
- Straight
  - Can be offensive
  - Implies non-straight is "crooked" or "twisted"

Homosexual vs Queer

- Homosexual
  - Primary emotional & sexual attraction to the same sex
- Queer
  - Can be negative
  - Reclaimed by some, symbol of pride
  - Generally not for "straights" to use

Gay

- Men primarily attracted to men
- MSM
- Sometimes refers to larger LGBT population

Lesbian

- Women primarily attracted to women
- WSW
- Some prefer the term ‘gay’

Bisexual

- Emotional & sexual attraction to both sexes
- Frequently shunned by some lesbian & gay populations

Gender Identity

- Innate perception of gender
- May not be consistent with anatomical gender
- Distinct from sexual orientation

Transgender

- Incongruity between birth sex & gender identity
- MTF or FTM
- Hormonal treatment
- Sex reassignment
- Can be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual

Population Comparisons

- US population – 281 million
- Black population – 36 million
- LGBT population – est 14 - 28 million
- Jewish population – 6 million
- American Indian population – 1.8 million

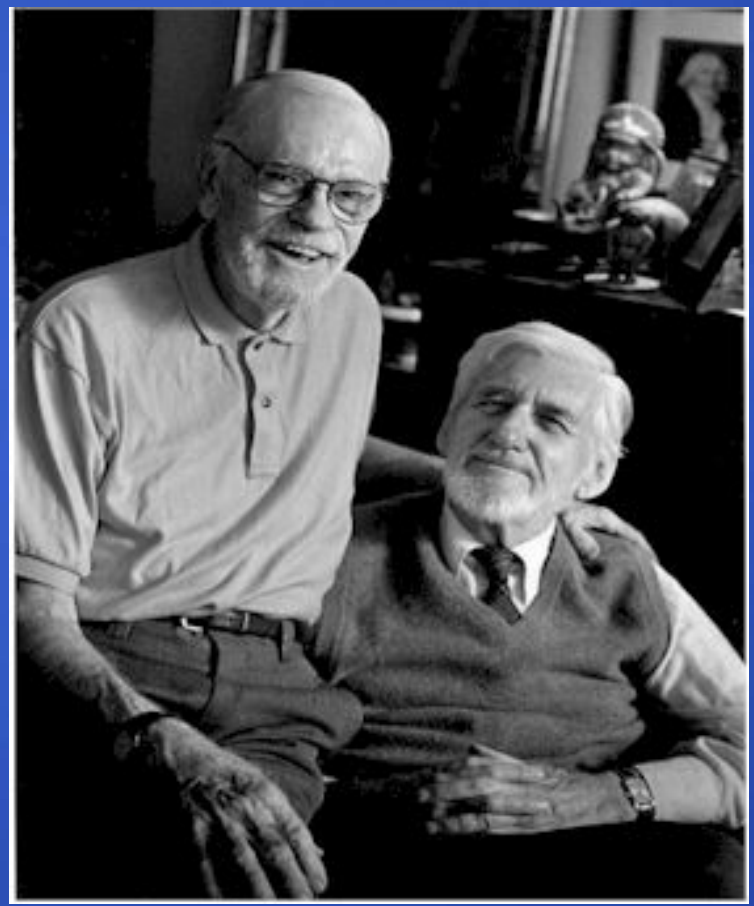
Discrimination & Bias

- Can be obvious or subtle
- Individual or institutionalized
- Homophobia
  - Irrational fear, hatred & intolerance of homosexuals

- Heterosexism
  - Assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and any other expression of sexuality is deviant
  - Organizations often think they have no LGBT clients or staff members

Couples & Families

- Domestic Partnership
- Civil Union
- Marriage



Domestic Partnership

- Must live together a specific period
- Be responsible for each other financially
- Not blood relatives
- At least 18
- Mentally competent
- Life partners/would get married if available
- Registered if registry is available
- Not legally married to anyone
- Inform company if DP terminates

DP Limitations

- Only valid at originating organization (company, city, or state)
- Benefits vary
- No category on most forms

Civil Union

- Legal status created by Vermont in 2002
- Gives legal protections at state level

CU Limitations

- Not portable
- No federal benefits
- Ending civil union after move
- No category on most forms

- Legal limbo
  - Governmental functions
  - Performed by both state & federal
  - Taxes & public benefits
  - Taxation, pension rules, insurance, Medicaid

Separate and Unequal

Separate and Unequal

2nd Class Status

Marriage

- Unique legal status conferred & recognized by governments the world over
- Obligations, rights, protections
- Cultural institution

Marriage Protections

- 1138 federal
- 300+ state
- Health insurance
- Taxes (179)
- Retirement & pensions
- Family & medical leave
- Immigration
- Federal employee benefits (270)
- COBRA
- Hospital visitation
- Nursing homes
- Home protections

Why Marriage?

- Move civil rights forward
- Protect couples nationwide
- Separate is not equal
- Provides families stability & security
- Support is growing

Current Recognitions

State Level Spousal Rights

- ✓California – DP, 1999, 2005
- ✓Vermont – CU, 2000
- ✓District of Columbia, DP, 2002
- ✓New Hampshire, CU, 2008
- ✓New Jersey, CU, 2007
- ✓Oregon, DP, 2008

State Level Limited Rights

- ✓Hawaii, RB, 1997
- ✓Maine, DP, 2004
- ✓Washington state, DP, 2007

Marriage

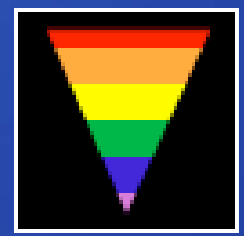
- ✓ **Connecticut, 2008**
- ✓ **Massachusetts, 2004**

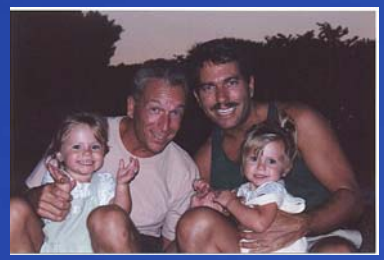
Marriage Recognition

- ✓ **New York, 2008**

Federal Marriage Amendment

- Proposed constitutional amendment
- Constitution amended 17 times since the Bill of Rights
- Except Prohibition (later repealed), was only to extend rights & liberties
- End slavery, guarantee vote for people of color, young people, women
- Would be first time a group of Americans constitutionally singled out for discrimination





“Gayby” Boom

- Current marriage and family law put families in jeopardy – no protections for parents or children
- 6 to 14 million G/L parents are raising children
  - Previous heterosexual contact
  - Adoption
  - Surrogacy
  - Artificial insemination
  - Foster care

Insurance and Benefits

- LGBT have lower rates of health insurance coverage, especially lesbians
- Health insurance coverage generally denied to G/L couples
  - If insurance available, additional tax penalties apply

Kids & School

- 84% LGBT students verbally harassed due to sexual orientation
- 40% report physical harassment
- 9 of 10 heard “faggot”, “dyke”, “that’s so gay”, etc frequently or often
- Over 85% of the time faculty don’t intervene
- LGBT youth twice as likely not to have post HS education plans

2003 GLSEN National School Climate Survey

State of the States 2004

A Policy Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Safer Schools Issues

- 8 states & District of Columbia have statewide legal protections
  - CA, MN, NJ, CT, MA, VT, WA, WI
- 9 states - anti-bullying laws
  - Most non-specific, vague
  - AK, CO, GA, LA, OK, OR, IL, NH, WV
- ND received "F" grade

Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Don’t Pursue Don’t Harass

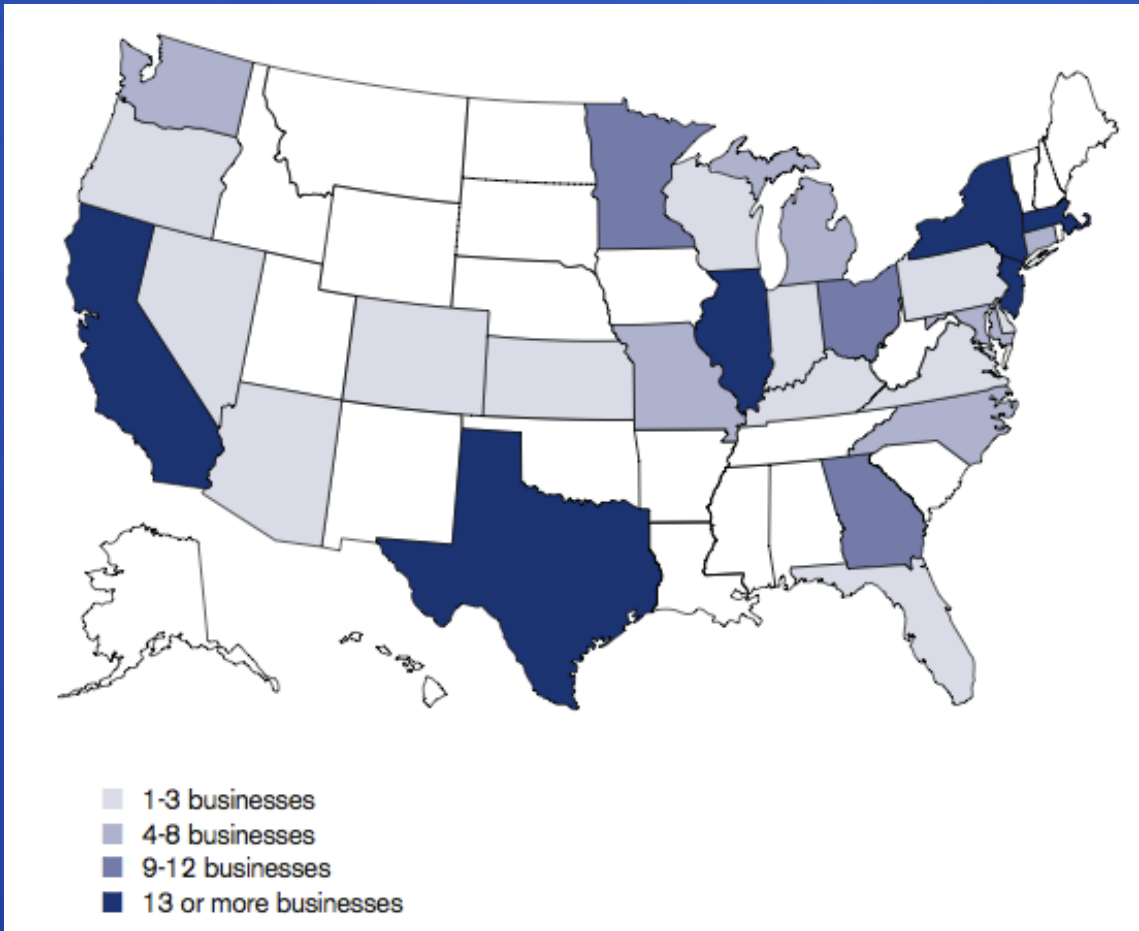
Military Service

- Requires people to be dishonest about personal lives
- Results in firing, potential imprisonment
- Proposed: Military Readiness Enhancement Act
- Gaining support

Workplace Discrimination

- Can't register as domestic partner
- Barred from family insurance, family medical leave, bereavement leave, etc
- Not hired or being fired
- Barred from advancement
- Different standards applied

HRC Corporate Equality Index



CEI 100%

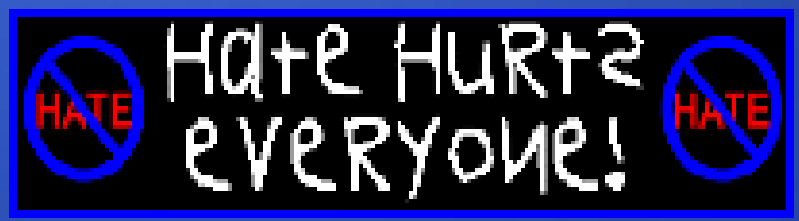
- Equal Opportunity Policies
- Diversity Training
- Partner Benefits
- Transgender-inclusive Insurance
- Diversity Council
- Engages LGBT Community
- Exhibits Responsible Behavior

Legislation

- Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA)
- Prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation
  - Exemptions

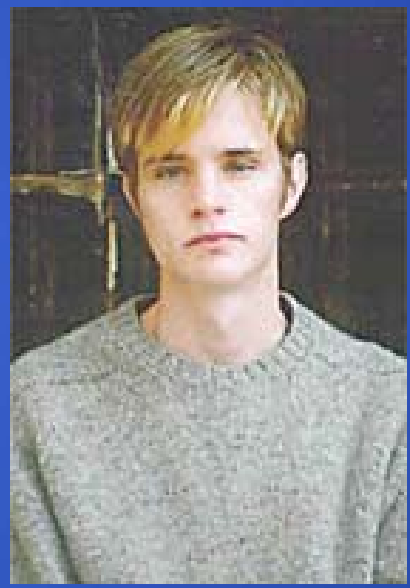
Violence

- Hate crimes
- 15.5% of all hate crime incidents (2006)
- Underreported
- 64% LGB fear being a victim of bias-related violence



Hate Crimes

- Not well reported
- Targets whole group
- Message - individual & their kind will not be tolerated
- Generates fear in whole community



Legislation

- Local Law Enforcement Act
- Regularly introduced
- Many cosponsors
- Adds actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, disability
- More hopeful of passage

Double Whammy!!!

Race & Ethnicity

- ✓Racial and ethnic inequities…
- ✓Compounded by sexual orientation or gender identity inequities…and
- ✓Possible cultural aspects impact family support

A Need for Cross-Cultural Understanding and Inclusion

As an African American, I have to say that racism and homophobia are not the same thing and the predominantly white gay community needs to be aware of that. I'm not minimizing homophobia, but I am just asserting that it is different than the discrimination that blacks have felt. But even more so is the fact that when the subject of gay marriage is brought up in the media, the people we see are all white. It's as if blacks or Latinos or Asian gays don't exist. So, if you are black person going to vote for this measure and you see no black people being portrayed, then why would you vote for it? It's just going to help white folks. But as a gay man and as an African American gay man, I know how pervasive homophobia is in our communities. Growing up, I remember being chastised if I bent my wrist downward, since that would tell people I'm gay. Because I didn't act in the hyper-masculine way that all black boys were supposed to act like, I received my fair share of the 'f___t' epithet. And I remember preachers condemning homosexuals from their pulpits and the derogatory chatter in barbershops. Because of all this, gay African Americans have tended to hide in plain sight, downplaying their sexuality.

Dennis Sanders

Health

- Same basic health needs as the general population
- Inequities related to sexual orientation or gender identity

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

Homophobia is a Health Hazard

- Quality of care affected
- LGBT health care training inadequate
- Sexual orientation disclosure necessary for good health care

Homophobia is a Health Hazard

- Physicians uncomfortable with sexuality issues
  - Only 11 to 37 percent take sexual history on new adult patients
- Stigma compounded
  - Only 18 to 49 percent disclose sexual orientation to physician

The Issues for Adolescents

- Suicide and Depression
  - Leading cause of death in questioning/gay males
- "Rites of Passage" denial
  - Stifles normal social development
- Violence
  - Average HS student hears 25.5 anti-gay slurs daily

Health Issues for Women

- In the United States there are an estimated 6 - 11 million lesbians that:
  - Access health care less frequently than heterosexuals
  - Are less likely to receive routine gynecological exams
  - Have an increased risk of cancers, tobacco use, sexually transmitted disease, chronic diseases

Health Issues for Men

- In the United States there an estimated 9 – 18 million gay men that:
  - Access health care less frequently than heterosexual men
  - Have an increased risk of HIV, sexually transmitted disease, tobacco use, cancers
  - May have an increased prevalence of anorexia and bulimia

Health Issues for Transgender Persons

- MTF Transsexuals
  - Prostate cancer
    - Prostate gland not removed
- FTM Transsexuals
  - Breast cancer
    - Risk still present though breast reduction surgery was performed
  - Ovarian cancer
    - Ovaries may not have been removed

Rural Aspects

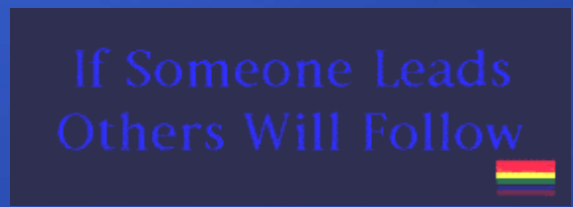
- More conservative political & religious climate
  - Precludes G/L affirmation
  - Homosexuality viewed as sin, mental illness or crime
- Most advocacy organizations active in more populated areas
- Issues of confidentiality more paramount
- Social support systems more likely church & family
  - LGBT often estranged from blood relatives & childhood church
  - LGBT socially & geographically isolated
- LGBT face discrimination, hate crimes, homophobia but help access is very limited to non-existent

Fears Fears Fears

- Losing child custody
- Employment loss
- Housing difficulties
- Losing social support
- Substandard health care
- Health care refusal
- Military discharge

Health Equity Promising Practices - Goals

- Eliminate discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity
- Provide full and equal access to services
- Eliminate stigma for LGBT individuals and families
- Provide an environment where it is safe to be out

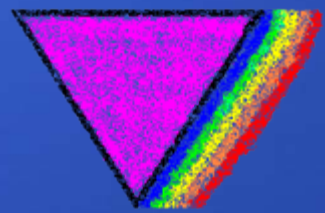


Health Equity Promising Practices - Methods

- Personnel training
- Written non-discrimination policies
- Non-discrimination policies posted
- Inclusive forms
  - Include domestic partner category
  - Allow spouse to be defined as same- or opposite-sex
  - Add transgender category under gender
  - Allow for non-traditional families – use "parent" instead of "mother" and "father"

Methods, continued…

- LGBT friendly reading materials & bulletin board items
- Confidentiality assurances
- Questions regarding heterosexism & homophobia included on evaluation forms
- LGBT representation on advisory boards



Work for LGBT Social Justice

Equality in society Equity in health

Have questions…Need additional information? Please contact:

Sherri Paxon
spaxon@nd.gov
701.328.2698

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- American Society on Aging – LGBT committee
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