



Working with LGBTQ Older Adults & Staff

Maren Levad, she/her
Aging Advocate

**RAINBOW
HEALTH**

Formerly known as JustUs Health

Rainbow Health

Respond to the health needs of Minnesota's LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected communities with a whole-person approach.

- Elders and older adults
- Housing assistance
- Mental health
- Financial and economic assistance
- Access to free or low-cost medications



Objectives

- 1** Describe LGBTQ history and how it impacts older adults seeking services.
- 2** State the impact of HIV and AIDS on older LGBTQ adults.
- 3** Learn strategies, resources, and tools to serve the LGBTQ aging population in your program services.



L G B T Q +

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Sexuality

Trans

Gender

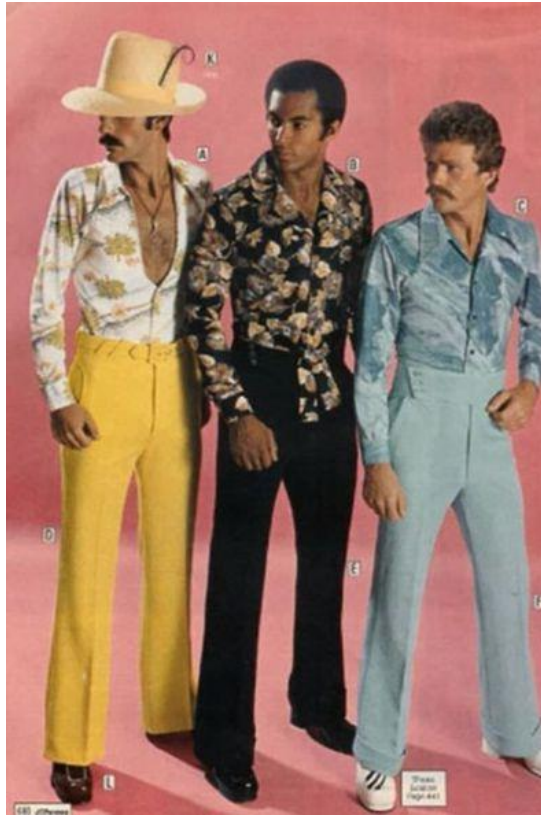
Queer

+

asexual, agender,
intersex, two-spirit,
questioning...

Sex/Sexuality/Gender

A Quick Note Before We Begin



Meet Your Clients

Maggie is 87 years old and identifies as transgender and straight. She uses the pronouns “she” and “her.” Maggie has some forgetfulness due to vascular dementia and receives some services. Maggie has a son who lives in another state.

Jim is 81 years old and identifies as a gay man and uses the pronouns “he” and “him.” Jim’s partner, who did most of the cooking and house maintenance, died of complications from Alzheimer’s disease. He relies on a network of friends to check in on him.

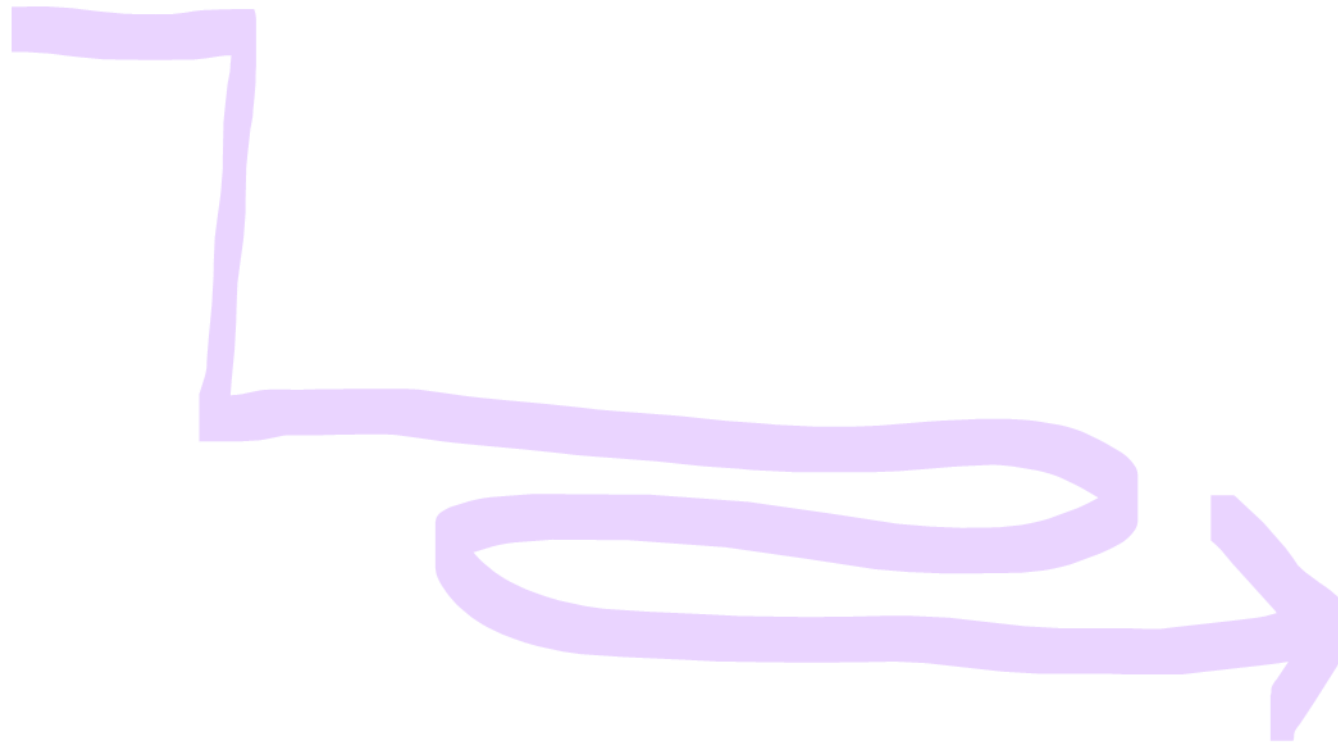


LGBTQ History



LGBTQ History...In a Minute

Then



Now

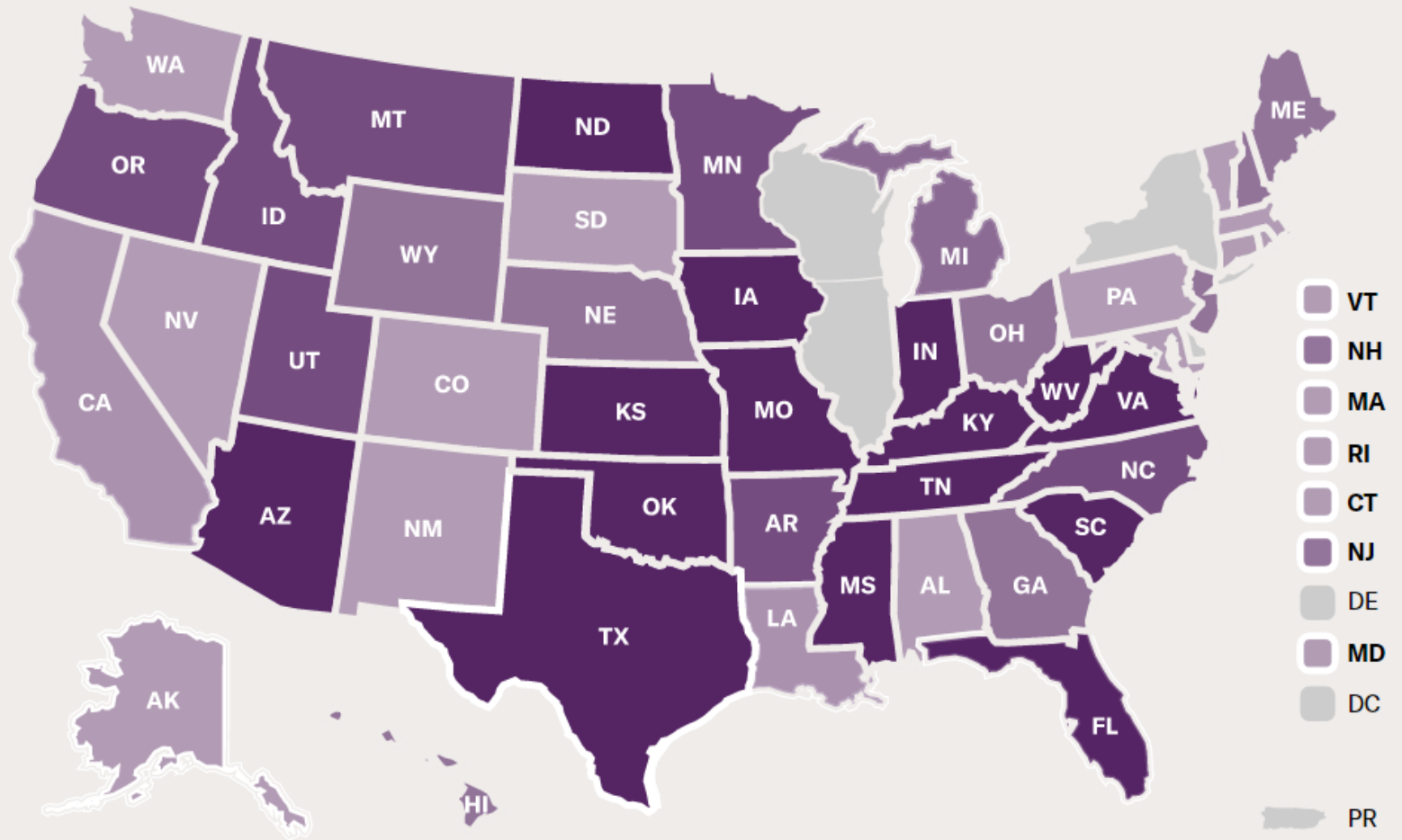


The ACLU is tracking **461** anti-LGBTQ bills in the U.S.

Choose a state on the map to show the different bills targeting LGBTQ rights and take action. While not all of these bills will become law, they all cause harm for LGBTQ people.

[View past legislative sessions.](#)

Bills per state



2023 Stats

Since January 2023 more than 31 anti-LGBTQ bills have been signed into law across the country, out of 461 live bills thus far

drugs bans

ID limitations - laws that seek to limit changes in legal documentation, directly impact trans people of all ages

Transgender girls in school sports

“Bathroom bills” in schools

Banning medically appropriate care for transgender teens

Book bans in school libraries

“Don’t say Gay”



2022 Quotes

"I have worked hard for many years to be authentic, to be truly the person I know myself to be. And now I feel like I need to hide part of myself." 67-year-old transgender man

"I'm going to be driving through rural Wisconsin to visit friends next week. I'm not sure how I feel about having a dancing women rainbow sticker on my bumper. I think I'll take it off." 62-year-old Lesbian



LGBTQ History Quiz

What was the first “successful” treatment for homosexuality?

What did the APA include in its first list of psychological disorders?

When did the AMA remove sexual orientation from its official list of disorders?



LGBTQ History Answers

What was the first “successful” treatment for homosexuality?

1935

What did the APA include in its first list of psychological disorders? [Homosexuality](#)

When did the AMA remove sexual orientation from its official list of disorders? [1973...1986](#)



History: Impact on the Present

The federal government banned lesbians and gays from employment (T/F)

The Reagan Administration approved federal funding for research about and treatment of AIDS (T/F)

What's Dr. Fauci got to do with the history of HIV and AIDS?



Answers : Impact on the Present Answers

The federal government banned lesbians and gays from employment (T/F) **True**

The Reagan Administration approved federal funding for research about and treatment of AIDS (T/F) **False**

What's Dr. Fauci got to do with the history of HIV and AIDS?
Dr. Fauci served as the NIH's AIDS Coordinator



History: Moving Towards Equality

When did the gay rights movement begin? Where?

There was an option for gender other than male/female on the 2020 census. (T/F)

Why did New York rename East River State Park in Brooklyn in honor of Marsha P. Johnson?



Answers : Moving Towards Equality

When did the gay rights movement begin? Where? 1969 in New York City

There was an option for gender other than male/female on the 2020 census. (T/F) False

Why did New York rename East River State Park in Brooklyn in honor of Marsha P. Johnson?

She was a transgender activist at Stonewall



Your Clients' Living History

Jim, 1942

- 1, military bans gays and lesbians
- 27, Stonewall
- 33, allowed to work for Fed Gov't, first MN filing for gay marriage
- 38, Harvey Milk assassinated
- 44, Regan denies AIDS \$\$, sodomy laws upheld at Supreme Court
- 54, Defense against Marriage Act
- 71, MN Marriage Amendment

Maggie, 1936

- 16, Christine Jorgensen receives first reassignment surgery in Europe
- 33, Stonewall
- 57, MN anti-trans discrimination law passed
- 58, AMA removes designation
- 63, Texas case rules against transwoman as widow





Discussion Time

How might knowing this personal history help you serve your clients?



HIV and Aging



HIV and Aging Statistics

More than half of all people living with HIV are 50 or older

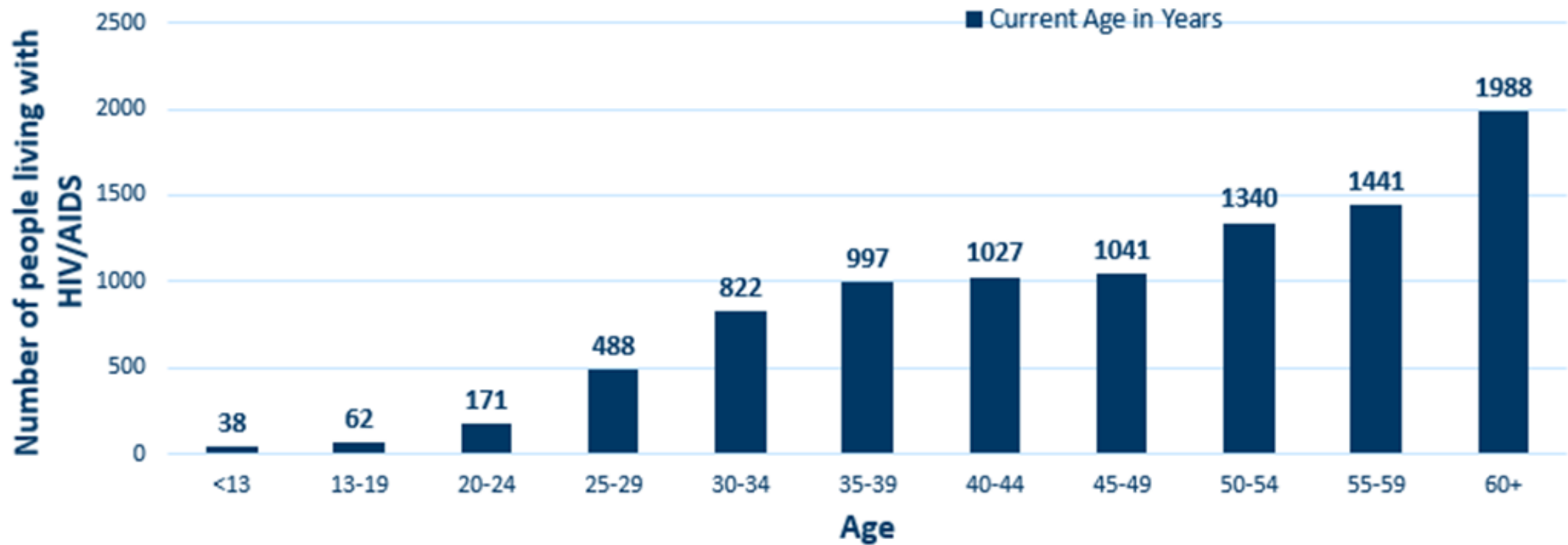
Older adults living with HIV show signs of aging on average 10 years earlier than the general population

35% of older adults are diagnosed later in the disease process

Early detection can prevent many complications related to long-term untreated HIV



People living with HIV in MN by age group, 2020



*Age missing for 7 people living with HIV/AIDS



HIV Stigma Amongst Older Adults

HIV stigma is a factor for anyone living with HIV, but is more likely to impact older adults

LGBTQ+ older adults may experience HIV stigma without living with HIV

Greater risk of isolation and loneliness

Impacts quality of life, self-image, and care-seeking behavior

More significant need to link older adults to supportive services to keep them engaged in care



Discussion Time

What are your own recollections of the AIDS epidemic?
How often do you think about HIV today?



2022 LGBTQ MN Aging Needs Assessment



Data Snapshot

Nearly **twice** as likely to be caregivers.

Less likely to have a caregiver.

Half as likely to have children.

More likely to live alone.

More likely to have completed a health-care directive.

Nearly **twice** as likely to volunteer.



Confidence in Receiving Sensitive Care

Do you feel that senior service providers would be sensitive to you if your sexual orientation and / or gender identity were known?



History Matters: Trauma Informed Care

50% of respondents report having personally experienced harassment or abuse due to their sexual orientation

53% of transgender respondents have personally experienced harassment or abuse due to their gender identity

75% know of someone who has experienced this due to either their sexual orientation or gender identity



Meet Your Clients

Today, **Maggie** experiences high-levels of anxiety whenever there is a new caregiver or home service who comes into her home, because she's afraid of how she'll be treated by them as a trans person. She has told a friend she might consider taking her own life if she starts to forget she has transitioned.

Jim's friends want him to attend a grief support group or join a men's shed because he loves building things. They are unsure how long he can live independently. Jim has not joined any groups or researched assisted living because he's worried what other participants or residents will think about him.



Support Groups Make a Difference

Jim is thrilled to discover a local LGBTQ Grief Group, co-facilitated by a member of the community.

Our Needs Assessment shows that older LGBTQ folks are generally comfortable receiving “mainstreamed” health services – except 66% prefer LGBTQ only support groups.





What Can I Do?



Staff Training

Train all staff, at all levels of the organization, on inclusive care regularly

- History of LGBTQ+ community
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Overviews of LGBTQ health (needs and risk factors)
- Rights of LGBTQ+ clients and patients
- Guidelines for providing inclusive care
- Cultural awareness and bias
- Communication strategies
- Profession-specific LGBTQ components



Training Can Make a Difference

When a new home care attendant arrives and introduces themselves with their pronouns, Maggie is put at ease. She has learned to look for signals of acceptance, and this small gesture allows Maggie to feel more comfortable in her own home.



Pronouns

Pronouns are how we refer to someone when we aren't using their name.

Pronouns *often* denote gender. Using someone's correct pronouns is a way to affirm their identity.

- Some pronouns are:
 - She/her/hers
 - He/him/his
 - They/them/their



Gender Affirmation

Transgender people sometimes change their name, pronouns, take hormones, and/or surgically alter their bodies...

... but none of these are *required* to be transgender.



Gender is less like this:



And more like this:



How do I know what pronouns someone uses?

You **can't** determine someone's pronouns by how they look or what their name is.

So, **ask!**

- “My name is Maren and I use she/her pronouns. What pronouns do you use?”
- Denotes you as a safe person
- Puts the power in the hands of the other person



Strategy:

Share your own pronouns even if you don't feel comfortable asking for someone else's.



- Add your pronouns to your...



Video Call
Name



Email
Signature



Name Badge



Office Door



Voicemail



Greetings

...anywhere you share your name!

Discussion Time

Do you have any questions about pronouns? This is a safe space.



Employee Policies

- Recruit from LGBTQ+ communities
- Review employee handbook for potential policy improvements
- Review employee benefits to ensure LGBTQ+ employees covered equally
- Include how welcome and supported LGBTQ+ employees feel in organization culture assessments



Language: Words Do Matter



Body Language!

They don't flinch

The Bar is Low

The don't miss a beat

I just get a vibe

Don't Assume

Heteronormativity

Not judgmental but curious

friendly

Your Clients Hit Road Bumps

Jim attends a birding workshop at his local senior center. He shares with the speaker that his now-deceased partner bought him a pair of binoculars for his birthday several years ago. The speaker asks what his wife's name was.

Will Jim ever return to the senior center??

Maggie meets a volunteer house helper at her front door, forgetting to put on her wig. The house helper greets Maggie with, "Good morning, sir."

Is this situation DOOMED???



Discussion Time

How might you respond if you made an mistake like this?



How to recover from mistakes

“I’m sorry for misgendering you!
Thanks for letting me know.”



“I am so so sorry. I can’t believe I did that –
I’ve even been practicing! I will do better
next time, I promise. Wow, I suck.”



Marketing & Signaling

Marketing comes last in our list for a reason!

Signaling

- Books in the lobby
- Pins and stickers
- Rainbow Flag
- Pronouns on nametag



Questions

What are you still wondering?





Thank you!

Reach us at

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RAINBOW
HEALTH

Formerly known as JustUs Health