

ready to serve?

PFund Foundation report of the aging network and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults



Advancing social justice
for LGBT communities
in the Upper Midwest

CE+HD

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

PFund Foundation

PFund Foundation is a 501(c)3 community-based foundation advancing social justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and allied communities in the Upper Midwest.

VISION

PFund Foundation (Philanthrofund) is a catalyst in building communities in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are celebrated and live free from discrimination, violence, invisibility and isolation.

MISSION

PFund is a vital resource and community builder for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and allied communities by providing grants and scholarships, developing leaders, and inspiring giving.

To achieve our mission, we provide hands on assistance to organizations to help them be successful, fund systems change work, and convene and report on issues of importance for our communities.

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executive summary

This study provides the first snapshot of the Aging Network's experience and readiness to serve old lesbian, gay and bisexual and old transgender (old LGB and T) people in the region served by PFund Foundation. The Aging Network is comprised of all agencies funded by the Older Americans Act through the U.S. Administration on Aging, including Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and State Units on Aging (SUAs). The directors of every AAA, along with the directors of the SUAs in areas without AAAs, were invited to participate in an online survey in May, 2010. Fifteen of the 24 agencies, 62.5% of those who were eligible, completed the survey.

Almost three out of four agencies serve a primarily rural area and nearly all (87%) of the agencies provide direct aging services.

More than half of the agencies have offered or funded staff training about LGB and T aging, yet only one agency is providing services and outreach targeted to

the LGB and T community and only two agencies had received a request to assist an LGB or T old person in the previous year.

While training does not necessarily result in a change in behavior, full staff training, with sufficient time to understand LGB and T identities and unique needs and to develop a plan of action, is likelier to result in welcoming, appropriate services that LGB and T older adults trust. The agencies in the PFund region were overwhelmingly open to receiving training around issues of LGB and T aging.

PFund Foundation and its study partners recommend legislation that mandates service to LGB and T older adults, prohibits discrimination in aging services based on sexual orientation or gender identity and makes available sufficient funding to provide welcoming, appropriate care to LGB and T older adults.

introduction

Providers of aging services are increasingly aware of the existence of old lesbian and gay people. Some providers have begun to consider aging bisexual people and transgender people. A small number of services and policies now address the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB and T¹) older adults, and providers have created or participated in some training programs to build their understanding of these populations.

PFund partnered with researchers to analyze the AAAs in PFund's five-state region (Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin), presented in this report, to understand both agencies' service to LGB and T older adults and their readiness to serve these populations. PFund was inspired by a study conducted in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area in 2007 by the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development (U of MN CEHD) and the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging (MAAA). That study found that providers of aging services (e.g., adult day care providers, nutrition programs, senior centers) were willing to receive training to meet the needs of old lesbian and gay adults, but had little preparation or programming to meet the needs of this population.²

This report draws on data gathered from a national study that was sponsored by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE), PFund Foundation, U of MN CEHD, MAAA and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.³ This national study is the first to include nonurban service areas. It is also the first U.S. study of providers of aging services that considers transgender older adults and includes bisexual older adults in questions about sexual orientation. Robert Behney published the previous national study to assess provider readiness, activity and belief about old lesbian

and gay populations in 1994.⁴ Since that time, the LGB and T communities have successfully expanded their rights and public recognition.

methods

This mixed methods study was conducted by four researchers affiliated with the University of Minnesota collaborating with partner organizations. To solicit participation, the n4a extended the invitation to the directors of all 633 U.S. AAAs to participate in an online survey in May, 2010. In addition, the directors of seven SUAs and the District of Columbia were invited to participate. These SUAs are located in single state planning and service areas where the SUA in essence serves as the AAA. For the purposes of this report the acronym AAA is used to represent the responding sample of AAAs and SUAs.

Potential study participants received three email reminders. Three hundred and twenty AAAs and SUAs, 50% of the invited participants, completed the survey.

Fourteen AAAs and one SUA completed the study in PFund's service area (Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin), for a 62.5% response rate. The agencies in the PFund region are compared to the national sample and the Midwest sample for informational purposes in this study, but they are too few in number for a complete statistical analysis. The Midwest region is defined, in keeping with U.S. Census Bureau convention, to include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

The researchers modified questions utilized by Behney to reflect current LGB and T terminology and social conditions. In addition, researchers expanded the study questions to include bisexual people alongside old gay

¹The term LGB and T is used in this report to reflect the distinction between a person's sexual orientation (who they are attracted to; e.g., lesbian, gay or bisexual) and a person's gender identity (the gender they understand themselves to be; e.g., transgender). The questions used in this study asked providers separately about transgender people and about lesbian, gay and bisexual people in recognition of the distinction between these two identities.

²Knoche, K.A., Croghan, C.F., & Quam, J.K. (2010). Are old lesbian and gay people well served? Understanding the perceptions, preparation, and experiences of aging services providers *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 29(6).

³Knoche, K.A., Croghan, C.F., Moone, R.P., & Quam, J.K. (2010). *Ready to serve? The Aging Network and LGB and T older adults*. Obtained on December 7, 2010 from <http://www.trainingtoserve.org/demography.html>.

⁴Behney, R. (1994). The aging network's response to gay and lesbian issues *Outword*, 1(2), 2.

and lesbian adults, and to incorporate separate consideration of transgender older adults. The survey consisted of five demographic questions and eight content questions that addressed:

- >> Current work with LGB and T older adults;
- >> Training experience and willingness to provide staff training about LGB and T aging; and
- >> Beliefs about separate services to LGB and T populations, addressing LGB and T-specific aging issues, and the welcome local aging services would extend to LGB and T older adults.

Seven of the eight content questions asked study participants to respond separately about a) lesbian, gay and bisexual older adults and b) transgender older adults. The survey tool did not define the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Participants chose Yes or No responses to the eight content questions. Many participants wrote explanations that indicated the need for more answer categories; researchers recoded responses into “Unsure,” “Conflicted” and “Some” responses as needed to reflect the intent of the study participants.

demographics

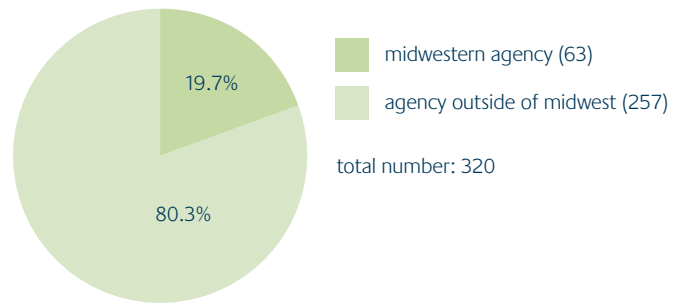
sample

320 AAAs and SUAs participated in the national study. Nearly one-fifth (63) of the participating AAAs are located in the Midwest region, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

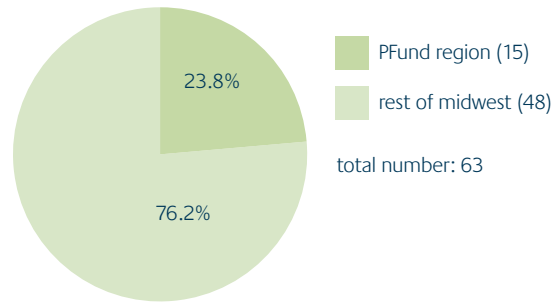
Midwestern States: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.

Approximately one-fourth (15) of the responding Midwestern AAAs are located in PFund’s five-state area.

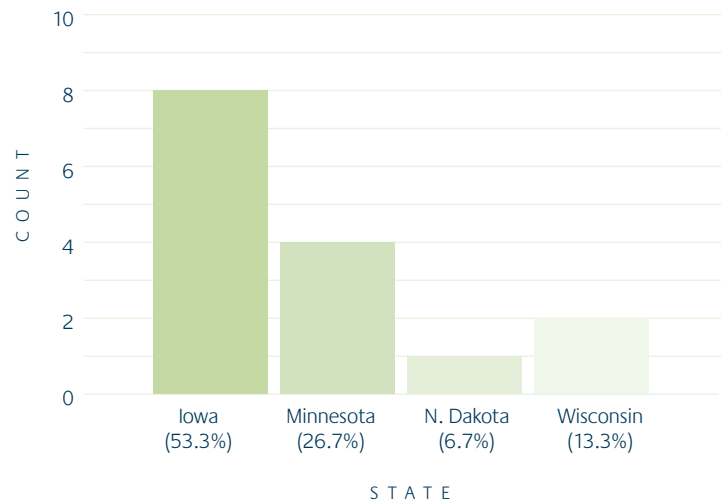
MIDWEST VS. NATIONAL SAMPLE



PFUND VS. TOTAL MIDWEST SAMPLE



PFUND-AREA DISTRIBUTION BY STATE

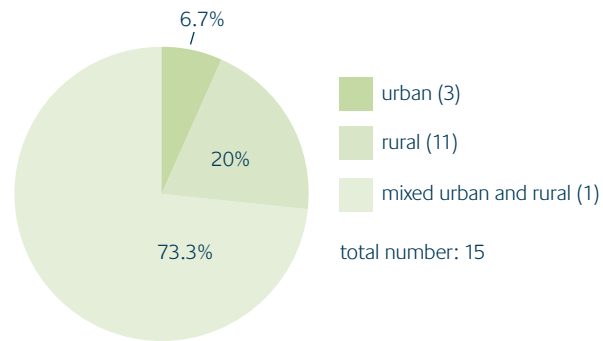


Twenty-four AAAs in PFund’s region were eligible to participate. Nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of the AAAs completed the survey, representing all states in PFund’s region except for South Dakota.

service area geography

Eleven (73.3%) of the participating AAAs serve areas that are primarily rural, while three (20%) serve primarily urban areas and one agency serves both urban and rural areas. The national sample includes AAAs serving a similar number of urban areas (21%) and fewer rural areas (54%). The Midwest sample mirrors the national sample, with 22.2% of AAAs serving urban areas and 57.1% serving rural areas.

PFUND-AREA SERVICE AREAS GEOGRAPHY



direct services

The majority (87%) of participating AAAs in the PFund region provide direct services that extend beyond information referral and assistance. This is consistent with the breakdown for the full national sample.

PFUND-AREA DIRECT SERVICES

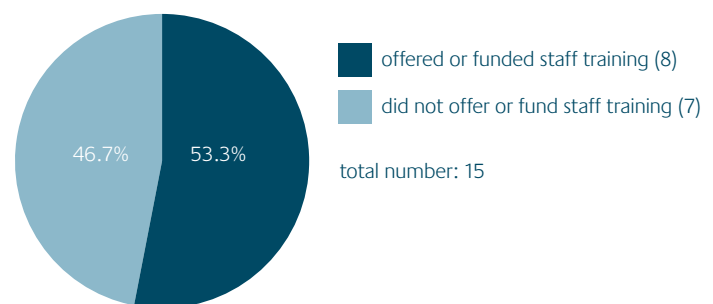
	frequency	percent
yes	13	86.7%
no	2	13.3%
total	15	100%

training

offer or fund training

More than one-half (53.3%) of AAAs in the PFund region have offered or funded training related to LGB and T aging for their staff. While some AAAs have provided LGB and T-specific training for all staff, other AAAs have folded it into their staff nondiscrimination training or have sent one or two interested staff to workshops. Interestingly, the PFund region AAAs have provided more staff training opportunities than the Midwest or national samples. The variety in the type of training opportunities they have offered to staff is similar.

PFUND-AREA AGENCIES AND STAFF TRAINING



willing to offer or fund training

Nearly all AAAs in the PFund region are willing to offer or fund training to better understand LGB and T populations. Remarks one respondent, “We have providers who have expressed they would benefit from this type of training.” One agency that is not willing to provide training explains, “At this point in time, it is not an issue in our state.”

Their willingness to provide training is tempered by financial constraints. “If there was specific funding available of course.” “We are open to both ideas, recognizing that our funding is very limited — so in order to offer training, may have to seek outside funding to sponsor/host trainings and would most likely do so in partnership with others.”

Slightly more (93.3%) AAAs in the PFund region are willing to provide training about LGB aging issues than transgender issues (86.7%). One agency, willing to provide training regarding LGB older adults but not transgender older adults, remarks, “Would need to approve training content prior to approval.”

The AAAs in the PFund region are more inclined than the Midwest and national AAAs to provide such training, while all are overwhelmingly willing to do so.

current services

services

Less than 10% of agencies offer services specific for the LGB and T aging populations. This is consistent with other groups.

There is a range of explanations for the lack of services. Several AAAs in the PFund region state that their services are available to everyone, including LGB and T older adults, with one agency declaring, “...[W]e don’t deny service, nor do we assume everyone is heterosexual.” Another agency explains that they have not been asked to fund such services. Finally, an agency identifies

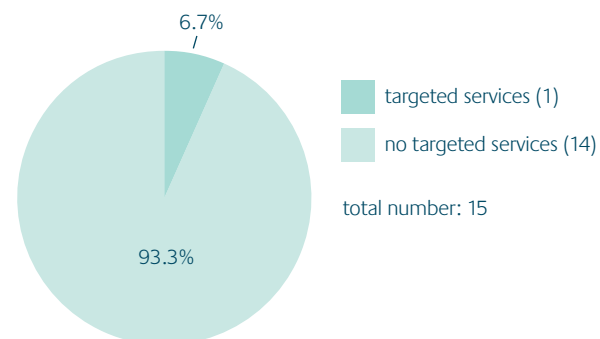
HAVE OFFERED OR FUNDED TRAINING

	PFund	Midwest	U.S.
LGB training	53.3%	39.7%	34.1%
T training	53.3%	34.9%	31.6%
sample size	15	63	320

WILLING TO OFFER OR FUND TRAINING

	PFund	Midwest	U.S.
LGB training	93.3%	88.9%	80.6%
T training	86.7%	85.7%	79.4%
sample size	15	63	320

PFUND-AREA LGB AND T SERVICES



a reason that LGB and T specific services may prove unsuccessful in their region: “We’re in [a] conservative state so LGBT don’t ID selves when accessing services.”

outreach

One agency (6.7% of the sample) reports outreach efforts targeted to the LGB and T aging populations. Another agency reports that it developed a program five years ago, but LGB and T older adults did not participate. Continuing the theme of service to everyone, one agency explains that their “outreach is not inclusive or exclusive” while another agency declares that they do their “targeting to persons age 60 or older.”

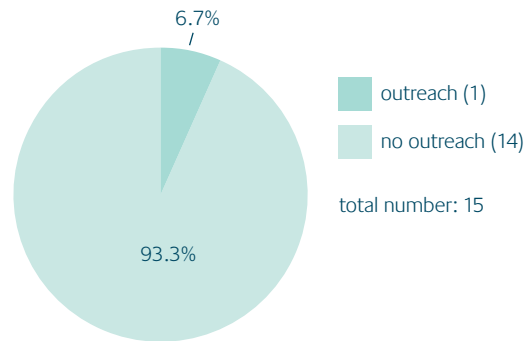
Outreach efforts are slightly higher in AAAs in the Midwest (9.5%) and nearly twice as high across the U.S. (12.5% LGB outreach, 12.2% transgender outreach).

LGB and T requests

Few AAAs in the PFund region have received one or more requests to provide assistance to an old person identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (13.3%) or identified as transgender (6.7%) in the past year. One agency is unsure whether they have received such a request. Several AAAs declare that they would not have knowledge of this, with one agency stating, “I’m not sure how we would know that. We do not ask people to identify their sexual preference in our intake process.”

Nationally, a higher percentage of AAAs have received one or more requests to assist an old person identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (31.3%) or identified as transgender (19.1%). The Midwest AAAs are also more likely to have received at least one request to serve old people identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (28.6%) or identified as transgender (15.9%).

PFUND-AREA AGENCIES AND STAFF OUTREACH



LGB AND T SERVICES, OUTREACH AND REQUESTS

	PFund	Midwest	U.S.
LGB services	6.7%	6.3%	7.8%
T services	6.7%	6.3%	7.2%
LGB outreach	6.7%	9.5%	12.5%
T outreach	6.7%	9.5%	12.2%
LGB requests	13.3%	28.6%	31.3%
T requests	6.7%	15.9%	19.1%
sample size	15	63	320

beliefs

LGB-specific and T-specific issues

Approximately half of AAAs in the PFund region are willing to address issues specific to the aging LGB (46.7%) and T (53.3%) communities. One agency explains, “Our staff need to be sensitive to the difficult challenges faced, particularly legal issues” while another agency draws parallels to other oppressed populations: “Treating GLBT older adults with respect and culturally appropriate knowledge is as important as doing the same for ethnic/racial minorities, differently abled individuals, etc.”

AAAs that do not believe in addressing LGB and T-specific issues either do not see the need (“We will respond when it becomes an issue.” “We treat all clients the same.”) or should work to treat all the same, “We believe there is a need to address issues relating to acceptance of all human beings.”

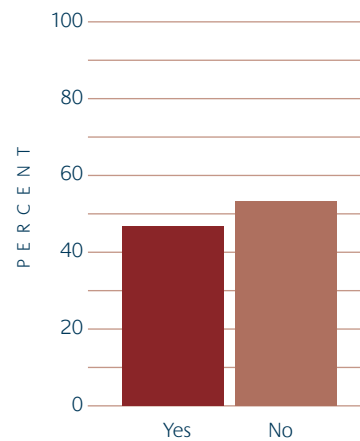
Slightly more AAAs nationally and in the Midwest believe in addressing these issues.

separate services

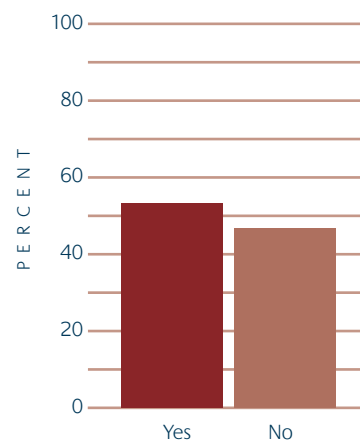
Two-thirds of AAAs in the PFund region do not believe that separate services are a good idea for LGB and T older adults, while one-third of AAAs support separate services. One agency supports separate services “...[i]f the network formed feels that they could provide more appropriate and compassionate care,” while another agency supports LGB and T people’s choice to have separate services, but adds, “I would hope that all our programs would be open, welcoming and appropriate for ALL older persons.”

There is less belief in separate services in the PFund region than is found nationally (53.4% did not think) or in the Midwest region (60.3%). AAAs in the PFund region that do not believe separate services are a good idea most often cite concerns with division or segregation: “I don’t believe ‘separate but equal’ is a particularly successful

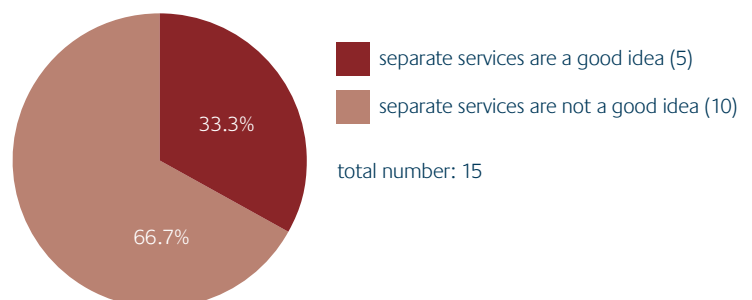
PFUND-AREA BELIEF IN ADDRESSING LGB-SPECIFIC AGING ISSUES



PFUND-AREA BELIEF IN ADDRESSING T-SPECIFIC AGING ISSUES



PFUND-AREA BELIEF IN SEPARATE SERVICES FOR LGB AND T OLDER ADULTS



philosophy.” “The more you segregate, the less opportunity there is to engage in meaningful dialog about the concept of acceptance and respect for differences.” One agency explains that, “Given the current financial environment it doesn’t seem financially feasible to sustain a separate service network” and that separate services should be provided only “if a business model can support it.”

Agencies in the national sample that do not believe separate services are a good idea most often cite inadequate funding or a belief that existing services meet the needs of all old people, including those who are LGB and T.

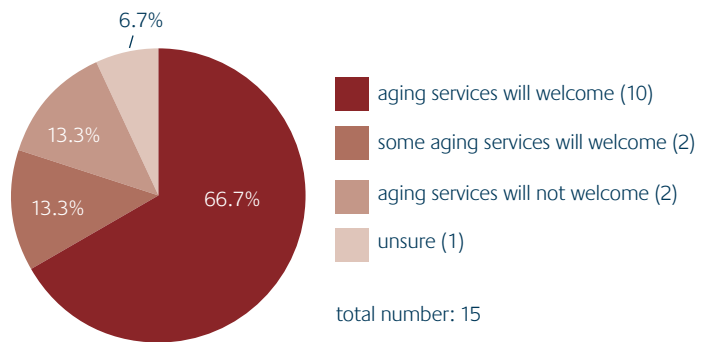
welcome from area services

Two-thirds of AAAs in the PFund region believe that LGB and T people will be welcomed by local aging service agencies and programs. Declares one agency, “I would be appalled to learn that someone would not accept an individual based upon sexual orientation, national origin, etc.!” A couple of the AAAs in the PFund region identify reasons they believe their area’s services may be more welcoming: “We are one of the few states allowing gay marriage.” “In our urban area they would for sure. It might be more difficult in the rural areas.”

The national sample and the Midwest are even more optimistic about the welcome LGB and T older adults will receive.

Few (13.3%) of the AAAs in the PFund region feel that older LGB and T people will not be welcomed by local aging services. One-fifth of AAAs in the PFund region feel that only some local services will be welcoming or are unsure whether or not older LGB and T people will be welcomed. One agency explains, “Some would and some wouldn’t. Many organizations are open to and want to know more about the issues and needs of GLBT people to provide better service. Many don’t know what they don’t know. So the answer is some do, and some may not.”

PFUND-AREA AGENCIES BELIEF IN WELCOMING SERVICES



WILLING TO OFFER OR FUND TRAINING

	PFund	Midwest	U.S.
LGB people welcome	66.7%	71.4%	75.6%
T people welcome	66.7%	69.8%	71.9%
sample size	15	63	320

discussion

A majority of the AAAs in the PFund region have offered or funded staff training about LGB and T aging. Results from the national study show that AAAs that have trained their staff conduct more LGB and T-targeted outreach, offer more LGB and T-specific services, and are more likely to have received requests to assist LGB and T older adults.

In the PFund region, the high level of training has not translated into services or outreach targeted to LGB and T populations. Only two AAAs have received recent requests to assist people identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual or identified as transgender. Just half of the AAAs that have trained their staff believe in the importance of addressing aging issues unique to LGB and T people.

While the sample is too small to draw conclusions with confidence, this result may be explained by the primarily rural nature of areas served by AAAs in the PFund region. The national study finds that rural-based AAAs are less likely than urban-based AAAs to offer services specific to LGB and T people or to reach out to them. Further, the national data finds that LGB and T older adults are less likely to request services from AAAs in rural areas. Nearly three-fourths of the AAAs in the PFund region serve primarily rural communities.

Qualitative data on staff training on LGB and T issues indicated training was often provided only to interested staff or incorporated generally during nondiscrimination trainings. It will be important to examine the quality and content of staff training, and to identify and replicate an effective training model. The AAAs in the PFund region are overwhelmingly open to receiving training around issues of LGB and T aging.

One agency identified a failed attempt to provide LGB and T-targeted services. Instances where targeted services failed are opportunities to refine techniques in serving this community.

Significant numbers of participants in community needs assessments conducted in the U.S. and Canada have expressed fear that they will face discrimination or insensitivity when seeking aging services.⁴ However, AAAs in the PFund region are highly optimistic about the welcome LGB and T older adults will receive through local aging services. This optimism may need to be tempered with an understanding that people who fear discrimination need reassurance at the front end in order to make their way through an agency's doors.

Sexual orientation (the gender of people to whom one is attracted) and gender identity (a person's understanding of their own gender) are frequently mistaken to be the same thing rather than two different identities. The survey tool did not explain the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, and many of the written responses indicate that study participants do not understand the distinction between these identities. AAAs need to understand the distinctions between LGB and transgender people in order to address their unique needs.

⁴ Altman, C. (1999). Gay and lesbian seniors: Unique challenges of coming out in later life (SIECUS Report No. 27); Brotman, S., Ryan, B., & Cormier, R. (2003). The health and social service needs of gay and lesbian elders and their families in Canada. *The Gerontologist*, 43(2), 192-201; Croghan, C., Mertens, A., Yoakam, J., & Edwards, N. (2003, April). GLBT senior needs assessment survey. Poster presented at the Joint Conference of the American Society on Aging and the National Council on the Aging, Chicago, IL; deVries, B. (2006). Home at the end of the rainbow. *Generations*, 29(4), 64-69.

recommendations

There have been several reports in the PFund region addressing LGB and T older adults⁵. Based on the review and analyses of this study data as well as information obtained from the other reports, PFund offers the following recommendations for service providers and for policy makers:

service providers:

- >> Recognize that agency administrators and staff need training to build their understanding of old LGB and T people and how to work with these populations.
- >> Train all staff to understand the unique needs of LGB and T individuals. Include a basic understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation. Make certain that all training is sensitive to issues of difference, such as race, religion, ethnicity and class.
- >> Accept that older LGB and T individuals may have experienced fear and discrimination in past encounters with service providers. They may need encouragement and understanding to feel safe to fully participate in programs.
- >> When clients reveal their LGB and T identities, treat the whole person and their situation. Recognize partners and families of choice. Do not assume that being LGB or T is a problem in itself.
- >> Become familiar with specialized services in the community that serve LGB and T clients regardless of age. Make referral as appropriate.
- >> Make certain that your agency is affirming and welcoming. All written materials and forms should be gender neutral and include language that allows for different family configurations.

policy makers:

- >> Pass legislation (such as Assembly Bill 2920 in California) that mandates each AAA (called a PSA in California) to include LGB and T older adults in its needs assessments and area plans.
- >> Require state AAAs to provide technical assistance and training to service providers at all levels so that they fully understand the unique needs of LGB and T older adults. Provide funding for the training as needed.
- >> Require the active recruitment of LGB and T individuals for constituent engagement on advisory boards and councils.
- >> Fully fund Area Agencies on Aging through the Older Americans Act as they continue to meet the needs of the underserved.
- >> Provide financial support for specialized services such as low income housing, drop-in health centers and congregate meal programs that do not discriminate based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- >> Support basic civil rights and equal access to services for all older adults, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

⁵ Knochel, K.A., Croghan, C.F., & Quam, J.K. (2010). Are old lesbian and gay people well served? Understanding the perceptions, preparation, and experiences of aging services providers *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 29(6).; Croghan, C., Mertens, A., Yoakam, J., & Edwards, N. (2003, April). GLBT senior needs assessment survey. Poster presented at the Joint Conference of the American Society on Aging and the National Council on the Aging, Chicago, IL ;PFund (2010). Equality as we age: A report on LGBT seniors in Minnesota. Minneapolis: Author.

appendix A: national aging network readiness survey

1. How many Area Agencies on Aging do you direct?

- 1 2 3

2. With the exception of information, referral and assistance, does your agency provide any other direct services?

- No Yes

Please explain:

3. Your agency serves an area that is primarily:

- Urban Rural Other

Please explain:

4. Your agency is located in (please choose one response from the drop-down menu below):

1. Alabama

2. Alaska

3. Arizona

[rest of states]

51. U.S. territory (please specify in the box to the right)

52. Tribal nation (please specify in the box to the right AND please also identify the state in which your nation is located)

53. Other (please specify):

5. Your agency is a (please choose one response from the drop-down menu below):

a) Title III AAA

b) Title III State Unit on Aging

6. Does your agency currently offer or fund any services which are specifically designed or intended for:

a) older gay men, lesbians and bisexual people? No Yes

b) older transgender people? No Yes

Please explain:

7. Does your agency target or fund any outreach efforts to the:

a) older gay, lesbian and bisexual community? No Yes

b) older transgender community? No Yes

Please explain:

8. Has your agency offered or funded any staff training regarding:

a) older gay men, lesbians and bisexual people? No Yes

b) older transgender people? No Yes

Please explain:

9. Would your agency be willing to offer or fund any staff training regarding:

- a) older gay men, lesbians and bisexual people? No Yes
- b) older transgender people? No Yes

Please explain:

10. According to Outing Age (2010), by the year 2030, 1 in 5 Americans will be 65 or older. As many as seven million of these older Americans will be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Does your agency believe there is a need to specifically address issues relating to:

- a) older gay men, lesbians and bisexual people? No Yes
- b) older transgender people? No Yes

Please explain:

11. Has your agency received calls or inquiries from a client, referring agency or other during the past year requesting help for an:

- a) older gay man, lesbian, or bisexual person? No Yes
- b) older transgender person? No Yes

Please explain:

12. In some locations, gay men, lesbians, bisexual people and transgender people have established their own social service networks to care for their older adults. Do you believe that the establishment of separate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organizations (i.e., agencies, programs or projects) to care for their older adults is a good idea?

- No Yes

Please explain:

13. Do you believe that the aging service providers in your areas would welcome:

- a) older gay men, lesbians and bisexual people? No Yes
- b) older transgender people? No Yes

Please explain:

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