

Ten Tips on How to be Bi-inclusive in Your Programs & Services For LGBTQ Elders

1. **Include Bi-sensitivity Training by Bisexuals:** If you are working on making your own services more LGBT-inclusive or bi-inclusive, make sure you do specific sensitivity training about bisexuality and bisexual people. Contact a bi-specific organization to find out how they can help you with this.
2. **Watch Your Mouth – Use Inclusive Language:** Pay attention to the language that you use both in print and in speaking to your community. Don't fall back on using "gay" to refer to the entire community. LGBT is a preferred usage to be more inclusive. Some people use the word "queer" as an inclusive term, but we know that others react against the term. It is not a term that LGBT people feel comfortable having straight people use, so if you are not a member of the LGBT community, do not use "queer." Also, beware of using "bisexual" as a slur, by using it to refer to promiscuous people or to indecisive people.
3. **Respect Bisexuals in Committed Relationships:** Unless you know for sure that both members of a couple identify as gay or lesbian, do not refer to all same-sex couples as "gay and lesbian couples." Many bisexual people have same-sex partners and have been together for many years. If both people identify as bisexual, they may want to be called either a bisexual couple or a same-sex couple. It's their choice. Also, if you are being inclusive of bisexual people, you will also have bi people who are in relationships with different sex individuals. Consider how you can make both of them welcome in your spaces.
4. **Use Open-ended Questions:** When you are asking questions of your clients, remember to make them open-ended so that assumptions do not silence some responses. For example: Who do you consider family? Where is your community?

5. **Plan Bi-inclusive Programming:**

When you are building programming for LGBT elders, make sure to include examples of bi culture and bi information. Holding an LGBT History or Pride event? Make sure to include representations of bi people in history and use images that include bi people, such as a bi group marching in a pride parade.

Not sure how to find this information? Google is your friend or contact a bisexual organization for resources.



6. **Be Thoughtful About Visual Representations:** If you are trying to be bi-inclusive in your marketing, please don't resort to images of three people together to indicate something is for bisexuals. Most bis aren't in three-way relationships, but we see these images time and time again used in the media. Keep in mind that some bisexuals are in different-sex relationships so a "straight" seeming couple may be a good visual way to include those bisexuals.
7. **Respect Diverse Life Narratives:** Many elder programs use a life review activity to help individuals reflect on their lives and appreciate who they are and what they have done. Validate the differences between the narratives of LGBT people and those of "straight" people. Bi people may have different narratives from gay, lesbian, and trans people. For example, a lesbian or gay person may describe an early "straight" marriage as a time when they were repressing their sexuality and they were not happy with themselves. A bi person may have had a happy "straight" marriage and may not have had those same feelings.
8. **Outreach to the Bi Community:** If you want to make sure you are reaching the full spectrum of the LGBT community, reach out to the bi community and ask them to help to reach their population. When you do identify bi clients in your programs, make sure they are aware of any bi-specific groups in your area that they might like to access. There are a lot of bi-specific online spaces that can offer support and information. When you are recommending LGBT spaces to bisexual people, ensure that those spaces are actually bi-welcoming. Do not take bi inclusion for granted just because the B letter is in the title.
9. **Design Bi-specific Research:** If you are involved with any data collection, make sure that you include bisexual identity and break out the results separately from gay and lesbian. The research studies that differentiate bi data from gay and lesbian data help to expose the particular vulnerabilities within the bi community so they can be addressed.
10. **Go to the Source - Ask a Bi:** Are you wondering if you are providing bi-welcoming services? If you are already serving bi clients, ask them if they feel welcome and what you can do to improve their engagement in your programs. Ask them what bi inclusion would look like to them.



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