

Diverse elders

Meeting the needs of elders of color and LGBT elders



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Overview

People of color, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals constitute a significant and rapidly growing portion of the older adult population in the U.S.

In 2010, people of color made up 20 percent of the nation's total 65+ demographic, a figure that will more than double by 2050. The Hispanic and Asian senior populations are expected to increase more rapidly than other groups over the next 40 years.

Measuring the number of LGBT elders is difficult, largely because factors such as stigma, underreporting, and methodological barriers (e.g. inconsistent question formats) have caused undercounting. Best estimates, based on numbers from UCLA's Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and the Law, put the current U.S. population of LGBT people age 65

and older at 1.5 million. That number will double to 3 million by 2050. Other studies have found the percentage of LGBT people to be as high as eight percent. (Source: Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders & National Center for Transgender Equality. [2012]. Improving the lives of transgender older adults: Recommendations for policy and practice. New York, NY: SAGE and NCTE.)

In this piece, we will be discussing [issues](#) surrounding programs for elders of color and LGBT elders; [grantmakers](#) involved in these issues; and [trending topics](#), [resources](#), and [organizations](#) that focus on diverse elders.

Elders of color and LGBT elders face significant disparities in health and health care access, economic security, housing, employment, community support, and more. Many of these elders routinely encounter aging providers who lack the cultural and linguistic competence to address their unique needs, and many others face outright discrimination and neglect from our aging and health care systems. More broadly, the research literature on these issues is thin, few programmatic interventions exist that explicitly serve elders of color and LGBT elders, and the policies meant to support aging, health and wellness often ignore, underfund, or discriminate against elders of color and LGBT elders across distinct populations.



To address the needs of these populations, a small but growing sector of organizations offers services and programs for elders of color and LGBT elders, as well as training and technical assistance to aging providers and other health care professionals. Additionally, many of these organizations engage in advocacy efforts that seek to improve public policies aimed at older people and their families to ensure that elders of color and LGBT elders have the unique supports they need to age successfully. In 2010, seven national aging organizations representing elders of color and LGBT elders

formed the [Diverse Elders Coalition](#), a unique, long-term strategy to strengthen policies and programs that enhance the health and well-being of diverse older people. Yet despite the importance of these programs and advocacy efforts, too often they are underfunded and cannot keep pace with growing demographics and demand.

Issues

Several issues dominate the discussion about policies and programs related to elders of color and LGBT elders. [Read more.](#)

Grantmakers

Grantmakers have been involved in the issues of diverse elders in several ways, but the extent of their involvement is difficult to track since it has often been under the umbrella of “underserved populations.” For example:

- The [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and [the Faye McBeath Foundation](#) have supported programs of [the Latino Geriatric Center](#) in Milwaukee, WI, which provides early detection and treatment of Alzheimer’s disease in underserved populations, including diagnosis and culturally competent treatment for Alzheimer’s disease to older Latinos.
- The [James Irvine Foundation](#) has helped support Cuidar, Puerta a Puerta, the [Elder Care Program](#) run by [Latino Health Access](#), in Santa Ana, CA. This program uses “promotoras,” outreach specialists who help link older Latinos to community resources that help them remain in their homes safely and independently.
- The [Con Alma Health Foundation](#) of New Mexico helped [Las Cumbres Community Services](#) develop a pilot program for grandparent-headed families in Rio Arriba County with a monthly support group with 16 grandparents. For many, this is the first time they have met other grandparents raising grandchildren.
- The Senior Citizens’ Law Office (SCLO) in Albuquerque, N.M., received support from Con Alma Health Foundation to improve access to culturally sensitive health-related resources and support services for LGBT older adults in New Mexico. The SCLO also received a grant from the McCune Foundation to launch Pride in Aging, a project designed to raise awareness about the concerns of LGBT older adults.

Three areas of potential investment for grantmakers include: (1) building the advocacy infrastructure of organizations that are working with communities of diverse elders; (2) strengthening and growing the number of service programs, training and research related

to elders of color and LGBT elders; and (3) supporting national initiatives that focus on federal policy change and local efforts that focus on improving local and state public policies, as well as building public support for policy improvements that improve the lives of elders of color and LGBT elders.



Trending topics

1. Supporting aging service providers nationwide in understanding the unique needs of diverse elders. [Read more.](#)
2. Building the advocacy infrastructure of groups working with elders of color and LGBT elders. [Read more.](#)
3. Ensuring that diverse elders have the employment supports they need to survive in today's economy. [Read more.](#)
4. Strengthening programs and services aimed at diverse older people, including senior centers that primarily serve these populations. [Read more.](#)
5. Investing in communications vehicles that educate older consumers about their health, financial planning, legal rights, and more--and connecting them to policy debates on aging as older advocates. [Read more.](#)

To learn more about these issues, visit the [Diverse Elders Coalition](#).

Source: **Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders** October 2012

Resources

[Securing Our Future: Advancing Economic Security for Diverse Elders](#). A report by the Diverse Elders Coalition in partnership with the Insight Center for Community Economic Development.

[Diverse Elders Coalition](#) [video].

[Improving the Lives of LGBT Older Adults. Services and Advocacy](#) for GLBT Elders and Movement Advancement Project

["Are We Doing Enough for Marginalized Elder Populations?"](#) Huffington Post blog

Resource Libraries

- The **Diverse Elders Coalition**, a coalition of seven national organizations representing the needs and interests of elders of color and LGBT elders, has a website (www.diverseelders.org) that can provide grantmakers with information on the issues affecting diverse elders, and policy issues that are particularly relevant to these communities. Click on "Resources" to access the Coalition's library of resource material.
- The **U.S. Administration on Aging's** website has a [research and statistics section](#) that features "Minority Aging Statistics" (primarily Census data).
- The **National Resource Center on LGBT Aging** is an assistance [resource center](#) aimed at improving the quality of services and supports offered to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender older adults. The website has an extensive collection of resources.

Resources Available through Grantmakers In Aging

- [For All Ages: The GIA Guide to Funding Across the Lifespan](#) (rev. 2012). The GIA toolkit for grantmakers shows how to incorporate aging into existing funding areas and how to develop new initiatives on aging. Although Diverse Elders is not a specific section of the toolkit, related content can be found in the Health and Communities sections.
- [The Latino Age Wave](#): What Changing Ethnic Demographics Mean for the Future of Aging in the United States. Hispanics in Philanthropy, February 2011.
- [GIA Webinar: Diverse Elder Communities](#). Challenging Issues, Innovative Responses. Grantmakers in Aging, June 2012.
- [Still Out. Still Aging: The MetLife Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Baby Boomers](#). MetLife Mature Market Institute, January 2010.

Organizations that Focus on Diverse Elders

- [Asociación Nacional Pro Personas Mayores](#) (ANPPM)
- [National Asian Pacific Center on Aging](#) (NAPCA)
- [National Caucus & Center on Black Aged](#) (NCBA)

- [National Hispanic Council on Aging](#) (NHCOA)
- [National Indian Council on Aging](#) (NICOA)
- [Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders](#) (SAGE)
- [Southeast Asia Resource Action Center](#) (SEARAC)