

August 2017

LGBT COALITION ON AGING

The LGBT Coalition on Aging (LGBTCOA) was formed in 2016 as a result of a focus group discussion sponsored by AustinUp and Austin Prime Timers to address updating Austin's plan for an age-friendly city.

AustinUP is a community alliance of businesses, non-profit organizations, and the public sector committed to making Central Texas a place where older adults can live full, engaged lives.

Prime Timers is a nationwide social support organization for older gay men with an active and thriving chapter in Austin.

As the so-called Babyboomers reach maturity, a huge influx of consumers is about to hit the senior care industry; among these are going to be a new generation of LGBT people who have been "out-of-the-closet" most of their lives and who, unlike their predecessors, expect acceptance and respect. This will be especially significant in Austin as the City was recently recognized as a top location for LGBT retirement by SeniorAdvice website and reported widely in the Huffington Post Internet Magazine, Oct 7, 2016.

The LGBT Coalition is made up of representatives of LGBT community organizations, senior services providers, and interested individuals who have come together to "improve the condition of the LGBT aging community through advocacy, education and programs/services."

Why have we chosen to focus on LGBT aging?

- While 80% of long-term care in the US is provided by family members, LGBT elders are twice as likely to be single and three to four times more likely to be without children than their heterosexual counterparts.
- LGBT seniors are more likely to have limited resources. Senior gay male couples are slightly more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to live in poverty; senior lesbian couples are twice as likely.

- LGBT seniors are more likely to experience social isolation, an important factor in early morbidity. Past histories of discrimination result in their reluctance to participate in the community or to access available service and their likelihood to postpone seeking medical help.
- In 1994, 46% of Area Agencies on Aging responded to a survey saying that “LGBT people would not be welcome at our senior centers.” In 2017, that has to be different, and the Coalition is seeking to understand the change.

Statistics come from research by the national organization SAGE (Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders).

The Coalition has held a series of Town Hall Meetings to determine what needs to be accomplished. Participants in these discussions have identified three goals thus far.

The first goal is to **Strengthen Our Community** by creating a coordinated LGBT community response, providing opportunities for people to congregate for social interaction, participating in the City’s intention of making Austin “age-friendly,” and encouraging informed participation in the decisions being made that affect us.

The second goal is to **Encourage LGBT Sensitive Services** by researching agencies regarding their knowledge and staff and caregiver training in these issues in order to find those that are sensitive to the LGBT concerns and to encourage others to provide training in our issues by making them aware of the need.

We have just begun work on our third goal, to investigate and **Support Housing Alternatives/Options**.

The Coalition hopes to be a partner and a resource for those serving the senior community, an opportunity for active participation and involvement for those in the community interested in aging issues and an educator and advocate for LGBT friendly aging.

For more information, to be included in our information distribution or to join in this effort, visit our website at lgbtcoa.org

If you have questions or concerns, please contact us at contact@lgbtcoa.org OR by phone to Barry Waller 512 419 1103.