



JB Pritzker, Governor
Paula A. Basta, M.Div., Director

Respect for Yesterday
Support for Today
Plan for Tomorrow

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IDoA COVID-19 Resources

June 23, 2021

Dear Aging Network:

Happy Pride Month! Aging can be a challenge for any community. But the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults bring distinct challenges. It is estimated that 4.3% of the adult population of Illinois identify as LGBTQ+. Our mission is to provide high-quality, person-centered care to all older Illinoisans, and support efforts to empower older Illinoisans and caregivers in remaining independent, connected, and aging well. However, LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans face a unique set of challenges that are not yet widely understood or addressed in our society, and the numbers of LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans are difficult to track.

It remains a priority for our Aging Network to enhance our data collection efforts, and create a welcoming, safe and LGBT-affirming space; encouraging honesty and trust so that our clients can be their authentic selves. The face of aging is really growing much more diverse, and at a faster rate than anybody realizes. LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans are often invisible in aging service demographics resulting in an inability to evaluate the effectiveness of existing services and inefficient planning for future programmatic expansions.

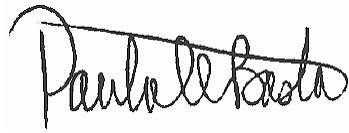
President Biden's [LGBTQ Pride Month Proclamation](#) noted "many LGBTQ+ seniors, who faced discrimination and oppression throughout their lives, are isolated and need support and elder care." In addition, LGBTQ+ older adults have often lived through the effects of prejudice resulting in poor health outcomes and greater risk for chronic illnesses and mental illnesses. At IDoA, we are committed to ensuring that LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans receive the services and supports they need and deserve. It is imperative that we continue to fine tune our services as we learn more about LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans and develop a person-centered plan of care that fits everyone.

I am proud of our Aging Network, becoming [SAGECare Bronze credentialed providers](#). Make no mistake, it is a badge of honor that gives prospective consumers instant confidence that our management and staff teams have been trained in working with LGBTQ+ people. During Pride Month, I hope you will continue to look for ways we can improve support for LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans. Take time to celebrate and engage LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans in your community. Listen and learn from them about the discrimination they've faced and how they have persevered. Invite them to work with you to explore ways we can improve our outreach and ensure that they feel welcome in our programs. With a shared commitment and a focused effort on equity and inclusion of *all* older adults, we can ensure that we are providing the services and supports they need. Here are some additional resources you may find helpful:

[Long-term Care Considerations for LGBT Adults](#)
[National Resource Center on LGBT Aging](#)
[SAGE](#)
[SAGE LGBT Elder Hotline: 877-360-LGBT \(5428\)](#)
[SAGEConnect](#)
[Trans Lifeline Hotline: \(877\) 565-8860](#)

It is incredible to see the trajectory since [Stonewall](#) 50 years ago to where we are today, but there is still so much work to do. IDoA is committed to supporting all our older Illinoisans with diverse programs and services, and we look forward to continuing to strengthen our outreach and education efforts as we help every LGBTQ+ older Illinoisans successfully age with dignity and respect. We owe it to our elders to **respect yesterday, support today, and plan for tomorrow**. Please continue to stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,



Paula Basta, M.Div.
Director, Illinois Department on Aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the **Senior HelpLine at (800) 252-8966; (888) 206-1327 (TTY)**

