

Strategies for Effectively Serving LGBT Clients

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Introductions

- Lisa Cisneros
- Proyecto Poderoso | Project Powerful
 - A joint effort by California Rural Legal Assistance and the National Center for Lesbian Rights to improve legal services for low-income LGBT people in rural California

Goal

- **Share strategies for effective advocacy on behalf of elder LGBT clients**

Overview

Effective legal services for LGBT clients requires:

- Knowledge base and access to relevant legal information
- Strong working relationships with clients
- Community education

LGBT-related Legal Knowledge

Terminology & Concepts

- **Mastering terminology and key concepts helps us understand our clients' experiences and LGBT-related law**

Terminology

- **The Acronym**
 - **L -lesbian**
 - **G - gay**
 - **B - bisexual**
 - **T - transgender**
 - **Q - queer or questioning**
 - **I - intersex**

Underlying Concepts

- Sex
- Gender
 - Identity
 - Expression
- Sexual Orientation

Legal Relevance of Concepts

- The concepts are often used in statutory and case law to describe prohibited bases of discrimination or violence.

Illustrations

- Federal Hate Crimes Statute – 18 U.S.C. § 249(a)(2)(A)
 - Gender, sexual orientation and gender identity
- Title VII and Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins, 490 U.S. 228 (1989)
 - Sex and gender
- California Govt. Code § 11135(a) and (e)
 - Sex and sexual orientation, with additional reference to Cal. Govt. Code § 12926
- California Govt. Code § 12926(p)
 - "Sex" also includes, but is not limited to, a person's gender, as defined in [Section 422.56 of the Penal Code](#).
- California Penal Code § 422.56
 - "'Gender" means sex, and includes a person's gender identity and gender related appearance and behavior whether or not stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth.

Reach Out to Experts

- **National LGBT Legal Organizations**
 - National Center for Lesbian Rights
 - Lambda Legal
 - ACLU LGBT Project
- **Other Legal Organizations**
 - National Senior Citizens Law Center
 - Legal Services of Northern California
 - California Rural Legal Assistance
 - Immigrant Legal Resource Center
- **National LGBT Legal Forum**
 - www.nclrights.org/lgbtlegalaid

Effective Attorney-Client Relationships

Effective Communication: Mindful of Language

- Gender neutral language
- Client's preferred name and gender
- Listen and adapt to client's language
- Intake Forms
 - Williams Institute [study](#) on best practices for asking questions about sexual orientation

Effective Communication: Unspoken, LGBT Affirmative Cues

- Rainbows
- LGBT-related information
- Pictures of LGBT people, same-sex couples and their families

Community Education

Challenges in Community Education

- Potential elder LGBT clients may be closeted or isolated

Community Outreach Strategies

- Initiate LGBT-related educational and outreach activities with “non-LGBT” organizations, including elder groups and agencies
- Build working relationships with local LGBT groups and advocates
- Identify LGBT elder groups

Community Outreach

- Connect with informal social networks
- Include LGBT legal information in general outreach and educational materials
- Leverage media

Final Tips

- Be prepared to address incorrect assumptions, or even negative or hostile attitudes
- Not all legal issues will relate to the client's LGBT status

Thank You

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