How Do Long-Term Care Facilities Treat LGBT Elders?

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation and SAGE partnered to create an equality index.

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In a little more than a decade, as many as 4.7 million LGBT elders are expected to be seeking long-term care and services—but will they be treated with dignity and respect, free of discrimination and mistreatment? To ensure that they receive quality care, two of the nation's leading LGBT organizations have partnered to launch the Long-Term Care Equality Index (LEI) and to ask long-term care facilities to sign the "Commitment to Caring" pledge.

The effort is a collaboration between the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, which is the educational arm of the national LGBT civil rights group, and the national nonprofit SAGE (Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders).

According to an HRC press release, the focus will be the Long-Term Care Equality Index, a survey that will score long-term-care facilities on how fairly they treat LGBT patients, visitors and employees as a matter of both policy and practice.

SAGE and the HRC Foundation are now developing the evaluation tools for the index. In the meantime, they've asked facilities to sign the "Commitment to Caring" pledge, which you can read here.

According to the press release, a national survey of LGBT older adults in long-term care facilities found that:

- Only 22 percent of respondents felt they could be open about their LGBTQ identity with facility staff;
- Eighty-nine percent predicted that staff would discriminate based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and;
- Forty-three percent reported instances of mistreatment.

“It’s time to end the tragedy of LGBTQ elders being forced back into the closet because of discrimination and mistreatment in care settings,” said SAGE CEO Michael Adams, in the press release. “That’s what the Long-Term Care Equality Index is all about and why SAGE is excited to join forces with HRC on this critically important effort. It will be an essential complement to the cultural competency training that SAGE provides across the country.”

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