



National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

QUARTERLY WEBINAR

Sponsored by The Home Depot Foundation

SERVING LGBTQ+ VETERANS

October 19th, 2022 3PM EST

Panelists



Bryan Ellicott
Program Manager
SAGEVets



Jean-Michel Giraud
President/CEO
Friendship Place





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Who is SAGE & What is the SAGEVets Program?

SAGE is the country's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older people. Founded in 1978 and headquartered in New York City, SAGE is a national organization that offers supportive services and consumer resources to LGBTQ+ older people and their caregivers.

SAGEVets is a statewide program to help LGBTQ+ older people ages 50+ who are veterans of military service improve their access to the VA and other veteran services, as well as support their overall health and wellness.





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What does SAGEVets Offer?

- Outreach and education to providers and individuals throughout New York State
- VA benefit eligibility evaluation
- Legal advice and counsel and/or representation regarding discharge status upgrades, especially regarding discharges related to sexual orientation
- Case management assistance
- Programs for older LGBTQ+ veterans
- “Know Your Rights” materials for LGBTQ+ veterans
- Support group for older LGBTQ+ veterans

Restoring Equal Rights To LGBTQ+ Veterans

As of June 1, 2020, the New York Division of Veteran Services is accepting applications for restoration of New York State benefits. Any individual with prior military service who was discharged under conditions that were other-than-honorable (OTH) or general under honorable conditions may apply for restoration of New York State veterans' benefits if the discharge resulted from:

- Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity
- Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)





1. Overview of the project and how it came together

- SAGE has not historically been a direct housing provider. In 2014, amidst SAGE constituents' growing concerns related to their housing vulnerability, the Equal Rights Center reported that at the time, 48% of same-sex older adult couples faced some form of housing discrimination.
- SAGE launched its National LGBTQ+ Elder Housing Initiative and made a decision to catalyze LGBTQ+ affirming affordable elder housing in New York City.
- In 2014, a Request for Proposal was released by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) requesting bids to redevelop an existing public housing site (Ingersoll) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn.
- Housing developer BFC Partners engaged w/ SAGE to submit a bid for the redevelopment of an existing public housing development in Brooklyn as part of HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program.

Stonewall House opened in 2019

- 145 units decided specifically for older people in one of the first 2 LGBTQ+ affirming low-income elder housing development in New York City
- Adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of the Ingersoll public housing lot through the HUD Rental Assistance Demonstration Program (RAD)
- LGBTQ+ culturally competent case management and support services for 300+ building and community residents.
- Utilized 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit in development
- All 145 units have Project Based Section Housing Choice Voucher subsidy to guarantee housing affordability.





2) Considerations – What is important to think about when developing housing for this population?

- I. Community Need
- II. Deep Affordability
- III. Physical Infrastructure
- IV. Social, Mental, Emotional, & Cognitive Health needs

Provision of culturally affirming and ROBUST social services in the building is key, and this means ensuring that staffing packages are well funded, that the staff are culturally affirming and that the building is well-staffed in regard to caseload and capacity.



3) How did SAGE ensure the Target Population was reached (leased to) without violating Fair Housing Laws?

- a) SAGE was clear on language and the development of LGBTQ+ friendly or welcoming marketing materials for eligible residents to provide clear communication in the application process. Stonewall House presented its own specific marketing processes required from multiple agencies such as HPD and NYCHA.
- b) We can build housing that is affirming, friendly, and welcoming to LGBTQ+ people and allies.
- c) We hosted community forums and engagement sessions explaining the project to LGBTQ+ aging communities in town hall style events. The ads featured different languages, color schemes, building imagery and real-life SAGE members
- d) Go where the community is, talk to them, and get them the information they need and the tools they need to apply.





4) Challenges/Lessons Learned –

- a) Reaching eligible LGBTQ+ elders -
- b) Financing gaps
- c) Community buy-in, displacement history & engagement

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Housing Challenges for LGBTQ+ Veterans

2022 National Coalition for Homeless Veterans Webinar

October 19, 2022



Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

Presenter



Jean-Michel Giraud
President/CEO
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Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

Friendship Place Impact

- ❑ Founded in 1991 in response to NIMBY movement
- ❑ Serving DC Metro Region (DC/MD/VA)
- ❑ Broad Spectrum of Programs and Services*

- Street Outreach (Adult/Youth)
- Drop-in Center
- Medical & MH Services
- Scattered-Site PSH (Ind. & Fam.)
- Veterans RRH (SSVF)
- Youth & Young Adult Services
- "Jobs First" and HVRP
- Short-Term Family Housing
- Site-based PSH (Single Men)
- Bridge Housing
 - Rapid Housing Solutions
- LGBTQ+ Services
- Anti-Racism Taskforce
- CARF Accreditation



***Served more than 3,400 individuals in FY2021**



Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

Societal Shifts and the LGBTQ+ Community

A lot of progress has been made but some discrimination and bias remain.

- Gaining a historical perspective is helpful to understand and serve members of the LGBTQ+ community
- Acceptance of the community has evolved through the years
- Civil rights have been an important factor
- Marriage for all was a significant milestone
- Advocacy has advanced the cause but the community is still used in politics
- The impact of the last administration was negative
- Some forms of housing discrimination remain
- Transgender people experience additional housing challenges
- SSVF has a welcoming and affirming stand on LGBTQ+ matters



LGBTQ+ History

- ❑ For many years, the community experienced oppression
- ❑ Oppression caused isolation
- ❑ Homophobia in DOD culture
- ❑ Shaming and threats to expose LGBTQ+ community members
- ❑ Exposure could have significant effects on people's lives and careers
- ❑ Religious beliefs also impacted negatively
- ❑ Family secrets and the people we don't talk about
- ❑ **Uneven relations with the larger dominant group for this minority group**

Legal Structure of Oppression

- ❑ Oppression was reflected in the legal system
- ❑ Arrests of customers in gay and lesbian clubs
- ❑ Public shaming in the newspapers
- ❑ Discrimination: outing and firing of employees in the federal system
- ❑ Discrimination and social rejection in the DOD system (firings, discharges, promotions)
- ❑ “Don’t ask, don’t tell” and remaining impact on veterans, discharge status, etc.
- ❑ Banning transgender candidates from entering the armed forces (Previous Administration)
- ❑ Listing in the DSM manual as a psychiatric disorder, psychiatric admissions by families

Oppression, Victimization and Housing:

- ❑ This climate of oppression has created additional victimization of LGBTQ+ community members
- ❑ Victimization of transgender women of color
- ❑ Homophobia is exacerbated in some people in this climate
- ❑ Hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community
- ❑ This climate is exploited politically: fearmongering, scapegoating, use at key political times
- ❑ Some communities express more openly homophobic views than others
- ❑ Some areas are considered less safe to live in by some LGBTQ+ community members
- ❑ LGBTQ+ service members can experience additional challenges during active service putting them in a more difficult emotional and economic situation pre- and post-discharge. This can impact housing navigation and stability post discharge.

Housing Challenges for Veterans in 2022

- ❑ Some transgender veterans face assaults and unsafe situations in emergency and transitional shelters
- ❑ These incidents create physical and emotional stress for veterans and traumatic events with later effects
- ❑ They also create challenges for staff who are faced with difficult choices in terms of housing referrals as they fear they may expose the veteran they support to dangerous situations
- ❑ Friendship Place uses a trauma-informed model of care to support veterans
- ❑ These issues are not consistently addressed by service providers or systems of care at the local level
- ❑ Other members of the LGBTQ+ community experience homophobia in the shelter system
- ❑ Employment is also an issue for many transgender people



Homophobia Among Landlords

It can be hard to detect but important to read.

- ❑ Some landlords have homophobic attitudes
- ❑ These thoughts are not readily expressed
- ❑ Some excuses for not renting the unit to the presenting veteran include credit scores and low income
- ❑ These reasons do not come up systematically with veterans perceived as heterosexual
- ❑ As a result, some veterans introduce their partners as friends or family members in fear of being discriminated against and not getting the apartment
- ❑ One issue here is that the veterans are experiencing situations that are not affirming
- ❑ Staff have to witness and contend with negative and unfair housing practices
- ❑ This situation can present with any new landlord
- ❑ Beware of “code” wording like this area is for “families”
- ❑ The issues may arise after the move creating fear in LGBTQ+ veteran households

Income And Health Care Disparities

- ❑ **Statistics show that LGBTQ+ veterans experience greater income and health care disparities**
- ❑ This can be due to less than honorable discharges that occurred before and during the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” era
- ❑ These resources are essential in helping veterans achieve housing stability
- ❑ LGBTQ+ veterans were more than four times more likely to find it difficult to get by financially than other veterans (14% vs 3%)
- ❑ LGBTQ+ veterans reported being unable to pay some bills in the past month at a higher rate than other veterans (21% vs 9%)
- ❑ LGBTQ+ veterans were twice more likely than other veterans to use SNAP resources in the past 12 months (8% vs 4%)
- ❑ Some households report difficulty purchasing needed food items

Health Care Coverage Disparities

- ❑ LGBTQ+ veterans were seven times more likely than other veterans to report they were unable to access needed mental health care or counseling in the past 12 months because they could not afford it (21% vs 3%)
- ❑ LGBTQ+ veterans were less likely to have coverage from TRICARE, VA, or other military or veteran's health care plan (26% vs 39%)
- ❑ These figures show a lower level of system integration among LGBTQ+ veterans and systemic disparities
- ❑ **Income and health care disparities can be linked back to active duty and impact housing navigation and stability**

What you can do...

- Make sure your organizational culture is welcoming and affirming
- Check your own level of comfort
- Become familiar with LGBTQ+ cultures and their history
- Use an empathic, transparent and non-judgmental approach
- Be aware of generational differences
- Call out micro-aggressions and homophobic remarks and attitudes
- Link with LGBTQ+ groups to provide support and educational opportunities



Questions & Answers



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Thank You!



“Ending Homelessness. Rebuilding Lives.”



:FriendshipPlaceDC



: @friendshipplace



: @FriendshipPlace

www.FriendshipPlace.org



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References:

- Statistics provided are from a study by the Center for American Progress
- Some information came from the VA website
- Some background information was found in an article in The Washington Post



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