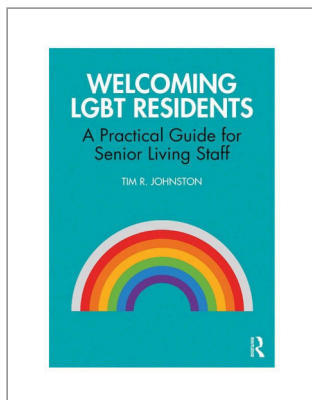


Welcoming LGBT Residents: A Practical Guide For Senior Living Staff – Q & A With Author, Dr. Tim R Johnston



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What inspired you to write about a book about LGBT residents?

There are many excellent resources out there, like the **National Resource Center on LGBT Aging**, but I saw the need for a book that is friendly, open-minded, and can act as a one-stop reference guide for anyone working in a congregate living setting. Having worked with providers all across the country, I thought I hav

unique perspective that speaks directly to their questions and concerns. I was also able to reach out to my network of providers, advocates, and LGBT people to make sure their voices are included in the books as well through vignettes, testimonials, stories, and their suggestions.

What has been the response to this book? Is there anything that surprised you?

The response has been positive! My goal was to write a book that is thorough and approachable, and so far people are saying it is a useful guide. I've been touched by the heartfelt responses to the book. Many people have told me stories of their LGBT family members, friends, loved ones, and former residents. Those stories are a constant reminder that so many allies and activists are out there every day doing the work of making their services warm and safe for LGBT people.

From your experiences in aging and LGBT programs and services, how has the acceptance and inclusivity of LGBT residents, their families and caregivers changed over time?

I have seen a big change in people's willingness to engage in this topic. Five years ago it was hard to get someone to book a free training, now major providers are seeking us out for training and consulting work. More and more people don't need to be convinced that LGBT inclusion is the right and smart thing to do, they just need access to the resources to make it happen.

There are still serious challenges ahead, and the providers I worry about are the ones who never reach out to SAGE or engage in discussions about inclusion. We are seeing the conversation shift, but in many ways we are at the start of the next important phase in this work.

What can older LGBT people, families, caregivers and allies do to encourage more inclusive and welcoming LGBT long-term care communities?

Have open and honest conversations with one another, and with providers. LGBT inclusion is a topic that is still often tinged with fear or shame. That means it can be hard to know who are the supporters, and who are the people who are not comfortable with the discussion. It isn't until we start having dialogue that we can see where there is room to grow.

What can long-term care communities do ensure LGBT residents feel welcomed and have a true sense of belonging?

Start by reading the **best practices** (<https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/index.cfm?s=35>) on the National Resource Center website! There is also the **SAGECare** (<http://sageusa.care>) training program, the **Long-Term Care Equality Index** (<http://thelei.org>), and many regional and local resources. Start with staff training and then get professional advice on changing policies, procedures, outreach, and marketing. After you train your staff and make all of these structural changes – then you'll be ready to raise the rainbow flag.

How can our readers learn more about this book?

It is available at all major booksellers, as well as independent online book stores!