



SEPTEMBER 2023

REGION 9 AREA AGENCY ON AGING CAREGIVER NEWSLETTER

Serving the Counties of: Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle and Roscommon



CARING FOR A LGBTQ+ OLDER ADULT

Many LGBTQ+ older adults have experienced a lifetime of discrimination and social stigma, as well as institutionalized discrimination in health care, employment, and social services. Because of this history, LGBT older adults as a group experience social, financial, physical, and mental health disparities, and are at higher risk for developing chronic diseases, being diagnosed with depression and anxiety, living in poverty, and experiencing social isolation.

1. Expand your own LGBTQ+ care knowledge.
2. Be aware of key LGBTQ+ definitions.
3. Create a welcoming environment for the LGBTQ+ community.
 - a. Visibly have a rainbow flag, pink triangle, or other symbols of inclusiveness
 - b. Have unisex restrooms available.
 - c. Health education literature with diverse images and inclusive language, including information about LGBTQIA+ health
 - d. Posters announcing days such as World AIDS Day, Pride, and National Transgender Day of Remembrance
4. Use inclusive language.
5. Use gender-neutral language such as they and them.
6. Ask open-ended questions.
7. Be aware of mental and physical health risks for LGBTQIA+ patients.
 - o Higher risk of substance abuse
 - o Higher risk of STDs
 - o Higher risk of cancers
 - o Higher risk of cardiovascular diseases
 - o Higher risk of bullying
 - o Higher risk of mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and suicide
8. Convey respect.

Here are some websites that can help you further your understanding:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [GLBT Health Access Project \(Community Standards of Practice Section\)](#)
- [Trans-Health.com](#)
- [Women'sHealth.gov](#)
- [Region 9 Area Agency on Aging LBGT+ Senior Resource Page](#)

LGBTQ+ older adults make up 2.7 million of the quickly growing aging population in the United States. By 2030, that number is expected to more than double.



- **LESBIAN:** A woman who is sexually attracted to other women; a gay woman.
- **GAY:** A man sexually attracted to other men (this term is also used for women attracted to women).
- **BISEXUAL:** Someone who is attracted to men and women. Also called “bi”.
- **TRANSGENDER:** Umbrella term for people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the biological sex they were assigned at birth.
- **QUEER:** Some people use this term to describe their gender identity and/or gender expression. Once considered a pejorative term, queer has been reclaimed by some to express themselves. It is not a universally accepted term.
- **QUESTIONING:** A term used to describe those who are discovering and exploring their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.
- **INTERSEX:** A general term used when a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the boxes of “female” or “male.” Sometimes surgeries are performed on intersex babies to make their bodies fit binary ideas of “male” or “female”.
- **PANSEXUAL:** Someone who is attracted to people of all gender identities.
- **TWO-SPIRIT:** A person who identifies as having both a masculine and feminine spirit—used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender, and/or spiritual identity.
- **ALLY:** A person who confronts heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexual privilege in themselves and others out of concern for the well-being of LGBTQ+ people.
- **ASEXUAL:** A term used to describe a person who lacks sexual attraction or desire for other people. It's different from celibacy, in which people make a choice to abstain from sexual activity.



TIPS FOR AFTER CAREGIVING IS OVER



Take a moment.

After the initial loss, grief is forefront to other emotions and life feels chaotic. Give yourself a good 30 days before jumping into any major decision-making.



Honor their memory.

Make choices that feel good and honor the wishes of your care recipient.



Do not do it alone.

After the initial loss, grief is forefront to other emotions and life feels chaotic. Give yourself a good 30 days before jumping into any major decision-making.



Take care of yourself

You need to prioritize your needs. Sickness is common in this period, as your body responds to grief and stress. Don't neglect your health, job, friends, other family members and the need to grieve.



Keep track of your decisions.

List each item and assign it a number, then add the location the item came from and who/where the item is going. This offers peace of mind, and prevents future arguments.



OLDER ADULTS AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Nearly 1 million adults aged 65 and older live with a substance use disorder.

Older adults are impacted differently by alcohol and drugs. Older adults metabolize substances more slowly, causing their brains can be more sensitive to drugs. This makes them more vulnerable to adverse consequences as they age.

The effects of some drugs cause impaired judgment, coordination, or slower reaction time can result in accidents, such as falls and motor vehicle crashes. These sorts of injuries can pose a greater risk to health because of the longer recovery time.

Older adults are more likely to unintentionally misuse medicines by forgetting to take their medicine, taking it too often, or taking the wrong amount.

Alcohol is the most used drug among older adults, with about 65% of people 65 and older reporting high-risk drinking.

Alcohol use disorder can put older people at greater risk for a range of health problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, liver and bone problems, memory issues and mood disorders

Physical risk factors for substance use disorders in older adults can include:

- Chronic pain.
- Physical disabilities.
- Reduced mobility.
- Transitions in living or care situations.
- Loss of loved ones.
- Forced retirement.
- Change in income.
- Poor health status.
- Chronic illness.
- Taking a lot of medicines and supplements.
-

Psychiatric risk factors include:

- Avoidance coping style.
- History of substance use disorders.
- Previous or current mental illness.
- Feeling socially isolated.

It is never too late to quit using substances—quitting can improve quality of life and future health. Many behavioral therapies and medications have been successful in treating substance use disorders in older adults.





WHAT DOES ONE DRINK LOOK LIKE?

The National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism advises that people older than age 65 who are healthy and who do not take any medicines have no more than 7 drinks a week. And no more than 1 to 2 drinks on any 1 day.

As we age, changes to our body composition and ability to metabolize alcohol mean that alcohol affects older adults more profoundly when they drink. The definition of “one drink” means:



One 5-ounce glass of red or white wine.



One 8.5-ounce can or bottle of malt liquor.



One 12-ounce can or bottle of regular beer, ale, or hard seltzer.



One 1.5-ounce shot glass of 80-proof distilled spirits like gin, rum, tequila, vodka, or whiskey.



GRIEF AND LOSS

We generally think of grief as a reaction to death. But grief can still come from loss while caring for someone with a chronic condition like dementia. These losses can be, loss of intimacy, friendship, independence, and dreams.

These losses lead to grief, and grief can lead to sadness, depression, anger, guilt, sleeplessness, and other physical and emotional problems. It is important to identify our losses, identify our feelings, and let ourselves grieve the changes that have happened in our lives. When we can do this, our feelings will less often erupt as angry outbursts weighed down by guilt, or creep over us as depression and hopelessness

Grief affects our whole being—physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Each of us will have different symptoms.

PHYSICAL



Sleep disturbance



Low energy, exhaustion, weakness or fatigue



Change in Appetite



Headaches

SOCIAL



Feeling alone



Wanting to isolate yourself from socializing



Angry that others' lives are going on as usual and yours is not.

EMOTIONAL



Sadness, crying spells



Worry, anxiety, and panic



Anger, frustration, or rage



Guilt

SPIRITUAL



Anger at God



Questioning the reason



Questioning your faith or meaning of life



WHY IS RESPITE IMPORTANT?

As a caregiver it is important that we recognize that it is OK to take a break from our caregiving duties. It is OK to feel tired, and want to have a break from caregiving! Not only is it OK, it is your right! You are allowed to stay healthy both physically and emotionally. Actually, by not doing this you are helping to create a potential problem down the road. No one can keep going day after day without a break, sooner or later it is going to catch up with you. Then, not only will you suffer but your loved one will as well.

Respite Care provides caregivers the opportunity to:

- Take a vacation.
- Have a weekend getaway.
- Attend to home or work responsibilities that have been building up.
- Recharge their energy to be better prepared to provide the attention and patience required on a daily basis.
- If roles were reversed, there is no question I would want my loved one to have respite.
- I am worthy of a break.
- I am showing my commitment to my caregiver role when I take steps like respite care to ensure that continued quality care is delivered to my loved one.
- It is okay to relax and enjoy other aspects of my life.
- It is okay to take a break and recharge my energies.
- It is okay to maintain as much normality in my life as possible
- It is okay to continue to dream.
- It is right and responsible of me to take advantage of the respite.

So make a decision today to plan for the respite you deserve and need! You will be glad you did. If you have not had a respite before, you are going to wonder what took you so long!



IMPORTANT DATES

Powerful Tools for Caregivers

NOVEMBER 8 - DECEMBER 13, 2023
3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Caregiver Webinar Series

1:00 PM-2:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 8, 2023: MEDICARE
HEALTH CARE BENEFIT: HOSPICE VS.
PALLIATIVE WHEN DO YOU QUALIFY

OCTOBER 13, 2023: PREPARING TO
CARE: CAREGIVING 101

NOVEMBER 10, 2023: BUILDING
RESILIENCE TO AVOID BURNOUT

DECEMBER 8, 2023: TECHNOLOGY
TOOLS FOR CAREGIVING

JANUARY 12, 2024: THE NEUROSCIENCE
OF ARY AND ONE LITTLE WORLD

FEBRUARY 9, 2024: IMPORTANCE OF
PLANNING AHEAD FOR LEGAL MATTERS

Healthy Living Webinar

1:00 PM-2:00 PM

NOVEMBER 8, 2023: CHAIR
EXERCISES

DECEMBER 13, 2023: IMPORTANCE
OF SELF-CARE

JANUARY 10, 2024: SLEEP

FEBRUARY 14, 2024: MINDFUL
COOKING AND NUTRITION

MARCH 13, 2024: MANAGING WORK-
LIFE BALANCE

APRIL 10, 2024: MANAGING STRESS
AND MENTAL HEALTH



HOW TO BE A ALLY

For the LGBTQ+ community, an ally is a straight and/or cisgender person who supports and advocates for LGBTQ people. You can do this by:

- Recognize your privilege and use it for good.
- Ask educated questions—and do your own research.
- Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.
- Speak up for the underrepresented.
- Correct people if they misgender someone, even if that someone isn't in the room.
- Speak up when a person uses slurs or insensitive and racially-charged language.
- Promote diversity in the workplace. Update your email signature to include pronouns.
- Show your support by wearing a Pride pin or posting a flag.
- Follow the lead of your LGBTQ peers.



COMMUNITY RESOURCE FINDER

Alzheimer's Association and AARP created a database of dementia and aging-related resources. This online tool makes it easy for people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias, family caregivers, and those involved in making care-related decisions to find local programs and services.

Click here to visit the [Community Resource Finder](#)



TRUALTA

Trualta is a free online personalized, skills-based training platform for family caregivers caring for someone living at home.

Enroll at: www.region9aaa.trualta.com/login



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE HELPFUL INFORMATION?

Region 9 Area Agency on Aging's Special Projects Coordinator is available weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to answer your questions, register you for caregiver workshops, provide resources, and to support you and the person you are caring for.

**Contact Brooke at 989.358.4616 or
mainvilleb@nemcsa.org**