

March 18, 2024



In 2023 Friends Village sought to enhance its competency regarding the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals in the older adult population. The initiative was supported by funding from Friends Foundation for the Aging to complete SAGECare training, aiming to equip staff with the necessary skills and knowledge.

The training initiative was divided into two phases. In Phase 1, five members of the Leadership Team underwent comprehensive online and virtual in-person training. In Phase 2 thirty staff members completed online training titled "Creating Inclusive Communities for LGBTQ+ Older Adults."

Following the training, Friends Village developed a plan to integrate this newfound knowledge into the community:

**Policy and Practice** – We immediately added our Non-Discrimination Policy to the Mission, Vision, and Values page of the Friends Village website. A few lines describing the SAGECare certification and SAGECare logo were later added to that page as well. The SAGECare logo was also added to the website's footer. Both logo images were embedded with a clickable link to the SAGEUsa website. We designed branded email signatures that included a space for pronouns and encouraged staff to use their pronouns where they felt comfortable.

**Diversity Month (June 2023)** – Staff hosted a film festival for residents featuring mainstream films that highlighted LGBTQ+ issues, racism, ageism, and ableism. Discussions were facilitated after each screening. Display and wearable items such as rainbow bracelets, flags, and pins were made available to residents and staff, allowing each to visually express their support.

**Pride Spirit Month (November 2023)** – We introduced an in-house Pride Spirit Month. Activities staff designed a pamphlet focusing on LGBTQ+ issues and kindness. These were distributed to residents and staff. We hosted a "Wear Your Rainbow," day as well.

We observed throughout training that staff were concerned about the negative perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ+ older adults. Staff perspective appeared to be that all individuals should be treated well as they age. Some seemed surprised to hear that this was not always true. Not surprisingly, a small number of residents expressed generational prejudice and declined to attend the film festival or participate in discussion. While we were disappointed by these reactions, Friends Village Leadership noted that no objections were voiced with hatred, but seemed more an expression of continuing, negative generational beliefs that were identified in the SAGECare training. The Leadership Team saw the benefit in a gradual approach in introducing all Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion topics with a goal of fostering genuine understanding within the community, rather than silent compliance or division.

In 2024, Friends Village aims to continue its commitment to LGBTQ+ competency and inclusivity by:

1. Coordinating SAGECare re-certification for staff members to ensure ongoing competency.
2. Expanding awareness programs for Pride Month in June 2024 and Kindness Month in November 2024.
3. Evaluating and addressing concerns raised by staff regarding the negative experiences of LGBTQ+ older adults and addressing generational prejudice within the community.
4. Working with LGBTQ+ members of the Friends Village community and volunteer base to identify marketing opportunities to better reach the aging LGBTQ+ population.