CHAPTER 3:
LGBTQ and Human Rights

CHALLENGE

Issues affecting the full spectrum of gender identity and sexual diversity have come to the forefront in recent decades. There has been significant progress in the movement for gay rights—most recently the legalization of gay marriage by the Supreme Court in all 50 states. However, issues of discrimination across the gender spectrum remain and need to be addressed. A person can be married on Sunday but still be fired on Monday for being gay. Too often, outdated and harmful laws hurt the roughly 2 million children being raised by LGBTQ* (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) parents and deny homes to children awaiting adoption. Bisexuals do not fit neatly into current categories and special considerations are sometimes needed. Additionally, issues of transgender and queer stigmatization and abuse continue, despite progress.

Unconscious bias, open discrimination, abuse, violence and exclusion make living difficult and sometimes dangerous for members of this vulnerable community. For example, “stop-and-frisk”-type policies often disproportionately target black LGBTI and gender-nonconforming people. LGBTQ young people are not only still dropping out of schools at higher rates, they are also at particular risk for punitive consequences to non-criminal behavior when police are highly present in schools. Undocumented LGBTQ immigrants face particular challenges accessing social services and also face high levels of violence in detention centers.
Increasingly, mayors are an important part of this emerging national conversation. While national laws are changing to protect rights, these issues are still strongly and intensely debated in local communities. Engaging people in interfaith and bipartisan conversations helps inform, humanize and personalize these issues. As awareness and education grow, discrimination, violence and stigmatization can give way to a deeper understanding that no matter how people identify on the gender spectrum or their sexual orientation, everyone deserves a full set of human rights. Members of the LGBTQ community are not looking for special privileges, but rather for equal rights. It is helpful to understand unconscious bias and increase understanding in order to achieve needed social and institutional change at every level.

* The acronym LGBTQ is meant to be inclusive; since this report does not address the specific challenges faced by intersex and asexual people, we have chosen not to append “IA” to the acronym here. Terminology is constantly evolving, as will the acronyms used in future versions of this report.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**EDUCATION**

At the municipal level, provide education and sensitivity training for all staff.
- Offer unconscious bias training: encourage leaders to ask themselves, “How can I be more inclusive?”
- Train police in handling domestic violence issues in the LGBTQ community, many of whom don’t report domestic violence because they think the police do not understand their situation and could make them a further target of abuse.

Have and support courageous conversations in your community and strive to be more inclusive across the board.

Provide proactive education programs about trans people in your community. Help curb the disturbing national trend of scapegoating transgender people and resurrecting old myths about gay and trans people as sexual predators.
- **Transgender Law Center** offers resources for training and messaging.
- **API Equality Los Angeles** offers in-language educational materials.

Encourage more gender neutral language, one person at a time.
- Examples of language to be changed: “Hey babe,” “You guys,” “Boys will be boys.”
- Educate staff and leaders about pronouns, so they are inclusive whenever possible. “They” and “ze” are gender-neutral/inclusive pronouns.
- “Partner” and “spouse” are more inclusive than “husband/boyfriend” or “wife/girlfriend.”

**DATA**

Look more closely at data and make sure that categories are not just men/women and black/white. Have more options on the census, and watch intersectionality issues (example: Trans Latina).
- Bisexuals are the largest population of the LGBTQ community, and have the highest rates of suicide and domestic violence, particularly among women.
- Lesbian girls have major issues that are often ignored, leading to high suicide rates (lesbian teen pregnancy is an issue because of poor education, stratification and social pressure).
- Find ways to encourage honesty and safety on public forms.
- Wages and other issues need to be broken down to more than just male/female when collecting data.
- University of California applications are now using new language for LGBTQ: “Sexual diversity/gender identity/gender expression.”
Include LGBTQ as well as women when encouraging diversity in tech fields.
- Encourage tech world to share best practices and have conversations about diversity, including women and LGBTQ.
- Recognize businesses that promote sexual and gender minorities.
- Sometimes members of the LGBTQ community are afraid of coming forward with a complaint in the workplace. People are afraid they will be fired, and won’t get a job again if they speak up/report something. Encourage employers to make their policies fair and transparent.
- Hire more women and members of the LGBTQ community in law enforcement (police, fire) and safety positions.

Support organizations that help seniors and provide senior services.
- Increase the cultural competence of caregivers and doctors to include LGBTQ people.
- Seniors are even more at risk than LGBTQ youth.
  - Lonely LGBTQ seniors rely on community services and education.
- Provide computer and social media training, which helps tremendously with finding resources and dealing with depression.
- Train seniors to understand how to: speak for themselves in hospitals; communicate their medical information; and know what to do when they don’t have family to retrieve them from the hospital.
- Assist seniors with preparing advanced medical directives if in a gay relationship.

We need more women in leadership; women tend to be more inclusive regarding issues affecting people across the gender spectrum and across issues of sexual orientation.

Be mindful of gender and bathrooms.
- Offer gender neutral and/or single stall bathrooms (i.e., without a specific gender), which are helpful for disabled people, LGBTQ people, seniors and youth/young parents.

Create easy-to-access and unified information about the resources available to LGBTQ people.

LGBTQ SHELTERS or sections within shelters provide safety for this vulnerable community.
- Larkin St. Shelter - Based in San Francisco, the mission of Larkin Street Youth Services is to create a continuum of services that inspires youth to move beyond the street.

Partner with LGBTQ organizations to help lead these efforts.
MODELS AND IMPACT

- **Open House** is an LGBTQ-oriented senior services organization that provides housing services and case management.

- **Community Living Campaign** in the San Francisco Bay Area provides computer training for seniors and other important senior education and community-building for lonely, often disabled seniors.

- The Unified San Francisco School District has model LGBTQ policies.

- San Francisco, Portland and Seattle have model policies for LGBTQs, seniors and recently incarcerated people.

- Article on how to protect LGBTQ individuals in incarceration.

- Article on San Francisco’s policy on trans inmates.

- **St. Mary’s College** is listed by New Ways Ministries as one of the most LGBTQ-friendly Catholic campuses in the country.

- **LGBTQ Resources** from the University of California Office Of The President, which is now publishing new information about LGBTQ in education.

**Funding:**

- LGBTQ foundations (e.g., Horizons Foundation)
- San Francisco Foundation
- General fund resources (city resources)
- Private funding (find LGBTQ community advocates)
- **Title 9**
- Federal Government resources that partner with local projects

- **The White House**, which has several relevant task forces
- California Institute for Integral Studies, which has a fellowship in LGBTQ leadership
RESOURCES

Articles, Books, Organizations, Videos

- **Department of Aging and Adult Services** - Department of San Francisco Human Services Agency.
- **Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice** - Philanthropic organization working exclusively to advance LGBTQI human rights around the globe.
- **Lesbians Who Tech** - A community of queer women in and around tech.
- **Out & Equal Workplace Advocates** - Nonprofit organization dedicated to achieving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workplace equality.
- **National Center for Lesbian Rights** - Organization shaping the legal landscape for all LGBTQ people.
- **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** - Working for almost 100 years to defend and preserve individual rights and liberties guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.
- **API Wellness Center** - Health organization centered on Asian & Pacific Islanders.
- **Lavender Youth Resource Information Center (LYRIC)** - Working toward social justice for LGBTQ youth.
- **Global Fund for Women** - A champion for gender equality, standing up for women and girls to be strong, safe, powerful, and heard.

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CHECKLIST

1. Provide education and sensitivity training around gender and sexuality issues to municipal staff.

2. Consider gender and sexuality when collecting data.

3. Consider gender and sexuality when hiring staff.

4. Assist seniors in the LGBTQ community by supporting organizations that help them, and by providing training for caregivers to be sensitive to their issues.

5. Be mindful of gender diversity in providing bathrooms; offer gender neutral bathrooms as an option.

6. Make information about available resources visible and easy to access.

7. Provide an LGBTQ shelter or section of a shelter.

8. Collaborate with LGBTQ organizations to help lead these efforts.