



Tips to Support LGBTQ2S+ Friendly Activity Programming in Continuing Care

Purpose

This resource will enhance your awareness, confidence, knowledge, and skills to create lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S+) friendly activity programming.

This resource was developed in consultation with the Alberta Health Services (AHS) LGBTQ2S+ Task Group comprised of AHS sexual and gender identity and expression experts, AHS/non-AHS clinical professionals and community volunteers.

Working together for your health

What is LGBTQ2S+ friendly activity programming?

It refers to activity or recreation programs supported, developed and/or facilitated by continuing care staff for clients accessing continuing care services and their chosen family members, friends and visitors. A client that identifies as LGBTQ2S+ may or may not share this personal information about themselves, and this is also true for their chosen family members, friends and visitors. It's important that all activity and recreation therapy programs promote inclusion and welcome diversity, which includes sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQ2S+) people.

Actions to consider

All continuing care clients are at risk for being socially isolated, but clients who identify as LGBTQ2S+ may be at a higher risk. Below are some actions that staff can take to make LGBTQ2S+ clients feel welcome:

- Have the activity or recreation therapy staff meet with the client, family members, visitors and friends to inform them that all programming promotes inclusion and welcomes diversity, which includes sexual and gender minorities (LGBTQ2S+) people.
- Offer LGBTQ2S+ friendly programming and events at your care home or participate in ones that are offered in the community. Remember all clients, families, friends, visitors and staff are welcome to attend.
- Use the rainbow flag or other LGBTQ2S+ symbols or images in your programming calendars or in your activity areas.

We encourage you to meet with your manager, other staff members, family members and clients to come up with other creative ways to make your care home feel more inclusive.

Activity programming ideas

There are many programming ideas presented in the following section. Your healthcare team can choose and combine which programming ideas are a great fit for your care home.

1. LGBTQ2S+ role models for peer support

LGBTQ2S+ role models are identified as key supports for LGBTQ2S+ clients to feel safer and more welcome in their care home. The LGBTQ2S+ role models are volunteers that identify as LGBTQ2S+ such as staff, family members, visitors and clients. Their role will depend on the care home needs but the main intent is to offer peer support LGBTQ2S+ clients (e.g., one-to-one socialization).

2. Positive space committee

A Positive Space Committee supports all clients, staff, physicians and volunteers to work together to stop discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression to create a safer and more welcoming care environment. A committee could be formed by staff, clients, family members and volunteers to plan and coordinate LGBTQ2S+ friendly events, participate in community LGBTQ2S+ events, offer education sessions (e.g., on subjects such as inclusion, diversity, respect) and facilitate information sharing within the care home.

For more information, see:

University of Toronto: Positive Space or visit utoronto and search “positive space.”

3. Safe space

A safe space is an area within the care home that is designated as a safe place where individuals can go to sit and relax and feel included and accepted. Specific signage can be posted around the facility to let everyone know about the purpose of the safe space and that they can access the space at any time.

4. LGBTQ2S+ site champion

A LGBTQ2S+ site champion:

- is a designated member of the healthcare team who demonstrates allyship by actively promoting the tips and strategies identified in the:
 - Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Toolkit
 - Continuing Care LGBTQ2S+ Tip Sheets
- supports your site to be safer and more welcoming for LGBTQ2S+ clients, visitors and staff

For more information, visit ahs.ca/lgbtq and see LGBTQ2S+ Site Champion Tip Sheet.

5. Gender sexuality alliance

**In Alberta, a Gay-Straight Alliance commonly refers to GSA. In this document, Gender Sexuality Alliance is used to be inclusive of all people that identify as LGBTQ2S+ and is used with the permission from the City of Toronto, Long-Term Care Homes and Services.*

Establishing a Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) can be an effective strategy to create a positive care environment for LGBTQ2S+ clients, other clients, family members, friends, volunteers and healthcare providers.

For all clients, moving into a continuing care home means leaving the familiar comforts of home. For LGBTQ2S+ clients, it may also bring back old fears of mistreatment.

A GSA provides a safer space for clients to get to know one another on a more personal level where they can:

- talk openly
- share interests
- explore ways to enhance an inclusive environment
- support one another
- promote equality

Anyone could suggest having a GSA in the care home: the continuing care provider, healthcare providers, interdisciplinary team, LGBTQ2S+ clients, family or friends. The continuing care provider can support the GSA by providing a meeting space and help to establish meeting times, frequency and agenda, as needed.

Education resources

AHS has developed a series of tip sheets to support your awareness, confidence, knowledge, and skills to create safer and more welcoming continuing care for LGBTQ2S+ clients.

Visit ahs.ca/lgbtq

Get in touch: continuingcare@ahs.ca

