

OUTSaskatoon Aging is a non-profit, community-based organization that serves all genders and sexual orientations, no matter where the individual falls. Programs arise out of the needs expressed by the people who access our centre. Our programming addresses the underlying issues which affect the health and welfare of our community by countering heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

Contact:

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The Saskatoon Council on Aging is a non-profit, community-based, voluntary organization dedicated to the promotion of dignity, health and independence of older adults. community leader in promoting Positive Aging for All and envisions an environment in Saskatchewan that addresses the widespread prejudices of ageism, enhances the age-friendliness of communities, enables healthy, positive aging and supports the well-being of seniors across the province.

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For more information on the Saskatoon Council on Aging or the Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative visit our website www.scoa.ca. For a copy of the report please visit:

Saskatoon Council on Aging and OUTSaskatoon release a study highlighting the challenges Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender older adults face in Saskatoon congregate living facilities

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, February 22, 2016 - The Saskatoon Council on Aging and OUTSaskatoon today released a study identifying the challenges faced by Saskatoon's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) older adults when they enter congregate housing facilities. A training manual is also being shared with these facilities to help inform managers of best practices in this area.

While Saskatchewan has put in place legislation and regulations that make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and sexual identity, LGBT older adults today encounter a form of discrimination within congregate living facilities, according to research undertaken by the Saskatoon Council on Aging and OUTSaskatoon.

The research grew from SCOA's Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative that involved conversations with hundreds of Saskatoon's older adults. The Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative works to enhance the quality of life of older adults by encouraging programs and services for older adults that promote a more age-friendly approach to community services and supports for successful aging. LGBT participants in that process told stories of how hard fought gay rights fall to the wayside in the congregate living facilities in Saskatoon.

"Most managers do not engage in overt discrimination", Cheryl Loadman, from the Saskatoon Council on Aging said. "Rather they fail to see is that creating a welcoming environment is not a passive activity. Management has to act to ensure the development and implementation of policies that create a safe, supportive and friendly environment for LGBT older residents. Anything else is really a gentle form of discrimination that is harmful to LGBTs individuals and sends them back in the closet."

Positive environments do not treat everyone as heterosexual, instead they include clear statements prohibiting discrimination, training for staff regarding how to be responsive and to provide appropriate services, and have services that are inclusive in language and presentation. For example, LGBT older same-sex couples must be allowed to share a room and to put their names on the door without fear of retribution from staff and other residents.

Rachel Loewen Walker, Executive Director of OUTSaskatoon notes, "Many LGBT people told us they return to the 'closet' because facilities make no formal effort to provide a safe environment and they fear discrimination and isolation within the facility. None of the facilities interviewed in the study had policies addressing the LGBT older adult resident. In fact the studies found that a small number of places even refused to acknowledge the issue."

Saskatchewan's baby boomers are retiring and many of them are LGBT older adults. These individuals will require the services offered by congregate housing, and expect to age in place with dignity and with the services and supports appropriate to them as gay, lesbian or transgender individuals.