



Last week our policy team attended the Symposium on LGBTQ Aging at the LGBT Social Science & Public Policy Center at Roosevelt House. This symposium offered various panels and in-depth discussions on how to raise awareness on issues affecting LGBT elders, the need for research & advocacy efforts around these issues, and collaboration to better assist the LGBTQ community. NYC Council Member Ritchie Torres, a member of the LGBT Caucus of the Council, participated in a Q & A session with fellow panelists and described the lack of visibility of the aging LGBTQ community. He offered the following wisdom to those in the audience on how to increase visibility, “Never underestimate the power of personal narrative. Allowing LGBTQ members to share their stories is a powerful way to end discrimination and increase understanding”.

Here at God's Love we are proud to serve the aging LGBTQ community with chronic disease and we firmly agree with the power of sharing stories. We offer our clients that opportunity through various posts, articles, blogs and events. Through these avenues we learn that our program is a critical support for the LGBT community as it ages.

God's Love has a long history of service to and close collaboration with the LGBTQIA community and with CBOs that serve that community, such as GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis) and SAGE (Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders). We welcome these clients and others onto our Client and Community Advisory Board and design our program to incorporate the specific needs of all of our vulnerable populations, from arranging unique delivery directions for our drivers to accommodate the disabilities of our clients, to an individually tailored diet, to personalized nutrition counseling, to efforts to address stigma. Annually, our Program Services staff who have direct contact with clients attend multiple, God's Love mandated trainings on subjects such as Cultural Competency and Sensitivity, Client Confidentiality, as well as Cultural Awareness in Dementia Care and Mental Health in Ethnically Diverse and LGBTQIA Groups.

Locally and nationally we hold leadership positions with organizations that are at the forefront in the fight against stigma and discrimination. Our President & CEO sits on the national Public Policy Committee for AIDS United. Our Director of Policy & Planning is the Co-chair of the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership's Structural Interventions Working Group, designed to increase awareness around nutrition and housing needs, criminalization and stigma for people living with HIV. Locally, our Director of Nutrition Services is the Chair of the Integration of Care Committee of our HIV Planning Council and our Senior Director of Program is a member of the HIV Planning Council's Finance Committee and of the HIV Care Services Community Advisory Group.

The Symposium was a wealth of information and a wonderful opportunity to connect with others who are committed to the community as we are. We look forward to many more years of service.

