

LGBTQ+ Caregiving Challenges

Family First's medical director, Dr. Grubissich, has witnessed the challenges the LGBTQ+ community faces when it comes to caregiving, and has these insights to share:

According to research from the National Resource Center on LGBTQ Aging, LGBTQ+ older adults are twice as likely to age alone compared to their heterosexual counterparts.* When it comes to aging and caregiving, there are special factors to consider for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Sometimes older LGBTQ+ people feel excluded and isolated, but caregivers need to find ways to ensure their loved ones are receiving equitable care. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community and a healthcare provider, I have been on both sides of the aisle when it comes to healthcare delivery and caregiving for a loved one. Caregiving within the LGBTQ+ community has its own challenges, as there are many scenarios where a LGBTQ+ caregiver or care recipient may experience issues while navigating the healthcare system. But these challenges can be overcome with acceptance, love, and understanding.



Luciano Grubissich
Medical Director

Here are a few possible LGBTQ+ caregiving scenarios:

- **LGBTQ+ baby boomers:** Given the older age of baby boomers, this group is usually on the care recipient side. This is a group of individuals who have been decimated by the AIDS crisis in the 80s. Therefore, they are alone, their families have usually cut ties with them, and their friends have passed away. These individuals are usually very open to receive care. It is important to find healthcare providers that understand their background and systems of support that will help them age in place.
- **Same sex couples caring for their children:** In this scenario, a same-sex couple who are caregivers for their children can experience trouble accessing care due to the lack of understanding or willingness to provide care because the parents are in a same-sex relationship. Same-sex couple caregivers often find that they need to be more vocal advocates at their children's schools and within the healthcare system.

- **Caregiving for a same-sex spouse:** The issue often involves the denial of rights to same-sex couples for visitation or sharing health information. Same-sex couples must frequently draft legal documents to be able to obtain health information or receive proper care for their spouse (even though by law there is no difference from a heterosexual couple). Same-sex couples are often, and repeatedly, asked to explain the nature of their relationship to their spouse.
- **Caregivers who identify as LGBTQ+:** While caregiving for my mother-in-law, my husband and I were coordinating and attending her medical appointments. In many instances, we were expected to explain our relationship to each other and our relationship to my mother-in-law, and why we both needed to be present at appointments, rather than focusing on my mother-in-law's health issues. To improve the delivery of her care, we decided to avoid mentioning that we were married by presenting ourselves as both her sons. This approach worked as no time was wasted talking about our relationship, however, it left my husband and me feeling frustrated that we had to hide our relationship.
- **Caregiving for Trans individuals:** Unfortunately, today there is a cultural discourse against trans individuals that is having a direct negative impact on their healthcare. Caregivers must not only fulfill the duties of care but also advocate for the care recipient's rights as a trans individual.

LGBTQ+ older adults and caregivers must be provided with equal support and resources. If you are caring for a loved one who identifies as LGBTQ+, or you identify as a LGBTQ+ caregiver, our Care Experts are here to support you and locate adequate resources for care needs.



* Source: "Improving the Lives of LGBT Older Adults," Movement Advancement Project and SAGE, 2010