



# Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

## **LGBT Refugees and Asylees: Responding to the Needs of a Hidden Population**

Three-Day Training Curriculum



**Rainbow Welcome Initiative**  
Cultivating Safe Spaces and Supportive Communities



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# Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Day 1: Definitions and Diversity: Understanding Sexuality and Gender</b>	
<b>Introduction and Discussion on Safe Space</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Personal Reflections on the LGBT Community</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation &amp; Gender Identity in Different Cultural Contexts</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LGBT Refugees' and Asylees' Experiences</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>How to be an Ally</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Debrief and Check-in</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Day 2: LGBT Refugees' and Asylees' Needs &amp; Building Capacity</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Creating a Safe and Inclusive Environment</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Case Management: Employment and Housing</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Physical Health</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Debrief and Check-in</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Day 3: Practice Makes Perfect: Applying Knowledge and Rehearsing for Action</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Legal Issues</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Reaching Refugee/Asylee Communities</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Connecting with LGBT Community-Based Organizations</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Forum Theater: Rehearsing for Action</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Resettlement Agency Assessment and Designing a Workplan</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>29</b>

## **Introduction**

Recognizing a gap in the resettlement network's response to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) refugees and asylees, the US Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) awarded funding to Heartland Alliance to establish the Rainbow Welcome Initiative. The Rainbow Welcome Initiative supports the resettlement of LGBT refugees and asylees by offering on-site and remote technical assistance, and developing and aggregating resources for service providers, community members, and refugees and asylees.

LGBT refugees/asylees face unique challenges before, during, and after resettlement. The Rainbow Welcome Initiative is committed to equipping service providers with the tools necessary to ensure the successful integration of LGBT refugees and asylees as they establish new lives in the United States and pursue new possibilities. For additional information and resources, please visit: [www.rainbowwelcome.org](http://www.rainbowwelcome.org)

Heartland Alliance believes that all of us deserve the opportunity to improve our lives. Each year, we help ensure this opportunity for more than one million people around the world who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. Our policy efforts strengthen communities; our comprehensive services empower those we serve to rebuild and transform their lives. For more information, visit: [www.heartlandalliance.org](http://www.heartlandalliance.org).

## **About This Curriculum**

This curriculum was developed in preparation for Heartland Alliance's series of regional training workshops in March 2012. Heartland Alliance conducted four three-day training workshops in San Diego, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Chicago. The curriculum is designed to introduce resettlement service providers to key terms and concepts relevant to the LGBT refugee community. The curriculum also covers how core services can be adjusted and tailored to meet the specific needs of this population. Heartland Alliance extends its appreciation and gratitude to its partners on this initiative who not only contributed to the development of this curriculum with their insight and feedback, but who so successfully applied best practices to strengthen services for LGBT refugees and asylees: Alliance for African Assistance in San Diego; Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta; Nationalities Service Center in Philadelphia; Church World Service in Miami; Refugee Services of Texas; and Heartland Human Care Services in Chicago.

## Trainer Tips

This curriculum is intended to offer service providers an overview of issues affecting the LGBT refugee/asylee community and ways in which agencies can strengthen service provision for this population. The curriculum is a companion piece to Rainbow Welcome Initiative's other resources. When conducting trainings, please also refer to Heartland Alliance's field manual, "Rainbow Response," and its PowerPoint presentation, "LGBT Refugees and Asylees: Responding to the Needs of a Hidden Population." These resources can all be found on [www.RainbowWelcome.org](http://www.RainbowWelcome.org)

The curriculum breaks down each workshop session by establishing objectives, noting materials needed, and outlining critical messages to communicate. The text of this curriculum was written for trainers to use as a script if they so desire. Italicized text is interspersed throughout the curriculum, highlighting trainer tips and notes.

Facilitators will all have their own training style; we encourage you to tailor the training to meet the needs of your staff. Offering examples from your own agency and incorporating additional information or activities can enhance participants' learning experience. Please use training participants' prior knowledge and experiences and your desired outcomes of the training to adapt the curriculum accordingly.

## Overview

At the end of this training, participants will have learned:

- LGBT terms and definitions used by UNHCR;
- Global patterns and practices of persecution against LGBT individuals;
- LGBT refugees' and asylees' specific needs, concerns, and vulnerabilities during the resettlement period.

At the end of this training, attendees will be able to:

- Tailor core services to meet the specific needs of LGBT refugees/asylees;
- Intervene and advocate on behalf of LGBT refugees/asylees during times of crisis;
- Connect LGBT refugees/asylees to additional resources that will facilitate their social integration and cultural adjustment.

The goal of this training session is to:

- Provide service providers with the knowledge, tools, and skills to effectively resettle LGBT refugees and asylees;
- Afford training participants an opportunity to assess individual and organizational strengths and identify areas needing improvement in service delivery to LGBT refugees/asylees.

# Day 1: Definitions and Diversity: Understanding Sexuality and Gender

## **Introduction and Discussion on Safe Space (30 minutes)**

### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will feel comfortable honestly engaging with the group.
- ❖ Participants will reflect on their goals for and expectations of themselves, the group, and the training.
- ❖ Participants will develop skills for creating safe spaces.

### **Materials:**

Butcher paper; markers; notebook paper; pens; name tags; copies of agenda

### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- This training is a safe space for everyone.
- Everyone's voices are valued, their perspectives and experiences respected.

### **Welcome, Introductions and Daily Agenda**

- *Welcome participants to the training. Begin by introducing yourself and co-trainers. Then have participants go around and share their name, experience with refugees/asylees, and why they decided to participate in the training.*
- *Discuss logistics (timing, breaks, restrooms, resources that will be sent out afterwards, etc.)*
- *Hand out agendas. Discuss the format of the training and today's topics.*

### **Discussion of Safe Space**

Cultivating a safe space is critical to the success of this training. A space is made 'safe' when all participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings honestly without fearing social repercussions. This training is an opportunity to grow and learn from one another. We want to create a positive, non-judgmental environment, because we all come from different backgrounds and have different experiences with this topic. Some may have lots of experience working with LGBT individuals; for others, this may be the first time ever discussing issues affecting the LGBT community. We value and respect everyone's voices and experiences here. Despite these differences, we are all united by a common desire to support refugees and asylees by affirming their human rights and strengthening service provision. As a reminder, anything shared at this training will remain at this training. Thank you in advance for maintaining confidentiality and assuming good will (*if needed, define good will as "everyone present is looking to engage in discussion respectfully and has no intentions to offend"*).

### **Activity: Ground Rules**

*Participants will establish a list of ground rules to abide by; recorded and hung up for the remainder of the training, this list will serve as a social contract to which all*

*attendees may hold themselves and others accountable for following. Trainer/assistant should have a marker and butcher paper/whiteboard to record the rules.*

In order to make sure that everyone is on the same page, let's set some ground rules. I already mentioned two of them; "what's said here, stays here," and "assume good will." Are there other rules participants would like to add?

*Record any ground rules that are shared. Feel free to prompt with additional rules (e.g. "step up/step back," "debate the issue, not the person").*

Thanks! Does this list feel like something that everyone can agree to for the time that we're here at the training? *If needed, ask "is there anything we need to add or change before agreeing to these rules?"* I'll keep this list up throughout the training – feel free to check in with me about it at any time. *Also, do not hesitate to point out to the group if as a community of learners, we have strayed from the rules established.*

## **Personal Reflections on the LGBT Community (90 minutes)**

### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will identify knowledge gaps pertaining to the LGBT community.
- ❖ Participants will reflect on their interactions and experiences with LGBT individuals, professionally and/or personally.
- ❖ Participants will assess their level of comfort working with this community and learn ways to reduce or manage discomfort experienced.

### **Materials:**

Butcher paper; post-it notes; markers

### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- It is important to be aware of our prejudices in order to challenge them.
- We are barraged with negative images and messages about the LGBT community. Either consciously or subconsciously, we may internalize these messages; this can affect our interactions with clients.
- It is important to be sensitive to the fact that LGBT clients are confronted with hurtful and derogatory statements. This affects their self-esteem, confidence, and motivation level.

We all have different levels of experience interacting with LGBT persons in both personal and professional settings. Refugee resettlement for LGBT individuals is an emerging issue; while Heartland Alliance has identified gaps and potential solutions, your input as practitioners and service providers will help to inform best practices as we move forward. To acknowledge our unique perspectives, we'll take a few minutes to engage in activities that will help us identify and reflect on our own knowledge and areas for growth. *Stress that everyone has insights to offer as everyone is learning together.*

### **Activity: Associations (Myths and Stereotypes)**

*On butcher paper, draw [androgynous] stick figures, labeling on separate pieces of paper Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. Pass out post-it notes.*

Up on the wall, you'll find four poster papers with figures and the words Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Please use the post-it notes to write the word that first comes to mind when you hear these terms. Use a different post-it note for each term. The first thing you think of may be positive, it may be negative, or it may just be something you've heard. These do not need to be words you use; they could be words society at large employs. If you do not know what these terms mean, you can just write a question mark—we'll be going over the definitions as a group shortly. When you've finished writing your words down, please come up and post your note onto the corresponding poster paper.

*For the discussion questions below, be sure to give enough time for participants to respond. It's possible many of the words will be negative. Ask the group why they think that is. Some of the words may refer to stereotypes that are patently false (e.g. gay men are pedophiles). Others may invoke stereotypes that hold true for some members of the community but not all (e.g. lesbian women are butch and masculine).*

1. Do you notice any patterns or themes to the words we came up with as a group?
2. How does seeing these words make you feel?
3. From where do these words come? What stereotypes and myths are these words products of?
4. Is there any truth to these associations?
  - *Sure, some gay men are effeminate and flamboyant, but not all. We cannot assume that all gay men, or all lesbian women, etc. will behave and present a certain way. Making such assumptions could result in service providers not offering clients the appropriate referrals or information.*

### **Activity: Baseline Assessment on Knowledge and Comfort**

*Participants will fill out a questionnaire that affords them an opportunity to consider their own personal experiences with LGBT individuals and to evaluate their comfort with and understanding of this community. Pass out the assessment [Appendix I]*

I've just passed out a short assessment you can use to gauge your personal knowledge of and comfort with the LGBT community. You don't need to turn this in at the end of the session; it is intended for you to keep. *Give 5 minutes for participants to fill out the quiz, and then break out into small groups of 2-3 participants.*

In your groups, please discuss the following questions:

1. When filling out the self-assessment, did any of your answers surprise you?
2. Why were the L G B and T separated when asking if you felt comfortable interacting with these individuals?
3. What factors might contribute to your discomfort?

4. Have you ever worked with a client who identified as LGBT? If so, what was that experience like?
5. In what service areas do you excel, and in what services do you struggle?
6. Do you think you need to know someone or be friends with someone who identifies as LGBT in order to understand issues relating to this community?

## **Managing Discomfort**

It is important to identify and acknowledge why and under what circumstances we experience discomfort and strategize ways to move forward. During this discussion please feel free to refer back to the self-assessment exercise.

- In what situations do you find yourself most uncomfortable?
- Are there certain job responsibilities and/or tasks you find harder to fulfill?

Factors that may contribute to our discomfort:

- Unfamiliarity or lack of exposure
- Messages from family, friends, and community members
- Negative images and stereotypes perpetuated by society

Next steps: Making an action plan

*Use this time to help the group map out ways to manage or reduce discomfort.*

- Identify areas of strength and areas of growth
- Identify resources to assist you in providing services to this population
- It is important to recognize and honor personal boundaries
  - Communicate what can be expected of you so your team can make necessary alternative arrangements, ensuring LGBT clients receive the services and information critical to their resettlement and integration

## **Understanding Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity in Different Cultural Contexts (75 minutes)**

**Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will increase knowledge of critical terms and concepts of sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- ❖ Participants will appreciate the fluidity of sexuality and gender by learning about how the communities from which refugees come conceptualize sexual orientation and gender identity differently.

### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- Sexual orientation and gender identity are separate categories.
  - L, G, and B refer to one's sexuality/sexual orientation;
  - T refers to one's gender identity/expression;
- The relationship between sexuality and gender is interrelated but they remain distinct identities.
- Because of the diversity of expression and how individuals choose to identify, service providers cannot make assumptions about their clients' sexual behavior.

### **LGBT Terms, Definitions, and Myths**

Sexual orientation and gender identity are separate categories.

- Sexual orientation refers to each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate relations with, individuals of a different or the same gender.
- Gender identity refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.
- Lesbian: a woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women.
- Gay: used to describe a man whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other men.
- Bisexual: describes an individual who is physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to both men and women.
- Transgender: an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Does the term lesbian refer to sexual orientation or gender identity? What about gay? Bisexual? Transgender?

Questions:

- Is being LGBT a choice?
  - *No. Most LGBT individuals describe their sexual orientation as being inherent. Choice plays a role in whether an individual decides to live openly as LGBT.*
- How do people know they are LGB?
  - *Just like straight/heterosexual individuals are inherently attracted to members of the opposite sex, LGB individuals find themselves attracted to members of the same sex. Some identify as LGB early on in life; others may identify later on. Each person is on a unique path as s/he explores his/her sexuality and gender.*
- Are LGBT persons predisposed to mental illness and/or substance abuse?
  - *No. While LGBT individuals are more susceptible to mental illness and/or substance abuses, it is a result of the isolation, hostility, and discrimination they endure as LGBT individuals, not because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.*

- Is this a Western, contemporary phenomenon?
  - *No. LGBT individuals can be found in all cultures and communities across the globe and have been recorded throughout history.*
- Do I refer to a transgender woman as 'he' and 'him'?
  - *If the person identifies as female, feminine pronouns should be used. Transgender individuals though may circumstantially alternate what pronouns they prefer, depending on where they are and how they are feeling. If your clients let you know they identify as transgender, it is best to ask them what pronouns they prefer.*

Now we will take some time to discuss what it means to be LGBT in some of the countries from which refugees come and how sexuality and gender are sometimes understood differently across the globe. Before moving on though, are there questions about what was just covered? *Encourage participants to not be shy; they may feel intimidated to admit something is unclear, but chances are, someone else in the room has the same question!*

### **LGBT in Different Cultural Contexts**

The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender may be useful in certain contexts. You can also use the terms MSM and WSW since they focus on the sexual acts of individuals, not their sexual orientations. Not everyone who has same-sex sexual partners identifies as gay, lesbian, or bisexual; there are often other cultural and societal implications for identifying as a member of the LGBT community. Consequences may include endangering oneself, bringing shame or dishonor to one's family, and experiencing difficulty in securing employment.

- ❖ In Iraq, identifying as gay or lesbian is taboo, in part because it poses an immediate threat to the family unit, which like in other countries in the Middle East/North African region, is the foundation on which many communities are built. Some also perceive LGBT identities as imports of the West and are hostile towards this community for this reason.

You will likely encounter participants who never disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to you. They may not identify as LGBT or they may not feel comfortable sharing this information. Some may even be married to a member of the opposite sex but still have sexual relations with members of the same sex (either for economic purposes or out of romantic/emotional attractions). Do not make assumptions based on how one presents her/himself or one's relationship status.

- ❖ In many Latin American communities, men who penetrate other men are not considered to be gay; only their male partners who are penetrated are. The nature of these male partnerships varies, from one-time affairs and purchased sex to long-term emotional and romantic relationships. Active partners are perceived as masculine and often have wives. Receptive partners are more feminine and typically do not partner with women.

There are often no corresponding words for homosexual, heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender in different countries. In some cases, these words exist but are not widely known or used by most community members. Still, sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions vary in all cultures and communities, whether there is vocabulary to define it. Service providers can educate participants about the terms we use here in the United States, but it is important not to impose our own views or expectations of how LGBT people should look, act, or identify. Participants have a right to self-determination and to decide for themselves how they wish to identify and if and when they disclose such sensitive information.

Cultural variables determine how one identifies, how one expresses her/himself, and how society reacts and responds to certain behaviors and identities.

*Discuss the following questions together or in small groups.*

1. Why is it important for us to be aware of the cultural context when working with clients?
2. Does knowing the cultural context for clients affect how we interact with them? Having learned more about the fluidity of sexuality and gender, and how they are in many ways social constructs, what do you think of the definitions we first introduced?
3. Are there limits to these terms?
4. How might they be useful?
5. What are some of the cultural variables that impact how one identifies?

## **LGBT Refugees' and Asylees' Experiences (105 minutes)**

### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will understand the unique backgrounds and experiences of LGBT refugees and asylees that distinguish this population from other refugee communities.
- ❖ Participants will learn of the particular vulnerabilities LGBT refugees face before, during, and after resettlement.
- ❖ Participants will learn why LGBT refugees and asylees remain a 'hidden' population.

### **Materials:**

Guest speaker

### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- LGBT refugees and asylees are often at greater risk than other refugee populations during the resettlement period as they face particular vulnerabilities.
- Unlike other refugee populations, LGBT refugees often flee persecution not just from state actors, but from friends, family, and community members.

In this portion of the training, we will survey patterns and practices of persecution against LGBT individuals around the world. We will also discuss the protections afforded to this community.

### **Country Conditions for LGBT Refugees and Asylees**

In their countries of origin, LGBT persons face:

- Abuse; trauma; murder; rape; arbitrary arrests; and in some places, the death sentence (Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, and parts of Nigeria and Somalia).
- Detention – LGBT individuals are at greater risk of being detained, where they are often attacked and sexually abused. While in detention, they may also be denied access to health services and medication. Transgender individuals are especially vulnerable.
- Systems of impunity – Approximately 76 countries criminalize homosexual behavior. In over 130 countries where it is not criminalized, LGBT persons are still at risk of violence and persecution. Legal systems may not support them and police often do not investigate crimes committed against LGBT individuals.
- Consequently, repatriation is usually not a durable solution for LGBT refugees.

### **Countries of Asylum**

LGBT individuals face continued persecution in the country of first asylum. Often, the countries where they seek refugee status are just as hostile and discriminatory as the countries of origin. For this reason, local integration is often not possible for LGBT individuals.

### **Legal vs. Lived**

In many places, the legal climate does not always correspond to the lived experiences of LGBT individuals. In Iraq, there is no legislation explicitly criminalizing LGBT people, but the subject is now heavily politicized, and extrajudicial violence is common (e.g. killing campaigns in 2009 and 2012.) In South Africa, same-sex sexual activity is legal but 10.5% MSM still report being blackmailed and extorted. There is also a high prevalence of rape targeting lesbians as a spurious way of “correcting” their lesbian status. In Brazil, expenses associated with gender realignment surgery are covered by the government, but it also has the highest recorded rate of trans murders.

### **UNHCR, Global Actors, and Government Responses**

- 2011 speech by Secretary Clinton and memorandum by President Obama
- UNHCR
  - 2008- UNHCR Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
  - 2010- “The Protection of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Asylum-Seekers and Refugees”

- 2011- “Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Persons in Forced Displacement”
- 2007 Yogyakarta Principles

### **What Do We Know About LGBT Refugees/Asylees?**

- There is no robust statistical analysis or precise demographic information
- UNHCR does not identify or track LGBT cases
- Many LGBT refugees do not disclose status and are resettled under a different claim
- Sexual orientation and gender identity are inherent human characteristics rather than lifestyle choices, and therefore can be expected to exist in a more or less predictable rate in all human populations. In the United States, between 3.8 and 4.6% of individuals are estimated to fall within this population. The number of LGBT asylees is estimated to be a larger percentage of the overall asylee population because many asylees seek protection specifically due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

### **LGBT Refugee or Asylee Speaker**

*\*If possible, the trainer should invite a LGBT refugee or asylee from the community to speak. To the extent s/he feels comfortable, this person can cover:*

- Experiences in the country of origin as a LGBT individual;
- Experiences in the country of first asylum as a LGBT individual;
- The process of applying for resettlement
  - Escaping country of origin;
  - Interviews with UNHCR and other overseas processing entities;
  - Detention;
  - Resettlement and cultural adjustment period in the United States;
    - Successes
    - Challenges
    - Role the resettlement agency and other service providers played

*Training participants will have an opportunity to ask the guest questions. After a break and the speaker leaves, the group will have time to reflect and process.*

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How did you feel listening to the refugee’s story?
2. How do individuals, even within the LGBT community, blame the victim?
3. Do you often have an opportunity to hear the backgrounds of your clients?
4. What role did the providers/resettlement staff play in the refugee’s journey?
5. Do you think knowing about clients’ histories is important for when delivering services?

## **How to be an Ally (45 minutes)**

### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will learn how they can serve as allies to LGBT refugees and asylees.
- ❖ Participants will feel empowered to confront personal biases and support the LGBT community.

### **Materials:**

Paper, pens for drawing

### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- Meet clients where they are at instead of imposing certain expectations or plans of action.
- Ask questions instead of making assumptions.
- When negotiating between multiple clients and different concerns, the safety of a client must always be prioritized.

**What does it mean to be an ally?** An ally is someone who supports and advocates for a community of which you are not a member. Why be an ally? Why do marginalized groups benefit from having allies? What can we offer as allies? *Allow time for the group to brainstorm here.*

### **Activity: Drawing the Ideal Ally**

*Pass out paper and pens. Break participants into groups of 3-4 people.*

Work with your group to draw a figure that represents your vision of an ideal ally. In order to do so, feel free to exaggerate certain features to illustrate your point, e.g. very large ears to symbolize the significance in listening to individuals you are trying to support. Take 10 minutes to do this, and then we'll come back together to share our ally images.

*Bring training participants together and ask each group to share their thoughts about what makes an ideal ally.*

Have you previously been an ally? What are some of the challenges? What are some things to keep in mind as an ally?

- i. Learning (and putting knowledge into practice)
- ii. Confronting personal biases
- iii. Following, not leading

Taking a strength's based approach (an empowerment model) is one way to be an effective ally. This approach focuses on identifying and highlighting the strengths of clients: their skills, knowledge, and resources. Instead of focusing on what are clients' needs or deficits, focus on the strengths they possess to overcome obstacles and barriers. This approach empowers clients and facilitates their active involvement in services.

**Scenario:** Let's discuss the following scenario:

An Iraqi teenage boy, who resettled with his parents and two younger sisters, comes to you one day after school alone. He tells you that he is gay and asks for information on available services for LGBT individuals. He is having a very difficult time keeping his sexual orientation secret from his family and friends at school; he has only told his best friend and now you.

How would you approach this situation as an ally? *Give time for participants to respond, and then discuss the following responses if they haven't yet been discussed.*

- ☹ Do you encourage him to come out? "You live in the United States now, no reason to be afraid! You have rights!"
- ☹ Do you advise him to remain closeted? You are afraid that if he discloses his sexual orientation to his parents, they will kick him out of the house. Your agency does not have the funds to support him and resources in the surrounding area are limited; you are concerned you will not be able to find him shelter elsewhere.
- 😊 Instead of making a choice for him, you gently talk to him about potential repercussions, essentially conducting a risk assessment. Weigh the pros and cons to each possible decision, empowering your client to make an informed choice of his own. Determine what support you can offer based on your client's plan of action.

## **Establishing Rapport**

Since LGBT refugees and asylees remain a hidden population, it's crucial to create a space in which clients feel comfortable discussing sensitive information. We've discussed what it means to be an ally. Now we'll focus on practical tips for developing and strengthening personal relationships with clients through one-on-one interactions.

- Active Listening—it's as easy as:
  - **Affirming**
    - "Thank you for trusting me with this information..."
  - **Being sensitive**
    - "I'm sorry you experienced that..."
  - **Clarifying**

- “What does that mean? Can you explain that further?”

A common question asked is: “How do I talk to my client about LGBT issues? If I think they’re LGBT, can I just ask?”

- As we discussed before, even if a client engages in behavior or acts in a way we typically associate with the LGBT community, that does not mean they identify as LGBT.
  - Asking clients outright puts them on the spot, can make them feel uncomfortable, can diminish the rapport you’ve been building with them, and may discourage them from accessing further services (based on fear of being outed)
- You can provide services inclusive to LGBT individuals to all clients. By informing clients indiscriminately about available services and referrals for LGBT individuals, you are able to reach those who have not yet self-identified.
- By following the guidelines and recommendations presented in this seminar, you will hopefully establish a relationship where your clients will feel comfortable trusting you with personal information regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity.

### **Debrief and Check-in (15 minutes)**

*Day one will conclude with a brief session to process issues covered, conversations had, and feelings evoked. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, discuss challenges, and share impressions. Take this time to check in with participants about group dynamics. Are people’s voices being heard? Has anyone been made to feel uncomfortable or ashamed about their beliefs or perspectives? Have participants go around and share one thing they learned about the LGBT population and/or themselves.*

As we close for the day, are there any questions or comments anyone wants to share? Feel free to do so in this group format or speak with me after we break.

Let’s go around for a quick check-in. What is one thing you learned about the LGBT community and/or yourself today?

## **Day 2: LGBT Refugees’ and Asylees’ Needs & Building Capacity to Respond**

### **Introduction (30 minutes)**

#### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will be reminded of what they learned yesterday.
- ❖ Participants will reconnect and feel ready for the day’s activities.

Facilitator will lead the group in an icebreaker exercise to further promote community building. Facilitator will offer participants another opportunity to share any remaining thoughts or questions from the previous day's session and will then provide an overview of the second day's workshops. The second day focuses on how core services rendered by service providers can be tailored to adequately meet the needs of LGBT refugees and asylees during the cultural adjustment period. Facilitators will lead discussions while also affording the group time to strategize and process on their own.

## **Creating a Safe and Inclusive Environment (90 minutes)**

### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will explore what it means for an agency to be safe for and inclusive of LGBT clients.
- ❖ Participants will learn how daily choices and practices may signal either support for or disapproval of clients' sexual orientation or gender identity.
- ❖ Participants' will have increased confidence in their ability to interact with LGBT clients.

### **Materials:**

Agency mission statements, intake forms (as available)

### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- Cultivating a safe and inclusive environment positively affects LGBT clients and will ultimately allow service providers to do their jobs more effectively.
- These efforts must be made at both the individual and agency level.

What does it mean for an agency to be safe for and inclusive of LGBT clients? How do our daily choices and practices signal either support for or disapproval of clients' sexual orientation or gender identity?

1. Why is it important to cultivate an inclusive environment for this population?
2. What makes an environment safe?
3. What are some of LGBT refugees' experiences that need to be considered when providing services?

### **Activity: Understanding Inclusiveness**

For this next activity, review your agency's mission statement and intake forms to identify inclusive language, and then consider the following:

- What about the mission statement is inclusive?
- Would LGBT refugees/asylees read it and believe that the agency is a place designed for them to receive support?
- What about the mission statement or intake form might be changed to make it more inclusive?

What does it mean for an environment to be inclusive as opposed to non-exclusionary? How can we *actively* reach out to LGBT clients? By failing to do so, is it possible we are unintentionally excluding them? *Allow time for discussion.*

### **Inclusive Choices**

The words we use have serious implications. Through language, we have the opportunity to signal support to LGBT clients. Whether we intend to or not though, words we use (or don't use) might also suggest disapproval of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Here are some examples:

- Language choice and usage
  - Use of pronouns with transgender clients – use preferred pronouns and names
  - Assumptions we make about clients' sexual orientation in casual conversations
  - Terms that are used to refer to LGBT individuals may vary. Interpreters may use terminology that is considered offensive

#### Office documents

- Intake forms
- Brochures

- Facilities

- Restrooms – single occupancy or gender neutral restroom to be trans-friendly
- Physical markers: rainbow flags; brochures from LGBT organizations

- Policies

- Confidentiality
  - Physical space
  - Allocating time
  - Interpretation considerations
- Discrimination
- Sexual harassment
- Grievance

There are also physical safety concerns that affect LGBT refugees and asylees, including family and partner violence and bullying of youth.

### **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is when one intimate partner seeks to control the thoughts, beliefs, or conduct of the other intimate partner, or to punish their partner for resisting their control. This may manifest itself as physical or sexual violence, or persistent or severe emotional and/or verbal abuse. Other forms include: economic abuse, isolation from others, and other controlling patterns. Domestic violence can occur in any relationship regardless of race, religion, culture, gender, or sexual orientation.

Domestic violence is underreported and under-recognized among same-sex couples.

- DV rates in LGBT community = rates for heterosexual couples (approx. 25%)
- Hostility toward same-sex couples by law enforcement
- Sometimes assumed that abuse must be mutual in same-sex couples
- Reluctance to report due to double-stigma – discrimination against LGBT persons, plus shame associated with DV
- Failure to recognize situation
- Male victims reluctant to report
- Internalized homophobia

Additional risks:

- Linguistic isolation and lack of knowledge about resources
- Fewer sources of support – family and community may not be accepting
- Domestic violence shelters are often not able to accept LGBT people (i.e. trans women in women's shelters)
- Threat of being outed
- Coercion based on legal status or legal misinformation
- Sometimes lack of support from and/or reluctance to acknowledge abuse by LGBT community

### **Bullying and LGBT teenagers**

- One study estimates that teenagers in US high schools hear anti-gay slurs about 26 times a day.
- 1/3 of LGBT teens experienced a physical threat during the school year, and one survey shows that 22% skipped school in the previous month due to bullying.
- LGBT teens in U.S. schools are often embarrassed or ashamed of being targeted and may not report the abuse.
- LGBT youth feel they have nowhere to turn. According to several surveys, four out of five gay and lesbian students say they don't know one supportive adult at school.

Consequences:

- LGBT teen dropout rates are 3 times that of straight teenagers.
- LGBT teens are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.
- LGBT teens are at risk because their distress is a direct result of the hatred and prejudice that surround them, not because of their orientation.

## **Case Management: Employment & Housing (75 minutes)**

**Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will strategize on how to best advocate for LGBT clients when securing employment opportunities.
- ❖ Participants will explore necessary considerations to make when identifying safe and appropriate housing options.

**Materials:**

Appendix II (Prompt for activity)

**Critical Messages to Communicate (Housing):**

- Housing should be located in a neighborhood considered safe for LGBT individuals.
  - This is especially important for transgender clients, who are at greater risk of being targeted.
- Roommates should be supportive and/or tolerant of the LGBT community.
- Service providers should be aware of housing discrimination laws pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Critical Messages to Communicate (Employment):**

- Pre-employment activities
  - Have a conversation with clients about their concerns and boundaries
  - Identify LGBT-friendly workplaces
  - Cultivate partnerships with LGBT-affirming companies and businesses
- Post-employment activities
  - Ensure clients are safe at their workplace
  - Support clients as they decide whether to openly identify as LGBT at work
  - Inform clients about regulations and expectations
  - Intervene and advocate when necessary

**Activity: Drafting a Service Plan**

*Split participants into small groups and assign them either employment/vocational counseling or housing. Distribute the prompt [Appendix II] and give participants thirty minutes to discuss in their groups before reconvening.*

*Discussion Questions:*

1. What strikes you about the service plans developed by different groups?
2. Do we notice any patterns?
3. What might be some challenges in providing these services to LGBT clients?
4. How can we overcome these obstacles?

**Housing Considerations**

- Some neighborhoods are more appropriate to house LGBT refugees in than others. Consider the following:
  - Have hate crimes been reported in the neighborhood?
  - Is there a pattern of police arresting transgender individuals for solicitation in the area? In some areas, police may wrongfully, and insensitively, assume that transgender individuals are sex workers based only on their gender expression.
  - If you are unfamiliar with the surrounding neighborhoods and the climate for LGBT individuals, ask local LGBT organizations about safe neighborhoods and/or conduct a web search of LGBT businesses and services.

- In rural and suburban areas, it might be difficult to find housing close to resources for the LGBT community. Although these services are not exclusive to metropolitan cities, there are dramatically fewer resources readily available for the LGBT population in rural areas; resettling this population far away from LGBT organizations and communities may result in increased isolation and stigmatization.
- Roommates and Proximity to Community
  - While resettlement agencies are inclined to resettle individuals in areas where other members of their country of origin live, it may not be safe for LGBT refugees to live with or near other members of their community. Many LGBT refugees and asylees are cautious to interact with members of their home communities because of the continued discrimination they would potentially endure. LGBT refugees and asylees who maintain contact with others from their country of origin often do not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity; this can have harmful consequences on clients' mental health and emotional wellbeing.
  - It is necessary for LGBT refugees to live with individuals who are supportive of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
  - Resettlement affiliates should whenever possible screen potential roommates to ensure that LGBT clients are matched appropriately. It is the clients' decision to disclose to their roommates. Information regarding the sexual orientation or gender identity of a client should not be communicated to prospective roommates under any circumstances. Cultivate relationships with potential roommates and identify who would most likely be supportive of LGBT individuals. Keep these individuals in mind when housing a LGBT client.

### **Employment Considerations:**

- Pre-employment considerations
  - Have a conversation with clients
    - Have they previously experienced discrimination in the workplace due to their sexual orientation or gender identity?
      - Many LGBT refugees and asylees were subjected to harassment from coworkers and/or were fired as a result of how they identify back in their countries of origin. They may have significant reservations about re-entering the workforce for this reason; to address and mitigate their anxieties, employment counselors should encourage their LGBT clients to openly discuss their concerns and fears.
    - LGBT clients, out of concern for their safety and wellbeing, may not be willing to take certain jobs. For instance, if a job involved working with individuals from their country of origin, they may not feel comfortable taking the position. To reduce psychological stress and ensure clients thrive in their new job placements, work collectively to evaluate which jobs are most suitable.

- Under the guidelines of the Matching Grant program, a refugee's or asylee's participation can be revoked if she or he refuses a job offer. Sensitivity should be paid to LGBT clients if a job is turned down due to security concerns.
- Investigate employers' policies
  - Does the employer have a nondiscrimination policy? Does it prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression? Does the employer have an anti-sexual harassment policy in place?
- Cultivate partnerships
  - Identify LGBT friendly employers and those with strong non-discrimination policies.
  - Collaborate with the local LGBT Chamber of Commerce.

#### Post-employment considerations

- Safety
- Self-disclosure
- Harassment and discrimination
  - If clients ever raise concerns about their safety in the workplace, take them seriously and evaluate how to best support them. Does the employer have a grievance or harassment policy? Are there local or state laws to support them? Is there a human resources department that you have a strong relationship with?
  - Remember every person has the right to choose when, where, and with whom they want to identify as LGBT. Speak with your client about whether they plan to be "out" at work – talk through the advantages, possible disadvantages, and be careful not to out them if they decide not to be open with their employer.

### **Physical Health (45 minutes) [Outside Speaker Recommended]**

#### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will learn about physical health issues particular to LGBT refugees and asylees.
- ❖ Participants will increase their ability to effectively advocate for LGBT refugees and asylees in the healthcare system.

#### **Critical messages to communicate:**

- LGBT refugees/asylees have particular healthcare considerations.
  - Lesbians are at higher risk for breast cancer and heart disease.
  - History of trauma may affect how LGBT clients react to physical examinations.
- Transgender individuals have additional healthcare concerns.
- A discussion on sexual health must be included during cultural orientation as clients may never have been educated on safe sex practices.

- It is important for caseworkers to identify culturally competent healthcare providers and provide training when necessary.

### **Accessing Healthcare**

What are some of the issues your clients experience when accessing healthcare?  
How might it differ for LGBT clients?

What can resettlement providers do to support LGBT refugees and asylees as they access medical care in the US?

- Offer appropriate referrals
- Conduct trainings when necessary
  - Refugee health clinics may not have the cultural competency to provide LGBT specific care
  - LGBT health clinics are often unfamiliar with the backgrounds and needs of refugees and asylees
- Prepare clients for what happens during medical appointments
- Encourage clients to be honest with providers and to voice their concerns and needs
- Understand the limitations of your role in providing care and sharing information
- Sexual Health: What is your role in discussing sexual health with clients?
  - *Include sexual health information in cultural orientations*
  - *Let all clients know that they can ask you or their healthcare provider questions relating to sexual health and safe sex practices*
- Transgender Health
  - Discrimination in health care system – there are procedures/types of care that are often not covered by insurance

### **Mental Health (105 minutes) [Outside Speaker Recommended]**

#### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will increase their understanding of mental health concerns specific to LGBT refugees/asylees.
- ❖ Participants will feel confident in their abilities to identify LGBT refugees' and asylees' in need of mental health services and make appropriate referrals.

#### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- Living in a culture where being LGBT is considered a sin, is criminalized, or is pathologized can negatively impact a LGBT person emotionally and psychologically.
- LGBT refugees and asylees have similar mental health concerns as the general refugee population but are more likely to have suffered from torture/trauma.
- Refer clients in need to professional mental health services and intervene immediately if the situation calls for you to do so, e.g. responding to a potentially suicidal client.

## **Debrief and Check-in (15 minutes)**

Day two will conclude with a brief session to process issues covered, conversations had, and feelings evoked. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, discuss challenges, and share impressions. Take this time to check in with participants about group dynamics. Then have participants go around, saying one word to describe how they are feeling.

## **Day 3: Practice Makes Perfect: Applying Knowledge and Rehearsing for Action**

### **Introduction (15 minutes)**

*Facilitator will lead the group in an icebreaker exercise to warm up the group. Facilitator will offer participants another opportunity to share any remaining thoughts or questions from the previous day's sessions and will then provide an overview of the third day's workshops.*

The third day will focus on applying knowledge gained from the first two days. We'll focus on real life scenarios and map out a work plan for you to take back to your organizations.

### **Legal Issues (90 minutes) [Outside Speaker Required]**

#### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will learn about legal issues particular to LGBT refugees/asylees.
- ❖ Participants will know in what situations to seek legal assistance.
- ❖ Participants will become aware of risks concerning LGBT refugees/asylees.

#### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- Service providers should not act as attorneys or provide legal advice under any circumstances.
- It is critical for service providers to be attentive to discrimination their clients may endure.
- Clients should be informed of their rights as both refugees/asylees and as LGBT persons.

### **Reaching Refugee/Asylee Communities (30 minutes)**

#### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will consider the ways in which LGBT refugees are at greater risk of experiencing isolation upon resettlement.

- ❖ Participants will explore ways to facilitate LGBT refugees' integration in their respective refugee communities.

### **Critical Messages to Communicate:**

- Presenting on diversity and issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity during PRM's mandated cultural orientation is one way to reach all clients and promote tolerance.
- Integrating LGBT issues in ESL classes offers another opportunity to educate clients on this community.
- Refugee allies can serve as ambassadors to facilitate LGBT individuals' inclusion.

### *Discussion Questions:*

1. Do you have any concerns talking about LGBT issues with your clients?
2. What do you think their reactions will be?
3. Can you think of other ways to facilitate social integration?

## **Connecting with LGBT Community-based Organizations (60 minutes)**

### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will learn about services offered by local LGBT organizations.
- ❖ Participants will have an opportunity to practice educating individuals on the experiences of LGBT refugees/asylees.
- ❖ Participants will strategize with local LGBT organizations on ways to collaborate to support LGBT refugees and asylees.

### **Materials:**

List of LGBT organizations/presenters that are at the training (and their business cards)

While it is important to support LGBT refugees' integration within their home communities, the local LGBT community can also play a critical role in the resettlement and cultural adjustment process. We've invited local LGBT organizations and community members to join us for an exploratory collaborative session.

*Have all participants go around and introduce themselves. Ask the training participants to share with LGBT organizations what they have learned over the course of the past few days and provide a background of LGBT refugees and asylees. Training participants will also at this time discuss more broadly about the refugee populations arriving in the local/regional area. Allow time for LGBT organizations to offer an overview of their services and programs.*

*Facilitate a dialogue between everyone in attendance, making sure to raise any questions that came up earlier in the training and highlight opportunities for collaboration.*

1. How do you think resettlement staff and LGBT organizations can collaborate?
2. What capacities does LGBT civil society currently have to support refugee and asylee populations?
3. Can you identify current gaps in LGBT service provision in regards to working with refugees/asylees?
4. What sort of partnerships and projects can you establish to support LGBT refugees' social integration?
5. What are some of the obstacles and barriers we might encounter?
  - Language capacity
  - Cultural differences
6. How can we overcome these obstacles?

*Encourage participants and invited guests to over lunch discuss in greater detail plans to establish formal referral mechanisms and potential collaborative projects.*

### **Forum Theater: Rehearsing for Action (90 minutes)**

#### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will apply knowledge in an interactive, safe setting.
- ❖ Participants will increase their confidence in responding to difficult professional situations.
- ❖ Participants will collaborate on and devise best practice solutions.

*To offer participants an opportunity to put into practice what they learned over the course of the training in a safe space, facilitators will lead the group in an activity modeled off of Theater of the Oppressed (Forum Theater). All participants will have the opportunity to role play scenarios surrounding potential issues that may arise when working with LGBT refugees and asylees. This is a solution-oriented exercise promoting creative collaboration.*

*The trainers will act out all the scenes. Participants will then have an opportunity to workshop scenes they prioritize, stepping in the role of the protagonist to try out possible solutions. After each participant steps into a scene, the trainer should ask the following questions to the group:*

1. What worked in this scene?
2. What didn't work in the scene?
3. Was this 'magic'?
  - Would you feel comfortable doing what you did in real life?
  - Is the antagonist's response realistic?

*Multiple participants can step into the same scene, trying out different approaches.*

**Scenario 1:** A caseworker returns to work after the training, excited about implementing new practices to ensure that LGBT refugees/asylees feel welcome at her/his organization. A colleague (perhaps a supervisor) is resistant to make any changes to

the organization's policies or procedures and makes it known very strongly. The colleague sees no benefit in putting so much effort into supporting a population they "have never resettled."

**Scenario 2:** A caseworker secures an apartment for a transgender client. The landlord has been rude and unresponsive to the client's needs. The caseworker suspects that the landlord is trying to push the client to move out and decides to stop on by to pay a visit.

**Scenario 3:** A client storms into the office to tell his case manager that his daughter is having a relationship with another girl. The case manager is concerned that he will, or already has, become violent.

**Scenario 4:** A LGBT client walks into the office and expresses suicidal ideations.

## **Resettlement Agency Assessment and Designing a Workplan (45 minutes)**

### **Objectives:**

- ❖ Participants will reflect on their new skills and knowledge.
- ❖ Participants will map out steps they and their organizations can take to effectively support LGBT refugees and asylees.

### **Materials:**

Appendix III [Organizational Assessment]

*Participants will review a checklist of guidelines to assess their organization's current capacity to support LGBT refugees and asylees. As participants identify gaps in their organization's services, they should draft ideas and strategies to either adjust or implement new practices and policies.*

As we begin to think about next steps, take the next 30 minutes to work on an organizational work plan. Use the following questions as a guide:

1. What is your organization already doing well?
2. In what areas do you think the greatest improvement is needed?
3. Do you think your colleagues and/or supervisors will be supportive in making adjustments to service provision? If not, how might you get them on board?

*Reconvene as a large group and on a piece of butcher paper, write down what participants are committed to doing after they leave the training.*

## **Conclusion (30 minutes)**

*Participants will then have an opportunity to share with the group one thing they are proud about themselves; something they would like to work on; and something they have appreciated about the group.*



9. I am comfortable providing services to someone who is HIV-positive.

Always

Sometimes

Never

10. I have friends who identify as LGBT.

11. I have colleagues who identify as LGBT.

12. I have provided services to LGBT individuals.

13. There are certain job responsibilities and/or tasks I find harder to fulfill when working with LGBT individuals.

## Appendix II

### Activity: Drafting a Service Plan Guiding Questions

In groups, participants will be assigned one of two topics to address: employment/vocational counseling or housing. Participants should apply knowledge learned in previous sections to collaborate with group members in determining how they would tailor these services to meet the specific needs of the LGBT community. Groups will have half an hour to draft a plan before they present to the larger group. As participants develop their service plans, they should consider what actions need to be taken at all stages of the process.

#### **Employment:**

1. What information from your client would be helpful as you search for employment opportunities?
2. What steps can you take to reduce the risk of your client experiencing discrimination in the workplace? Consider actions at the individual, agency, and community level.
3. How can you tell if a company is LGBT-friendly?
4. Once your client is employed, how can you continue to support her/him?
5. Under what circumstances might you need to advocate for your client?

#### **Housing:**

1. What are some of the factors that will inform in which neighborhood you house your client?
2. What will you consider as you select a roommate for a client? Why?
3. What is your role in advocating on behalf of your client?
4. What obstacles do you imagine will hinder your efforts to safely house your client? What are some potential solutions?

## Appendix III

### Organizational Assessment

As you review these guidelines and considerations, think about what your organization is already doing well. When you identify gaps, work to draft ideas and strategies to either adjust or implement new practices and policies.

- Official documents and forms are gender-inclusive.
- Confidentiality and discrimination policies are practiced and enforced.
- There is a formal grievance policy for participants.
- Participants' sexual orientation or gender identity is not disclosed to other resettlement staff or outside parties unless given approval by participants.
- Staff members have undergone sensitivity training on LGBT issues.
- Outside interpretive services are available so that resettlement agencies do not need to rely on family members, friends, or other members of the community for interpreting. This will ensure the confidentiality of LGBT participants.
- Staff is mindful of using participants' preferred gender pronouns in verbal and written communication.
- An orientation is designed to inform LGBT refugees and asylees about their rights as refugees and asylees, as well as federal and state laws regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. An orientation devotes time to discussing matters relating to sexual health and safe dating practices and is inclusive of LGBT individuals.
- LGBT topics are included in the general cultural orientation for all refugee and asylee participants, ensuring that information reaches even those whose sexual orientation or gender identity have not been disclosed. Special attention should be paid if there are mixed gender groups to ensure that orientations remain culturally sensitive.
- LGBT refugees and asylees have access to medical care and mental-health services. Accommodations are made to address financial, transportation, language, and cultural barriers.
- Appropriate referrals are made to healthcare providers and mental health practitioners who have experience working with the LGBT population and are sensitive to their needs and concerns.

- LGBT refugees and asylees are offered affordable housing options and are placed in living arrangements that feel comfortable to the participant.
- Neighborhoods are vetted to assure security for LGBT persons.
- Roommates are screened to ensure refugees and asylees are housed with individuals supportive of the LGBT community.
- LGBT friendly<sup>1</sup> employment and vocational services are provided. LGBT refugees' and asylees' participation in the Matching Grant program will not be terminated based on their need for a LGBT friendly work space. Preference is given for placing LGBT participants in organizations with non-discrimination employee policies.
- Resettlement agencies are engaged with LGBT communities in identifying work opportunities for participants.
- Efforts are made to advocate on LGBT refugees' behalf in immigrant communities, ensuring that these individuals are not isolated due to their self-identified or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- LGBT specific services and referrals are made available to all participants in the refugee resettlement program due to the expected existence of non-disclosing LGBT refugees and asylees.
- Partnerships with LGBT service providers are formally established to offer comprehensive social services, mental health services, medical care, and other necessary support.
- Efforts are made to provide LGBT organizational partners with training on refugees and asylees.
- An assessment process is created to determine the success of LGBT refugees'/asylees' acculturation and access to supportive services. Procedures are in place to monitor and report participants' progress and outcomes.
- Methods are established to identify and gain access to LGBT resources in communities to which refugees/asylees may move.

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<sup>1</sup> Workplaces should be defined as LGBT friendly if they have policies in place that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Ideally, LGBT individuals are also currently employed.