

SilverSource, Inc.
2009 Summer Street, Stamford, CT 06905

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Laura Roberts, 203-273-2218
Laura@LauraRobertsMarketing.com

SilverSource Partnership in Elderly Services Group Learns How To Better Serve Members Of LGBTQ Older Adult Community

STAMFORD, CT (April 20, 2017) Yesterday morning, approximately 30 members of the Partnership in Elderly Services (P.I.E.S.) group gathered together in Stamford to receive instruction most people haven't had: cultural competency training for working with the LGBTQ community of older adults. Anthony Crisci, Executive Director of Triangle Community Center (TCC), shared information with the group about language and definition of terms associated with the LGBTQ (*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer*) community, definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity, statistics and insights about the LGBTQ experience and how to be a good ally to LGBTQ communities.

"This is important training for service providers," said Kathleen Bordelon, Executive Director of SilverSource and leader of the PIES group. The LGBT population age sixty and above is expected to grow from 3 million in 2013, to 7 million by 2030. Knowing how to speak respectfully, which is true for all caregiving, is especially true for caring for LGBTQ older adults, considering how their life experiences and prejudices may have shaped their frame of reference to those outside their community"

For instance, Crisci points to a study by the group Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE), which reports that 40% of LGBTQ older adults haven't shared their sexual orientation with their healthcare providers. Crisci attributes this hesitancy to the fact that it was not safe to share that information throughout much of their lives. Knowing the type of lifestyle a person lives impacts, for instance, what medical tests should be performed; information especially important because the LBGTQ community has a higher prevalence of certain types of cancer, heart disease, mental illness and sexually transmitted disease.

"A lot of LGBTQ older adults grew up in a time when it was illegal to be gay or lesbian and you would go to jail for it," said Crisci. "Many are dealing with PTSD because of it, and the degree of PTSD can be more or less severe depending upon age."

Crisci suggests that homecare workers undergo sensitivity training to learn how to speak in gender neutral terms until a client shares how they like to be identified, as misuse of pronouns can erode trust. Additionally, since some in the LGBTQ community describe their relationships as a friend, roommate, or even as a sister or brother because they don't feel safe sharing the true nature of that relationship, workers should look for clues. Listening to how a client speaks about the other person, and pictures around the home are hints, allowing a provider to move forward with understanding.

Other factors essential to understanding the older LGBTQ population include consideration of their level of familial support and preparation for retirement. Social isolation is a concern for LGBTQ older adults because they are more likely to live alone, more likely to be single and less likely to have children than their non-LGBTQ counterparts. Adding to that, says Crisci, "many children of the transgender population don't want anything to do with their parent now that they're out. We recommend that you never assume that an older adult has that support."

Savings for retirement is another concern for this group. SAGE reports that 51% of LGBTQ older adults are concerned about having enough money to live on as they age, compared to 36% of non-LGBTQ people. Crisci explained that many in the LGBTQ community had a hard time finding gainful employment throughout their lives, and thus they're not as financially prepared for retirement. Adding to this, LGBTQ older adults lived through the 1980's AIDS epidemic, causing them to think they wouldn't survive to their 60s and 70s, and thus didn't plan enough for retirement.

"Today's meeting affirmed that my base knowledge of operational definitions and phrases were accurate," said Gene Thompson, a case manager at Jewish Senior Services. "Knowing this information assists us in avoiding sensitivity landmines, which can make or break interactions with a client or a client's family. Just being aware of the correct style of communication can effect business outcomes."

Triangle Community Center (TCC) is Fairfield County's leading provider of programming and resources to nurture growth and connection within the LGBTQ community. TCC is the only organization focused exclusively on the LGBTQ community in Fairfield County, and offers case management, programs, services and events that provide critical and in some cases life-saving resources and assistance. TCC offers a co-sponsored housing program that works directly with TCC's case manager, provides emergency financial assistance to clients in need, and other direct services. To learn more, visit <http://www.ctpridecenter.org/>

The Partnership In Elderly Services was founded by SilverSource nearly 30 years ago to serve as a professional forum to increase community awareness, knowledge and professional involvement in developing responses to the challenges facing older residents from the greater Stamford area. Monthly meetings are attended by representatives from more than 100 non-profit and for-profit providers of services to older adults. The group shares best practices and discusses how to improve service delivery for older adults in our area.

About SilverSource, Inc.

SilverSource, formerly known as Senior Services of Stamford, was founded in 1908. It is an independent, nonprofit foundation that advocates for older adults and provides case management, emergency financial assistance and other services to positively improve the quality of life for people over age 60. In addition, SilverSource is an information resource center and referral source for older adults and their families. SilverSource, Inc., is a 501(c) 3, is located at 2009 Summer Street in Stamford, CT 06905. For more information visit www.silversource.org or call 203.324.6584.

Image to Accompany this Release: PIES LGBTQ1.jpg

Caption: Members of the SilverSource Partnership in Elderly Services (P.I.E.S.) group attended a cultural competency workshop to improve working relationships with the LGBTQ community of older adults.

#