



# Standing up for ALL New Yorkers

A Report from  
the NYS Interagency LGBT Task Force



New York State has a strong history of advancing progressive ideals, from women's rights to marriage equality. The State continues to demonstrate its leadership by being the first state in the nation to systematically update relevant agency data systems to include sexual orientation and gender identity information. With this data, the State can begin to effectively address health and financial disparities, safety concerns and a myriad of other issues, thereby improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender New Yorkers across the state. This new policy signals an era of greater inclusiveness and reflects our commitment to the diverse needs of New York State.

*-- Governor Andrew M. Cuomo*

## **The Interagency LGBT Task Force**

A growing body of research suggests that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) New Yorkers face significant health disparities. However, it is difficult to target programs and services to address these disparities without specific data. New York State created the Interagency LGBT Task Force in 2012 with a focus on improving program and service delivery. The LGBT Task Force has been working with select State agencies to improve existing systems, while reviewing best practices and exploring new initiatives designed to implement uniform and comprehensive data collection methods. By gathering targeted demographic health information, the State will be better positioned to serve all New Yorkers, including the LGBT community.

Currently, there are eight state agencies collecting or updating their systems to gather LGBT demographic information: Department of Health; Department of Corrections and Community Supervision; Office for the Aging; Office of Mental Health; Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services; Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance; Office of Children and Family Services; and Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

In 2011, the Office of Mental Health (OMH) became the first behavioral health state agency in the country to include sexual orientation and gender identity questions on its admission forms at state mental health facilities. OMH has used this information to develop a comprehensive training curriculum for clinicians working in the mental health system to improve treatment for LGBT people.

In 2012, the NYS Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) updated their system to ensure that LGBT seniors were included. According to research, LGBT seniors are more likely to live alone and lack other vital support systems that keep people healthy. NYSOFA is working to support all seniors with diverse programs and services, and continues to strengthen their outreach and education efforts.

OMH and NYSOFA are two examples of how New York State agencies are enhancing their data collection efforts to include sexual orientation and gender identity, and then using that information to improve the lives of LGBT New Yorkers. This report outlines current and upcoming efforts by state agencies to update their data systems, so they can be more responsive to the needs of the LGBT communities. New York State is the first state in the country to systematically update data systems to include sexual orientation and gender identity information.



**Current and upcoming changes will reach 1.5 million New Yorkers across the state.**

**Over 20 state agency and industry training efforts on LGBT issues are currently available or underway.**

## **NYS Interagency LGBT Task Force Member Agencies**

Department of Corrections  
and Community Supervision

Department of Health

Office for the Aging

Office of Alcoholism  
and Substance Abuse Services

Office of Children and Family Services

Office of Mental Health

Office for People  
with Developmental Disabilities

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

In partnership with the Empire State Pride Agenda



## Office for the Aging

The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA)'s home and community-based programs provide older persons with access to a well-planned and coordinated package of in-home and other support services that supplement informal care. NYSOFA works through a network of 59 local Offices for the Aging, also called Area Agencies on the Aging (AAA). Recognizing that LGBT seniors need to feel welcome at all NYSOFA offices in order to receive adequate services, the agency updated their data system to better collect information about sexual orientation and gender identity.

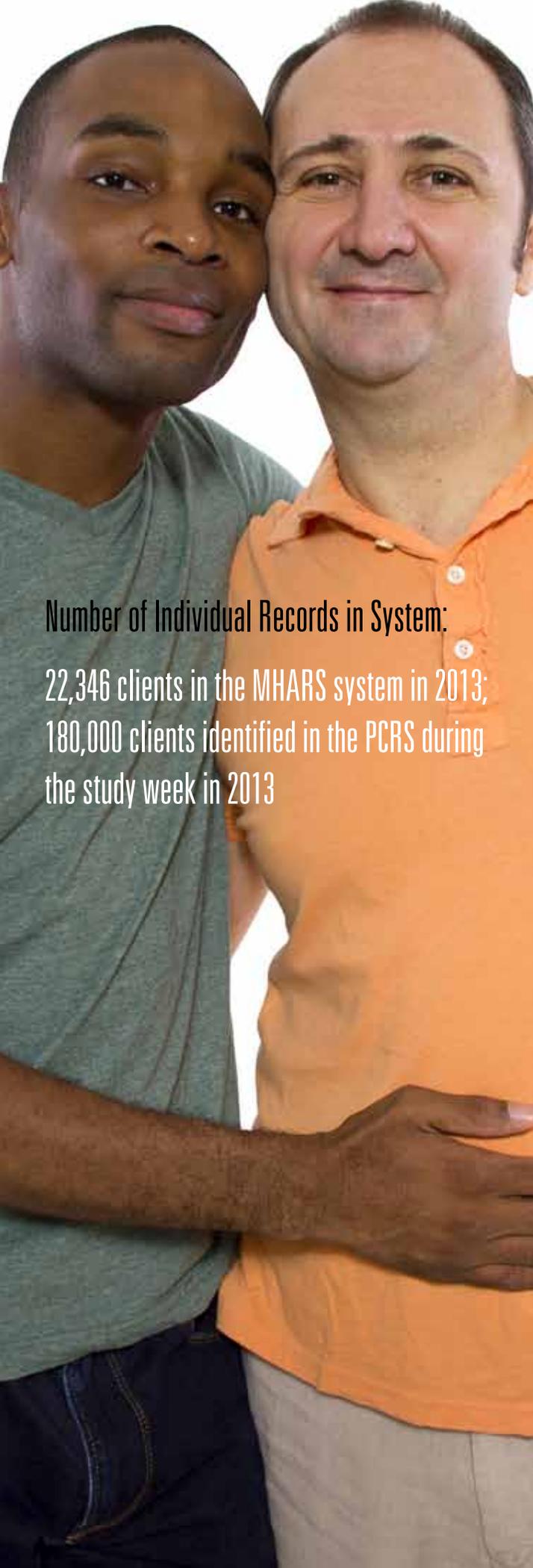
**Data System:** Comprehensive Assessment for Aging Network Community-Based Long Term Care Services (COMPASS). COMPASS assesses persons for any one of seven community-based long term care services including case management, home health aides, adult day care services and home-delivered meals.

Questions related to underserved populations, such as the LGBT community, were also added to the Annual Implementation Plan, which NYSOFA uses to direct policy decisions.

Data collected through COMPASS will assist local AAAs in targeting their outreach efforts to ensure clients receive necessary services. NYSOFA collaborated with Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE) to provide three cultural sensitivity webinars on how to address the new reporting data elements with clients in April 2013

As a result of raising awareness through the Annual Implementation Plan and NY Connects, several local AAAs have updated their programs to reflect greater awareness of LGBT senior needs. For example, the Cattaraugus County AAA had cultural competency training for all case management staff with the local Seneca Nation of Indians on LGBT seniors. They also held two staff trainings on LGBT senior issues and now sponsor the new local LGBT group.

**Number of Individual Records in System: 62,000 clients**



## Number of Individual Records in System:

22,346 clients in the MHARS system in 2013;  
180,000 clients identified in the PCRS during  
the study week in 2013

## Office for Mental Health

New York State has a large, multi-faceted mental health system that serves more than 700,000 individuals each year. The Office for Mental Health (OMH) operates psychiatric centers across the State, and also regulates, certifies and oversees more than 4,500 programs, which are operated by local governments and nonprofit agencies. These programs include various inpatient and outpatient programs as well as emergency, community support, residential and family care programs. Self-identification of sexual orientation and gender identity can assist behavioral providers in their cultural background and clinical assessments, treatment planning, and service delivery to meet the diverse needs of the LGBT population served in the state's behavioral health system.

**Data System:** OMH has two data sets: the Mental Health Automated Record System (MHARSII) and the Patient Characteristic Survey (PCS).

MHARS is an electronic clinical patient record system for the state's psychiatric center programs (inpatient, outpatient and residential) The PCS contains client-level demographic, clinical and service information across both state-run and community-based public mental health service programs. The PCS is conducted every two years and collects information for each person who receives public mental health services during a specified one-week period. All participants in programs licensed or funded by OMH are required to complete the survey. Both data sets now require the patient and/or recipient of behavioral health services to "self-identify" their sexual orientation and gender identity.

In 2011, OMH was the first behavioral health or health organization in the nation to ask self-identification questions regarding "sexual orientation and gender identity" on the admission form. In 2013, sexual orientation and gender identity questions were added to the PCS. Instructional changes were made to the PCS Guidance document to help behavioral health providers improve their skills in asking these questions.

OMH is exploring the utilization and implementation of granular data collection processes within MHARS II and PCS and eventually the Child and Adult Integrated Reporting System (CAIRS) system in 2014. Information from all data systems are analyzed on an ongoing basis for policy development and program evaluation to ensure programs meet patient needs.

OMH's Bureau of Cultural Competence (BCC), the Center of Excellence for Cultural Competence, The Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research and the NYS Psychiatric Institute have developed and facilitated training videos and additional resources for the MHARS and PCS data systems on how to ask questions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity with sensitivity and how this information can be used by behavioral health providers.

The LGBT videos and/or webinar below can be viewed on the BCC's Learning Unit Curriculum page on Special Cultural Groups at:

[http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/cultural\\_competence/cultural\\_groups.html](http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/cultural_competence/cultural_groups.html)



## Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

The Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) oversees one of the nation's largest addiction services systems with more than 1,600 prevention, treatment and recovery programs. The agency plans, develops and regulates the State's system of chemical dependence and gambling treatment agencies. This includes the direct operation of 12 Addiction Treatment Centers, which provide inpatient rehabilitation services to 10,000 people a year. In addition, the office licenses and supervises nearly 1,000 local chemical dependence treatment programs. OASAS treatment programs assist about 100,000 people on any given day and approximately 240,000 individuals every year.

**Data System:** Client Data System (CDS). The CDS is the agency's central reporting system for all admissions and discharges. Both state and local provider systems conform to the CDS format to ensure consistent client reporting. OASAS uses this information to monitor treatment trends and provider compliance with regulations.

As of Oct. 1, 2014, the CDS system will include both sexual orientation and gender identity in the demographic component.

The Learning and Development Unit at OASAS updated their LGBT curriculum in 2013 to reflect the training needs of OASAS providers for the LGBT community. OASAS also conducted four two-day in-person training sessions for providers throughout the state on how to serve LGBT clients. For each training session, OASAS partnered with local LGBT organizations that could connect providers to additional resources to support their clients.

In addition, OASAS produced a Learning Thursday webinar on "Working with the LGBT Community," which attracted 3,210 remote participants. Learning Thursdays are a series of 90-minute programs designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of individuals working in the addictions field. In 2014, OASAS plans to continue delivering provider LGBT training throughout the state and responding to specific provider needs regarding the CDS update. The LGBT Workgroup at OASAS is developing online resources to ensure providers have access to the resources they need to help agencies become more welcoming for LGBT clients.

**Number of Individual Records in System: 240,000 individuals.**

## Department of Health

### *Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention*

The Department of Health's Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention implements chronic disease and injury prevention programs to enhance opportunities for all New Yorkers to live healthier lives. To assist in that process, the division coordinates the state's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), which is a population-based survey of non-institutionalized adults in New York. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention creates a part of the survey content, but states can add questions relevant to state needs.

BRFSS staff analyzes data to understand trends in health indicators for the state as a whole and by sub populations that may be experiencing health disparities. The information has been used by local health departments and hospitals to develop Community Health Assessments, as well as by state government to direct resources more appropriately.

**Data System:** Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Data from the BRFSS is useful for planning, initiating and supporting health promotion and disease prevention programs at the state and federal level, and monitoring progress toward achieving health objectives for the state and nation.

Among the factors assessed by the BRFSS are safety-belt use, tobacco use, physical activity and use of cancer screening services. By collecting behavioral health risk data at the state and local levels, BRFSS has become a powerful tool for targeting and building health promotion activities. As a result, BRFSS users have increasingly demanded more data and asked more survey questions. Demographic questions help assess if there are health disparities among different populations. The sexual orientation and gender identity questions will enable New York to assess disparities in the LGBT community.

LGBT data will be shared with relevant programs and partners to support health promotion and health behaviors to targeted demographics as well as to better understand health disparities.

In partnership with, and support from, the Department's Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention, the 2014 BRFSS will include sexual orientation and gender identity; data from the survey will be available mid-2015.

### Number of Individual Records in System:

6,000 to 8,000 adults identified at random complete phone interviews each year



Number of Individual Records  
in System:  
101,000 individual clients



## Department of Health

### *AIDS Institute*

The AIDS Institute protects and promotes the health of New York State's diverse population through disease surveillance and the provision of quality prevention, health care and support services for those impacted by HIV, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, viral hepatitis and related health concerns.

#### **Data System:** AIDS Institute Reporting Systems (AIRS)

AIRS is the principal software used by the AIDS Institute to facilitate contractor reporting for funded activities. AIRS is a client-centered database designed to track individual client demographics, status histories and services. AIRS also supports reporting to federal funders including the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

AIRS currently collects information regarding gender identity; sexual orientation will be added to the system by July 1, 2014.

The data will be used to further inform program development and policy recommendations.

In 1994, the AIDS Institute developed the LGBT HIV Prevention Initiative, which supports HIV prevention interventions and HIV-related support programs. A second initiative, the LGBT Health and Human Services initiative, supports a broad and diverse range of services including those for youth, seniors and communities of color as well as programs for mental health and substance abuse prevention. In addition, the AIDS Institute contracts with various community HIV service organizations throughout the State to provide a range of HIV prevention and support services to LGBT communities.

For more information, please visit the LGBT Resource Page: <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/consumers/lgbt/>



## Department of Health

### *Division of Long-Term Care*

Managed long-term care (MLTC) streamlines the delivery of long-term services to people who are chronically ill or disabled and who wish to stay in their homes and communities. These services, such as home care or adult day care, are provided through managed long-term care plans that are approved by the New York State Department of Health (DOH).

#### **Data System:** Universal Assessment System (UAS)

DOH developed the UAS, as part of the Medicaid Redesign and in partnership with New York's Balancing Incentive Program (BIP). BIP provides financial incentives to states to offer community Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) as an alternative to institutional care. New York State was approved for BIP and awarded \$598.7 million on March 15, 2013. The funding is contingent upon the State's ability to increase the ratio of expenditures in community-based care versus institutional care.

The UAS includes both sexual orientation and gender identity questions in the demographic section. DOH is working with other state agencies on leveraging the UAS tool, which could expand the scope of how the LGBT data is used across New York.

Aggregate reports will be used to analyze health disparities and service needs for patients in long-term care facilities.

DOH has a UAS training program that addresses demographics, including sexual orientation and gender identity. If a provider requests additional staff training, DOH offers referrals to providers who can deliver more comprehensive training.

**Number of Individual Records in System: 350,000**



## Department of Corrections and Community Supervision

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision is responsible for the confinement and habilitation of approximately 54,700 people in custody at 58 state facilities and 36,500 parolees supervised through seven regional offices.

**Activities to Improve LGBT Programs and Services:** In July 2012, the Department convened an internal multi-disciplinary “GID (Gender Identity Disorder) Task Force” to study the needs of transgender individuals, and to review policies to ensure an appropriate balance between individual needs and the agency’s mission. The work of this Task Force continues and keeps DOCCS at the forefront as corrections agencies across the nation work to identify best practices for working with LGBT inmates.

DOCCS is expecting to launch a new sexual assault/sexual victimization screening tool, which will include information about an inmate’s sexual orientation and gender identity. The goal is to implement this tool beginning with training in July 2014. The agency is working with the National Institute of Corrections and subject matter experts to develop and deliver training to a core group of trainers within the agency. The trainers will educate reception and guidance staff across the State to properly understand sexual orientation and gender identity concerns, and give them the tools they need to respectfully ask a series of questions to ensure inmates’ needs are met while they are in the Department’s care and custody.

In addition to enhancing their screening tools, DOCCS has implemented a number of policy changes to be more accommodating of the needs of incarcerated transgender individuals as well as those on community supervision. DOCCS has protocols that seek to identify transgender individuals who may be in need of a diagnosis and treatment plan. DOCCS also works with a community partner to ensure that transgender inmates receive appropriate treatment.

DOCCS is slated to be part of a multidisciplinary advisory group working with the National Institute of Corrections to develop a best practices white paper focusing on LGBT adult offenders.



## *Other Agency Activities*

### **Office for People With Developmental Disabilities**

The Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is responsible for coordinating services for more than 126,000 New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders and other neurological impairments. It provides services directly and through a network of approximately 700 nonprofit service agencies, with about 80 percent of services provide by the private nonprofits and 20 percent by state-run organizations.

#### **Data System:** Coordinated Assessment System (CAS)

OPWDD recently unveiled CAS, a new tool specifically designed to capture the unique health and support needs of individuals with developmental disabilities in New York State. The revamped assessment process has been designed to feel like a conversation between the individual, his/her family, the assessor and others most integral to that person's life. Assessment specialists trained in person-centered practices and interviewing techniques will work closely with individuals, families, support and clinical staff, and others to gain a thorough understanding of the individual's strengths, needs and desires for his or her life.

Starting in 2015, CAS will include a gender identity element.

OPWDD recognizes the importance of collecting demographic data on sexual orientation and gender identity. But in order to ensure the proper use of this data, we must first understand the capacity of the field.

To that end, OPWDD is developing a survey to explore existing services and supports, as well as policies and procedures, associated with sexuality and relationships, in the OPWDD service network. The survey was developed by a workgroup convened by OPWDD and includes contributions from various stakeholders. The survey will be administered to provider agencies within the OPWDD service system, including state operations. Information gleaned from the survey will provide a better understanding of the policies, supports and services available to the LGBT community. This survey will be a critical step toward identifying the most effective strategy for collecting data on sexual orientation and build capacity in the field to better support the LGBT community.

**Number of Individual Records in System:**  
**126,000 individuals in the OPWDD system**



## Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and Office of Children and Family Services

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) supervises programs that provide assistance and support to eligible families and individuals. Depending on the client's needs, the agency may provide temporary cash assistance or help with paying for food and heat. It also oversees the state's child support enforcement program; determines aspects of eligibility for Social Security disability benefits; supervises homeless housing and services programs; and provides assistance to certain immigrant populations.

OTDA's Bureau of Housing and Support Services (BHSS) administers programs to address homelessness in the State. These programs provide a continuum of services for the homeless, as well as at risk and low-income households. BHSS programs are designed to prevent homelessness, provide shelter for the homeless, construct supportive housing for the homeless, and offer essential services to stabilize housing situations and increase self-sufficiency.

OCFS is responsible for programs and services involving foster care, adoption and adoption assistance, and child protective services including the Statewide Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment. OCFS also oversees abuse prevention services for children and families, services for pregnant adolescents, and protective programs for vulnerable adults. In addition, OCFS is responsible for the functions performed by the State Commission for the Blind and coordinates the state's response to the needs of Native Americans on reservations and in communities. The agency provides a system of family support, juvenile justice, child care and child welfare services that promote the safety and well-being of children and adults.

**Activities to Improve LGBT Programs and Services:** OTDA and OCFS have distributed a survey to agencies that contract with OTDA's Bureaus of Shelter Services, Housing & Support Services, and Refugee and Immigrant Assistance as well as OCFS' voluntary agencies. The survey asks how each agency protects against discrimination in the provision of services based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as how the agency best serves LGBT individuals.

When the survey is completed and returned, OTDA and OCFS will analyze the information and develop a plan to better support agencies in their efforts to best serve the LGBT community.

The survey also inquires about current training efforts and possible future needs. Based on the responses and resources available, OTDA and OCFS will coordinate available resources for providers serving LGBT clients.



## Department of Health

### *Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention*

The Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention (OMH-HDP) strives to ensure that everyone, regardless of ethnic or racial background, income or social status, has access to the resources and services they need to be healthy.

OMH-HDP works with government systems, public/private partners, communities and individuals to strengthen the health care delivery system so that it can provide high quality, affordable and accessible health care to all New Yorkers. The office achieves these goals through research, grant and loan programs, and projects with a cross-section of stakeholders.

The goal is to promote access to care for racial/ethnic minorities and other underserved populations, including incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, persons with disabilities and the LGBT community. Every two years, OMH-HDP publishes a Health Equity Report, which details the health status of New York State's diverse populations.

In response to recommendations from the Affordable Care Act, OMH-HDP has expanded data collection to include race and ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) questions into all grant-funded activities. OMH-HDP advocated for the addition of SOGI questions into the 2014 NYS Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) conducted by the Department's Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention.

OMH-HDP aims to ensure that providers improve the delivery of services to LGBT populations by promoting the National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards in Health and Health Care's Principle Standard to *"provide effective, equitable, understandable and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy and other communication needs"*.



## Department of Tax and Finance

The Department of Tax and Finance is responsible for all New York State personal and business tax collection, monitoring and enforcement. Additionally, the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance disperses tax revenues to other agencies and county governments, and enforces the tax laws of New York.

Twice, the Department of Tax and Finance has played a critical role in ensuring fair tax treatment to same-sex couples. The Department implemented the tax provisions of the State's Marriage Equality Act, which was passed in June 2011 and made New York the largest state in the nation to achieve marriage equality. In 2013, when the U.S. Supreme Court held that the federal Defense of Marriage Act was unconstitutional for defining marriage as that between a man and a woman, New York made it clear that the estates of same-sex spouses were entitled to the same deductions and elections allowed for those of different-sex spouses.

Estate tax refunds may be available for same-sex couples and New York State is now able to issue refund checks to qualified same-sex spouses who were previously required to pay taxes. Taxpayers impacted by this change should contact the New York State Taxpayer Information Center at 518-457-5387.



## Empire State Development

I LOVE NY LGBT is a tourism initiative targeting the LGBT community, and highlights travel destinations throughout New York that are of interest to LGBT travelers. The niche LGBT tourism segment accounts for approximately \$70 billion in tourism spending in the U.S. every year. Represented by the iconic I LOVE NY logo with a rainbow-colored heart, this initiative includes the [iloveny.com/lgbt](http://iloveny.com/lgbt) website which contains information and suggestions to help LGBT travelers plan their New York vacations. The website features regional travel highlights, lists of local LGBT events and resources, and a wedding guide with tools for same-sex couples to plan a wedding in New York State. The website also includes topic pages such as Arts & Culture, the Great OUTdoors, Shopping, Food & Drink, Path Through History, Relaxation, Family Fun and Nightlife. The program is supported through I LOVE NY's other promotional platforms which includes public relations, digital marketing and social media. The campaign also markets the state's tourism to the LGBT community at live events across New York, ranging from Pride festivals to LGBT expos. For more LGBT travel information, visit [iloveny.com/lgbt](http://iloveny.com/lgbt).





## Resources and Training:

### *State Agencies and Community Partners*

The Department of Health AIDS Institute has many resources for LGBT New Yorkers.

<http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/consumers/lgbt/>

Division of Human Rights: If an individual believes that he or she has been discriminated against based on sexual orientation, he or she can file a claim with the Division to conduct an investigation.

<http://www.dhr.ny.gov/>

Empire State Development “I Love NY LGBT”:

<http://www.iloveny.com/lgbt/lgbt-resources/>

The Offices of Children and Family Services provides several resources for LGBT youth and their families.

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/LGBTQ/default.asp>

The Office of Mental Health Bureau of Cultural Competency offers many resources for improving service provision through cultural competency with regard to the LGBT community.

[http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/cultural\\_competence/resources.html](http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/cultural_competence/resources.html)

### *Other Resources*

Institute of Medicine Report outlining importance of LGBT data collection:

<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/The-Health-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-People.aspx>

Krehely, Jeff, “How to Close the LGBT Health Disparities Gap,” (2009) Center for American Progress.

[http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/12/pdf/lgbt\\_health\\_disparities.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/12/pdf/lgbt_health_disparities.pdf)

National Resources Center on LGBT Aging “Inclusive Questions for Older Adults: A Practical Guide for Collecting Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity,” (March 2013)

<http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/resource.cfm?r=601>

The Joint Commission Field Guide “Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community”

<http://www.jointcommission.org/lgbt/>

Empire State Pride Agenda: [www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org)

Fenway Health Materials: [www.fenwayhealth.org](http://www.fenwayhealth.org)

NYC LGBT Community Center: [www.gaycenter.org](http://www.gaycenter.org)