

Washington State Employees'
LGBTQ+ Business Resource Group



Did you know...

Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN)

RAIN exists to help Washington State create safe and inclusive workplaces where every LGBTQ+ employee can bring their full authentic selves to work, enabling them to do their best work every day for the people of Washington. It is a business resource group that advises state agencies on how to create inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ employees and customers.

Governor Jay Inslee RETURNS TO RAIN

By Tracey Carlos, L&I



In January of 2016, over 300 state employees gathered in a packed auditorium at the Department of Labor and Industries and listened as Governor Jay Inslee kicked off the first ever Washington State LGBTQ+ Business Resource Group meeting. None of us knew what the group would be like three years later, but the governor gave us a few clear objectives that day, and we were excited to get the work started.

On January 16th 2020, Governor Inslee will return to speak with RAIN again.

Since 2016, RAIN has expanded the Seattle Safe Places program to state agencies in Olympia and Tumwater. This goal was set out by Governor Inslee in the Directive of the Governor 16-11. It would not have been possible without the work of the Safe Places sub-committee and their excellent work to build partnerships with State Patrol, and the Tumwater Police Department.

From the governor's biography: Since Jay became governor in 2013, Washington State has expanded voter rights, provided affordable health care to 800,000 more residents, passed the Reproductive Parity Act, stood up to the president's Muslim ban, protected LGBTQ+ Americans from discrimination, raised the minimum wage, passed historic investments in public schools and infrastructure, and created one of the best clean-energy economies in America.

For information on attending this meeting please email RAIN@ofm.wa.gov.



Honoring our elders
SAGE OLYMPIA

By Tracey Carlos, L&I

The September RAIN General Membership meeting featured Anna Schlecht from [Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders \(SAGE\) Olympia](#). SAGE was founded in New York City in 1978. Olympia is one of the 30 affiliates to the original organization around the country helping to enhance the lives of LGBTQ+ elders. As co-founder, President, and Secretary, Anna has played a big part in making sure our community looks out for each other.

LGBTQ+ elders are twice as likely to be single and living alone, and four times as likely to have no children. That means they are less likely to have a built-in support network looking after them as they age. That is where SAGE comes in. Anna explained that the leading cause of death in older people is lack of social activity. SAGE helps with that by organizing various social activities every month. They also offer resources to assist with finding senior housing.

As a group, we discussed with Anna how the LGBTQ+ community has evolved over the years and some of the issues that can exist due to that evolution. The language and accepted norms in the community have shifted greatly, making it a challenge for some, particularly those who are older, to keep track of it all. We also discussed how specific agencies might do better on accessibility issues.



Agency Spotlight

SOARING HIGH, THROUGH EDI*By Carrie Jackson, DSHS*

On October 16– 17, 2019, the Department of Social and Health Services' Economic Services Administration (ESA) held their fourth annual Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion conference. The conference theme, 'Soaring High through EDI' alludes to ESA's commitment to EDI as the means to achieve the highest results in the work that we do to **reduce poverty** in a way that eliminates disparities.

ESA recognizes that equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is crucial to our poverty reduction goal for both our clients and ESA's workforce. When workforce demographics represent its client-base and/or community, and employees can bring their full, authentic selves to work a lot happens! There is an increase in diversity of perspectives, which fuels innovation and results in better products, increased engagement and productivity, and improved service to customers.

The EDI conference began in 2016 as a forum for 36 staff who were unable to attend that year's DSHS-wide forum. The ESA forum has since grown to a multi-track two-day conference for 150+ participants who represent each of ESA's six divisions, including many participants from the original forum who continue to be actively engaged in EDI work for ESA.

Renée Smith of Results Washington provided the keynote address. Renée spoke about transitioning from a fearful workplace to a more human workplace "where team members know they belong, their contributions matter, and that they are truly welcome to bring their whole selves to work."

Each day of the conference included a plenary panel discussion as well as breakout sessions on a wide range of topics with options to engage individuals with varying levels of EDI experience. The day one panel consisted of community representatives who spoke about the impact the services provided by ESA has on their communities. On day two, an ESA Leadership panel answered questions regarding the various ways each division can embed EDI principles in the work that they do.

Several members of RAIN were kind enough to sit on the panel for the 'Gender Beyond the Binary' discussion – a big thank you to Allison Spector, Mo Tabor, Jasper Marino, and Elizabeth Fontanilla for helping advance equity, diversity and inclusion throughout ESA. The ESA EDI Core team and ESA leadership now begin the work of assessing the reviews from this year's conference in order to start thinking about how ESA can make next year's conference even better.

Land Acknowledgment

ESA would like to acknowledge that the conference was held on federal Trust Indian land within the boundaries of the reservation of the Chehalis Tribe. The property is jointly owned and operated by the Chehalis Tribe and the Great Wolf Lodge Corporation.

ESA is deeply appreciative that the facility allowed planners to designate both an all-gender restroom and a lactation space and offered a variety of amenities for overnight guests while still meeting or beating all state per diem requirements for Thurston County and it also represented a public/Tribal partnership.

In Remembrance: Duane French December 19, 1953 - September 12, 2019

The 2019 ESA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion conference was dedicated to the memory and legacy of friend and colleague, Disability Determination Services Director Duane French.

Against all odds, Duane led his life with vision and a single-minded focus to defend people and bring awareness that each human being has attributes and value, no matter what their differences are.

He has been a true role model, and premier advocate whom we have been proud to work alongside and call friend.



Introducing our new team
RAIN ELECTION RESULTS

Welcome to our newly elected team! These folks were elected to office in September by RAIN General Membership. They will each serve a 15-month term in their positions.



Ariel Kay, RAIN Co-Chair

Ariel works for the Employment Security Department. You are likely to find her outside and/or with a book on her free time.



Elizabeth Fontanilla, RAIN Co-Chair

Elizabeth works on the Leadership Development team at the Department of Enterprise Services (DES). She has little free time beyond the schedules of her three teenagers. Occasionally she carves out an evening with friends to have dinner, play games, or see a movie.



Allison Spector, RAIN Administrative Liaison

Allison works for Washington State Department of Transportation. She enjoys volunteering as a Thurston County CASA and being active in the local community. Because she doesn't have a car, you will likely see Allison walking in the most random locations throughout the area.



Saundra Schaefer, RAIN Administrative Liaison

Saundra works for the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS). She loves to spend time with her family and play board games with friends in her spare time.

Outgoing Elected Members

Our sincerest gratitude is extended to the amazing outgoing elected members of RAIN: Justin Taylor, Co-Chair and Mo Tabor, Administrative Liaison.

Thank you both so much for your hard work and dedication to the BRG. We will miss your leadership and support and look forward to seeing your smiling faces at RAIN meetings.

RAIN Outstanding Agency Awards

By Elizabeth Fontanilla, DES

At the General Membership meeting on October 17, 2019, we honored three agencies with the first annual RAIN Outstanding Agency Award for supporting LGBTQ+ employees: Employment Security Department, Department of Labor and Industries, and Department of Health.

The RAIN Best Practices sub-committee established this award to recognize and honor the important and good work agencies undertake to implement best practices such as supporting the awareness and use of more inclusive gender pronouns, displaying gender affirming bathroom signage, and collecting sexual orientation and gender inclusion demographics to better serve our customers and employees. It also allows us to celebrate the leadership of agencies who help create a welcoming and supportive environment for our LGBTQ+ employees and customers. Recognizing this work is in itself a best practice to thank people for their efforts and encourage others to reach higher.

John Wiesman, RAIN Executive Sponsor, announced the organizations who were nominated for their great work in making our workplaces more inclusive for LGBTQ+ people and asked representatives from these agencies to stand:

The Attorney General's Office | Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Department of Natural Resources | Department of Corrections | Department of Licensing

Department of Revenue | Department of Social and Health Services

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction | Office of the Secretary of State



Marisa Sanchez-Reed and Jasper Marino, the Best Practices sub-committee Co-Chairs, joined Secretary Wiesman in announcing the first two winners.



(L-R) Secretary of Health John Wiesman, ESD Deputy Commissioner Cami Feek, Best Practices Co-Chair Marisa Sanchez-Reed, ESD UICSD Compliance Manager Jill Will, Best Practices Co-Chair and ESD WSC SMS Coordinator Jasper Marino, and ESD Equal Opportunity & Diversity Manager Teresa Eckstein

Employment Security Department

Cami Feek accepted the award on behalf of the Employment Security Department.

The nominator said this about ESD:

“Gender inclusion and diversity training was rolled out this year and offered to all managers agency-wide. Their sexual harassment training also addresses LGBTQ situations appropriately. ESD has updated their bathroom signage to be more gender inclusive. This helps promote bathroom safety for LGBTQ+ folks as an expectation and norm.”

Continued on following page...

Department of Labor and Industries

Heather Normoyle accepted the award on behalf of the Department of Labor and Industries.

The nominator for L&I stated that “leadership continually expresses the importance of supporting staff’s participation in initiatives that make the work environment more inclusive for LGBTQ staff and customers. Leadership has also elevated diversity and inclusion as one of the agency’s core values. It was clear that creating a safe environment for people with all gender identities was important when L&I leaders wore pronoun pins at a major agency all-staff event.”



(L-R) Secretary of Health John Wiesman, L&I Assistant Director of HR Heather Normoyle, L&I Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager Rocky Dimico, Best Practices Co-Chairs Marisa Sanchez-Reed and Jasper Marino, and RAIN Co-Chair and L&I Multimedia Manager Justin Taylor.

John closed his remarks by saying, “It warms my heart to know that so many agencies are doing great work in equity, diversity, and inclusion and I want to thank everyone here for pushing for progress in this area.”



Marisa and Jasper concluded the ceremony by surprising Secretary Wiesman with the announcement that a third agency had also won the award.

Marisa remarked, “John and the Department of Health have really been leaders in so many ways, but especially in making Washington State a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ employees and customers. The Department of Health was nominated for working with a consultant to conduct a workplace diversity and inclusion assessment, which provided recommendations on

how the agency can progress. DOH also rolled out gender affirming bathroom signage. On a personal note, the Department of Health was one of the first to update their bathroom signage. Whenever there is change, people want to do it right, and they look to see if there is anyone else who has done this before. Being the first is hard, but John and the folks at DOH dove in and got to work. They did it gracefully and thoughtfully.”

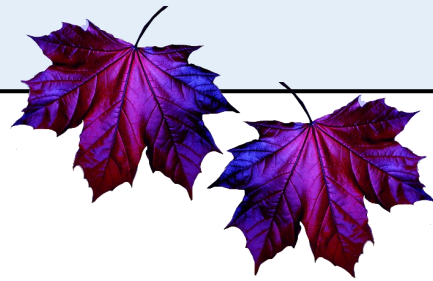
Marisa acknowledged the following folks as instrumental in making the awards possible:

John Wiesman, Jasper Marino and everyone on the Best Practices sub-committee, the RAIN Advisory Committee, including Co-Chairs Justin Taylor and Elizabeth Fontanilla, Robin Vazquez and Ayanna Colman with OFM, Cassie Bordelon with DNR, folks with CI, Chrissy Smith with L&I and Betty DeVos with DOR.

The standing-room only crowd enjoyed cake and refreshments at the conclusion of the ceremony.

RAIN welcomes PFLAG PRESIDENT

By Dallas McKay, ECY



RAIN was pleased to welcome Dana McCormick, president of the Olympia chapter of PFLAG, at its October 17 General Membership meeting. Helping parents help their kids through transition and coming out is her joy. Whether it is via support groups, offering information, support through phone consultation, or having face-to-face meetings over coffee, she lives her personal commitment to PFLAG's mission. Dana works to create an environment for people to bring questions, ask for help, and get connected to resources. In addition to the regular meetings below, PFLAG has a table at the Olympia Farmer's Market four times per year and hosts a "meet the candidates" panel in the fall – which this year was filmed by CVT Television.

When asked what kinds of concerns she hears most, Dana shared that parents are scared for their children. They are often unhappy with what their children are facing at school, more often with the adults than other kids. Parents and friends often have a lot of questions and don't know what to do to help. Youth tend to ask for help with their relationship with their parents. And everyone wants to know what their resources are.

Upcoming PFLAG Olympia events at First United Methodist Church:

- Monthly support group meetings: second Sunday, 2:00-4:30 pm
- Annual Holiday Program: December 8, 2:00-4:30 pm
- Open House: January 12, 2020 2:00-4:30 pm
- LGBTQ Resource Fair: January 2020



PFLAG also hosts a Parent Trans Support Group in Olympia and the Gender Alliance of the South Sound group in Tacoma. You can contribute to PFLAG through Combined Fund Drive code 1479572.

Did you know...

PFLAG is an international, grassroots organization of hundreds of chapters dedicated to providing support, education and advocacy to promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, two-spirit and ally persons, their families, and friends.

It is an especially good resource if:

- You, or someone you care about, is LGBTQ+;
- You would like to better understand the struggles faced by people who don't fit neatly into a hetero-normative, binary gender society; or
- Would like to learn how to be a positive influence toward inclusion, respect, and celebrating diversity.

To learn more and locate a PFLAG chapter near you, visit their [website](http://pflag.org) or call 888-THE-GLNH. For those in the Olympia area, visit <http://pflag-olympia.org> or call 360-207-1608.



Update!

SAFE PLACES WA

By James Trujillo, ESD

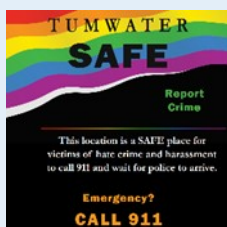
The Safe Place WA team had several major victories earlier this fall. The program went live in multiple agencies on the downtown Olympia Capitol Campus and in the Tumwater Campus. Employees from multiple state agencies, with significant support from Michaela Doelman from Department of Enterprise Services, put in the effort to make this program a reality.

Safe Places is a law enforcement initiative that requires police departments to take LGBTQ+ awareness training and other related training programs to improve their response to hate crimes targeting the LGBTQ+ population. These participating law enforcement departments, like Olympia Police Department, Tumwater Police Department and Seattle Police Department, then partner with businesses, nonprofit organizations and agencies in creating safe places that provide a safe harbor until police arrive. Seattle Police Department, under the leadership of Officer Jim Ritter, was the first to bring this program to life.

Our community has historically had very contentious relationships with police departments. However, as the LGBTQ+ community advances, gains allies and LGBTQ+ individuals begin serving as law enforcement officers, we need to strive to build bridges. LGBTQ+ rights are human rights and as we make more connections with law enforcement our safety increases.

Now that we have launched the program successfully we need to continue to expand. The RAIN sub-committee on Safe Place WA met recently and determined that our first priority should be to encourage agency expansion in local areas where we have state agencies and participating police departments. Seattle, Centralia and Bremerton are notable locations where it makes sense to begin new partnerships and connections. In addition, the sub-committee recommended that we should seek to expand in localities where the program is not in place, such as the King County Sheriff's Office, Tacoma Police Department and Spokane Police Department. These efforts take time, resources and a concerted centralized voice to effectively move forward. RAIN leadership will continue to partner with the appropriate parties to ensure the state is moving forward in a positive, consistent and thoughtful way.

Congratulations to all who helped the state achieve this important program milestone. Let's continue to move forward together.



For more information about the program, please visit the [Safe Place WA website](https://www.safeplacewa.org/).



Upcoming General Membership Meetings

Meetings are open to all current state employees and are held on the third Thursday of each month.



Thursday
NOV21
Labor and Industries



Thursday
JAN16
Department of Enterprise Services
1500 Jefferson Street SE, Olympia
★ *Special Guest:* **Governor Jay Inslee**

Future newsletter ideas?

Are you aware of a community event others should know about?

Is your agency hosting a diversity related event that needs be highlighted?

If you have ideas for future newsletter features or would like to contribute content, please send your articles (photos are great too - if you have permission!) to RAIN Communications Co-Chair [Tracey Carlos](#), no later than January 21, 2020.

You can't have a
rainbow without a
little rain.

-Unknown

