

# DWHSA Master Class: LGBTQ Romance Travel

## (December 2, 2025)

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1

## What does “LGBTQ” mean?

“LGBTQ” means:

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer or Questioning

At times, you may see other initials (e.g., “I” for intersex and “A” for asexual), but typically in a commercial setting **“LGBTQ” (or “LGBT+”) is the accepted designation** for same-sex individuals and couples as a group.

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2

## What is “LGBTQ travel?”

**The # 1 change in recent years with finding LGBTQ travelers and planning their trips:**

**They are now mainstream consumers to a large degree. They’ll have specific concerns, but basically LGBTQ travel is just travel.**

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3

## What is “LGBTQ travel?”

**And, the # 1 tip for booking trips for these travelers:**

**The actual logistics for LGBT clients’ trips – finding and reserving lodging, arranging transportation, recommending excursions, etc. – are basically the same as for “straight” travelers.**

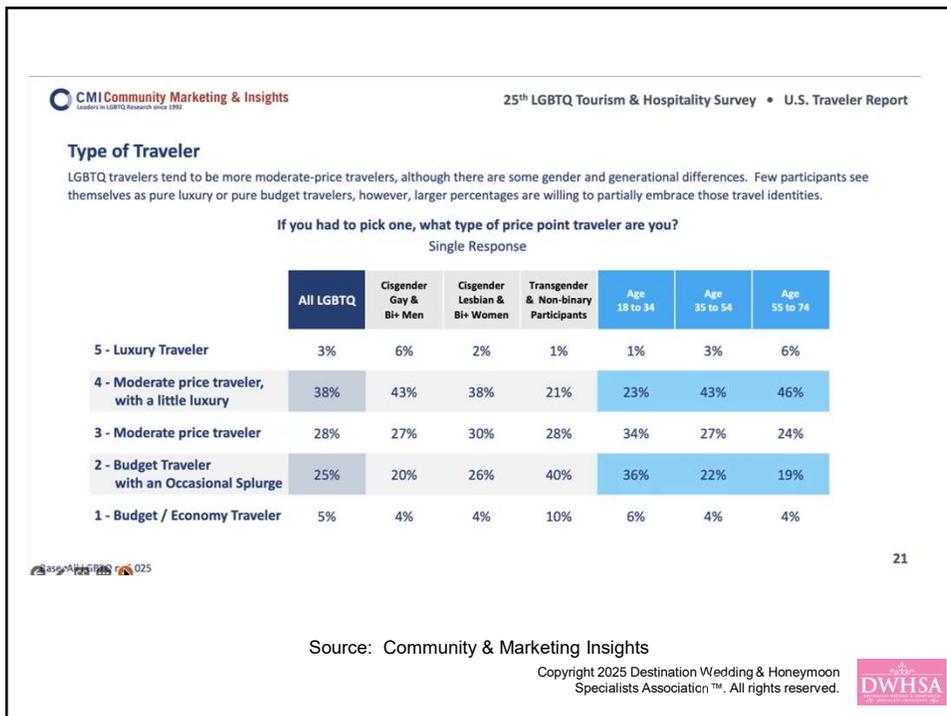
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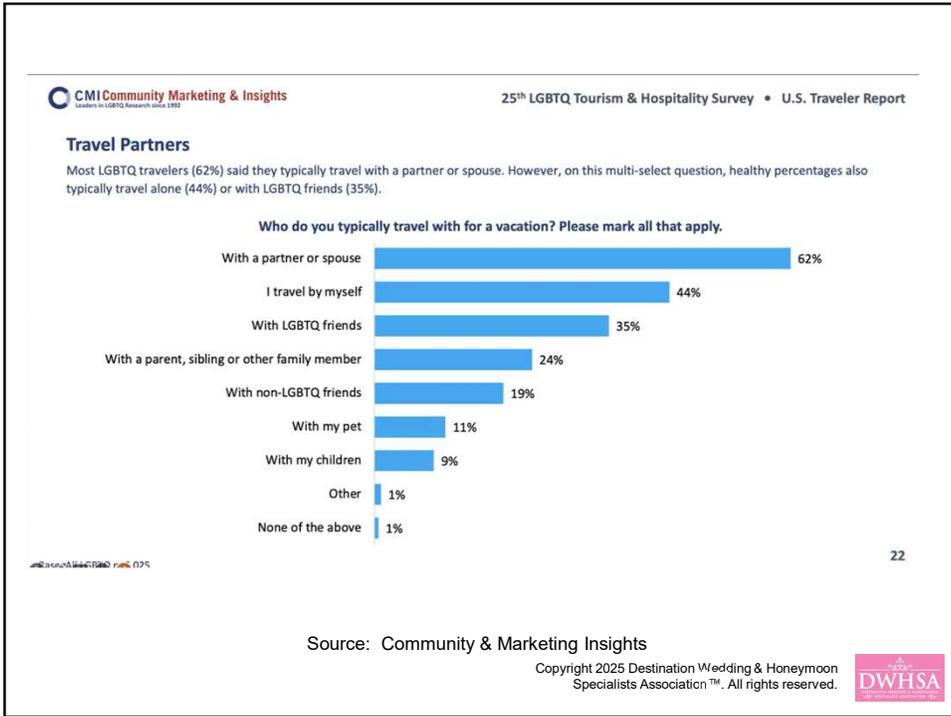
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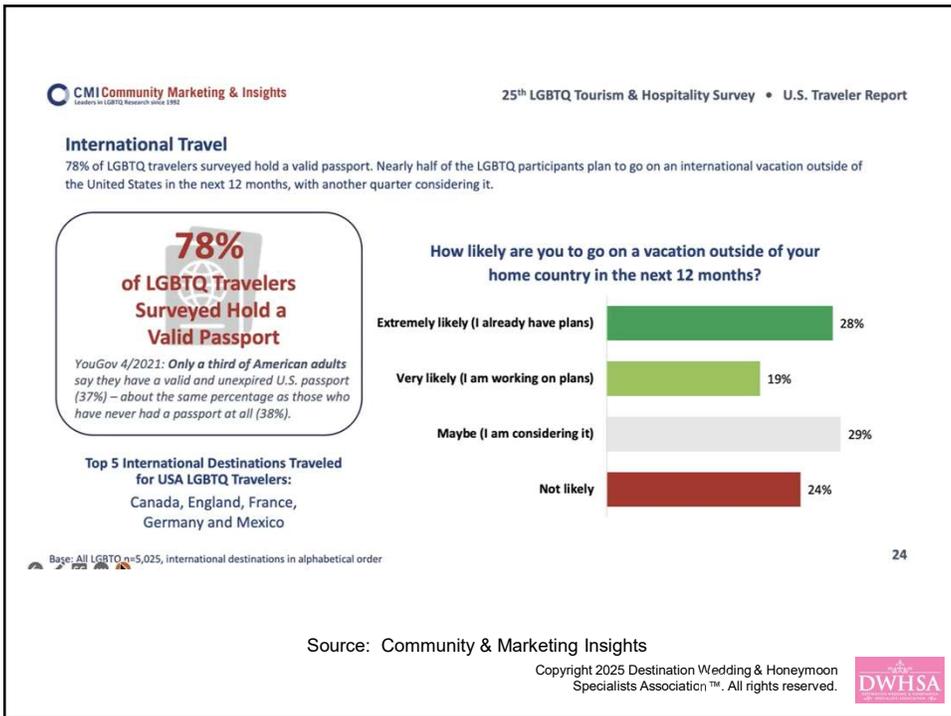
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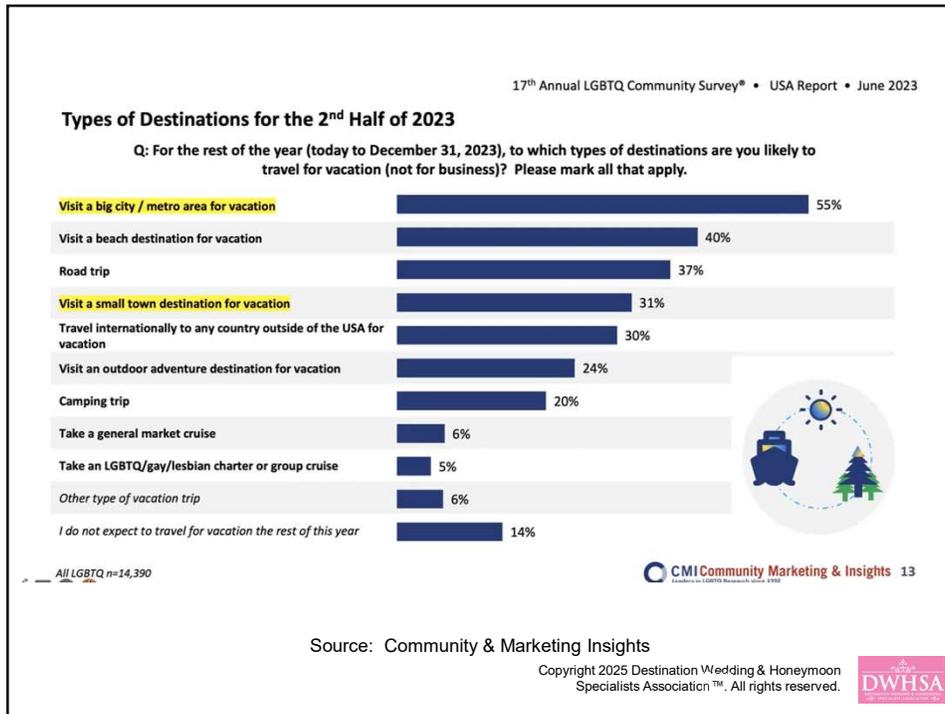
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7



8



9

## More LGBTQ travel info

- **LGBTQ travel is exploding** - it's a USD\$200 billion market today, but it's expected to grow to \$568 billion by 2030. (And, more young people now identify as LGBTQ - 6.9 percent, compared to 3.5 percent of Millennials.)
- What matters to LGBTQ travelers most? **Inclusivity, representation, and personal safety**. In fact, 66 percent of them prefer destinations and brands that are welcoming to LGBTQ travelers and people of color (compared to 39 percent of other travelers).
- They're frequently **last-minute bookers** (nearly half say they've booked a trip with only one week's notice),
- They're more likely to **share their travel experiences online**, posting reviews and content from Facebook to TikTok.

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10

## Where do same-sex couples go for DWs/honeymoons?

### Popular LGBTQ wedding/honeymoon destinations:

- **Hawaii**
- **Mexico**
- **Caribbean islands with U.S. influences** (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands)
- **Islands with Dutch or French influences** (Tahiti, St. Martin, Curacao, St. Croix)
- **U.S. and Canadian locales close to clients' homes** (Las Vegas, Niagara Falls, New Orleans, Orlando, Vancouver)
- **Long-haul destinations that welcome LGBTQ travelers** (South Africa, Israel, Denmark, the Netherlands, Thailand)

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11

## Where do same-sex couples go for DWs/honeymoons?

### Challenging destinations for LGBTQ couples:

- **Caribbean islands with religious or cultural objections to homosexuality** (Antigua, Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Bermuda, Barbados, St. Lucia)
- **Central American countries with similar backgrounds** (Belize, Guyana)
- **Many parts of Africa**

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12

## The safest LGBTQ places

Conde Nast Traveler identified its top 10 picks for the world's safest destinations for LGBTQ travelers:

10. Belgium
9. Malta
8. United Kingdom
7. Denmark
6. Spain
5. Canada
4. Sweden
3. Norway
2. The Netherlands
1. Iceland

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13

## One more “safe places” slide 😊

**Countries that have approved same-sex marriage** will be excellent bests as safe destinations for LGBTQ travelers. Here’s a current short list:

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay

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14

## LGBTQ family travel tips

Finland was the first country to allow same-sex couples to adopt children, and Taiwan is now the first destination to do so in Asia. But, it's still questioned in other places. Remind your LGBTQ clients traveling with their kids to carry these documents with them (original papers plus digital copies):

- Original (official) copy of each child's birth certificate (if one partner is not listed on the certificate, get a notarized letter from the parent whose name is listed that authorizes her/him to travel with the child)
- Adoption papers
- Custody documents for minor children (especially if their surnames don't match)
- Notarized "permission to travel" letter (particularly if they're traveling alone with their kids)
- Copy of everyone's insurance cards and travel insurance policies (showing their names specifically)
- Emergency contact information (the kids' pediatrician and dentist, family members)

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15

## Current “hot” trends

**Limelight destinations.** Two thirds of LGBTQ travelers said they've made travel plans or were inspired to visit places after they were featured in a TV show or film, according to a 2023 American Express survey.

**Polydays.** It's not uncommon for LGBTQ couples to travel as "throuples" or other romantic groups. And, certainly, they may travel as groups of friends.

**Pride events.** Festival travel in general is very popular now with all types of clients, but it's especially in demand with Pride parades and celebrations.

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16

## Which suppliers work best for this market?

- Few wholesalers, cruise lines, and hotel/resort companies have specific, separate packages for LGBTQ romance travel.
- But, **many standard DW/honeymoon packages can be customized and adjusted** to meet the needs of your LGBTQ clients. Stripped down to their basics, these packages offer the same transportation, transfer, lodging, food/drink, and excursion components that **any** DW/honeymoon couples would need, regardless of their sexual orientation.
- **Talk to your preferred suppliers** to ask if they deal with LGBTQ clients and if they have LGBTQ-specific packages. And, talk specifically to the wedding coordinators ...

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17

## Tips for talking with same-sex couples

- **Avoid gender-specific terms** such as "bride" - say "couples" or "partners" instead. (Ask them upfront how they'd prefer you refer to them – and ask their pronouns and offer yours.)
- **Don't make assumptions based on traditional wedding or gender roles** (e.g., ask "How do you refer to each other?" instead of "Who's the husband and who's the wife?").
- **Be careful not to go overboard in trying to be supportive** (e.g., "Some of my best friends are gay!"), because you may come across as patronizing.

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18

## LGBTQ safe travel tips

Being gay is still illegal in more than five dozen countries around the world.

Research destinations thoroughly. Use tools such as IGLTA's safety pages to learn about a destination's LGBTQ laws, mores, and social attitudes. And, encourage your clients to ask themselves questions before they go:

- Is it even legal there to be LGBTQ?
- Will they travel openly as part of a couple, or will they feel comfortable "closeting" yourself on the trip?
- How do they feel personally about public displays of affection?

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19

## 2 marketing approaches

### LGBTQ Focused

You'll change your branding with a dedicated web site and social media accounts/pages and even a business name dedicated to serving LGBTQ clients.

### LGBTQ Friendly

You'll revise your site, social media, and marketing/operating materials to use LGBTQ images and terms (and erase any hetero sexist themes) while you continue to serve straight clients as well.

Either approach will work - but definitely avoid a "separate but equal" approach (e.g., having a sub-brand just for LGBTQ clients),

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20

## What if you're not LGBTQ?

Will it matter if you're not yourself LGBTQ? Or, what if you've never worked (knowingly) with LGBTQ clients?

LGBTQ clients want to know first if **you know what you're doing booking romance travel**. And, they want a sense that they'll feel confident and comfortable with you as a person. Here's an example from Bernadette Smith (founder of the Equality Institute) of what you can say if you're asked about previous LGBTQ clients:

"Thanks for reaching out to me! I'm proud to work with all types of clients, and our agency follows strict nondiscrimination policies. I haven't worked yet with a lesbian wedding couple directly, but I'm a big supporter of marriage equality and I've gone through formal training in this field so I can better understand your needs and help you plan the ceremony you want!"

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21

## Step 1: Create your agency's nondiscrimination policy.

**Write a short-and-sweet policy** that you can post on the "About Us" page of your site, display in your office, share on social media, post in your wedding show booth, etc., that says clearly you're glad to work all types of clients.

Here's an example:

"ABC Romance Travel is deeply committed to diversity and equality. Our owners and advisors work very hard to understand, accept, and celebrate differences among people. We welcome everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, age, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, and socioeconomic status."

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22

## Step 2: Review your written and spoken language.

Do you catch yourself saying "bride" and "groom?" Do your new client questionnaires say "bridal" instead of "wedding?"

**Go through all of your agency's written and online materials** - both your marketing content and your operating/back-office forms - **to scan for any references that might exclude LGBTQ prospects.**

**Avoid creating separate forms for these clients**, though - one form for straight couples, another for LGBTQ couples - so your LGBTQ clients don't feel like second-class prospects.

And, when you first meet prospects or prepare for a consultation, **ask for their pronouns.** (This is especially important if they have gender-neutral names such as "Pat" or "Taylor.")

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23

## Step 3: Mix LGBTQ images into your materials.

If your web site and social media are filled with photos of straight couples, **switch some out with images that appear to be LGBTQ couples** as well. You can find these from many sources:

- The image galleries of your preferred suppliers and tourism offices
- Royalty-free sites such as Pixabay.com, Unsplash.com, and Pexels.com
- Images available through your free Canva.com account
- Photos shared with you by past clients

**Avoid LGBTQ images that might appear trite**, such as rainbow flags or pink triangles. But, if you belong to LGBTQ groups such as Human Rights Campaign or Egale Canada, you might show their logos.

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24

## Step 3: Mix LGBTQ images into your materials.

Also, there's no disrespect in staying away from images showing kissing or public displays of affection between any couples (LGBTQ or straight).

Finally, **make sure your images reflect diverse couples and clients of all types** - not just straight and LGBTQ, but different ages, people of color, parents, etc.

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25

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**Web sites:** Will LGBTQ prospects visiting your site understand immediately that you welcome them and you want their business?

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26

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Ed... See more

**Social media posts:** Rotate LGBTQ-themed posts in your social media marketing calendar. Once a quarter, devote an entire week of posts to this niche. And, always use #LGBTQ hashtags!

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27

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**LGBT Vacation Planners**

**Social media pages and groups:** Make sure your Facebook business page and other social media accounts clearly communicate that you serve this niche – or create a separate page/account. And, find LGBTQ consumer groups on Facebook you can join and answer questions (or start your own!).

Book Now Message Like

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28



**RAINBOW GETAWAYS**  
VACATIONS AS UNIQUE AS YOU

THE ULTIMATE LGBTQ+ HONEYMOON GUIDE  
PLAN THE PERFECT ROMANTIC GETAWAY

**Lead magnets:** Create LGBTQ-themed lead magnets (e.g., tipsheets for lesbian weddings, a packing list for gay honeymoons).

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29



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Join our newsletter

Sign up to our newsletter for the latest inspiration and information about our wonderful destinations.

We will send you one update a week with beautifully curated itineraries and suggestions for your next trip.

**Email:** Send once-a-month emails to the LGBTQ prospects/clients in your CRM – and add LGBTQ items into your regular client marketing emails.

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30

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**LGBT groups/media:** Find LGBTQ community groups, media, events, expos, causes, and directories to promote your agency.

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31

## LGBTQ groups/media

**Learn firsthand about the LGBTQ community in your local market area -** and get visibly involved as a supportive business partner.

**Groups:** Do a Google search for LGBTQ organizations in your area (e.g., advocacy groups, charities). Join as a business so you may use their logos in your marketing.

**Events and festivals:** Volunteer to help (wearing your logo clothing) or sponsor something (ask your preferred suppliers for help).

**Media:** Look for local LGBTQ publications and online media. Consider advertising in them and offer yourself as a news source.

**Business listings.** In your existing business listings (e.g., Google Business Profile, Wedding Wire, The Knot), mention prominently that you serve LGBTQ clients. And, you can purchase listings on sites that operate as LGBTQ directories such as EquallyWed.com, EnGAYgedWeddings.com, WeddingChicks.com, and LGBTWeddings.com.

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32

## Final marketing advice

**Inch by inch, it's a cinch.** The LGBTQ community in your local market area can be difficult to crack - it will take time to get your first clients and use their positive experiences to begin building a reputation for trust. Don't give up - stay involved in the community and use your first testimonials to promote yourself. And soon, you'll see momentum building!

**LGBTQ clients don't want special treatment - they want equal treatment.** If you show them respect and pick suppliers and destinations carefully for them, they'll love you for it.

**Always be authentic.** Don't pretend you know more than you do - ask lots of questions and they'll respect you for that.

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33

**2026  
LGBTQ DUAL  
CERTIFICATION  
PROGRAMS**

**Registration is now open through Jan. 18!**

It's hard to imagine a more perfect market for romance travel bookings than LGBTQ travelers:

- They plan 3.4 trips every year on average.
- Three quarters of them (76%) have passports.
- And, an astounding 92 percent of potential LGBTQ travelers are in a relationship (married, partnered, or dating)!

**For members only: DWHSA's "Certified LGBTQ Romance Travel Specialist" program (USD\$75) ... the Equality Institute's gay wedding planner certification (\$299) ... or both combined for \$239 total!**

<https://dwhsamembers.com/LGBTQ-Dual-Certification-Program/>

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34

# Questions?

**support@dwhsa.com**

**615.730.9977**

**DWHSAs Facebook group**

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