

What the Experts Say: Position & Policy Statements on LGBTQ Issues from Leading Professional Associations

The overwhelming consensus among the country's leading and most respected child welfare, social service, behavioral and medical health, and legal organizations is that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning ("LGBTQ") youth and adults deserve respect and support from professional service providers. The following policies and position statements are based upon decades of peer-reviewed and published research and subject matter expertise. The child welfare community, which includes representatives from all of these organizations, should reflect the shared professional opinion that mistreatment of LGBTQ individuals is unacceptable, and should adhere to best practice standards.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

"All decisions relating to custody and parental rights should rest on the interest of the child. There is no evidence to suggest or support that parents who are [LGBT] are per se different from or deficient in parenting skills, child-centered concerns, and parent-child attachments when compared with heterosexual parents. There is no basis on which to assume that a parent's sexual orientation or gender identity will adversely affect the development of the child... [LGBT] individuals historically have faced more rigorous scrutiny than heterosexual people regarding their rights to be or become parents. The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry opposes any discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity against individuals in regard to their rights as custodial, foster, or adoptive parents."

www.aacap.org/cs/root/policy_statements/gay_lesbian_transgender_and_bisexual_parents_policy_statement

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

"The AAFP opposes all discrimination in any form, including but not limited to, that on the basis of actual or perceived...sexual orientation, [or] gender identity."

www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/d/discrimination.html

"Family physicians should be aware that their adolescent patients may be dealing with issues of sexual orientation that impact their psychosocial and physical health. Asking open questions about sexuality rather than assuming a teen is heterosexual can open a dialogue on family relationships, safe sex, suicide risks and other issues confronting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender adolescents, in a sensitive and accepting atmosphere."

www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/a/adol3.html

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

"The AAP reaffirms the physician's responsibility to provide comprehensive health care and guidance in a safe and supportive environment for all adolescents, including

FOSTERING TRANSITIONS

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nonheterosexual adolescents and young people struggling with issues of sexual orientation.”

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/113/6/1827>

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

“The American Bar Association opposes legislation and policies that prohibit, limit or restrict placement into foster care of any child on the basis of sexual orientation of the proposed foster parent when such foster care placement is otherwise appropriate under the applicable law of the state, territory or tribe. . . . Every child deserves a permanent home and all the love and care that good parents can provide. Prospective foster and adoptive parents should be evaluated on the basis of their individual character and ability to parent, not on their sexual orientation, and courts should grant adoptions when they are determined to be in the child’s best interest.”

www.abanet.org/leadership/2006/midyear/daily_journal/102.doc

AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

“The American Counseling Association strongly encourages counselors to actively participate in the elimination of all discrimination based on sexual orientation in matters of adoption, child custody and visitation, foster care and reproductive health services in their practice, research, education and training.”

www.counseling.org/PressRoom/NewsReleases.aspx?AGuid=244405dc-044e-46ae-aeac-60ca1c8bd6dc

“In 1999, the Governing Council adopted a statement ‘opposing the promotion of “reparative” therapy as a cure for individuals who are homosexual.’ The belief that same-sex attraction and behavior is abnormal and in need of treatment is in opposition to the position taken by national mental health organizations, including ACA. . . . The Committee members agree that counselors who offer conversion therapy are providing ‘treatment that has no empirical or scientific foundation’ . . . and, therefore, ‘must define the techniques/procedures as “unproven” or “developing” and explain the potential risks and ethical considerations of using such techniques/procedures and take steps to protect clients from possible harm.’ ”

www.counseling.org/PressRoom/NewsReleases.aspx?AGuid=b68aba97-2f08-40c2-a400-0630765f72f4

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

“The AMA reaffirms its long-standing policy that there is no basis for the denial to any human being of equal rights, privileges and responsibilities commensurate with his or her individual capabilities and ethical character because of an individual’s sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or transgender status. . . .”

www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/member-groups-sections/glb-advocacy-committee/ama-policy-regarding-sexual-orientation.shtml

“[The] AMA. . . opposes, the use of ‘reparative’ or ‘conversion’ therapy that is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that the patient should change his/her homosexual orientation.”

In 2008, the House of Delegates of the AMA passed a resolution for “Removing Barriers to Care for Transgender Patients,” which states that AMA “support[s] public and private health insurance coverage for treatment of gender identity disorder as recommended by the patient’s physician.”

www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/member-groups-sections/glb-advocacy-committee/ama-policy-regarding-sexual-orientation.shtml

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

“APA affirms its 1973 position that homosexuality per se is not a diagnosable mental disorder. Recent publicized efforts to repathologize homosexuality by claiming that it can be cured are often guided not by rigorous scientific or psychiatric research, but sometimes by religious and political forces opposed to full civil rights for gay men and lesbians. . . . In the last four decades, ‘reparative’ therapists have not produced any rigorous scientific research to substantiate their claims of cure. Until there is such research available, APA recommends that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals’ sexual orientation, keeping in mind the medical dictum to first, do no harm.”

www.psych.org/Departments/EDU/Library/APAOfficialDocumentsandRelated/PositionStatements/200001a.aspx

AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION

“Same-gender sexual orientation cannot be assumed to represent a deficit in personality development or the expression of psychopathology. As with any societal prejudice, anti-homosexual bias negatively affects mental health, contributing to an enduring sense of stigma and pervasive self-criticism in people of same-gender sexual orientation through the internalization of such prejudice. . . . Psychoanalytic technique does not encompass purposeful efforts to ‘convert’ or ‘repair’ an individual’s sexual orientation. Such directed efforts are against fundamental principles of psychoanalytic treatment and often result in substantial psychological pain by reinforcing damaging internalized homophobic attitudes.”

www.apsa.org/About_APsaA/Position_Statements/Reparative_Therapy.aspx

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

“APA has a long-established policy to deplore ‘all public and private discrimination against gay men and lesbians’ and urges

'the repeal of all discriminatory legislation against lesbians and gay men'...[T]here is no scientific evidence that parenting effectiveness is related to parental sexual orientation: lesbian and gay parents are as likely as heterosexual parents to provide supportive and healthy environments for their children...[T]he APA opposes any discrimination based on sexual orientation in matters of adoption, child custody and visitation, foster care and reproductive health services."

www.apa.org/pi/lgbcpolicy/parents.html

"The American Psychological Association opposes portrayals of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth and adults as mentally ill due to their sexual orientation and supports the dissemination of accurate information about sexual orientation, and mental health and appropriate interventions in order to counteract bias that is based in ignorance or unfounded beliefs about sexual orientation."

www.apa.org/pi/sexual.html

"The American Psychological Association expressly opposes prejudice (defined broadly) and discrimination based on... gender identity [and] sexual orientation...[and] concludes that there is insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation... [T]he American Psychological Association advises parents, guardians, young people, and their families to avoid sexual orientation change efforts that portray homosexuality as a mental illness or developmental disorder and to seek psychotherapy, social support and educational services that provide accurate information on sexual orientation and sexuality, increase family and school support, and reduce rejection of sexual minority youth."

www.apa.org/pi/lgbcpublications/resolution-resp.html

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

"Based on more than three decades of social science research and our 85 years of service to millions of families, CWLA believes that families with LGBTQ members deserve the same levels of support afforded other families. Any attempt to preclude or prevent gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals or couples from parenting, based solely on their sexual orientation, is not in the best interest of children."

"The family foster care agency should not reject foster parent applicants solely due to their...sexual orientation."

"All applicants [for adoption] should be assessed on the basis of their abilities to successfully parent a child needing family membership and not on their...sexual orientation."

www.cwla.org/programs/culture/glbqtstandards.htm

EVAN B. DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

"Based on both the available research and growing experience, adoption by gays and lesbians holds promise as an avenue for achieving permanency for many of the waiting children in foster care...Against a backdrop of increasing public acceptance, social science research concludes that children reared by gay and lesbian parents fare comparably to those of children raised by heterosexuals on a range of measures of social and psychological adjustment...Laws and policies that preclude adoption by gay or lesbian parents disadvantage the tens of thousands of children mired in the foster care system who need permanent, loving homes."

www.adoptioninstitute.org/policy/2006_Expanding_Resources_for_Children.php

"Research shows that children fare just as well with gay and lesbian parents when compared with children raised by heterosexuals...However, 25 years of social science research concludes that children raised by such parents fare well when compared to those raised by heterosexuals. Studies on lesbian parenting and the few extant studies on gay parenting have found that their children are not disadvantaged and, in some cases, receive unique benefits...Laws that prohibit adoption by gay or lesbian individuals and couples should be rescinded to maximize the number of interested, qualified adoptive families for waiting children."

www.adoptioninstitute.org/publications/2008_09_Expanding_Resources_Legal.pdf

NATIONAL ADOPTION CENTER

"We believe that every child has the right to a loving, nurturing and permanent family. Therefore, it is the policy of the National Adoption Center that no person should be denied consideration in the adoption process solely based on marital status, sexual orientation [and/or] lifestyle..."

www.adopt.org/assembled/policies.html

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

"NASP recognizes that students who become aware of or question their own minority sexual orientation and those who question their sexual orientation may be at risk for a number of dangerous and destructive behaviors as well as harassment, discrimination and poor self-esteem due to psychosocial stressors. A successful program to address these issues educates both those who discriminate and those who are discriminated against because of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender non-conformity."

www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/pospaper_glb.aspx

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

“NASW believes that same-gender sexual orientation should be afforded the same respect and rights as other-gender sexual orientation. NASW is committed to working toward the elimination of prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation, both inside and outside of the profession... NASW supports antidiscrimination legislation at the national, state, and local levels. NASW opposes laws that allow discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people...”

www.socialworkers.org/resources/abstracts/abstracts/lesbian.asp

“NASW recognizes that there is considerable diversity in gender expression and identity among our population and believes that people of diverse gender — including those sometimes called ‘transgender’ — should be afforded the same respect and rights as any other person. Discrimination and prejudice toward anyone are socially, emotionally, physically and economically damaging. A nonjudgmental attitude toward gender diversity enables social workers to provide maximum support and services to those whose gender departs from the expected norm. Social workers must encourage the development of supportive practice environments for those struggling with gender expression and identity issues, including both clients and colleagues.”

www.socialworkers.org/resources/abstracts/abstracts/transgender.asp

NATIONAL FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

“[I]t is crucial that child welfare agencies develop plans to assure safe and proper care consistent with the child’s best interest and special needs, it is also crucial that child welfare agencies establish standards, policies and training programs to protect all foster children and youth including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth, and... Be it resolved that the National Foster Parent Association acknowledges gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth are present in the foster care system and encourages and supports establishment of standards, policies and training programs for foster care providers and professionals based on nondiscrimination principles and sensitivity to the sexual orientation of all foster children and youth.”

www.nfpainc.org/content/?page=POSITION%20STATEMENTS

NORTH AMERICAN COUNCIL ON ADOPTABLE CHILDREN

“Children should not be denied a permanent family because of the sexual orientation of potential parents... NACAC believes children and youth in the foster care system who are, or who are perceived to be LGBTQ deserve loving and permanent families and should be afforded the same rights, services and protections as those who are [or are perceived to be] heterosexual... Unfortunately, many LGBTQ youth are in care solely because of their family’s reaction to their sexual

orientation or gender identity... The prejudice, family rejection and mistreatment experienced by LGBTQ youth — or those who are perceived to be LGBTQ — have a tremendous negative impact... NACAC strongly opposes the use of conversion or so-called reparation services that are designed to involuntarily change the sexual orientation of youth.”

www.nacac.org/policy/lgbtq.html

THE WORLD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TRANSGENDER HEALTH

“The WPATH Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders... articulate the ‘professional consensus about the psychiatric, psychological, medical and surgical management of GID’... sex reassignment, properly indicated and performed as provided by the Standards of Care has proven to be beneficial and effective in the treatment of individuals with transsexualism [and/or] gender identity disorder... The medical procedures attendant to sex reassignment are not ‘cosmetic’ or ‘elective’ or for the mere convenience of the patient. These reconstructive procedures are not optional in any meaningful sense, but are understood to be medically necessary for the treatment of the diagnosed condition.”

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