



## Making a Difference for LGBT Youth

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) youth face unique challenges. They are more likely than their peers to face bullying, more likely to be homeless, become involved in the juvenile justice system and commit suicide. What can you, as a lawyer, do to make a difference?

### **Number 1: Get Involved in ABA Efforts for LGBT Youth**

- Join the LGBT Litigator and/or Children's Rights Litigation Committees of the Section of Litigation to learn more about the issues facing LGBT youth and join with other lawyers in making a difference for these youth.
- Visit the website, <http://thekidsarelistening.org>, to learn more about the Opening Doors Project a program of the ABA's Center on Children and the Law, which is dedicated to training and supporting the legal and social service professionals on the front lines to ensure that LGBT foster youth have the support they need. This website provides an opportunity for judges, lawyers, and members of the public to sign up and become involved in local efforts for LGBT youth.

### **Number 2: Volunteer for Pro Bono Work for LGBT Youth**

- Check to see if your local or state bar associations have pro bono law projects that serve LGBT youth (for example, name changes for transgendered youth or addressing discrimination in work or school). If not, work with your bar association to determine if such a program is needed.
- Check with your local children's law center or agency to see if it is serving LGBT youth and if there might be a role for pro bono lawyers in that work. To find a children's law center in your area, visit the ABA Directory of Children's Law Programs at <http://apps.americanbar.org/litigation/committees/childrights/directory.html>.

### **Number 3: Train Your Juvenile Judges and Lawyers**

The American Bar Association provides training (at no cost) for lawyers and judges to assist them in their work with LGBT youth. Talk to judges and lawyers in your community and encourage them to request training at [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child\\_law/projects\\_initiatives/openingdoors.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/projects_initiatives/openingdoors.html). Additionally, the training *What Lawyers Need to Know About Representing LGBTQ Youth* is available for no cost at <http://apps.americanbar.org/litigation/committees/childrights/multimedia.html>

*Questions on how to get involved? Need assistance in starting an LGBT pro bono program through your law firm, bar association, or children's law center? Contact the Children's Rights Litigation Committee at [Cathy.Krebs@americanbar.org](mailto:Cathy.Krebs@americanbar.org) or (202) 547-3060.*

## American Bar Association: LGBT Policies

Since 1973, the ABA has been a leading LGBT-rights advocate. This list highlights only a few of the significant sexual orientation and gender identity policy actions that affect youth taken by the ABA through its House of Delegates.<sup>1</sup>

- Urges federal, state, tribal, territorial and local officials to prevent and remediate the existence and dangers of bullying, including cyberbullying and youth-to-youth sexual and physical harassment, by defining these acts and developing education programs to assist teachers, parents and children in identifying victims and enhancing appropriate interventions. ***Approved as revised and amended February 2011.***
- RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local legislatures, government agencies, and courts to adopt and implement laws, regulations, policies, and court rules that promote the safety, well-being, and permanent placement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth who are homeless or involved with the foster care system. ***Adopted August 2007.***
- RESOLVED, That 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. ***Adopted February 2006.***
- Supports state and territorial laws and court decisions that permit the establishment of legal parent-child relationships through joint adoptions and second-parent adoptions by unmarried persons who are functioning as a child's parents, when such adoptions are in the best interests of the child. ***Approved August 2003.***
- Supports the enactment of legislation and the implementation of public policy providing that adoption shall not be denied on the basis of sexual orientation when it is determined to be in the best interest of the child. ***Approved February 1999.***
- Supports legislation and public policies that do not deny or restrict child custody or visitation on the basis of sexual orientation. ***Approved August 1995.***
- Urges enactment of federal, state, and local legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. ***Approved as Amended February 1989.***
- Condemns crimes of violence, including those based on bias or prejudice of race, religion, sexual orientation or minority status, and urges government officials to focus public attention on this growing national problem. ***Approved August 1987.***

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<sup>1</sup> The American Bar Association Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity maintains a full listing of policies on sexual orientation and gender identity at [http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/2011\\_build/sexual\\_orientation/sexual\\_orientation\\_and\\_gender\\_identity\\_policies.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/2011_build/sexual_orientation/sexual_orientation_and_gender_identity_policies.authcheckdam.pdf).