



Position Statement on Parenting of Children by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adults

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The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI), North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) and Voice for Adoption (VFA) affirm that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents are as well suited to raise children as their heterosexual counterparts.

Issue

CWLA, DAI, NACAC, and VFA believe that children deserve every opportunity to have a permanent, loving family, and that ruling out qualified prospective parents through discrimination limits options for permanency and stability for children waiting in temporary arrangements. We oppose policies and practices that categorically discriminate against prospective parents, including but not limited to discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, marital status, family size, disability, medical condition, geographic location, employment status, occupation (including employment in the child welfare system), and educational attainment. We support making decisions about approving prospective parents and matching waiting children on a case-by-case basis, based on the strengths of the family, safety of the home and the best interests of each child.

Based on more than three decades of social science research, we believe that families with LGBT members deserve the same rights and levels of support afforded other families. Any attempt to preclude or prevent LGBT individuals or couples from parenting, based solely on their sexual orientation or gender identity is not in the best interest of children. Scientific evidence demonstrates that children who grow up with one or two parents who are gay or lesbian fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual.¹

¹ Perrin, E.C. (2002). Technical report: Coparent or second-parent adoption by same-sex parents. *Pediatrics*, 109(2), 341-344. Doeber V Snyder (2014), Amicus Brief of the American Psychological Association, United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, June 16, 2014, <http://www.apa.org/about/offices/ogc/amicus/deboer.pdf>

In recent months, several states and jurisdictions have taken or are considering actions that will allow discrimination and prohibit placement of children and youth in families and family-settings that would be in the child's best interest. Under these proposed bills, an adoption agency that receives public funding would be permitted to refuse to place youth with parents based on the agency's religious or personal beliefs, including qualified single parents, same-sex couples, parents with different religious beliefs and many others. Further, pending actions would allow adoption agencies to refuse or delay services to an LGBT youth in foster care, causing additional stress and harm to youth who have already faced trauma and loss.

Our organizations and our members have worked for decades to ensure that abused, neglected and other vulnerable children are protected from harm and allowed to flourish. We strive to advance research-based best practices and sound public policy on behalf of the millions of vulnerable and voiceless children affected by child welfare agencies across the country. We believe every child and youth is valuable and we envision a future in which families, neighborhoods, communities, organizations, and governments ensure that all children and youth are provided with the resources and supports they need to grow into healthy, contributing members of society.

We value and encourage approaches to child welfare that are culturally competent and responsive to the specific needs of our society's broad and diverse population. Included in our definition of cultural competence is the ability to support children, youth, parents and families who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), as well as those individuals who may be questioning (Q) their sexual orientation or gender identity.

There are already an estimated 2 million children in America who are being raised by LGBT parents or same-sex couples. Although the country has made progress, resistance to LGBT civil and equal rights continues to force many lesbian and gay people to remain silent about their sexual orientation and relationships. The Williams Institute concludes that there are an additional two million LGBT people across the country who would step forward to foster or adopt children from foster care,² but state laws, policies, and practices that deliberately limit or downright prevent qualified LGBT parents from coming forward harm our nation's children who are waiting for *permanent* families.

² Gary J Gates, M.V. Lee Badgett, et al, Adoption and Foster Care by Gay and Lesbian Parents in the United States, The Williams Institute and the Urban Institute, March 2007, accessed online at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411437_Adoption_Foster_Care.pdf

CWLA, DAI, NACAC and VFA re-affirm their principles and standards that LGBT parents are as well suited to raise children as their heterosexual counterparts, and that the needs of children and youth who are LGBTQ must be addressed based on their best interests. Therefore, we firmly stand against any federal, state, agency laws or policies that prohibit or discriminate against any qualified individuals and couples from becoming parents due to philosophical and religious beliefs or personal bias.

Social Science Research Supports Same-Sex Parenting

Research comparing lesbian and gay parents to heterosexual parents, and children of lesbian and gay parents to children of heterosexual parents, shows that common negative stereotypes are not supported. Likewise, beliefs that lesbian and gay adults are unfit parents have no empirical foundation (American Psychological Association, 2005). Many factors confer risk to children's healthy development and adult outcomes, such as poverty, parental depression, parental substance abuse, divorce, and domestic violence, but the sexual orientation of their parents is not among them. (Perrin, 2013)

A growing body of scientific evidence demonstrates that children who grow up with one or two parents who are gay or lesbian fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual. Evidence shows that children's optimal development is influenced more by the nature of the relationships and interactions within the family unit than by its particular structural form. Current claims that children need both a mother and father are spurious because they attribute to the gender of parents benefits that correlate primarily with the number and marital status of a child's parents since infancy. At this point no research supports the widely held conviction that the gender of parents matters for child well-being. (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010)

Studies in the last decade, using diverse samples and methodologies, have persuasively demonstrated that there are no systematic differences between gay or lesbian and non-gay or lesbian parents in emotional health, parenting skills, and attitudes toward parenting. For example, studies using nationally representative data sets have found that, consistent with earlier research, the peer functioning and psychological adjustment of children of lesbian and gay parents appear to be well within normal limits. (Goldberg, 2010)

No studies have found risks to or disadvantages for children growing up in families with one or more gay parents, compared to children growing up with heterosexual parents. Indeed, evidence suggests home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents support and enable children's psychosocial growth,

just as do those provided by heterosexual parents. There is no evidence to suggest that lesbian women or gay men are unfit to be parents or that psychosocial development among children of lesbian women or gay men is compromised relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents. Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents. Indeed, the evidence to date suggests that home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to support and enable children's psychosocial growth. (APA, 2005)

Prevalent heterocentrism, sexual prejudice, homophobia, and resulting stigmatization might lead to teasing, bullying, and embarrassment for children about their parent's sexual orientation or their family constellation, restricting their ability to form and maintain friendships. Nevertheless, children seem to cope well with the challenges of understanding and describing their families to peers and teachers (Perrin, 2002). CWLA, DAI, NACAC, and VFA conclude that problems associated with such family formations do not emanate from within the family unit, but from prejudicial forces on the outside. Children of LGBT parents are better served when society works to eliminate harmful, prejudicial attitudes directed toward them and their families.

References & Resources

Child Welfare League of America. [LGBTQ ISSUES IN CHILD WELFARE](#)

American Psychological Association (1995). *Lesbian and gay parenting*. [Available online](#). Washington, DC: Public Interest Directorate.

[American Academy of Pediatrics, Technical Report: Co-parent or Second Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents](#)

Legal and Advocacy Organizations:

[Lambda Legal](#)

[American Civil Liberties Union Lesbian and Gay Rights Project](#)

[Family Equality Council](#)

[Human Rights Campaign](#)

[Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#)

[Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere](#) (COLAGE)