

## Position Statement on Adoption and Co-parenting of Children by Same-sex Couples

Approved by the Board of Trustees, November 2002

Approved by the Assembly, November 2002

"Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees...These are...position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects..." – *APA Operations Manual*.

**N**umerous studies over the last three decades consistently demonstrate that children raised by gay or lesbian parents exhibit the same level of emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as children raised by heterosexual parents. This research indicates that optimal development for children is based not on the sexual orientation of the parents, but on stable attachments to committed and nurturing adults. The research also shows that children who have two parents, regardless of the parents' sexual orientations, do better than children with only one parent.

While some states have approved legislation sanctioning second parent adoption, other court judgments and legislation have prohibited lesbian women and gay men from adopting or co-parenting. Therefore, in most of the United States, only one partner in a committed gay or lesbian couple may have a legal parental relationship to a child they are raising together. Adoption by a second parent, however, would not only formalize a child's existing relationships with both parents in a same-sex couple, it would also provide vital security for the child.

Children could avail themselves of both parents' health insurance benefits, access to medical care, death benefits, inheritance rights, and child support from both parents in the event of separation. Adoption protects both parents' rights to custody and/or visitation if the couple separates or if one parent dies.

The American Psychiatric Association has historically supported equity, parity, and non-discrimination regarding legal issues affecting mental health. In 2000, APA supported the legal recognition of same sex unions and their associated legal rights, benefits, and responsibilities. APA has also supported efforts to educate the public about homosexuality and the mental health needs of lesbian women, gay men, and their families. Removing legal barriers that adversely affect the emotional and physical health of children raised by lesbian and gay parents is consistent with the goals of the APA.

**The American Psychiatric Association supports initiatives which allow same-sex couples to adopt and co-parent children and supports all the associated legal rights, benefits, and responsibilities which arise from such initiatives.**

*This position statement was drafted and proposed by the Committee on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues and was supported by the Council on Minority Mental Health and Health Disparities.*