



The issue:

PARENTING

In the U.S., 96% of all counties have at least one gay or lesbian couple with a child under 18.



damn facts

An estimated 2 million gay and lesbian adults are interested in adopting.¹²

Nearly 30% of gay couples identified in Census 2000 have a child under 18 living with them.¹³

At least 1 dozen respected child health and welfare organizations support parenting by gay adults.¹⁴

Three states have blanket adoption bans that prohibit any gay couples from adopting.¹⁵

A total of 9 states do not allow second-parent or step-parent adoptions by gay people.¹⁶

a project of



Family Matters. Our Kids Matter. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PARENTING!

For gay and lesbian adults, the issue of parenting encompasses a number of concerns:

The ability to protect one's child. An estimated 2 million American children are being raised by at least 1 gay or lesbian parent.¹ Ninety-six percent of all U.S. counties have at least one gay couple with a child under 18.² But children of these couples don't enjoy the same level of federal protections and benefits that other children do. And on a social level, kids who have gay, lesbian or transgender parents, who were born to a lesbian couple through donor insemination or who live in some other family situation considered "different" by society often feel isolated and alone among their peers.

The opportunity to adopt. More than 120,000 children languish in the U.S. public child welfare system each year.³ These children need parents—but often, qualified, nurturing gay and lesbian adults are prevented from adopting them. And many private adoption agencies refuse to consider gay adults as potential adoptive parents, simply because of who they are.

The ability to adopt a partner's child. This is known as second-parent adoption. In many cases, both partners have actually been raising a child together since birth. Without the ability to second-parent adopt, gay parents can't necessarily cover a child on their health insurance, make medical decision on their child's behalf and more.

WHO SUPPORTS GAY PARENTS!

On all standard measures of child development—such as academic achievement, psychological well-being and social abilities—studies have shown that children of gay parents are just as healthy and well-adjusted as children raised by straight parents.⁴

In fact, at least a dozen leading medical, social service and child welfare organizations support parenting and adoption by gay adults, including: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychiatric Association; American Psychological Association; National Adoption Center; Child Welfare League of America; North American Council on Adoptable Children.⁵

HOW ADOPTION LAWS AND AGENCIES TREAT GAY PARENTS!

When it comes to adoption, most experts say that the first consideration needs to be what's in the best interests of the child. Even so, many agencies explicitly do not work with gay adults: In a survey mailed to nearly 900 public and private adoption agencies, nearly one-third noted they did not work with gay or lesbian prospective adoptive parents.⁶

And 3 states—Arkansas, Mississippi and Utah—have blanket adoption bans that prohibit any gay or lesbian couple from adopting.⁷ The bans apply even if both parents have demonstrated their fitness as parents, and even when the couple has already been caring for a child for the majority of the child's life.



COLAGE
www.colage.org

COLAGE is a national movement of children, youth, and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer parents.



HUMAN
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The Human Rights Campaign is the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization.

Courts in the state of Michigan additionally says unmarried couples may not jointly adopt.⁸ Another 5 states—Kentucky, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin—have court orders prohibiting second-parent adoptions.

In many states, the parenting laws for gay, lesbian and transgender people are unclear. In only 13 states and the District of Columbia can gay couples jointly petition to adopt statewide; in only 9 states and the District of Columbia can a gay person petition to second-parent adopt statewide.⁹

HOW CHILDREN OF GAY PARENTS ARE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST!

The millions of gay and lesbian parents in this country¹⁰ literally cannot ensure their children's emotional and financial security. For one thing, society often rejects families headed by gay parents—or, as another example, families where one parent is transgender. For children in these families, it can be extraordinarily isolating and challenging to live in a world where teachers, peers and others may be misinformed about their families; where their families are rarely reflected in school curricula or celebrations; and where they may be bullied for having a "different" family situation. For another thing, current federal and state regulations extend thousands

of protections to married couples and their families, but not necessarily to same-sex couples and their families.¹¹

Following are just two of the thousands of ways in which children of gay parents are left vulnerable and abandoned by the law—through no fault of their own.

Health insurance. Many employers, including the federal government, do not extend health insurance coverage to domestic partners of their gay employees, even though spouses and children of married employees are covered.

Survivor benefits. When a married parent passes away, Social Security survivor benefits are paid out to their spouse and children. Such benefits would only go to the biological or legally adopted children of a gay or lesbian American, and never to that person's partner.

CONSIDER THE REAL VICTIMS!

The real victims of these laws and regulations, of course, are our children.

So isn't it time we gave a damn? Or should we continue to deliberately fail our children?
It's time for things to change.

WE GIVE A DAMN. DO YOU?

I GIVE A DAMN ABOUT PARENTING! Now What?

- **JOIN THE GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN:** The Give A Damn Campaign is for everybody who cares about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality, especially all you straight people out there!
 - Register now at www.wegiveadamn.org
- **GET INFORMED:** Learn more about the issues.
 - Watch a [Damn Video](#) or read [people's Personal Stories](#)
 - Check out our [Damn Blog](#), which is updated daily
- **GET INVOLVED:** Spread the word about equality to family and friends!
 - [Share a Damn Video](#) or [tell us your Personal Story](#)
 - [Forward this PDF](#)
- **VISIT OUR NON-PROFIT PARTNERS' WEBSITES**
 - Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org
 - COLAGE: www.colage.org

www.wegiveadamn.org

1 Human Rights Campaign. www.hrc.org

2 The Urban Institute. "Gay and Lesbian Families in the Census: Couples with Children," 2003.

3 Bushlow, Abby Lynn. "Information Packet: Gay and Lesbian Second Parent Adoptions," National Resource for Foster Care & Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work, May 2004.

4-5 Human Rights Campaign. "Answers to Questions About Marriage Equality." www.hrc.org

6 See 3.

7-9 Human Rights Campaign. "Parenting Laws: Joint Adoption" and "Parenting Laws: Second Parent Adoption," July 6, 2003. www.hrc.org

10 See 4-5.

11 Human Rights Campaign. "Family Matters: Securing Equal Treatment under Federal Law for Same-Sex Couples and Our Children." www.hrc.org

12-13 Gates Gary J et al. "Adoption and Foster Care by Gay and Lesbian Parents in the United States," The Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy, UCLA School of Law, March 2007.

14 See 4-5.

15-16 See 7-9.