

ABOUT OUR CHILDREN

New windows of understanding have opened up to us. We are committed to help change attitudes and create a safe environment in which our gay sons and lesbian daughters can live with dignity and respect.

We invite you to share our knowledge, to be free from fear and to reach out, search and discover more about being human.

When we use the term, "gay persons," we are referring to both men and women.

GAY PERSONS ARE EVERYWHERE

About 10% of the world population is gay, lesbian or bisexual.^{1,2} Gay men and lesbian women come from all corners of the earth, from every culture, ethnic group, and economic level. A community the size of Des Moines, Iowa, for example, with a population of 194,000 contains about 20,000 gay citizens. They and their families number about 50,000.

Some gay persons fit special stereotypes, but most look and act like individuals from the heterosexual majority. Physical appearance and mannerisms have nothing to do with a person's sexuality.

We know, for example, both masculine women and effeminate men who are heterosexual.

GAY PERSONS ARE HEALTHY PERSONS

Homosexuality, like heterosexuality, is not in and of itself a mental or emotional disorder.³

For example, gay men and lesbian women share the same amount of interest in sexual activity as heterosexual persons, neither more nor less.⁴

Gay persons lead lives as varied as heterosexuals. They establish stable, long lasting relationships, work for a living, shop, watch TV, vote and pay taxes.⁵

GAY PERSONS ARE NATURALLY HOMOSEXUAL

No one knows how human sexual orientation is determined.^{6,7} During 20 years of discussions with thousands of families having gay and lesbian children, PFLAG has found that:

- Homosexuality is deep-seated and not something one chooses to be or not to be.⁶ People have no choice in their feelings of affection. The only choice is to be open and honest about one's sexual orientation, or to be closeted.
- There would be fewer unhappy marriages if it were safe for lesbians and gay men to be honest about their sexual orientation.
- Gay and lesbian children are often aware of being different at a very early age. They generally become aware of their sexual orientation during adolescence or early adulthood.⁷
- Gay and lesbian children are not influenced or taught to be gay by any person.
- Family fears of "catching" homosexuality or of being "recruited" at school or elsewhere are "...utterly without scientific foundation."⁸
- All attempts fail when gay people try to become heterosexual.^{9,10}
- The American Medical Association calls for "non-judgmental recognition of sexual orientation."¹⁰
- The reality is that some people are naturally attracted to members of their own sex. The time has come for society to acknowledge and accept our gay and lesbian children.

GAY PERSONS ARE PART OF THE FAMILY

Approximately one of every four families has a gay member. Our lesbian daughters and gay sons have parents, grandparents, sisters, and brothers, cousins, aunts and uncles, and nieces and nephews, whom they love and care for.

Rejection of a gay person by his or her family is a tragedy for each person in the immediate and extended family unit.

PFLAG Help and Hotlines are in operation throughout the nation. They afford an opportunity to share concerns and ask questions in a confidential and caring environment with parents who have gone through similar experiences.

The Help/Hot Line and rap/discussion meetings help to unite families and their gay and lesbian children. Permanent family division and lifetime heartbreak are often prevented.

GAY PERSONS RESPECT CHILDREN

Lesbians and gay men make good parents. Children who have gay or lesbian parents are no different in any aspects of psychological, social, or sexual development from children in heterosexual families.¹¹

Gay men and lesbian women are rarely involved in child abuse. In the United States, 90% of all sexual child abuse is committed by heterosexual men. The molesters are fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles and the mother's boyfriends.^{12,13}

GAY PERSONS ARE RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEES

Our gay sons and lesbian daughters come from all occupations and all levels of education. They are teachers, nurses, doctors, and ministers. They are clerks, artists, accountants and city planners.

Our children make important contributions to our society.

GAY PERSONS FACE DISCRIMINATION

Vicious and mean-spirited attacks continue to be made against our lesbian and gay family members. In recent years, organized statewide political initiatives have tried to limit or deny civil rights protections to gay people by any local or state government entity. Lesbians and gay men feel constantly threatened because they rarely have any legal protection in employment, child custody or housing.

Our gay family members are entitled to the same rights that the rest of us take for granted, such as to marry, and serve in the military.

GAY PERSONS ARE A FACT OF LIFE

In this booklet, the word heterosexual describes persons who are naturally attracted to the opposite sex.

The words gay, lesbian and homosexual describe persons who are naturally attracted to their own sex. Bisexual persons are naturally attracted to both sexes.

Many of our children prefer the words "gay" or "lesbian" to "homosexual" just as "African American" or "Black" is preferred to "negro" or "boy" by many persons of African ancestry, or as Japanese, or Polish, or Italian are preferred to thoughtless and offensive racial and ethnic slurs.

Footnotes:

¹Alfred C. Kinsey, et. al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953)(W.B. Saunders)

²John C. Gonsiorek and James D. Weinrich, "The Definition and Scope of Sexual Orientation" (*Homosexuality: Research Implications for Public Policy*, Sage, 1991) p. 1-12.

³See statements by the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association.

⁴Alan P. Bell and Martin S. Weinberg, for the Institute for Sexual Research, "Kinsey," *Homosexualities: a Study of Human Diversity*, (Simon and Schuster, 1978)

⁵Linda D. Gamets and Douglas C. Kimmel, *Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Male Experiences*, (Columbia University Press, 1993.)

⁶Dr. Alan P. Bell, senior author of the two-volume study, "Sexual Preference," Bell, Weinberg and Hammersmith, (Indiana University Press, 1981)

⁷R. R. Troiden (1989), "The formation of Homosexual Identities," *The Journal of Homosexuality*, 17, 43-73.

⁸Dr. Jack Weinberg, President of the American Psychological Association (Statement, 6 October, 1977)

⁹D.C. Haldeman (1994). "The Practice and Ethics of Sexual Orientation Conversion Therapy," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62, 221-227.

¹⁰American Medical Association, 1994.

¹¹C.J. Patterson (1992) "Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents," *Child Development*, 63, 1025-1042.

¹²P.J. Falk (1989) "Lesbian Mothers: Psychological Assumptions in Family Law," *American Psychologist*, 44, 941-949.

¹³Mary Koss, et. al., "No Safe Haven: Male Violence Against Women At Home, At Work, And In The Community," (American Psychological Association, 1994)