

Gay and Lesbian Parents



Mary Le & Charlie W...

AAP Policy

“Children’s well being is affected much more by their relationships with their parents, their parents’ sense of competence and security, and the presence of social and economic support for the family than by the gender or the sexual orientation of their parents”

Epidemiology

- Children in 2 parent households: 73%
- Children living with 2 married biological parents: 65.3%
- Children with unmarried parents: 3.9%
- Children with single/separated parents: 27.1%
- Children being raised by 1 or more grandparents: 3.5%

Epidemiology Cntd.

- 131,729 self reported married same gender households
- 514, 735 self reported unmarried same gender households
- Current estimates are that almost 2 million children younger than 18 years are being raised by at least 1 gay or lesbian parent in the US

Child Development & Outcomes

- Studies show very few differences in heterosexual and homosexual parents' parental philosophy of raising a child
- Good data available for analysis of children of lesbian individuals, little data for analysis of children of gay individuals

Risk Factors for Child Development

- Poverty
- Parental Substance Abuse
- Divorce
- Domestic Violence
- Parental Psychologic Disorders

Child Development & Outcomes

- Children raised with same gender households have no difference in emotional, cognitive, social or sexual function and development
- Recent reviews suggest that factors that influence these children's development are:
 - Societal presence of stigma
 - Heterosexism
 - Family circumstance, structure and process

Child Development & Outcomes

- Homosexual households were found to have no differences compared to heterosexual households in the following:
 - Self esteem
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - School connectedness
 - School success

Child Development & Outcomes

- Comparisons of lesbian mothers to two parent heterosexual families and single heterosexual mothers found no differences in:
 - Maternal warmth
 - Emotional involvement
 - Enjoyment of motherhood
 - Frequency of conflicts
 - Supervision of the child
 - Abnormal behaviors
- In this study increased behavioral problems in children in single parent families irrespective of sexual orientation

Child Development & Outcomes

- US National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study
 - Use of Achenbach's CBCL/6-18 for assessment
 - Half of adolescents reported that they have been treated unfairly (teased, stigmatized, excluded)
 - No effect on quality of life; believed to be a result of close warm relationships with mothers
 - Higher levels of social, school/academic and total competence than gender matched normative samples

Child Development & Outcomes

- Increased verbal limit setting; less corporal punishment
 - Less power assertion and increased parental involvement= healthier psychological adjustment
- 56 % of couples separated (average of 12 years)
 - Shared childrearing associated with favorable outcomes
 - No differences in personality, peer group relationships, self esteem, scholastic or behavioral issues

Children's Gender Identity

- Gender identity is consistent with biologic sex.
- No differences in toy, game, activity, dress, or friendship preferences.

Sexual Orientation

- Adult men and women with gay/lesbian parents are as likely to identify as gay or lesbian compared to adults with heterosexual parents.
- More often reported feelings of attraction toward someone of the same sex or to have had a same-sex relationship
 - May also be secondary to openness and acceptance of gay/lesbian relationships

Office Evaluation

- Intake:
 - Office setting and available literature should be made welcoming for all genders, races, and sexual orientations
- Clinical Management
 - History:
 - Inquire about family history due to varied paths to parenthood
 - Awareness of children's knowledge regarding conception
 - Assessment of family and community support
 - Assess for family depression, anxiety, bullying and feelings of stigmatization

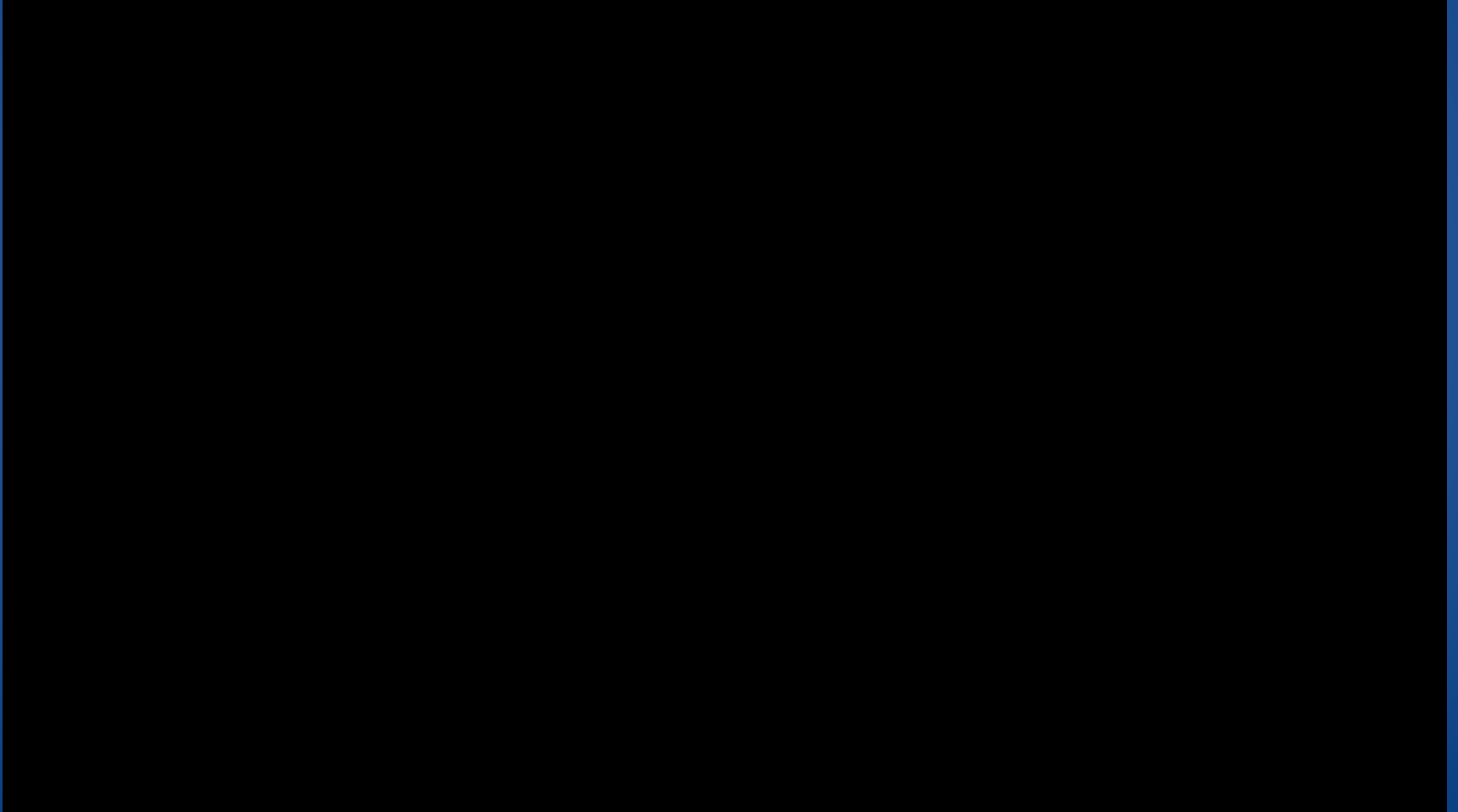
Challenging Transitions

- Parents have to respond to inquiries about their birth/conception
 - Age 3-4
- Parental concerns regarding social stereotypes and stigmata
 - Age 4-5
 - Caution parents about transference of anxiety
- Adolescent curiosity regarding family history
 - Recommend family to be open and honest regarding background
- Late adolescent exploration of sexuality
 - Similar challenges that face heterosexual parents

Healthcare Disparities

- Legal Consent to Medical Treatment
 - Lack of legal recognition can result in parental inability to make medical decisions (Depending on State)
- Stigma and fear of healthcare professionals
 - In NY 42% reported lack of appropriately trained competent officials
 - Families protect child from doctor visits due to hostile questions of misunderstandings
 - Concern for being blamed for child's physical or emotional disorders.

The Fight To Legalize Gay & Lesbian Marriage



Legal Issues

- Marriage offers many legal rights and responsibilities, including joint responsibility to care for children and to make decision (including medical decisions) for them.
- AAP task force on families: married couples have more financial and social resources to nurture and raise children.
- Defense of Marriage Act (1996): ruled unconstitutional by Supreme Court on 6/2013.

Legal Issues Cntd.

- Legal recognition of a child's relationship to both parents and joint parenting rights;
- Tax-exempt employer-sponsored health and other insurance benefits for spouse/partner and nonbiological/not jointly adopted children;
- Ability to consent to medical care or authorize emergency medical treatment of nonbiological/not jointly adopted children
- The ability to travel with a child if it will require proof of being a legal parent;
- The ability to file joint income tax returns and take advantage of family-related deductions, including the ability to use the child tax credit, child and dependent care tax credit, dependency exemption, earned income tax credit, and gift and estate tax exemption; and
- A surviving parent's right to the custody of and care for, and children's right to maintain a relationship with, a nonbiological parent in the event of the death of the other parent.

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States Have Legal Same-Sex Marriage



5 by Court Decision

California* (June 28, 2013), Connecticut (Nov. 12, 2008), Iowa (Apr. 24, 2009), Massachusetts (May 17, 2004), New Jersey (Oct. 21, 2013)

8 by State Legislature

Delaware (July 1, 2013), Hawaii (law will take effect Dec. 2, 2013), Illinois (law will take effect June 1, 2014), Minnesota (Aug. 1, 2013), New Hampshire (Jan. 1, 2010), New York (July 24, 2011), Rhode Island (Aug. 1, 2013), Vermont (Sep. 1, 2009)

3 by Popular Vote

Maine (Dec. 29, 2012), Maryland (Jan. 1, 2013), Washington (Dec. 9, 2012)

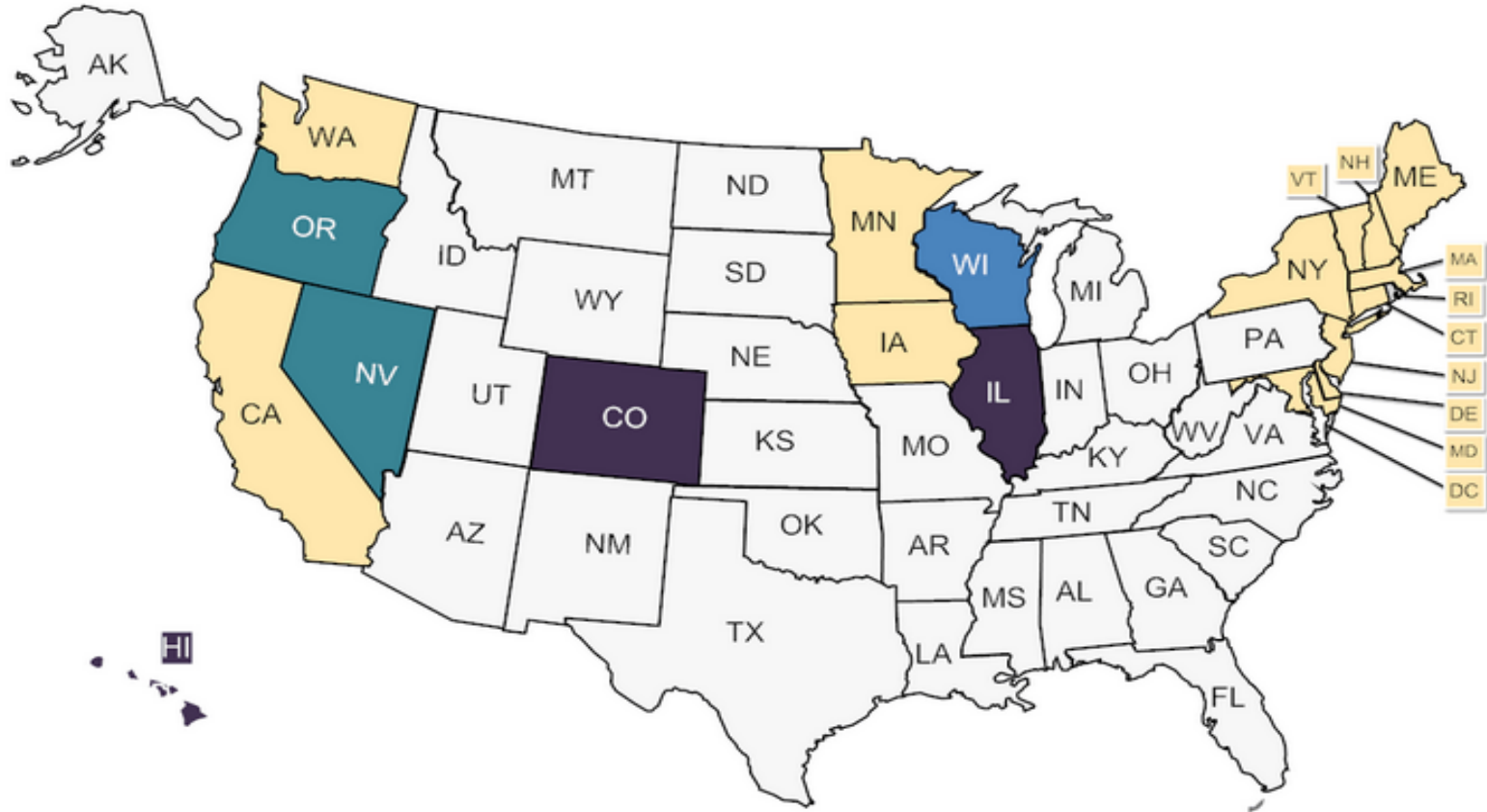
No legal protection

- No protections for unmarried parents as reflected in divorce law
 - No court approved legal arrangement for visitation rights and/or custody of children
 - No entitlement for financial support for children and ongoing relationships for both parents

Civil Union & Domestic Partnership

- Only in states that recognize these relationships will the gay/lesbian spouse or partner be recognized as a legal step-parent
- Most states lack a formal mechanism to ensure basic rights to non-biological, non-adoptive parents

State Laws: Civil Unions, Domestic Partnerships and Same-Sex Marriage



LEGEND

- Provides for civil unions for same-sex couples
- Provides broad domestic partnerships for same-sex couples
- Provides limited domestic partnerships for same-sex couples
- Allows same-sex marriages
- No provisions for civil unions, domestic partnerships or same-sex marriage

Adoption

- 400,000 children in US foster care system, 25% are awaiting adoption and permanent placement
- 19 states and the District of Columbia permit same sex couples to adopt jointly.
- 13 states allow second parent adoptions
- 6 states explicitly ban discrimination based on sexual orientation
- California has 20-24% of Gay/Lesbian couples raising children.
- California also allows joint adoption, second-parent adoption, and stepparent adoption.

The Changing Views on Gay & Lesbian marriages

