

FACTS *for* FAMILIES

No. 92

(Updated August 2006)

CHILDREN WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PARENTS

Millions of children in the United States have lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT) parents. Some LGBT parents conceived their children in heterosexual marriages or relationships. An increasing number of LGBT parents have conceived children and/or raised them from birth, either as single parents or in ongoing committed relationships. This can occur through adoption, alternative insemination, surrogate or foster parenting. A small number of states currently have laws supportive of LGBT couple adoption.

What effect does having LGBT parents have on children?

Sometimes people wonder if having a gay parent can be tough on kids, or even harmful. Current research shows that children with gay and lesbian parents do not differ from children with heterosexual parents in their emotional development or in their relationships with peers and adults. It is the quality of the parent/child relationship and not the parent's sexual orientation that has an effect on a child's development. Contrary to popular belief, children of lesbian, gay, or transgender parents:

- Are not more likely to be gay than children with heterosexual parents.
- Are not more likely to be sexually abused.
- Do not show differences in whether they think of themselves as male or female (gender identity).
- Do not show differences in their male and female behaviors (gender role behavior).

Raising children in a LGBT household

Although research shows that children with gay and lesbian parents are as well adjusted as children with heterosexual parents, they can face some additional challenges. Some LGBT families face discrimination in their communities and children may be teased or bullied by peers. Parents can help their children cope with these pressures in the following ways:

- Allow for open communication and discussions that are appropriate to your child's age and level of maturity.
- Prepare your child to handle questions and comments about their background or family.

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- Help your child come up with and practice appropriate responses to teasing or mean remarks.
- Use books, Web sites and movies that show children in LGBT families.
- Consider having a support network for your child (For example, having your child meet other children with gay parents.)
- Consider living in a community where diversity is more accepted.

Like all children, most children with LGBT parents will have both good and bad times. They are not more likely than children of heterosexual parents to develop emotional or behavioral problems. If LGBT parents have questions or concerns about their child, they should consider a consultation with a qualified mental health professional.

For additional information see *Facts for Families*:

#1 Children and Divorce

#15 The Adopted Child

#24 When to Seek Help

#27 Stepfamily Problems

#62 Talking to Your Kids About Sex

#63 Gay and Lesbian Teens

#64 Foster Care

See also: *Your Child* (Harper Collins, 1998), *Your Adolescent* (Harper Collins, 1999) and AACAP Policy Statement—“*Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Parents*” (Find on the AACAP Web site - aacap.org)

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