
Social Workers Urge Mainstreaming of Gay/Lesbian Adoption

Social worker Scott D. Ryan and two associates have urged that adoption policies be revised throughout the United States to include the adoption of children by male and female homosexuals.

Ryan says that "Laws and regulations, narrow definitions of family, homophobia, and heterosexism limit the possibility that lesbians and gay men will be considered as adoptive parents." He also named Judeo-Christian tradition as a major impediment to gay and lesbian social goals.

"Coming out of the Closet: Opening Agencies to Gay and Lesbian Adoptive Parents," was published in *Social Work*, (Vol. 49; Issue 1; 2004).

Ryan urges that social workers adopt a more flexible definition of "family" which includes gay and lesbian parents who wish to adopt children. He encourages social workers to implement a series of strategies inside their organizations to change policies concerning the placement of children in gay households.

Among them are: Providing training to overcome what he labels "heterosexism" among staff members; and using the policy statements from the American Psychiatric Association, Child Welfare League, American Psychological Association, and other professional groups to change opinions.

In addition, he notes that a "strong association exists between Western Judeo-Christian theology and negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Training for individual workers might include information about current interpretations of biblical references to help modify attitudes (Boswell, 1980)."

Training should also include creating special lesbian and gay committees that will provide more visibility for homosexuals inside an organization.

Ryan suggests that when social workers encounter critics who use biblical arguments against same-sex parenting, they should not be allowed to define the discussion. Social workers should "reframe the focus on areas of agreement, such as the best interest of the child and permanency or constitutionality and civil rights."

In addition, the adoption agency should establish a cadre of researchers and experts who can be referred to for media comments. These experts will also help reframe the issue, he says, to counter the opposition.

Reference:

Scott Ryan, Sue Pearlmutter, Victor Groza, "Coming out of the Closet: Opening Agencies to Gay and Lesbian Adoptive Parents," *Social Work*, Vol. 49; Issue 1; 2004. P. 48.