

## **Pediatrics Group Urges Pro-Gay Counseling for Teenagers**

### *Doctors Urged to Show Support for Alternative Sexualities*

The June, 2004, issue of *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, has published "Sexual Orientation and Adolescents," by Dr. Barbara L. Frankowski, a member of the AAP's Committee on Adolescence.

Dr. Frankowski urges pediatricians to provide positive counseling for teenagers who believe they are homosexual, bisexual, or transgendered. She states that "human sexual orientation most likely exists as a continuum from solely heterosexual to solely homosexual."

Sexual orientation, says Frankowski, is determined by a combination of genetic, hormonal, and environmental influences and is developed early in life.

The author notes that non-heterosexual youth have higher suicide rates, higher HIV infection rates, and more substance abuse problems. These negatives associated with

gay life, she states—without offering supporting evidence for her claim—are not "attributable to homosexual per se."

Gays experience stigmatization for their gender nonconformity, as well as "stress, violence, lack of support, dropping out school, family problems, acquaintances' suicide attempts, homelessness, and substance abuse."

Dr. Frankowski urges pediatricians to use gender-neutral language when discussing sexual orientation with non-heterosexual teens, and to display posters, brochures, and information on office bulletin boards that demonstrate the doctors' support for alternative expressions of sexuality.

Pediatricians are also urged to encourage abstinence, discourage multiple sex partners, and to provide safer-sex guidelines for all adolescents. She also suggests that pediatricians become community activists to help promote awareness about the unique problems of non-heterosexual youth.