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## Same-Sex Marriage – Fact Sheet

Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person and treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people. Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability. *NASW Code of Ethics*.

There are more than 1,000 federal protections and responsibilities denied to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families because they cannot legally marry in this country. Rights that married people take for granted are denied to committed same-sex couples because the law does not recognize their relationships. Without the legal right to marry for example:

- Same-sex couples do not have rights like family health coverage, child custody and medical and bereavement leave,
- Same-sex couples cannot file joint tax returns and enjoy income and estate tax benefits,
- LGBT persons cannot assume pension or Social Security benefits in the event of the death of a same-sex partner,
- LGBT persons do not have the automatic ability to make medical decisions for an incapacitated spouse,
- LGBT persons cannot petition for their same-sex partner to immigrate,
- LGBT persons are not entitled to leave of absence (up to 12 weeks) from work to care for a seriously ill partner or parent of a partner,
- Parenting responsibilities of children brought into LGBT families through birth, adoption, surrogacy or other means can be questioned or challenged through legal means,
- LGBT persons do not have the ability to purchase continued health coverage for a same-sex partner after the loss of a job.

For more information:

NASW Policy Statements: Social Work Speaks Abstracts

<http://www.socialworkers.org/resources/abstracts/default.asp>

- [Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues](#)
- [International Policy on Human Rights](#)

**NASW News Gay Marriage Rights Upheld 01-04**

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/2003/112603.asp>

**NASW Press Release MA Supreme Judicial Court Rules for Lesbian/Gay Marriage 11-26-03**

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/news/2004/01/gaymarriage.asp>

**Human Rights Campaign**

<http://hrc.org>

**National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**

Comparison Chart of the Differences Between Marriage, Civil Union and Domestic Partnership

<http://www.nglft.org/marriagecenter/MarriageDifferences.pdf>

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*Prepared by the NASW National Committee on Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Issues, March 2004*



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