



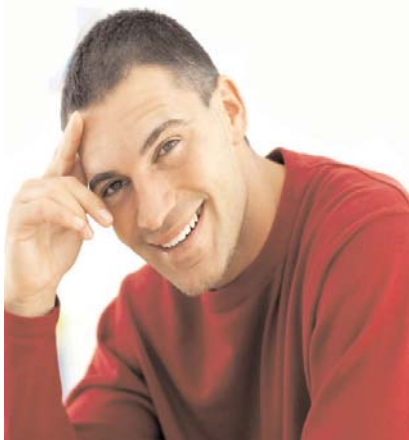
Local YMCA staff should have a series of discussions with policy volunteers on the subject of defining the YMCA's family membership category—not the definition of family.



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YMCA GLBT

A YMCA affinity group & leadership network for the YMCA GLBT community



YMCA GLBT, Affinity Groups Get National Support, Funding

David Thomas, Vice President and National Director for Diversity and Inclusion, recently spoke at the annual diversity and inclusion conference and he spoke about "our mission and our communities that compel us to increase the intensity and effectiveness of the movement's diversity and inclusion strategies."

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“The time is now to step up our efforts to make sure our YMCAs are truly places where everyone is welcome, everyone is heard, and everyone has the opportunity to develop their unique gifts to make the world a better place.”

David Thomas, Vice President and National Director for Diversity and Inclusion

The U.S. continues to change rapidly. Census figures show that one in three Americans is Hispanic, African American, Asian, Native American or multiracial. Almost 55 million Americans speak a language other than English at home, while 37.5 million are foreign born. And, these numbers do not cover other significant aspects of diversity: gender, generation, faith, sexual orientation-not to mention how we function as families and individuals.

David also announced at the National Diversity and Initiative Conference in Louisville that Gussie Monks, a 15-year YMCA veteran, will join YMCA of the USA as Manager of Inclusion. Gussie started Dec. 1 and hit the ground running. Gussie will have principal

responsibility for working with associations to help them implement diversity and inclusion leadership and governance strategies that result in organizational change and improvement. In addition, Gussie will have responsibility for coordinating the activities of YMCA affinity groups.

Gussie has served as the chair of the national Y-USA Asian Leadership Network and understands the important contributions that affinity groups can make toward our diversity and inclusion efforts.

Welcome, Gussie! To contact Gussie, send an email to gussie.monks@ymca.net or call 800-872-9622, ext. 8335.

Ten-Member YMCA GLBT Steering Committee to be formed.

In January, the YMCA of the USA will host all the affinity group chairs in Chicago to introduce a new direction of work for the five national affinity groups. Current leadership networks and affinity groups include: Asian, African-American, Women's, GLBT, and Hispanic/Latino.

Part of the new direction for the national affinity groups calls for each group to have set standards and protocols that will allow the affinity group to remain with the YMCA of the USA as a recognized group.

One standard will call for each affinity group to have an active steering committee that would work closely with the Y-USA's Diversity and Inclusion Team so that the national goal of having all voices represented and heard will become a reality.

Contact Richard Clegg at richard.clegg@ymca.net if you are interested or learning more about this great opportunity.



First Hand Impressions: *Being GLBT in the YMCA Movement*

My name is Ashley. I work in the Greater Richmond Association YMCA. I have worked here for two years and I am gay. I didn't tell anyone for the first year that I worked here. I came and went everyday and never said a word at work. Until a little after the first year, I confided in a colleague and she was the only person to know for a while.

When I met the person that was to become my life partner, I felt the need to tell everyone who I really am. I changed my last name to my partner's last name. I come from a state that does not recognize same-sex marriages and despite that fact, I wanted to do everything possible to feel closer in union to her. I changed my last name to my partner's name. Funny, I thought that everyone would not accept me but the opposite happened. No one has given me a hard time or had any remarks to say. I feel like people accept and understand who I am and that I am still the same person from two months ago!

Have a story to share? Please email info@ymcaglb.org. Stories may be submitted

Living The Life Program at the McBurney YMCA



Living the Life is a weekly group for LGBT/queer-identified youth and allies to talk about concerns related to being lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgender (LGBT). This includes the history of the LGBT community; addressing concerns of isolation, dating and issues involving the family.

This is a completely confidential group and a safe space for youth ages 13-20. All young allies of the LGBT/queer identified are encouraged and welcomed to attend. For more information contact: LaKeisha Harris at lharris@ymcany.org.

What Does Q Stand for?

GLBT is a term often used which usually implies the more inclusive forms GLBTQQI or GLBTQQIA. Confused? GLBT is short for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender. Also identified as LGBT!

Being inclusive there are also other parts of the GLBT community that include Transsexuals, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Allies.



Gay: a term given to males who are attracted sexually and emotionally to other males

Lesbian: a term given to females who are attracted sexually and emotionally to other females

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to two sexes or two genders, but not necessarily simultaneously or equally

Transgendered: refers to those whose gender expression at least sometimes runs contrary to what others would expect.

Transsexual: refers to those who do not identify with their birth-assigned genders and sometimes alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally.

Questioning: Refers to people who are uncertain of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Queer: Historically a negative term used against people perceived to be LGBT, "queer" has more recently been reclaimed by some people as a positive term describing all those who do not conform to rigid notions of gender and sexuality.

Intersex: a person who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

Allies: someone who advocates for and supports members of the GLBT community.

For more definitions go to:
<http://www.clubs.psu.edu/aa/gsa/terms.html>

Just *one* Click Away

What's new on YMCA GLBT? More than **1,018 visits** were logged and more than **52 resources** were downloaded in the month of November 2008. Visit us at www.ymcaglb.org!

So what's new?

- ▼ Announcement of New Manager of Inclusion
- ▼ YMCA Sample Policies on Domestic Partnerships
- ▼ Sample GLBT Ads from the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
- ▼ Updated list of YMCAs who offer domestic partner benefits



Who Can Get A Family Membership at the YMCA?

And We're Still Talking About It!

How the YMCA defines a family is not so much a legal issue as it is a long-standing commitment at the YMCA to be inclusive, rather than exclusive. *Something to ponder: Should the YMCA define family or define and set parameters on who can get a family membership at the YMCA?*

YMCAs must have one word for the GLBT community—**welcome**. This is what embracing inclusion is all about, as it is consistent with the National YMCA Diversity & Inclusion Initiative and the YMCA mission. YMCAs that maintained the traditional married-couple family membership category argue that everyone is welcome at the YMCA—gay and straight, married and not. However, at many of these YMCAs, GLBT families don't qualify for a family membership unless they live in Massachusetts!

Local YMCA staff should have a series of discussions with policy volunteers on the subject of defining the YMCA's family membership category—not the definition of family. YMCAs should be careful to control the language of the discussion. According to the YMCA of the USA, some YMCAs made it clear that they were not changing the definition of family, but rather changing membership categories. Others made it clear that this was not an issue about GLBT rights or about the morals of unmarried couples; for these YMCAs, it was about affirming marriage.



Ys from different parts of the country have defined a family, for family membership purposes, in each of the following ways:

All persons who live at the same exact address may be considered a family.

Single parent households and children still in school.

All persons who are eligible to file a joint tax return may be considered a family.

These are just three examples collected by the YMCA of the USA's Research and Planning Department. There are other variations YMCAs use. The important point is that your YMCA should define who may be included in a family membership, publish the definition as part of your membership policies, and apply the policy consistently.

As discussion points for your YMCA, you may want to discuss the following issues:

1. How does our community generally define a "family"?
2. How does our proposed definition of family relate to the YMCA's values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility?

3. If someone who is close to us announced that he or she were gay, how would we feel about our proposed membership category definition?
4. How does our proposed family membership definition relate to the YMCA's goal of self-respect?
5. How does our proposed family definition relate to the YMCA's long-standing commitment to recognize the worth of all individuals?

What YMCAs Can (and Should) Do:

Involve staff, volunteers, members, community leaders, and residents in a review of your membership categories and definitions. YMCAs have been challenged by city and state governments where states have passed anti-discrimination laws regarding sexual orientation. Many funders today are looking for inclusive policies, including personnel and membership practices of the organizations they fund.



Gather information about households in your area. What do those families look like? Are they being served by your current membership configuration?

Gather information about other membership organizations in your community. How do they treat different types of couples and family configurations?

Make sure people with strong opinions are heard. You won't be able to make everyone happy, of course, but you can make them feel included. Don't rush. You cannot hurry consensus. Let the board decide. Volunteers set policy at YMCAs.

"Some YMCAs made it clear that they were not changing the definition of family, but rather changing membership categories."



YMCAs should examine their membership categories periodically. YMCAs should act on this subject, instead of reacting to what others say. Don't wait for controversy.

Figure out the best way to implement any changes. It might not be necessary to publicize a change in membership category from family to household, anymore than a Y publicizes ending group-rate discounts. It is your YMCA's policy, not social policy. From a PR standpoint, even though it's not social policy, in some areas, this will be news...either wanted or unwanted. Ys should be ready for questions. Stick to the message that the YMCA is an *inclusive* organization.



Recognize that the trend among YMCAs is to extend the definition of the family membership category (not the definition of family) to include all households. This includes not only families headed by unmarried couples but also allows YMCAs to include grandparents and grown children living at home, adult siblings living together, aunts and uncles raising nieces and nephews, and so on.

This article is a compilation of work done by the YMCA of the USA's Research and Planning Department, the Office of the General Counsel and the former Membership and Program Development Group.