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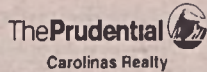
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## New report highlights dramatic rise in coverage for domestic partners

by Anabel Evora  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC — A new report on the prevalence of "family-friendly" workplace benefits confirms that coverage of domestic partners is increasing at a rapid pace. However, it also points up how many benefits are routinely denied to gay and lesbian workers because they cannot get married, the Human Rights Campaign said.

The 2001 *Benefits Survey* released April 18 by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that 25 percent of respondents reported that they offer domestic partner benefits to opposite-sex partners and that 16 percent reported offering these benefits to same-sex partners. In 2000, SHRM found 10 percent of respondents offered DP benefits. (2001 was the first year that SHRM asked separate questions on same-sex and opposite-sex coverage.)

"This growth rate is phenomenal, and confirms what we at the Human Rights Campaign have observed," said Kim I. Mills, HRC's education director. "Domestic partner benefits are on their way to becoming a standard business practice because employers are learning by experience that they help attract and keep good employees."

The SHRM study found that organizations with 2,501 or more employees are more likely to offer domestic partner benefits to same-sex partners than their smaller counterparts. The study also found that, out of 12 market sectors polled, the high-tech and computer industry sector was most likely to offer domestic partner

benefits, for both same-sex and opposite-sex partners. Market sectors that were least inclined to offer the benefits included manufacturing; finance, insurance and real estate; and government.

"Again, this closely tracks the data we have been collecting for years through HRC WorkNet, our workplace advocacy project," Mills said.

SHRM's study measured the spread of a variety of what it termed "family-friendly" workplace benefits, such as dependent care flexible spending accounts, flextime, adoption assistance, financial aid to employees' families and even pre-paid funeral assistance.

The SHRM questionnaire did not specifically define domestic partner benefits - although HRC has defined that term to include health insurance coverage at a minimum. "We have found that many employers define 'family' quite narrowly, so that many of the benefits listed in the SHRM report would probably not be offered to gay and lesbian couples," Mills said. "Nevertheless, we are extremely heartened to see that the general trend is on the increase."

In previous years, when SHRM did not break down DP benefits by type of relationship, the organization found 6 percent of respondents offered domestic partner benefits in 1997; 7 percent in 1998; and 9 percent in 1999. The 2001 survey was distributed to 2610 randomly selected SHRM members. A total of 754 replied, for a response rate of 29 percent. SHRM describes itself as "the leading voice of the human resource profession," with more than 150,000 professional and student members throughout the world. ▼

## Four LSU women assaulted in Easter attack in off-campus conflict

BATON ROUGE, LA — Four female students from Louisiana State University reported being attacked early Easter Sunday morning by

a pair of men shouting sexist and anti-gay slurs. Lacey All, Reagan Ilgenfritz, Crystal Guillory, and Christina LaFleur said they were attacked by the men as they walked to their car from the Cybercafe Restaurant near LSU.

The women said the attack began with the men continually asking if the four were "boys or girls." One of the pair then reportedly grabbed Ilgenfritz by the arm, shoved his face near hers and demanded, "Are you a boy or a girl?" After Ilgenfritz pulled away and All asked the pair to leave them alone, the older male responded by calling her a "dyke" and ordered her to leave. The older male then threw his drink into All's face.

According to LaFleur, as All was bent over trying to clear the alcohol from her eyes, the older male then punched her "viciously" in the back of the head, knocking her to her knees. According to Guillory, Ilgenfritz then moved to protect her girlfriend and was struck twice in the face and knocked to the ground. While she was on the ground, she said the man continued to attack her by punching her in the face.

LaFleur said she felt "terrified when I looked on the ground and couldn't make out Reagan's face because it was covered in blood." The attack ended with the younger male pulling the older male away as bystanders moved to assist the four women.

The attackers drove off while the four called the police.

The women sustained multiple contusions and bruises, one sprained wrist and multiple cuts. Ms. All also reported having difficulty seeing for at least 5 hours after the incident because of the strength of the blow to her head. Ilgenfritz was treated at LSU infirmary. Both All and Ilgenfritz suffered headaches for at least two days after the attack, and the four victims reported sleeplessness and anxiety. Guillory said she was "more concerned for my partner's safety than I am for my own."

The four did get the license plate of their attackers, and investigation by the police was underway at press time. ▼

# If this is what your closet looks like...



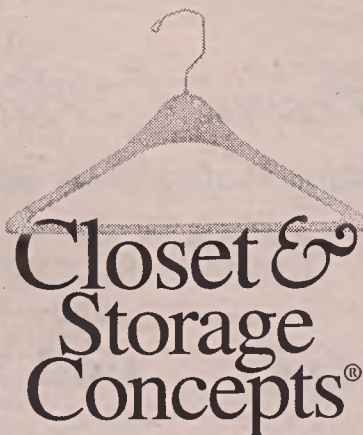
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